

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr NH

Date: 14 December 2017



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Councillor Peter Bradbury  
Cabinet Member, Culture & Leisure  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
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Dear Councillor Bradbury,

**Economy & Culture and Environmental Scrutiny Committee: 7 December 2017**

Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee have asked me to pass on their thanks to you, Juliette Dickinson (GLL), Dawn Pinder (GLL), Jon Maidment and Sarah Stork for attending Committee for our scrutiny to assess delivery of leisure centre services in the first year of partnership with GLL.

To inform this scrutiny, I sought feedback from leisure centre service users, via email and social media; I am pleased that you see this as a useful exercise providing a benchmark from which to assess progress in future years. It certainly provided detailed insight into the issues affecting service users, the main themes of which we explored at the meeting and are covered below.

I note your comment at the meeting that you will take the issues raised by the feedback and will challenge GLL on how these are being dealt with. There were also some specific queries raised by respondents; Members believe it would be only courteous for these to receive a response from GLL. I have therefore asked Scrutiny Services to share the responses received with you, anonymously, to enable responses to be prepared.

One of the issues most mentioned by service users was the closure of the leisure centre cafés and the impact this has on families and communities. Members note

that these were losing at least £100,000 per annum and your view that, had the service remained with the Council, these would still have had to close. However, in the way forward discussion, Members reflected on whether a social enterprise would be able to operate some or all of these cafés. Members therefore recommend that this option be considered and explored by the Council and GLL. In the meantime, Members note GLL's commitment to look at healthier and better options for vending machines as soon as possible.

Another issue that generated a lot of feedback are the changes being made to membership prices and terms and conditions, notably the Junior Active Card. Members note GLL's comments that it is committed to inclusivity and accessibility but that it had concerns that the previous Junior Active Card was not means-tested and, as the Council withdrew the scheme, was giving an unfair advantage to those families who had purchased them before the Council ceased the scheme. Members share the aim of inclusive and accessible leisure provision, not least because of the known benefits to long-term health and life expectancy. Members therefore welcome GLL's commitment to introduce concessionary charging based on household income. Members also strongly encourage GLL to introduce reduced 'bolt-on' pricing, as discussed at the meeting, for those wishing to undertake more than one activity. This can only be of benefit in tackling obesity and increasing activity levels, particularly for lower income households unable to afford private leisure centre membership.

Members note GLL's comments regarding the changes to teenager access to the gyms and that the rationale for this centres on safety concerns, requiring the gym to be staffed when under 16 year olds are present. Members note Juliette's comments that GLL has expanded the age range able to use the gym, from 14 year olds to 11 year olds, and will expand the length and number of scheduled sessions if customers express sufficient volume of demand.

A further issue mentioned in the feedback was that the Armed Forces covenant commitment to enable service personnel to swim for free at any leisure centre pool had been reduced to only enabling this at Maindy Leisure Centre. Members were pleased to hear that this is not the case and that service personnel can swim for free at all the GLL leisure centres in Cardiff and that there is a Help for Heroes booking

system. However, this does highlight another theme within the feedback I received, which is problems with communications.

In terms of customer communication, there were frequent references to poor use of the website and social media by GLL, for example to communicate about cancelled classes and to respond to customer complaints. Members note Juliette's response that she wants to improve communications and the way that customer complaints are handled, by moving to a local system of customer feedback where leisure centre managers receive customer feedback for their centres directly, rather than having to go via a central GLL website. Members also note your response offering support from the Council's communication team to use social media channels, such as twitter, more effectively.

In terms of customer satisfaction, Members note that GLL's survey found a 78% customer satisfaction rating. Members wish to thank GLL for their offer to share this survey, in terms of methodology used, questions asked and results for these. Members would also like to receive information about the representativeness of respondents compared to the overall service user profile.

Members were very interested to hear of GLL's success in tackling sickness absence amongst staff, reducing long-term sickness levels and sickness overall by 50%. Given the issues with sickness absence experienced in some other areas of the Council, Members recommend that you and HR officers meet with relevant officers from GLL to see if there are any lessons that can be shared and effectively applied in the Council. I understand that the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee will soon be scrutinising sickness absence; I will share GLL's success with their Chair, Councillor Walker.

Members were also interested to hear about GLL's plan for Carbon Reduction and Energy Efficiency. Members note that LED lighting is the primary action being taken by GLL but that Juliette committed to ask the GLL asset team about the installation of solar panels at leisure centres.

Overall, Members note that GLL is on target to achieve zero subsidy within the contracted period set for this.

I raised at the meeting whether GLL are using Equality Impact Assessments as part of their decision making process. Having discussed this in our way forward, Members recommend that GLL incorporate Equality Impact Assessments into their decision making process for strategic, policy and key operational changes.

Also during our way forward discussions, Members talked about the move towards a 24-hour economy, meaning many workers are not able to access leisure centres as they finish work late. Members are interested to know whether GLL have any plans to move towards 24-hour opening or late open for at least one of their centres.

Finally, Members were pleased to hear you offer to come back on a regular basis, either with or without GLL, to discuss service delivery in this important area. As part of this, Members would like to receive relevant contract management information, including the following:

- Renewal rates as well as membership rates
- Number of individuals using centres – as well as the overall number of visits
- Information re membership and usage broken down by service user profiles including age, gender and ethnicity.

Once again, thank you to all for attending and for contributing in a positive and constructive manner. This letter requires a response please as it contains recommendations and requests for information.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS**  
**CHAIR, ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee  
Juliette Dickinson & Dawn Pinder - GLL  
Andrew Gregory      Neil Hanratty  
Jon Maidment      Sarah Stork  
Cabinet Support Office  
Respondents to Press Release