

WEST LOTHIAN LEISURE REQUEST FOR COUNCIL CONSENT UPDATES

Deputation

The Council Executive heard from Ms Joyce Cameron, a member of the community, who spoke against the proposed closure of the Broxburn Swimming Pool. Ms Cameron listed the benefits of the pool to various local community groups and individuals and explained the potential difficulties in accessing alternative locations. Ms Cameron then responded to questions from the Council Executive.

PRIVATE SESSION

As had been previously agreed under Order of Business, the Council Executive resolved under Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Report by Depute Chief Executive

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive providing updates on the work being undertaken by officers since the decisions taken by the Council Executive at its meeting on 9 May 2023 in relation to the request by West Lothian Leisure (WLL) for council consent to implement the closure of four facilities. It also addressed a number of questions and concerns raised by the Council Executive at the same meeting.

It was recommended that the Council Executive:

1. Note the updates and further information on the work undertaken by officers since the decisions taken by the Council Executive at its meeting on 9 May 2023, as shown at section D.2 of the report;
2. Note that WLL considered there are no other feasible alternative options to continue to operate these facilities under the terms of the Services Agreement;
3. Note the update on work undertaken to invite expressions of interest in relation to the future operation of the four facilities;
4. Note the updates on members' questions and concerns raised at the Council Executive meeting on 9 May 2023, as shown at section D.3. of the report; and
5. Agree that a further update report be brought back to Council Executive on these matters and considers any further actions to be taken.

Motion

Agree the five recommendations.

In addition, Council Executive is asked to note that many events had been arranged, rehearsals conducted and ticket sales / bookings made for Howden Park Centre prior to West Lothian Leisure's announcement on 3 May 2023 of its intention to cease operations at the end of August 2023. Council Executive also notes that many events at Howden Park Centre cannot be suitably accommodated at any other venue in West Lothian.

Council Executive notes that Howden Park Centre is unique amongst the four venues in requiring a future programme of events to secure its viability, and agrees to provide one-off funding of £20,000 per month from the start of September for the remainder of financial year 2023-24 to support the operation of the centre. It is proposed that the one-off revenue funding of £140,000 is provided from the revenue budget outturn for 2022/23, with the £140,000 top sliced from a one-off 2022/23 revenue underspend.

This will ensure that a full programme of events is maintained and deliver a smooth transition to any new potential operator approved following the conclusion of the current process of exploring alternative commercial and community options for running Howden Park Centre.

- Moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan.

Councillor Janet Campbell moved an amendment that would instruct council officers to ensure continued operation of the four venues and in particular of Howden Park Centre until a permanent solution was found.

After taking advice from the Governance Manager, the Chair ruled that the amendment was incompetent on the grounds that it afforded open ended delegated authority to officers on a political issue and also did not address financial implications; therefore, it was invalid under Standing Order 15.

Decision

To unanimously approve the terms of the motion, with the addition that a further update would be presented to Council Executive on 20 June.