

Minutes of the meeting of the **DOVER LEISURE CENTRE PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 10 January 2019 at 4.47 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: P M Beresford
N J Collor
M D Conolly
Mr P Ward

Also present: Mr T Crafer (Places Leisure)
Mr S Warriner (Places Leisure)

Officers: Principal Infrastructure and Delivery Officer
Principal Community and Leisure Officer
Democratic Services Officer

47 APOLOGIES

It was noted that Councillor S F Bannister had sent an apology for absence.

48 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor B Gardner had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor S F Bannister.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

50 MINUTES

The notes of the meetings of the Group held on 13 September and 8 November 2018 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

51 OPERATION OF EXISTING LEISURE CENTRE AND MOBILISATION OF NEW DOVER DISTRICT LEISURE CENTRE

Mr Tony Crafer advised that a full management team had now been recruited. The pay roll had increased from 78 to approximately 110 staff and was likely to grow. New prices would be publicised on 18 January for existing members and on 21 January for the general public. Bookings were due to start on 14 January for squash, badminton, etc, and the new pool programme would also be available on that date.

In response to Councillor B Gardner, the Principal Leisure Officer (PLO) undertook to send the new schedule of prices to Members before it went public. The Principal Infrastructure and Delivery Officer (PIDO) advised that existing concessionary memberships would continue to be honoured. However, these would not be renewed once they had expired, and no new concessionary memberships would be given. Instead, there would be concessionary 'pay and play' rates which would be

managed differently. Mr Crafer added that, whilst the GP referral scheme would continue, the associated concessions would be applicable for a set period only.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

52 CONSTRUCTION

The PLO reported that the contractor was working really hard as the final stages of construction/fitting-out approached. Whilst works to the dryside area were almost complete, the wet side area was proving more challenging. She reminded Members that it was important to maintain the high quality of the build rather than finishing the project quickly.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

53 PROGRAMME

The PLO advised that interested parties were working towards completion of the centre in the first part of February. The opening and ceremony dates would be announced the following week after discussions with the contractor and Places Leisure.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

54 PLANNING

The PIDO advised that there were four pre-commencement conditions outstanding. These included a requirement to draw up a noise management plan to ensure that out-of-hours noise remained within acceptable levels. Works to the Tesco roundabout had been completed and signed off by Kent County Council (KCC). In respect of BREEAM certification, a final assessor visit was awaited.

A draft travel plan had been prepared by the Council's consultant, including a detailed description of all bus routes serving the site. The Council proposed to purchase £1,600 worth of month-long 'Megarider' bus tickets, half of which would be distributed in the first year and the rest in the second. The detail of how the tickets would be distributed was yet to be decided. It was clarified that the Council had taken this approach rather than commissioning new bus services on KCC's advice which was based on its experience of similar projects in other locations. The difficulty was that once Section 106 contributions ran out, it was likely that any special bus service commissioned to serve the leisure centre would cease. In any case, there were a number of existing services going to or nearby the site. Discussions with Stagecoach, KCC and consultants had indicated that the Council's approach was the most appropriate.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor B Gardner about the poor bus service to and from Deal, particularly in the evenings, the PIDO advised that surveys of other leisure sites indicated that evening bus services were rarely used for accessing leisure facilities, although it had not been possible to test this at Whitfield before the new centre opened. If new bus services had been commissioned, these were likely to prove uneconomic, unsustainable and a poor use of taxpayers' money.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

55 COMMUNICATIONS

The PLO advised that a good deal of marketing had been done over the preceding few months to raise awareness of the new facilities available. Regular construction updates had been posted on 'KeepMePosted', Twitter, etc. It was anticipated that an announcement would be made the following week regarding the 'soft' opening date. In advance of the 'soft' opening, selected clubs and users would be invited to test the facilities to ensure everything was functioning properly.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

56 OPENING CEREMONY

The PLO advised that the official opening ceremony would probably be hosted by the Chairman of the Council. The guest list would be drawn from organisations that had been directly involved in the project, plus other invited guests including the children from Whitfield Primary School who had named the road. A plaque would be unveiled in the sports hall, and there would be a buffet and tours of the centre.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

57 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that the items involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

58 CLIENT PROGRESS REPORT

The PIDO introduced the client progress report prepared by BAM Ltd. She clarified that Places Leisure would be responsible for managing the new centre once it was handed over on the practical completion date.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

59 RISKS

The PLO advised that the level of risk had reduced considerably. Whilst the weather could affect the completion of the access road, the Council was working closely with KCC to ensure that the road would be of a suitable standard for adoption. The functioning of equipment and plant was another risk until such time as the boilers, etc could be started up and tested, but Officers were confident that any problems could be overcome. The exact opening date was dependent on testing and commissioning. Whilst there was a wish to maintain continuity of leisure service, running two sites simultaneously would not be possible given that all staff would be needed at the new centre to run through drills, training, etc. A break in service of approximately one week was therefore anticipated.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

60 PROJECT COSTS

The PLO advised that the project was forecast to be completed within budget. There would be a budget meeting at the end of February/beginning of March to review the final position. The PIDO added that, whilst there had been additional costs to some elements of the project, the effective use of contingency monies had meant that the overall budget position was positive.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

The meeting ended at 5.57 pm.