

TO: Executive
18 JULY 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 to undertake a public consultation in order to provide information to help determine how community access to the leisure facilities at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst sports centres may be managed 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 and recent decisions by the school, which are supported by the Council, means that there will be no community access to the school's leisure facilities prior to 5.30 pm during term time from September 2016. There are no changes to the existing arrangements at Sandhurst Secondary School.

While these changes “merely” brings Edgbarrow into alignment with the community access arrangements at Sandhurst (and the majority of other schools across the borough and country), the collective impact of this and other changes over the years has created a situation where management of the facilities is less efficient than previously and much more challenging. Added to this are the ever increasing financial pressures facing the Council.

Consequently and in line with the Council's transformation programme, the community access arrangements to both schools would benefit from a comprehensive review to consider the views of the community, Crowthorne Parish Council and Sandhurst Town Council about future provision and how this is balanced against the Council's financial position now and in the future. While several access options have been discussed with both schools, two realistic options for that community access have been identified. Public consultation regarding those proposals should run ahead of any final Executive decision on the Council's recommended option which is what this report seeks to progress.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the proposed two delivery options are approved as the main focus for public consultation.
- 3.2 That the accompanying public consultation questionnaire is approved for circulation and feedback.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 One of the proposals for future community access represents a significant change from the current delivery. Full public consultation is therefore necessary.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 School management of full “pay and play” community access to the facilities have been discussed and rejected, as have 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 and there is the expectation of continued 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).
- 6.2 As a result of the growing pressures for teaching space at Edgbarrow school the Council has already accepted the school’s decision that there will be a cessation of all daytime, term time access at Edgbarrow sports centre. All daytime, term time access will therefore cease as of 1st September 2016. In addition, Edgbarrow school will commence a project to re-develop the two squash courts in to an alternative teaching space. There are no service changes at Sandhurst Secondary School.
- 6.3 The existing arrangements for the provision of community access at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst sports centres – delivery by the Leisure Services section – will remain in place until 31st March 2017 at the earliest. A decision on whether this is to continue or alternative arrangements put in place will need to be made this year if there is any change to allow a smooth transition. Two realistic management options have been identified following discussion between the schools and Leisure Services.
- 6.4 Option one is 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 would see the schools manage community access. 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 would represent a significant change.
- 6.6 Whilst option one is the least disruptive it would be subject to a number of influencing factors. Firstly there would be Bracknell Forest Council’s overall view towards continuing to support both sites financially given the current budget pressures it is facing generally. Secondly there would be the question of whether or not Crowthorne Parish Council and Sandhurst Town Council would continue to provide their financial

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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.

- 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 that pay and play and therefore expenditure can be reduced while maintaining income. Both schools would 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 however. 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.
- 6.8 Given the anticipated differences that option two will necessitate, Leisure Services and the Schools are proposing a public consultation regarding the future delivery models for both sports centres. A consultation questionnaire is therefore attached below as appendix 1. Assuming that Executive approves the two options outlined above and the accompanying consultation questionnaire, it is proposed that full public consultation would take place throughout August and September 2016. It is anticipated that feedback from that consultation together with a recommendation for the proposed future delivery model for community access at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Schools would be presented to the Executive for a final decision at their 15th November 2016 meeting.

7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 7.1 Legal Services will give any further advice required on the form and timing of the public consultation exercise and on the inter-authority arrangements that apply to the sports centres.

Borough Treasurer

- 7.2 Any financial implications associated in undertaking the consultation exercise will be met by existing revenue budgets.

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.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.3 An equalities impact screening assessment was previously completed which covered the loss of daytime use at Edgbarrow sports centre. There was an overall neutral impact. 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 Head teachers at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst School; Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Joint Management Committee; user group representing both facilities

8.2 Method of Consultation

Meetings

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 – Appendix 1

Contact for further information

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