



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Executive Board

Date: 22nd June 2011

Subject: Closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre and Middleton Pool and Reduced Opening Hours of Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to consider a recommendation from the former Scrutiny Board (City Development) that in future, proposals to reduce services like the closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre, Middleton Pool and reduced opening hours of Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre should be fully consulted upon before the matter is referred to the Executive Board for determination.
2. It is also to inform the Executive Board that Scrutiny Board (City Development) opposes the reduction in operating hours at Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre and the proposed Community Asset Transfer (CAT) to the School Partnership Trust and the closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre and Middleton Pool.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To seek the approval of the Executive Board that any proposals to reduce services should be fully consulted upon before the matter is referred to the Executive Board for determination.
- 1.2 To inform the Executive Board that Scrutiny Board (City Development) opposes the reduction in operating hours at Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre and the proposed CAT to the School Partnership Trust and the closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre and Middleton Pool.

2.0 Main Issues

- 2.1 Scrutiny Board (City Development) at its meetings in February and March 2011 considered a number of requests and petitions for scrutiny of the Executive Board's proposals to close East Leeds Leisure Centre, Middleton Pool and reduce the operating hours at Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny Board received reports from the Acting Director of City Development explaining the rationale behind the decisions which had been made as a consequence of a reduction in the City Development Directorate's Recreation budget net of £2.5m (12.8% of net controllable budget), to which facilities savings in sport contribute £1m.
- 2.3 Members of the Scrutiny Board were concerned that the Executive Board took the decision to close East Leeds Leisure Centre and Middleton Pool and reduce the operating hours at Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre before consultation on the proposals had been completed.
- 2.4 The Acting Director's reports acknowledge that "there was no doubt that some users of those centres which are closing or reducing hours, will have difficulty or may not be able to access other sites". The rationalisation was not presented as desirable in service terms, but sought to minimise negative impacts in the specific proposals for savings. The Scrutiny Board was not convinced as the deprivation in the areas where these proposals have been implemented is high and the negative effect that the decisions will have in those communities is significant.

3.0 Acting Director's Comments to the Board's Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - In future, proposals to reduce services like the closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre, Middleton Pool and reduced hours of Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre should be fully consulted upon before the matter is referred to the Executive Board for implementation.

Response - agreed with qualification

The Initial Budget Proposals report was presented to the Executive Board on the 15 December 2010, and then to the City Development Scrutiny Board on the 11 January 2011. This stated, in the main body of the report, "the current level of sports provision will also need to be reviewed", and within the detailed City Development section of the report, it stated that, "proposals include the possible transfer to community ownership or closure of up to 3 additional sport centres and or swimming pools". At the Executive Board meeting on the 3 November 2010, an approach for stakeholder consultation was agreed, and resident consultation on the spending challenge was run until 17 December 2010. Other consultation on the budget proposals was undertaken via, all party budget meetings, third sector, business sector and trade unions.

With the Council facing 2011/12 unprecedented budget reductions of £90m, the detail behind the Initial Budget Proposals report had to be developed quickly, and in time to be presented to the Executive Board on the 11 February 2011, and the subsequent full Council meeting. It was at the meeting of the 11 February and the Council meeting where the detail was presented and approvals given to close East Leeds Leisure Centre and Middleton pool, and reduce opening hours at Bramley Baths and Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre. It was the opinion of the Directorate that without these approvals and the agreed actions, the Directorate would not have been in a position to begin realising savings as from the beginning of the financial year, thus causing budget pressures.

In summary, City Development would agree that, under normal circumstances, a consultation exercise should take place, as is currently the case with a possible Bramley Baths community asset transfer, but in the case outlined above, in the context of unprecedented budget pressures, and having consulted widely on the Initial Budget Proposals, the Directorate took the decision to recommend immediate action to the Executive Board and full Council without further consultation.

Recommendation 2 - Former Scrutiny Board (City Development) opposes the reduction in operating hours at Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre and the proposed community asset transfer to the School Partnership Trust and the closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre and Middleton Pool.

Response - not agreed.

The City Development directorate needed to deliver £14m of budget savings in 2011/12 from the previous year's net controllable expenditure of £77m, of which the Recreation required saving was £2.5m, and within this figure, the Sport facilities saving was to be £1m.

To deliver this level of saving within Sport, the service needed radical change, and the proposals put forward and agreed were to close East Leeds Leisure Centre as from 31 March 2011 and Middleton Pool as from September 2011, with reduced opening hours at Garforth as from April 2011, and Bramley Baths as from September 2011, alongside a proposal to progress a community asset transfer for Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre. Whilst the pool at Middleton Leisure Centre would close, facilities would be enhanced by planned capital investment to playing pitch provision and changing room refurbishment.

In March and April 2011, the Scrutiny Board considered various reports relating to these sport budget approvals, and officers from the Directorate provided explanations and rationale behind the site specific proposals. Whilst making the recommendations, Scrutiny Board offered no alternative proposals for budget savings of this magnitude to contribute towards the Directorate's £14m required savings in 2011/12, and thus the City Development Directorate cannot agree with the recommendations as outlined by the Scrutiny Board.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 There are no specific Council policy and governance implications from this report.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

5.1 There could be specific legal implications arising from this report. In terms of resources there were savings in 2011/12 from the closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre of £572,000 and reduced hours at Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre of £274,000. There is also a projected saving in 2011/12 with the closure of Middleton Pool of £89,000. Clearly, any proposal to reintroduce these facilities or increase operating hours would have significant financial and resource implications.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Executive Board is asked to consider the recommendation of Scrutiny Board (City Development) that any proposals to reduce services should be fully consulted upon before the matter is referred to the Executive Board for determination.
- 6.2 The Executive Board is asked to note that the Scrutiny Board (City Development) opposes the reduction in operating hours at Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre and the proposed CAT to the School Partnership Trust and the closure of East Leeds Leisure Centre and Middleton Pool.

7.0 Background Documents

- 7.1 Reports of the Acting Director of City Development to Scrutiny Board (City Development) meetings on 5th and 20th April 2011