



COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

FAIRFORD AND TETBURY SPORTS CENTRES

POSITION STATEMENT

22nd JULY 2019

1. STATEMENT PURPOSE

Elected Members will be aware that the former District Council owned Sports Centres, located in Fairford and Tetbury which were asset transferred to the local secondary schools in 2013, are facing an uncertain future. This statement is provided to inform Members of the historical context, along with Cotswold District Councils position and the Schools current intentions regarding community use of the sports facilities.

2. Background Information

- 2.1 Following a strategic review and options appraisal of the Councils leisure and Cultural Service, Cabinet (3rd November 2012) decided to contract out the management of the service. Following a procurement exercise, to select a leisure management contractor, the contract award Cabinet report (11th April 2013) also authorised the transfer of the dual use facilities at Tetbury to Sir William Romney's school and at Fairford to Farmor's school. This followed a period of extensive consultation with the schools during which they reviewed the operating costs and income at that time. Both schools made the decision to request a transfer of the facilities to them.
- 2.2 The terms and conditions for the asset transfer, which included financial support in the form of grants, were specified within legal agreements signed on the 31st December 2013, expiring on the 31st December 2019. Both Schools elected to set up limited companies for the administration of the sites, and the existing staff transferred to the companies under TUPE.
- 2.3 Along with terms and conditions for the grant payments, the agreements also specified the opening hours for community use and arrangement for information sharing such as performance data. In August 2017 Farmor's School approached the Council to vary the opening hours to more accurately reflect patterns of use and enable more effective use of resources. The agreement makes provision for variations where consent cannot be unreasonably withheld. In order to support the school the variation was agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio holder and Ward Councillors.
- 2.4 Despite this variation Farmor's School has advised that without subsidy the community use of the facilities is financially unsustainable. As a consequence they are proposing to wind up the Limited company by the 31st August 2019 and make the staff redundant. Sir William Romney's school also advised they are in the same position and, acting on advice from an insolvency company, decided to close Tetbury sports centre for community use on Monday the 8th July.
- 2.5 By taking this approach both Schools will be in breach of the grant agreement and be liable to re-pay to the Council a proportion of the grant funding received. However the value of this repayment is likely to be a relatively small amount given that both agreements expire in 5 months'.

3.0 SCHOOLS POSITION

- 3.1 Both of the schools are proposing to revert to a traditional School community use model supervised by caretakers. The sports halls will continue to be available for hire by community groups, sports clubs and organisations on a block booking basis. Currently the health and Fitness Suites will close and not be available for community use. However both of the Schools have stated they are willing to explore options emerging from discussions with stakeholders which could result in a different operating model for community use of the health & fitness suites.
- 3.2 Sir William Romney's School are in discussion with St Mary's Primary School to facilitate the relocation of the children's "kids Camp" school holiday activities so this provision remains available in the summer holidays.

4.0 COUNCILS POSITION

- 4.1 In Response to the news of these closures being made public the local communities along with their Town Councils have held meetings. Councillors Ind and Doherty have attended some of these meetings and have facilitated some meetings to explore options for a way forward. They are acting in their capacity as Ward members but are not acting as a CDC liaison. Cllr Forde has been in regular discussions with both Ward members confirming facts and fielding enquiries from residents from all wards.
- 4.2 The Council has also approached its Leisure Management contractor and negotiated a 50% reduced rate membership package for existing gym users which can be provided as an option. This will help to encourage users to remain physically active. It is recognised this offer will not meet the needs of gym users who are unable to travel to Cirencester.
- 4.2 An informal approach has been made to the Council's Leisure Management Contractor exploring the ramifications of adding both sites to the existing contract. From this discussion it became clear that a re-negotiation would likely be necessary and potentially a new contract which could have financial implications for the Council. If this were to be pursued it could be a longer term solution for the community use of the sports centres.

5.0 SUMMARY

- 5.1 Both of the schools have stated that community use of the sports halls will continue, they have also expressed their commitment to explore options and ways in which they can continue to provide as many of the Sports Centre facilities as they can for the local community. Councillors Ind and Doherty are actively involved as the ward members liaising directly with Councillor Forde and following local discussions will review any emerging options.