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| Subject: | Leisure Services Reopening Update |
| Date: | 31 st July 2020 |
| Reporting Officer: | Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services |
| Contact Officer: | Noel Munnis, Partnership Manager |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? | |
| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some time in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in | |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| 1.1 | The purpose of this report is to update Members' on the remobilisation of GLL staff and the reopening of Leisure Services as permitted by the Executive Office (TEO) within the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the information provided below and the centre re-opening plans as detailed. |

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| 3.0 | Main report |
| | <p data-bbox="272 226 421 255"><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 322 209 351">3.1</p> <p data-bbox="272 309 1453 389">All BCC indoor leisure centres and associated outdoor facilities closed on 16th March 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak and in response to government restrictions.</p> <p data-bbox="165 461 209 490">3.2</p> <p data-bbox="272 461 1461 589">The easing of TEO Covid-19 restrictions has been delivered in phases with announcements relating to different aspects of leisure services released continuously since mid-June 2020.</p> <p data-bbox="165 660 209 689">3.3</p> <p data-bbox="272 660 1425 788">Reopening approval has been built around a large number of TEO and industry/sport National Governing Body (NGB) guidelines. The key measures required include revised protocols and assurances in relation to:</p> <ol data-bbox="323 862 1219 1093" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social distancing (reduced capacities) 2. Enhanced air handling and fresh air intake levels (indoor spaces) 3. Hand sanitising and enhanced cleaning regimes 4. Customer behaviour instructions and enforcement 5. Track and trace data capture <p data-bbox="165 1164 209 1193">3.4</p> <p data-bbox="272 1164 858 1193">To date TEO has approved the reopening of:</p> <p data-bbox="165 1265 233 1294">3.4.1</p> <p data-bbox="272 1265 561 1294"><u>OUTDOOR PITCHES</u></p> <p data-bbox="272 1364 1414 1491">BCC pitches opened for booking on 29th June and have been available for use since 6th July. This has included synthetic pitches at eight leisure centres (see table below) managed by GLL.</p> <p data-bbox="272 1568 1453 1597">The service currently allows for pitch hire only with no changing or toilet facilities available.</p> <p data-bbox="272 1671 1321 1751">Use is restricted to club and community sports programme use and is subject to compliance with TEO approval and team sport NGB Covid-19 secure guidelines.</p> <p data-bbox="272 1823 1453 1904">Pitches are open at peak hours only. Typically 5.00pm – 10.00pm Monday to Friday and 10.00am – 3.00pm Saturday and Sunday. Opening hours remain under review and will be</p> |

amended on a site by site basis subject to demand and further easing of Covid-19 restrictions and associated operating guidance.

3.4.2

FITNESS SUITES AND STUDIO CLASSES

Fitness suites and group exercise classes opened on 14th July at nine leisure centres (see table below) managed by GLL. Fitness suite opening hours are typically as they were before lockdown.

Group exercise class timetables have been amended and in most cases reduced to comply with social distancing protocols and permitted 'Covid secure' activities/exercises).

Access is restricted to registered members only and on a pre booked basis. This is essential to comply with TEO track and trace data capture requirements.

Booking slots are currently restricted to one hour to allow for 50 a minute workout

A rolling entry system is in place controlled by 'queue marshals'. Reception desks have been closed but a welcome host/queue marshal is on duty in each reception area.

All bookings and payments must be made online (mobile App, PC or at the 'in centre' kiosks)

Machines/exercise station availability has been reduced to comply with social distancing guidance. This, along with customer behaviour changes, has significantly reduced gym capacities.

Significant capacity reductions are in place based on 2m social distancing criteria. For example, at the centres we have recently reopened, fitness suite capacity is at approximately 50% of pre lockdown level.

Some gyms were not reopened in phase 1 as, due to room size and air turnover rates, they cannot comply with Covid Secure operational guidelines. This impacted on centres with smaller fitness suites of less than 350m². This size restriction dictates a maximum customer capacity that does not justify the cost of opening the building solely for the fitness suite and classes. Some of the smaller fitness suites will be considered for opening in

phase 2 (early August) at which point centres may open up main halls, courts and swimming pools. At that stage the buildings will be opened and staffed anyway, thereby allowing the fitness suites to be open at little or no additional cost. Even with very low customer capacities. Fitness suites at the following centres fall into this category:

Table 1

| Centre | Justification for not opening fitness suite and group exercise classes in phase 1 |
|-------------------------|--|
| Ballysillan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small fitness suite (adapted original café space) • Inadequate air handling potential • Low customer capacity • Under consideration for opening at phase 2 in early August |
| Girdwood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small narrow fitness suite • Low customer capacity • Under consideration for opening at phase 2 in early August |
| Ozone/ Tennis Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small fitness suites (2) (both narrow and not designed for the purpose) • Inadequate air handling potential • Low customer capacity • Under consideration for opening at phase 2 in early August |
| Whiterock | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small fitness suite (adapted 1st floor space from original purpose) • Inadequate air handling potential • Low customer capacity • Under consideration for opening at phase 2 in early August |
| Belvoir | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small fitness suite • Inadequate air handling potential • Low customer capacity • Restricted general customer circulation areas with narrow corridors • May remain closed until Covid-19 restrictions are removed |
| Loughside | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two very small fitness suites (converted office/storage spaces). • Low ceilings with inadequate air handling potential. • Extremely low customer capacity. • Restricted general customer circulation areas with narrow corridors • May remain closed until Covid-19 restrictions are removed |

Changing and shower facilities are not currently available and only designated toilets are open. This will remain under review and subject to future TEO approvals and industry lead body guidance amendments.

Hand sanitising points and equipment/supplies/instructions for workout station self-cleaning by customers is in place.

Substantially enhanced cleaning regimes are now the norm with regular deep cleans scheduled throughout the day.

Shift patterns have been amended to increase fitness suite staff cover in order to ensure compliance with social distancing and appropriate customer behaviours.

Air handling has been reset to meet 'fresh air' intake requirements and increased 'turn over' rates.

Group exercise class capacities have been allocated 9m² per person with grids marked on all floors. Some classes have been moved from studios to main halls to facilitate larger participant numbers,

3.4.3 **BROADER INDOOR LEISURE FACILITIES (EXCLUDING SWIMMING POOLS)**

An EO announcement in June indicated that a broader range of indoor leisure services would be permitted from 7th August 2020. Within the NI leisure industry this was generally interpreted to include swimming pools along with main halls, courts, etc.

TEO subsequently announced, on 9th July, that indoor leisure centres (excluding pools) would be permitted to open from 17th July.

It is hoped that a further EO announcement will approve the opening of swimming pools. BCC/GLL are planning for the widening of the leisure offer, including swimming pools, from early August, subject to TEO approval. It is anticipated that the initial reopening of pools will be for lane swimming only with casual/family swimming and learn to swim lessons to follow as soon as operational guidance is agreed.

At this stage it will not be possible to open our leisure water facilities at Shankill and Andersonstown. Leisure water has not been included in TEO approval at this stage. The

new £25m centre at Andersonstown was due to open just after the lockdown was announced. Formal commissioning was interrupted by the Covid-19 restrictions and in particular because the supplier/installer of the leisure water features is based in Canada and to date has not been in a position to arrange for the required technical commissioning team to travel to Belfast. This will remain under review pending TEO approval and formal commissioning of the Andersonstown leisure water zone.

Centre pools we are not intending to open are as follows:

Table 2 Justifications for not planning to opening specific pools at phase 2.

| Centre | Justification for not opening the swimming pools at phase 2 |
|-------------|--|
| Ballysillan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only four 25m lanes available allowing for the operation of 2 double lane width programmable spaces in line with current Covid safe guidance. • Although this could work from an operational perspective, swimmer numbers would be low and may not justify the financial cost of lifeguarding and pool water treatment. • Adequate ceiling height and air circulation. • Difficulty to function on the same operating model as other centres. • No access to the poolside from spectator gallery (closed in café area) thereby not allowing for the one way customer flow principle. |
| Brook | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only four 25m lanes available allowing for the operation of 2 double lane width programmable spaces in line with current Covid safe guidance. • Although this could work from an operational perspective, swimmer numbers would be low and may not justify the financial cost of lifeguarding and pool water treatment. • Difficulty to function on the same operating model as other centres. • No access to the poolside from spectator gallery thereby not allowing for the one way customer flow principle. |
| Shankill | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure features not approved for opening at this stage. |

- Only three 25m lanes available meaning that only one double lane width could be utilised.

Broadening services to include the opening of additional spaces and activities requires substantial planning and staff training. The lead in time required for detailed risk assessments and staff training rendered 17th July impractical.

Table 3 below sets out the current reopening plans at 20th July.

| Centre | Fitness & Classes | Synthetic Pitches | Main Hall | Swimming Pool |
|-----------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Andersonstown LC | Opened 14/07/20 | 5-a-side not currently open | Not applicable | Preparing for opening in early August |
| Better Gym Belfast | Opened 14/07/20 | Not applicable | Not applicable | Dry centre |
| Better Gym Connswater | Opened 14/07/20 | Not applicable | Not applicable | Dry centre |
| Brook LC | Opened 14/07/20 | Opened 06/07/20 (5-a-side not currently open) | Preparing for opening in early August | Not planning to open at phase one due to Covid-Safe considerations and financial sustainability |
| Falls LC | Opened 14/07/20 | Not applicable | Preparing for opening in early August | Preparing for opening in early August |
| Grove LC | Opened 14/07/20 | Not applicable | Preparing for opening in early August | Preparing for opening in early August |
| Lisnasharragh LC | Opened 14/07/20 | 5-a-side not currently open | Preparing for opening in early August | Preparing for opening in early August |
| Olympia | Opened 14/07/20 | Opened 06/07/20 | Preparing for opening in early August | Preparing for opening in early August |
| Ozone & Tennis Centre | Not currently open. Under consideration for next phase | Opened 06/07/20 | Preparing for opening in early August | Dry centre |
| Shankill LC | Opened 14/07/20 | Not applicable | Preparing for opening in early August | Unable to meet Covid-Safe protocols |
| Ballysillan LC | Not currently open. Under consideration for next phase | Opened 06/07/20 | Preparing for opening in early August | Not planning to open at phase one due to Covid-Safe |

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| | | | | considerations and financial sustainability |
| Girdwood CH | Not currently open. Under consideration for next phase | Opened 06/07/20 | Preparing for opening in early August | Dry centre |
| Whiterock LC | Not currently open. Under consideration for next phase | Opened 06/07/20 | Preparing for opening in early August | Preparing for opening in early August |
| Belvoir AC | Unable to meet Covid-Safe protocols | Not applicable | Unable to meet Covid-Safe protocols | Dry centre |
| Loughside RC | Unable to meet Covid-Safe protocols | Grass pitches will open in line with BCC seasonal schedule | Unable to meet Covid-Safe protocols | Dry centre |

3.4.4

SWIMMING POOL SERVICE IMPACTS

Subject to TEO approval, when swimming pools reopen, the service offering and customer restrictions will result in a very different pool experience for most users. Social distancing, pool capacity restrictions and limited shower/changing availability will impact on the customer experience for clubs, learn to swim lessons, fitness lane swimmers and casual/family users. Within the anticipated Covid safe operational requirements, casual swimming, general customer behaviours and shower/changing provision present the main challenges. It is anticipated that pool capacities will be at less than 50% of pre lockdown numbers. Key points for swimming pool operations include:

- Lane swimming and club coaching are the most controllable and therefore safest pool activities
- Clubs will be required to comply with published Swim Ireland guidance
- Casual/family use presents the greatest challenges
- Changing and showering will be discouraged and at best will be restricted. Pool users will be encouraged to arrive 'pool ready' and plan to shower at home.
- Advanced booking for registered users only will become the norm for the foreseeable future.

- Booking slots (session duration) will be restricted to facilitate a 'roll in roll out' capacity management system.

In the first phase of reopening pools, only the main pools will be open. Minor pools and pools with restricted access options will remain closed until all operational systems have been fully tested or until further restriction easing is announced.

3.5

OPERATIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL GUIDANCE

Reliance on Sport National Governing Body (NGB) and industry lead body operational guidance will be a key requirement. For both wet and dry facilities, clubs will be required to comply with their respective sport NGB Covid safe guidance. Sports will not be permitted to recommence until their NGB has Sport NI approved Covid safe protocols in place.

3.6

DIRECT DEBIT/INCOME IMPACT

A substantial percentage of the leisure income is derived from Direct Debit pre-paid monthly membership payments. 14,000 Health and Fitness members were contacted on 2nd July informing them that their Direct Debit payments would be reactivated from 14th July. This was done on an 'opt out' basis whereby members could (a) allow their payments to restart without taking any action, (b) freeze their membership at no cost or (c) choose to cancel. At 17th July circa 1,000 members had opted to freeze their memberships with a further 700 choosing to cancel. This 12% loss is lower than expected but is an ongoing process and expected to increase. Set against the loss of existing (pre lockdown) members, over 300 new Health and Fitness membership have been sold since reopening the gyms on 14th July. **Up to date figures for freezes, cancellations and new member sales will be verbally presented at the meeting.**

Since lockdown almost all GLL staff have been on furlough with only 26 of 600 team members working to deliver essential building checks. To facilitate reopening staff are being brought back off furlough on a phased basis. At 17th July circa 120 staff are back in work delivering outdoor pitch and fitness products. This number will rise as additional services are reopened.

3.7

BCC APPROACH AND ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER NI COUNCILS

It should be noted that BCC/GLL have set exemplary standards in Covid Safe planning for leisure operations. BCC officers are actively engaged with industry lead bodies and TEO advisory panels. BCC intervention (including a fact finding tour of Olympia LC) was instrumental in ensuring that local authority fitness suites were included, along with private sector gyms, in the EO approval announcement and that group exercise was included in the permitted services.

The BCC approach set out above is in line with other NI Local Authorities. Most of the eleven NI Councils are working to a similar timeline with three scheduling their phased reopening approximately four weeks later.

3.8

BUSINESS RISK AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The reopening strategy is not without risk. As we continue to reopen additional services and move towards normal operations, we assume liability for all/most of the associated fixed costs. Income has always been a key driver in the business model and in maintaining a sustainable net deficit. In the current climate, income is very much an unknown variable and at best, for the foreseeable future, will be restricted by capacity reductions and the loss of income from services that will remain closed. The main areas to be aware of include:

- Pre-paid monthly membership reactivation percentage and the impact on income.
- Possible second wave of membership freeze/cancellations when service restrictions become clear and customers experience the 'new norm'.
- Reliance on public confidence and the desire to return to indoor fitness and leisure.
- Customer behaviour and resulting PR for BCC (social media).
- Covid-19 infection spikes and any future reintroduction of restrictions or return to lockdown

3.9

SUMMARY

The key message is that we are working hard to restore services with the number one priority being the safety of our customers and staff.

Our ability to return to normal is almost entirely subject to TEO approvals and the associated operational guidance. This is a rapidly moving environment with announcements and clarifications emerging on a daily basis.

The reopening schedule is not without both financial and reputational risk. In a very uncertain environment BCC officers continue to work closely with GLL to identify risks and to agree and implement appropriate mitigations to minimise any impacts.

3.10

Financial & Resource Implications

The financial impact of the lockdown period has been significant.

- During this period there has been £0 taken in income.
- Note that during the lockdown period the overall membership base reduced by 20%, and this has decreased by a further 12% since opening.
- During this four month period the centres were forecast to take £2.8m in income and therefore a financial gap was created.
- All staff have been paid fully during the lockdown period and the majority of staff have been on furlough.
- This has allowed GLL to process furlough claims for staff not working and therefore recoup some of this financial gap. The monthly job retention scheme claim is circa £450k.
- During lockdown maintenance of the centres and a steady state of operation as has been maintained therefore while utility bills have reduced costs still exist in each centre.
- There were a team of 20 staff that have also been paid in full throughout lockdown that were not part of the furlough scheme as they supported daily building checking and maintenance checks.
- The job retention scheme has minimised the impact to date in drawing any further pressure on mgt fee payments, however the scheme does reduce from August to October on an incremental scale.
- In relaunching the centres from the 10th July, 120 staff are now working and no longer can be included within the job retention claims to government and therefore are fully costed.
- The income modelling has been based on a cashless model and membership only approach, with a focus on the gym sim and group ex activities from August.
- At this stage the modelling for August based on the proposal of openings could ensure a break even position which is essential as centre gradually reopen.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal is to balance the reopening of centres and volume of staff return, in line with the covid secure requirements to ensure centres could return to a “new normal” by October. • During this period GLL will minimise all non essential expenditure to protect any financial risk to council. • Once a full 4- 6 weeks of opening has been achieved a more robust forecast can be developed based on the actual return of members and real costs. A further report will be provided to Members detailing the overall financial implications in September. <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> |
| 4.0 | Appendices – Documents Attached |
| | None |