

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET - 26 JANUARY 2012**

**RESPONSE TO THE CO-OPERATIVE & COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
REVIEW OF LEISURE CONCESSIONS**

**REPORT OF: CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE & WELLBEING**

**(PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

1.1 Following a review of the current leisure concessions scheme and respective charges in partnership with the Co-Operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee it is proposed to:

- Remove the automatic concessionary status for new over 60s except for those in receipt of Pensions Credit;
- Introduce a flat rate £1 charge for swimming for all concessionary groups however retain free swimming for children and young people aged 16 and under.
- Standardise and increase concessionary Health & Fitness membership to £21.50pcm for all members;
- Remove concessions on golf for all groups.
- Retain the existing Arthog Remissions Policy

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 That Cabinet agree the response to the Co-Operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.**

**2.2 That the revised policy and new charges be implemented from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012.**

**3 SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	Health and Wellbeing
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<b>Customers of different ages</b> Telford & Wrekin residents over 60 with a Flex card are currently entitled to concessionary status regardless of their financial

		<p>circumstances. From April 2012 any new over 60 Flex card applicants will be required to prove entitlement to Pension Credit in order to a benefit from concessionary status. Existing Flex card holders aged over 60 will continue to be entitled to concessionary status but subject to review in 2014.</p> <p><b>Customers with a disability</b> Disabled Flex card holders will still benefit from concessionary status,</p> <p><b>Customers on low income</b> Financially disadvantaged groups will still benefit from concessionary status, however, along with other concessionary groups the introduction of or increasing of the level of charges may result in a reduction in usage.</p>
<b>TARGET DATE</b>	The revised policy and new charges would be implemented from April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2012.	
<b>FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	Yes	<p>The proposed Service &amp; Financial Planning Strategy for 2012/13 to 2014/15 was presented to Cabinet on the 22 December and is now in a consultation period with final decisions due to be taken at Council on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012. It contains savings proposals totalling £50k in respect of additional income generated following changes to the Leisure concessions policy (as per Appendix 7 of the budget papers saving number 9). The review of concessions has resulted in 4 proposed amendments to the concessions policy which will achieve estimated additional income of £47k. Clearly this will meet the majority of the £50k savings target and it is anticipated that the shortfall will be met through further additional income.</p> <p>The calculation of savings generated from changes to the concessions policy contains assumptions around the impact on usage figures. Should usage fall below the levels predicted then income targets will not be achieved. This will be monitored and reported as part of financial monitoring throughout 2012/13.</p>
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	No	<p>The provision of leisure services is a non statutory function. Any decision in respect of concessions should be reasonable and balanced. An Equalities Impact Assessment will inform Members of any equality Issues that need to be considered. As with any decision made by Members in respect of Council policy, there is the potential for such a decision to be challenged by way of Judicial Review; however, as long as Members have made a reasonable decision based on all relevant facts then any challenge should be capable of being successfully defended.</p>
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNIT</b>	Yes	The removal of or reduction in the level of concessions may impact upon the use of facilities and therefore physical activity levels amongst affected groups.

<b>IES</b>		
<b>IMPACT ON WARD</b>		Borough wide impact.

## **(PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4 INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The Council remains committed to encouraging residents to maintain a healthy lifestyle and it is recognised that physical activity plays an essential part in keeping people healthy. As such any decision that may potentially impact upon current physical activity levels is one that needs careful consideration.
- 4.2 Benchmarking carried out in respect of the current Council Leisure Concessions policy supports the notion that the current scheme is comparatively generous particularly in relation to the inclusion of free swimming for concessionary groups.
- 4.3 A key consideration in coming to the recommendations as detailed in Appendix 1 was that of trying to deliver the required amount of savings through additional income, whilst attempting to minimise the impact upon community physical activity levels.
- 4.4 A further key consideration was that of ensuring that future concessions are targeted at those with the most genuine need.
- 4.5 In addition to the concessions scheme the Council also provides targeted interventions, such as 'Tackle Your Health' to increase and support physical activity opportunities. Most of these schemes are funded externally either through grant funding or are commissioned by the Primary Care Trust.
- 4.6 The Council will continue to work with partners to identify and provide further sport and physical activity opportunities within the community and Leisure Services, through existing delegated authority we will utilise 'special offers' to incentivise customers in accordance with business need. The use of special offers and further use of Direct Debit opportunities will ensure that services remain accessible, sustainable and continue to provide value for money.
- 4.7 It is considered that the proposed changes will ensure that the level of concessions remains comparatively generous, protect existing users aged over 60, and deliver the required level of savings with a relatively low projected reduction in attendances and activity levels.
- 4.8 A further review including an evaluation of impact and level of additional income achieved is to be undertaken in 12 months time.

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