

DECISION NOTICE - CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY RELATED

Key Executive Decision taken by an OFFICER

KEY DECISION

Closure of Stevenage Leisure Facilities Operated by Stevenage Leisure Limited

DECISION TAKER:

Name: Richard Protheroe

Job Title: Strategic Director

Signature:

Date:

REASON WHY THIS DECISION DID NOT APPEAR ON THE FORWARD PLAN AND THE URGENCY PROVISIONS WERE NOT FOLLOWED:

This key decision/decision outside the Council's Budget and Policy Framework was taken as part of the Council's emergency response to the national Coronavirus Emergency. Due to the necessary speed of decision taking at this time it was not possible to comply with the Council's Constitution that includes the requirement to give 28 days' notice of the decision to be taken; publish details 5 clear days before the decision was taken; publish the decision within 2 days of it being taken; and provide the 5 day call-in period before implementation. Nor was it possible to comply with the Urgency provisions in the Constitution

Following the announcement of Tier 4 restrictions for Stevenage on 19th December an urgent decision was taken to close the indoor leisure facilities of Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre.

Following the announcement of the national Covid-19 lockdown on 4 January 2021 an urgent decision was made in consultation with SLL to close the Golf and Conference Centre with immediate effect. The urgency with which the lockdown measures were introduced, announced on 4th January, meant that the requirement to close services with immediate effect could not be planned.

DECISION TAKEN:

The announcement of the national lockdown from 5th January required a range of public venues to close with immediate effect. In Stevenage this included the Golf and Conference Centre which had not been included in the Tier 4 restrictions announced on 19th December. This decision will remain

under review as further government announcements relating to the restrictions are made. The government has not yet determined an end date for the restrictions, although these are anticipated to continue throughout February. Any easing of restrictions are unlikely to allow sites to be fully operational and retain all pre Covid-19 activities immediately. The council will need to work with SLL as it's operator to consider service recovery as guidance allows.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The decision has been made in accordance with the national lockdown restrictions announced on 4 January in the interest of public safety.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

The lockdown measures became law as national restrictions on 6th January, therefore officers were unable to consider alternative options.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The closure of leisure sites will have a significant financial impact on SLL's Business Plan and the financial position of the company. The council is currently monitoring this situation and exploring mitigation measures to protect the future recovery of leisure provision. The council is also due to submit a bid to the National Leisure Recovery Fund on 15 January.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The closure of these services come under the emergency provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The measures are a response to the government guidance on the Covid-19 pandemic and within the Council's gift to make.

Following government advice for identified people within the community to self-isolate plus the consequential impact upon those members of the community who are vulnerable or who need help and support SBC devised the establishment of a Community Response Team for Stevenage to ensure immediate support could be provided. (General Powers of Competence – Localism Act 2011)

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

The closure leisure sites operated by SLL impact all parts of the community who currently use the services. SLL has continued to provide an online digital offer for its members. Stevenage Helps has increased its capacity to support those in immediate hardship or those who need support and advice. The closure of the services will assist in the protection of older people and those vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus.

CONSULTATIONS:

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture has been consulted as have members of the Coronavirus Executive Committee at their meeting of 8th January. Members supported the measures in relation to the national lockdown guidance.

Senior Officers continue to meet with SLL on a monthly basis to monitor and review the current situation. This will be ongoing throughout the pandemic.

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

I agree that this decision was reasonable in all the circumstances, was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred

I further agree that any delay likely to be caused by the call -in process would prejudice the Council's or the public interest and that the decision should not therefore be subject to call-in.

Signed:

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date:

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION:

5 January 2021