

Report of Chief Officer, Culture & Sport

Report to Director, City Development

Date: 19th March 2020

Subject: Temporary closure of facilities in response to coronavirus

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

1. Main issues

- On 17th March 2020 the full closure to the public of council-run museums, galleries, leisure centres and facilities, and venues (Leeds Town Hall, Carriageworks Theatre, Pudsey Civic Centre) was implemented in response to Government advice regarding the coronavirus.
- On 18th March the Council, alongside other partners, also agreed to the postponement of the World Triathlon Series 2020 to a date later in 2020 or to 2021
- The response was immediate on the basis of emerging government advice regarding the need to minimise social interaction and save lives.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The health of people in Leeds is the primary consideration and this decision was made in that context.

3. Resource Implications

- Initial indications suggest the likely negative monthly impact on external income from the Council, (including gym membership, ticket sales for concerts, room bookings etc) of the closures is likely to be in the region of £1.5m per month.
- Nevertheless the closures do offer some opportunities to redeploy staff to support critical services

- The impact of the postponement of the World Triathlon Series is likely to be a c£190k saving to the Council budget in 2020-21 financial year assuming a revised date can't be secured in that year. Should the new date be agreed by partners for 2021-22, £100k of the saving, which is from the West Yorkshire Business Rate Pool, could be transferred to support the new date. Decisions on these matters are subject to further discussions with partners.

Recommendations

The Director of City Development is recommended to:

- Agree that, due to exceptional circumstances, on 17th March 2020 the full closure to the public of council-run museums, galleries, leisure centres and facilities, and venues (Leeds Town Hall, Carriageworks Theatre, Pudsey Civic Centre) sites was implemented in response to Government advice regarding the coronavirus.
- Agree that on 18th March the Council, alongside other partners, agreed to the postponement of the World Triathlon Series 2020 to a date later in 2020 or to 2021.
- Agree that the decision is exempt from call-in.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To record a decision made in immediate response to the coronavirus outbreak following government advice.

2. Background information

- 2.1 Background to the developing response to the coronavirus is well documented and public. This urgent demand took precedence over other further considerations such as the financial impact of the decision.
- 2.2 The decision to postpone the World Triathlon Series event was taken alongside partners; British Triathlon Federation, International Triathlon Union and UK Sport. All partners were in receipt of advice from their respective governments and the World Health Organisation in coming to this recommendation.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 In coming to the decision officers were aware of the significant impact on income as described under Section 3 above, but balanced this against the more significant concern of protecting public health.
- 3.2 Officers were also aware of the potential impact on staff within the facilities which were closing, and the impact on customers.
- 3.3 The otherwise positive impact of physical activity on health was noted as was the positive impact on the overall economy of visitor attractions and a lively cultural offer.
- 3.4 The decisions took place in an environment where every other local authority was also dealing with similar issues. The vast majority have taken identical action.

3.5 The only exception to the immediate closures was to allow pre-booked weddings to still take place in Leeds Town Hall up to and including 22nd March. Subsequently one wedding which was booked for 28th March was moved a week earlier to take place at Temple Newsam House.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 Consultation took place with the senior officers of the council, and the portfolio holder for Economy and Culture, and the portfolio holder for Environment and Active Lifestyles

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 Leisure and Culture Services offer a broad range of services to a wide mix of groups and individuals, including those often excluded from other provision. The closure of the services will have an adverse impact in terms of physical activity, and quality of life.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The health of people in Leeds is the primary consideration and this decision was made in that context.

Climate Emergency

4.3.2 The closure of services is likely to have a positive impact in terms of the carbon footprint of the venues, although in some cases there is a requirements for the ongoing maintenance of facilities during a period of closure.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 See comments in section 3 above. There is no procurement in this decision.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 It is a general requirement of the Council Constitution that advance notice of Key Decisions will be given in the List of Forthcoming Key Decisions (the List). Paragraph 2.6 of the Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rules details 'Special Urgency' procedures to be applied where notice of a Key Decision has not been included in the List and where the decision is of such urgency that it cannot be deferred. This decision falls under that category due to due to the exceptional and foreseen circumstances of the Coronavirus.

4.5.2 Due to the reasons outlined in the above paragraph, it is also recommended that this decision is exempt from call-in

4.5.3 The relevant Scrutiny Chairs have been consulted and are in agreement with the decision.

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 The decision was made as an action to mitigate the global risk of coronavirus.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Council made a speedy and effective decision to close leisure and cultural venues in line with other authorities across the country and in response to the coronavirus.

6. Recommendations

The Director of City Development is recommended to:

- Agree that, due to exceptional circumstances, on 17th March 2020 the full closure to the public of council-run museums, galleries, leisure centres and facilities, and venues (Leeds Town Hall, Carriageworks Theatre, Pudsey Civic Centre) sites was implemented in response to Government advice regarding the coronavirus.
- Agree that on 18th March the Council, alongside other partners, agreed to the postponement of the World Triathlon Series 2020 to a date later in 2020 or to 2021.
- Agree that the decision is exempt from call-in.

7. Background documents¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.