

TO: Executive
15 NOVEMBER 2016

COMMUNITY ACCESS AT EDGBARROW AND SANDHURST SPORTS CENTRES
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Executive for community access to the leisure facilities at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst sports centres to be managed directly by the schools in the future.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Increasing pressure on school places has meant that community access to the sport facilities at Edgbarrow School has gradually deteriorated over the years resulting in there now being no community access to the school's leisure facilities prior to 5.30pm during term time since September of this year.

This, and previous changes, means that the management of the facilities is much less efficient than previously. With increasing financial pressures on the Council in general and less income caused by the change, it was clear that a comprehensive review of the management arrangements was required.

Consequently the community access arrangements to both schools were reviewed and two options for that future community access were identified. Option one was for the Council's Leisure section to continue to manage community access as is currently the case; option two was for responsibility to pass entirely to each school and for them to block book space and time directly to any hirers. Public consultation regarding those options ran from 1 August to 30 September 2016.

Whilst there was significant overall community support for existing community access to remain the status quo there were a reasonable number of respondents who indicated that they could have their leisure needs met at either school site or Bracknell Leisure Centre.

Both schools have indicated a willingness to manage their own sites independently of the Council and given the current financial subsidy and a need for more if full community access is maintained, the Executive is asked to approve that from 31 March 2017, the Leisure Division no longer manages community access at either school site.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That with effect from 1 April 2017, the Leisure Services division of Bracknell Forest Council no longer manages the community leisure facilities at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst schools; and
- 3.2 That the necessary steps are taken to discontinue the Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Joint Use Committee; and
- 3.3 As detailed in paragraph 6.17, the Council maintains its commitment to providing the leisure service at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst School until 31 March 2017.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The need for BFC to make significant savings, increasing revenue pressures arising from the reduction in community access, the likely reduction in support funding from the local councils and a growing desire for singular on-site management all point towards transfer of control from the Council directly to each school.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 School management of full “pay and play” community access to the facilities has been discussed and rejected, as has community management of the facilities.

6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 6.1 Community access at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst sports centres is currently delivered by the Leisure Services section within Environment, Culture and Communities. A revenue budget is in place to support that delivery including financial support from both Crowthorne Parish and Sandhurst Town Councils in keeping with the current Joint Management Agreement for the 2016/17 financial year. The net cost of operating the two centres is £179,000 per annum (excluding recharges, pension costs and capital charges). The existing arrangements for the provision of community access at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst sports centres – delivery by the Leisure Services section – is intended to remain in place until 31 March 2017.
- 6.2 As a result of the growing pressures for teaching space at Edgbarrow school all daytime, term time access to the sports facilities ceased as of 5 September 2016. In addition, Edgbarrow school has commenced a project to re-develop the two squash courts in to an alternative teaching space. There have been no service changes at Sandhurst Secondary School.
- 6.3 In light of the developments above future arrangements for community provision at both schools beyond April 2017 were discussed between the schools and Leisure Services. Two realistic management options were identified.
- 6.4 Option one was for Leisure Services to continue to deliver community access at both leisure centres. Under this scenario Leisure would continue to staff both facilities and provide community access on weekday evenings (term-time), weekends and during school holidays. From the users’ perspective there would be little change in terms of access although charges may well have to increase to ensure at the very least no additional surplus is required to continue the operation and given the Council’s financial prospects prices may well have to be set at the maximum the market will bear to reduce the subsidy if possible.
- 6.5 Option two was for the schools to manage community access themselves. In practice this would mean the removal of fully staffed leisure facilities and a move towards groups hiring facilities for their own purposes via a direct booking arrangement with either school. This would mean the end to all pay-as-you-go access (where individuals can simply present themselves randomly and take part in any available service) and there would be an end to leisure memberships. From the users’ perspective this represents a significant change.
- 6.6 Whilst option one would be the least disruptive it would be subject to a number of influencing factors. Firstly there would be Bracknell Forest Council’s overall view

Unrestricted

towards continuing to support both sites financially given the current budget pressures it is facing generally and the growing revenue cost of the service. Secondly there would be the question of whether or not Crowthorne Parish Council and Sandhurst Town Council would continue to provide their financial contributions too. Finally it would depend on there being ongoing co-operation and agreement between the Council and both schools regarding Leisure's access as the current Joint Management Agreement has not proven enough to protect the access times and areas that Leisure originally had. The responsibilities for on-site management would therefore need to re-negotiated although it should be pointed out that this would be no guarantee that the agreements would not be changed in the future.

- 6.7 Option two would deliver singular on-site management as the overall responsibilities for the maintenance and operation of the sports facilities would pass to the schools. The schools themselves are mindful of the associated costs they would thereby inherit back from Leisure and would look to develop business plans to recoup that cost via generating block bookings income of their own. Block booking is where an individual or an organisation makes a long term commitment to use a facility and pays up front (for example 3 hours hire of the football pitch for 6 months every Tuesday and Thursday). Once access arrangements are agreed, the management of block booking is much less staff intense than pay and play and therefore expenditure can be reduced while maintaining income. Both schools could also approach their local parish / town councils to request financial assistance towards their continued commitment to providing community access. This option would most likely lead to the loss of certain aspects of current community use. For example access to the fitness facilities would be difficult to maintain and the delivery of coach-led sports courses would most likely cease too unless there were provided directly by coaches under the block booking system. In addition (but subject to the school's own plans) this option could potentially lead to staff redundancies although the Council's normal re-deployment strategies would be expected to mitigate this in whole or in part.
- 6.8 Given the anticipated differences that option two necessitated, Leisure Services and the Schools undertook public consultation regarding the future delivery models for both sports centres. Consultation questionnaires were duly made available for the period from 1 August to 30 September 2016. A total of 122 questionnaires were duly completed and a summary of the results is attached below as appendix 1.
- 6.9 Nearly 60% of all respondents were sole users of Edgbarrow. The responses indicated overwhelming public support (79.5%) for current arrangements to continue. This is not unexpected given that customers are generally happy with current arrangements and feel they would not benefit from change. Indeed loyalties towards the centres' staff, the specific activity programmes and the convenience of the locations were all expressed within the responses received. However there were 31 people (25.4% of all replies) who indicated that their own personal circumstances may be suited to block booking arrangements. It is also noteworthy that 86% of all respondents indicated they were individuals as opposed to representatives of groups (arguably less likely to see block bookings as suitable for their own patterns of use). Also, 19.5% of all the people who didn't think a block booking option would work did suggest that they would be able to use Bracknell Leisure Centre instead.
- 6.10 In order to assess whether users would be prepared to pay more to maintain full community access in order that a financial break-even operation could be achieved, one question sought to gauge what size of increase the market would bear. A price increase of 40% would be required at the current level of subsidy. Interestingly, 53.3% of all respondents indicated a willingness to support a price rise of up to 10%, which is commendable but still well short of the required 40% for the operation to

Unrestricted

break even. Significantly, only 1.6% of respondents indicated a willingness to anything more than 20%. With price rises needing to be significantly over and above 40% to break even and a reluctance of customers to pay more than 10% it is clear that the subsidy could not be reduced by price increases. Consequently, there is the risk of further loss of business and increased costs to the Council which is untenable in the current economic climate.

- 6.11 Many of the free text responses indicate upset at the loss of daytime use and squash court access at Edgbarrow. Whilst in no way belittling community feelings these are actually not up for consideration as arrangements have already been agreed with the school that those facilities/access times will no longer be available for community use whichever future direction of travel is taken. Other free text responses generally point towards the strength of public feeling for community access to continue as it is now, expressing perceived difficulties with mapping individual use patterns to block booking arrangements and a marked indifference towards re-locating to Bracknell Leisure Centre.
- 6.12 Whilst public support for the management of the sports centres to continue as is the case now is high, the financial sustainability of the model looks increasingly difficult. The current 2016/17 revenue budget was based on full-day access at Edgbarrow sports centre being available for the full year. All income generated from that term-time daytime access will be lost from 2017/18 onwards. In addition the income trends for the indoor halls and outdoor pitches at Sandhurst have been in steady decline in recent years owing to the condition of the facilities. In the event the Executive determines that Leisure Services continue with the management of these sites it would required an additional £142,000 of subsidy to be funded from the revenue account. Significant investment would also be required at Sandhurst School to maintain a leisure operation. At the very least about £300,000 would be required to renew the synthetic pitch, and basic roof repairs of about £200,000 are required. The latter spend is required whether there is a community leisure offer there or not, and the most obvious source to fund this would be from the Education Capital Programme. There is also the current combined revenue funding from Crowthorne Parish and Sandhurst Town Councils (circa £52,000) and Crowthorne Parish Council has indicated, quite reasonably, it would expect its contribution to fall given the reduced community access and this could have a knock-on effect with Sandhurst Town Council. These changes would bring further financial pressure on the Council.
- 6.13 Despite the strong community support for the operation to continue as it is now, an annual revenue subsidy in excess of £320,000 is simply not considered sustainable and there is significant investment required. The schools have indicated a willingness to take full management control of their sites and continue to offer a more typical form of community access to a school site, and therefore the recommendation is made that the Leisure Division no longer manages community access at the schools from 1 April 2017.
- 6.14 Assuming that Executive approves option two as the future delivery model for community access at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Schools work would then commence for the transfer of responsibilities for the operation of the sports facilities. The anticipated handover of control would be 1 April 2017.
- 6.15 The vast majority of the leisure equipment is owned by the Council. An assessment of this equipment would be made and if there is no clearly identified need for it at the Council's other facilities then, assuming the schools want it, the assumption is that these would be gifted to the schools.

Unrestricted

- 6.16 Previously, the Council has committed at the least to continue offering the current leisure service to the end of March 2017 but although the cessation of daytime use at Edgbarrow School and the uncertain future of the services have created a significant loss of income as previously identified, it is recommended that the Council maintains that commitment. Primarily this is because the Council has made booking commitments to clubs and organisations and therefore customer service and maintenance of reputation are a priority, but also in a practical sense it will take time to deliver an orderly handover with the school.
- 6.17 Once the schools have identified their staffing requirements there may be opportunities for some leisure staff to transfer to the schools. Others will benefit from the Council's redeployment policy either within Leisure Services or elsewhere but if all else fails there may be the need for some redundancies.
- 6.18 The recommendations mean that the public will have less easy access to the facilities although community use will be maintained but nonetheless a valued community service will be diminished. It will be essential that the reasons behind the decision be communicated effectively with customers, the community in general and of course staff and there will be a corporate approach to this element.

7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 7.1 By law the occupation and use of school premises, both during and outside school hours, is under the control of the governing body, subject to any directions given by the local authority or any transfer of control agreement entered into by the governing body. In exercising control of the occupation and use of premises outside school hours the governing body is required to have regard to the desirability of those premises being made available for community use.

Both the Edgbarrow and Sandhurst sports centres are subject to transfer of control agreements involving Bracknell Forest Council, the respective Parish Councils and the school Governing Bodies. These Management Agreements were put in place in 1981 (Edgbarrow) and 1985 (Sandhurst) and both were updated in the year 2000 whereby the control of use of each of the sports centres was transferred to Bracknell Forest Council and a Joint Management Committee set up for this purpose. The Agreements were intended to continue until 2041 so will formally need to be terminated to give effect to the recommendations set out in this report.

Borough Treasurer

- 7.2 Edgbarrow and Sandhurst has a deficit cash budget (i.e. operational income and expenditure but excluding capital charges, pension adjustments and recharges) of £179,000. A potential budget pressure of £142,000 would be incurred should the Council continue to manage the facilities.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.3 The potential loss of all community access at both sports centres (in its current form) would most likely impact equally on all users groups.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.4 The impact of the potential loss of full community access at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst sports centres on a pay-and-play basis is seen as a significant public relations risk.

8 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 8.1 User group representing both facilities; local residents and sports centre users. Headteachers and Governors at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst School; Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Joint Management Committee

8.2 Method of Consultation

Meetings and on-line / paper public consultation.

Representations Received

- 8.3 Strong community preference for continuation of existing arrangements; schools willing to accept sole management of facilities.

Background Papers

Public consultation questionnaire results – Appendix 1

Contact for further information

Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture and Communities – 01344 351750
Vincent.paliczka@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Gareth Jones, Head of Recreation - 01189 747580.
gareth.jones@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Public Consultation Questionnaire Results

Your use of the sports centres

1. Are you responding to this survey as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

(please select one answer)

Individual	105 (86.06%)
Organisation (eg, club, group, association, team)	14 (11.48%)
Didn't indicate.....	3 (2.46%)

2. Which sports centre do you currently use?

If neither, please answer Questions 8-10 and then complete the 'About you' section

(please select one answer)

Edgbarrow sports centre	72 (59.02%)
Sandhurst sports centre	19 (15.57%)
Both	14 (11.48%)
Neither	14 (11.48%)
Didn't indicate.....	3 (2.46%)

3. How often do you typically visit?

(please select one answer for each question)

Monday to Friday daytime

62 people responded as below

Several times a week.....	25 (40.32%)
Once a week.....	8 (12.90%)
Several times a month.....	8 (12.90%)
Once a month.....	1 (1.61%)
Rarely/never.....	20 (32.26%)
Other.....	0

Evenings/weekends

87 people responded as below

Several times a week.....	34 (39.08%)
Once a week.....	33 (37.93%)
Several times a month.....	12 (13.79%)
Once a month.....	4 (4.60%)
Rarely/never.....	3 (3.45%)
Other.....	1 (1.15%)

4. How far do you currently travel to use the facilities?

(please select one answer)

105 people responded as below

Less than 5 minutes	30 (28.57%)
5 to 10 minutes	43 (40.95%)
11 to 30 minutes	29 (27.62%)
More than 30 minutes	3 (2.86%)

5. Why do you currently choose to use Edgbarrow or Sandhurst sports centres? Please rate the each option on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the highest.
(please select one answer for each question)

Health/fitness

50.8% rated this as a 5

As a community activity/social contact

32.8% rated this as a 5

For specific sports coaching

17.2% rated this as a 5

For Convenience

51.6% rated this as a 5

Other – please specify (23 people responded as below)

My club plays here	4
I attend a specific class or activity	4
Price (value for money)	1
Availability of facilities (right day/right time)	5
Provided daytime access	1
Friendly Staff; Good coaches/instructors	5
Location	1
Quality of facilities	2

6. Which facilities or activities do you typically use? (Tick all that apply)

(please select all that apply)

Fitness room	20.28%
Badminton	17.92%
Exercise classes	15.57%
Squash*	4.25%
Tennis	5.66%
Football (indoor)	1.89%
Children's birthday parties	7.08%
Trampolining	2.36%
Gymnastics	3.30%
Martial arts	3.30%
Indoor cricket	0%
Archery	1.89%
Volleyball	0%
Basketball	0%
Table tennis	3.30%
Football (outdoor)	4.72%
Holiday schemes	6.13%
Netball	0.47%
Other.....	1.89%

7. Are there any activities which are not currently offered that you would wish to participate in if they were available? Please describe.

23 people responded as below

Table Tennis (at SSC)	3
Spin classes	1
More classes	4
Pilates	3
Squash	1
Daytime access	1
Cricket	1
Kettlebell classes	1
Swimming	2
Zumba	2
Boxing	1
Short tennis	1
Gym access for U16	1
Fitsters	1

Options

With Option 2 it is envisaged that each school would hire facility space and time to interested persons on a block booking basis. In other words access to facilities would be pre-booked for a set time on a set day in a set space for a fixed number of weeks at a time.

8. From 1 April 2017 which of the two options for future community access would you personally prefer?

(please select one answer)

119 people responded

Option 1 – current provision (outside of school hours) is retained	79.50%
Option 2 – block booking access directly with either school	8.20%
No preference	9.84%
No response.....	2.46%

9. Given the likelihood that either option would most likely entail a rise in prices please could you indicate the level of increase you would be prepared to bear

(please select one answer)

104 people responded

Up to 10%	53.28%
11 to 20%	12.3%
21 to 30%	0.82%
31 to 40%	0%
More than 40%	0.82%
No price increase would be acceptable ...	18.03%
No response.....	14.75%

Implications of Option 2

Given that Option 1 would present little or no change could you please respond to the questions below concerning Option 2.

10. Could your current pattern of use be maintained if you (or the activity or group you are a part of) were to block book space directly with either school?

If no, please go to Question 20 and continue from there, if yes or don't know please answer Questions 11 to 19 and then the 'About you' section (please select one answer)

105 people responded

Yes	25.41%
No	33.61%
Don't know/unsure	27.05%
No response.....	13.93%

11. Which facility / facilities would you require access to? (Tick all that apply)

(please select all that apply)

63 people responded

ESC - Dance Studio (formerly squash courts)	4.60%
ESC - Fitness Room	17.24%
ESC - Main Astro-Turf Pitch (all or part of)	5.75%
ESC - Main Sports Hall (all or part of)	28.74%
ESC - Small Hall	14.94%
ESC - Tennis courts	0%
SSC - Fitness Room	4.60%
SSC - Gymnasium Hall	5.75%
SSC - Main Astro-Turf Pitch (all or part of)	2.30%
SSC - Main Sports Hall (all or part of)	10.34%
SSC - Small Astro-Turf Pitch	3.45%
SSC - Tennis courts	2.30%

ESC = Edgbarrow Sports Centre

SSC = Sandhurst Sport Centre

12. Which day(s) would you most likely want to access to the facilities?

(please select one answer)

62 people responded

Monday to Friday evenings	58.06%
Weekends	14.52%
Weekday evenings and weekends	27.42%
Don't mind	0%

13. Which time(s) in the evenings would you most likely want to access the facilities?

(please select all that apply)

54 people responded

5.30pm to 6.30pm	17.43%
6.30pm to 7.30pm	31.19%
7.30pm to 8.30pm	26.61%
8.30pm to 9.30pm	19.27%

Later than 9.30pm5.50%

14. Which time(s) at the weekends would you most likely want to access the facilities?

(please select all that apply)

24 people responded

9am to midday48.28%
Midday to 3pm10.34%
3pm to 6pm10.34%
Later than 6pm31.03%

15. How long would you typically expect to use the facilities for on each visit?

(please select one answer)

64 people responded

Up to 1 hour45.31%
1 to 2 hours37.50%
2 to 3 hours17.19%
More than 3 hours0%

16. Please consider the following list and indicate which things you feel should be the school's responsibility and which should be yours?

(please select one answer for each question)

63 people responded

Self School

Set up / take down / move equipment

40 % self / 60% school

Insurance

25.4% self / 74.60% school

First aid provision

29.51% self / 70.49% school

Unlocking/locking facilities

8.06% self / 91.94% school

17. How regularly do you think you would block book the facilities?

(please select one answer)

58 people responded

For the term ahead (approximately 3 months)43.10%
For the next 6 months15.52%
For the next year39.66%
For another period of time1.72%

18. How do you currently interact with sports centre staff concerning your bookings? (Tick all that apply)

(please select all that apply)

59 people responded

In person at the desk56.04%
On the phone23.08%
Via email20.88%

19. When do you normally make contact with sports centre staff concerning your bookings? (Tick all that apply)

(please select all that apply)

56 people responded

Monday to Friday before 5.30pm34.18%

Monday to Friday after 5.30pm45.57%

Weekends13.92%

School holidays6.33%

Alternatives

20. Please explain why you do not think your current pattern of usage could be maintained under a block booking arrangement? (ie, what would change for you personally if a block booking arrangement is put in place)

40 people responded as below

Squash unavailable	5
Flexibility to book ad hoc	18
Can't book birthday parties	1
Need daytime access	3
Wouldn't be any instructor-led classes	4
Fitness room use wouldn't be possible	6
No holiday club	2
Not suitable for individual use	1

21. Would you be able to use Bracknell Leisure Centre instead of Edgbarrow or Sandhurst sports centres?

If yes, please go to Question 24 and continue from there

(please select one answer)

41 responded

Yes19.51%

No80.49%

22. What would stop you transferring to Bracknell Leisure Centre? (Tick all that apply)

If 'Travel time/distance' please answer the next question

(please select all that apply)

33 responded

Travel time / distance38.03%

Cost of travel21.13%

Lack of transport8.45%

Time / availability of access8.45%

No direct comparable activity7.04%

Unfamiliarity5.63%

Other11.2% (See table below)

Losing sense of community	1
BLC is too big / too busy	1
Traffic congestion	3
BLC parking too busy	1
Facilities unavailable at time/day	2

required
Classes/activities unavailable 1

23. How far would you be prepared to travel?

16 people responded as below

Within walking distance	3
Within cycling distance	2
Up to 2 miles	2
More than 2 miles	4
Up to 10 minutes	3
Not prepared to travel at all	2

24. What other current local venues might be suitable for your personal requirements? (please name the venues and explain how and why they might meet your needs)

11 people responded as below

Camberley Arena	3
Pinewood	4
Anywhere offering daytime access	1
Frogmore	1
Anywhere offering Squash courts	1
Anywhere offering tennis	1

25. Are there any other alternatives for providing community leisure for Crowthorne and Sandhurst that you feel have not yet been considered?

15 people responded as below

Transfer to Easthampstead Park Conference Centre	1
Centres to be run independently of the Council and schools	1
Re-locate facilities to Broadmoor	5
Re-locate facilities to TRL	2
Offer reduced pricing at Wellington Sports Centre	1
Keep one or both centres (ESC or SSC) open and operating as they are now	4
Open later/close earlier @ ESC and SSC	1