

## COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 14 July 2021

**Present: Councillor David Scott (Chairman)  
Councillors Fairweather (Vice-Chairman), March, Ms Palmer, Ellis, Rutland, Hill, Pope,  
Allen, Patterson and Britcher**

**Officers in Attendance:** Gary Stevenson (Head of Housing, Health and Environment), Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities) and Mark O'Callaghan (Scrutiny and Engagement Officer)

**Other Members in Attendance:** None

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

COM10/21 There were no absent members.

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

COM11/21 There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other significant interest made at the meeting.

### **NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS REGISTERED TO SPEAK**

COM12/21 There were no Visiting Members or members of the public registered to speak.

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 9 JUNE 2021**

COM13/21 No amendments were proposed.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting dated 9 June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### **FORWARD PLAN AS AT 29 JUNE 2021**

COM14/21 The Forward Plan was taken as read.

**RESOLVED** – That the Forward Plan as at 29 June 2021 be noted.

### **SPORTS CENTRE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT**

COM15/21 Cllr March and Gary Stevenson, Head of Housing, Health and Environment introduced the report set out in the agenda. Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities answered questions.

Discussion on the report included consideration of the following points:

- The sports centres provided an important service to the community both through promoting health for well people and recovery for people with medical needs.
- The conditions to be attached to any extension of the contract would improve the service.
- Complaints about Fusion predated the pandemic.
- Fusion had taken action to improve including bringing in a new management structure.

- Recommendation 2 within the report, if approved, would enable officers to apply further quality standards and performance indicators to the contract.
- A long extension would allow promised improvements to be delayed.
- Short term contracts or early break clauses in the contract would discourage long term investment.
- Operating the centres was a financial risk, particularly at the moment, any operator would need a long term commitment to underwrite the risk.
- The options set out in the report reflected the negotiations to date but other time-frames could be discussed.
- The longer-term options would provide the Council with the time to assess the long term needs of the service and put in place the right solution at the end of the extension period.
- Satisfaction with the current service was mixed. Problems were recognised and being addresses. Customer feedback was approximately 50/50.
- Some complaints were related to a lack of facilities at the centres which was not the responsibility of Fusion.
- The centres were tired and in need of capital investment, if the service was internalised that responsibility would fall on the Council.
- The centres operated in a competitive market and customers were returning as Covid restrictions eased indicating some satisfaction with the service.
- Examples of the evolving leisure market included integration of related health and welling being services. Such restructuring would take time to implement.
- Fusion would consult on the immediate needs of their customers but consultation on the strategic future of the service would be the responsibility of the Council.
- Fusion had failed and should not be trusted with an extension.
- The contract only allowed one extension so the Council needed to be sure it would be ready by the expiration of the contract.
- Bringing the service in-house, either directly or through a trust, would be actively investigated during the extension period and may be an option at the end.
- The market was sufficiently active that tenders would be expected if the contract was put to market now. However, the terms of those tenders was not expected to be as favourable.
- Short term extension would not provide any investment over the extension period.
- A short extension would protect the service and provide sufficient time to consider alternatives.
- Sports clubs and local providers could be brought in to take over parts of the service.
- A longer term extension would allow the terms of the contract to be revisited to improve standards.
- Complaints about the centres was on a downward trend.
- Fusion was working with sports clubs to address long term aspirations and use of the facilities to increase utilisation.
- Breaking the service into small components would loose economies of scale and fragment the service for customers.

The committee decided the matter taking the exempt information as read.

The Chairman reminded members of the options available to the committee and took a vote on the first option to support the recommendations.

Councillor Ellis requested a recorded vote.

Members who voted for the motion: Councillors Allen, Fairweather, March, Ms Palmer and Scott. (5)

Members who voted against the motion: None.

Members who abstained from voting: Councillors Britcher-Allan, Ellis, Hill, Patterson, Pope and Rutland. (6)

**RESOLVED** – That the recommendations set out in the report be supported.

### **URGENT BUSINESS**

COM16/21 There was no urgent business.

### **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

COM17/21 The next meeting was scheduled for 8 September 2021.

### **EXEMPT APPENDIX TO SPORTS CENTRE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT**

COM18/21 The item was considered in public taking the exempt information as read.

### **NOTES:**

The meeting concluded at 7.35 pm.