

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **COUNCIL HELD ON 12 August 2020**

#### **QUESTION from Mr Jeremy Allen a Wirksworth resident, on the motion to provide financial support to Freedom Leisure for the phased reopening of the District Council's Leisure Centres**

*Please can the following questions be asked:*

- 1. DDDC and Freedom had promised to open on 25<sup>th</sup> July, and we were all aware of the situation that we face. However, on the 21<sup>st</sup> July the preparations were obviously not in place, which has resulted in the delay and these discussions. Why weren't all these issues considered and why weren't costed plans for re-opening agreed ready before 21<sup>st</sup> July? Why did it appear to be a surprise?*
- 2. When is Month One? If Option two is accepted, surely DDDC and Freedom have plans in place to safely open within a week or two. If not, why is it taking so long to make adequate plans?*
- 3. Communication has been appalling, late and vague. Only Becky, the Community Development Manager, communicates with residents. Please can honest and open communication with exact dates be sent out immediately after this recommendation is approved? Who will communicate with residents on these matters while Becky is furloughed? (Try phoning the DDDC number and asking for clear information on leisure centre openings and you will understand the issue.)*

#### **ANSWER**

- 1 To be clear, neither DDDC nor Freedom Leisure gave any commitment to reopen on the 25 July. Once the Council received Freedom Leisure's final proposals and a request for financial support, it assessed the figures and applied for an Extraordinary Meeting of Council within that week.
- 2 Plans are in place and should Members approve the financial support package then Freedom Leisure can mobilise and reopen within 10 days (22 August).
- 3 The District Council and Freedom Leisure have a joint communications protocol agreed when Freedom Leisure took over the contract of operating the leisure centres. A key element of this is that operational communications are the direct responsibility of Freedom. However the Council and Freedom have worked together to issue joint statements during the pandemic to explain to the public the complicated impacts of the global emergency. Becky is not and has not been furloughed at any point and there are no plans to do so in the future.

**QUESTION from Ms Deboarh Winterburn on behalf of Matlock Baileans Hockey Club, on the motion to provide financial support to Freedom Leisure for the phased reopening of the District Council's Leisure Centres**

*The Astro Hockey Pitch at Anthony Gell School - Wirksworth Leisure Centre is the home ground for both Matlock Baileans Hockey Club and Derwent Mens Hockey club. Although Matlock Hockey club raised significant amount of money to fund the Astro Pitch - £5000, Freedom Leisure have the contract to run the facilities and will under COVID -19 regulation be responsible for the safe use of the facilities and adherence to COVID-19 guidance.. The clubs have over 200 active members ranging from 6yrs - 65 yrs of age. The club appreciates the request for additional financial support for Freedom Leisure to enable it to reopen its leisure facilities, at present the club does not have access to the Astro however access will be limited should the Leisure Centre open if the opening hours proposed in Option 2 are not extended as outlined below. Restricting access to the astro is likely to impact on the clubs membership, the participation in the sport locally for young people and have a detrimental impact on the fitness, health and wellbeing of everyone involved in the sport.*

*The clubs train on the Astro 3 nights a week and play league matches all day on a Saturday from 9-5pm. The opening hours proposed in option 2 does not cover the opening hours required by the the club to train fully and to play mathes especially league match once England Hockey deem it is safe to do so. England Hockey have moved to Step 4 in the phased returne to play allowing for training of up to 30 players per session and for local friendly match play. Matlock Baileans Hockey club have met the required standards set out by the Government and England Hockey guidance and are ready to return to full training and local match play with immediate effect. Once England Hockey and the Government authorises the move to Step 5 - Full Competitive Match Play the club will be ready to move to this stage. Matlock Baileans Hockey Club has 5 teams that play weekly competitive hockey which includes a significant number of U18 players*

*It is noted in the report that allowances have been made for other local clubs such as Matlock and District Swimming Club, the Polo Club and the Triathlon Club at Ashbourne with additional early and late opening of the facilities being provided. We would therefore welcome due considerations for the local Hockey Clubs to have full access to the necessary facilities to be able to train and play competitive matches.*

*The committee is asked to consider the following amendments to the opening hours for Wirksworth Leisure Centre which will allow full participation for all members to play hockey in line with England Hockey guidance*

*Tuesday: to remain open until 9pm*

*Thursday: to remain open until 9pm*

*Saturday: to allow access to the Astro and changing facilities from 9am - 6pm*

*It should be noted that Matlock Baileans Hockey club pay over £8000 for the hire of the Astro a season and appreciate that hire fees may need to increase slightly as a result of the pandemic*

*We welcome your consideration and feedback*

**ANSWER**

Officers have been in contact with the Business Manager at Anthony Gell School to try and allow the clubs access the astro turfs/pitches whilst the leisure centre is closed but unfortunately the school are not able to operate these pitches or allow clubs access to a key.

The proposed opening hours for Wirksworth Leisure Centre in option 2 were originally based on a July opening and therefore the outdoor pitches would be much quieter during the summer months. If option 2 was approved by councillors at the committee meeting then Freedom Leisure appreciate that there will be more bookings in the evenings and on weekends and they will be flexible with the timings if there was a demand.

Freedom Leisure will be made aware of the times you have mentioned.