

Equality Impact Assessment – Proposed closure of the Council’s 13 sports pavilions

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Strategic Director responsible for EIA: Louise Strongitharm	Date last updated: 11 December 2023

1. Introduction

This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) seeks to identify impacts and effect of this proposal with the aim of assessing whether it would have a disparate impact on persons with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. As part of this assessment, consideration will be given to ways in which any such impact can be avoided or mitigated, any negative impacts arising from this proposal will be assessed and where this could be reduced in their impact this will be noted in the attached action plan. The Council also recognises that it may not completely remove all negative impacts.

The purpose is to provide impartial information to assist in the decision-making process and inform rather than determine policy. The objective is not to make the decision but to assist decision makers through the provision of relevant information. This Equality Impact Assessment seeks to identify the impacts and effects on specific groups from this proposal, and to detail any mitigating actions that will be put into place.

The Council faces a critical financial shortfall owing to its historic investment strategy which has resulted in unaffordable borrowing, inadequate steps to repay that borrowing and high values of irrecoverable loans.

To address these severe financial challenges the Council must make significant saving alongside taking steps to ‘live within its means’ in the future.

Widespread reductions and changes to public-facing services, alongside reducing management and internal costs, have been set out in the Council’s [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#).

2. Impact on services

Woking Borough Council owns a multitude of sports pavilions across the Borough. Thirteen of these are included in the leisure partnership agreement and are managed by Freedom Leisure. However, the responsibility of these buildings still remains that of the Council. Freedom Leisure and Woking Borough Council have been spending on average £200,000 per year in the provision of the sports pavilions. This covers the buildings as there are further costs associated with providing the playing pitches. The provision of these facilities is not a statutory requirement and therefore do not need to be provided by the Council. The proposal is to remove funding for these. Assets will be transferred to community groups where possible. A Community Asset Transfer Policy will go to Council in February for approval and a £140,000 from the Government’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has been allocated to support the transition of community centre ownership to community groups and the costs involved with maintenance and utilities.

The Borough currently offers 55 pitches across the 13 public sites. The pitches are currently maintained by Serco, under contract in place until 2025.

There are 190 football, cricket and rugby teams in total, with circa 6,000 people participating in team sport on our pitches each week. The Borough comes above the national average in the Active Participation Statistics with 40% of the population being active for more than 30 minutes once per week. This is supported by the strong leisure offering locally.

The closure of the sports pavilions will impact the sports that are played. The Football Foundation and the Football Association have confirmed that league football cannot be played without the provision of toilets and senior team league football also require changing rooms and showers. Few of the 190 teams would remain if all facilities were to close.

All of the sports played on local pitches have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. NHS inform have published this [report highlighting the benefits of being able to play football regularly](#).

The groups that have raised responded to the consultation (ranging from football to nursery provision and scout groups) about being impacted are as follows:

Woking Cougars, Woking Vets, Byfleet Village FC, Woking Rugby Club, Woking Park Tennis, Surrey FA, Active Surrey, Knaphill Pre-school, Knaphill Athletic FC, Charlotteville Rascals Cycling Club, Woking United.

Some of these groups have Service Level Agreements in place to store equipment in the pavilions.

3. Engagement and consultation

The Council has carried out public engagement on all proposed savings to ensure a balanced budget for the 2024/25 financial year.

The **first phase of the engagement** took place in summer 2023. [View the consultation](#).

The **second phase of the public engagement** took place between **2 October and 12 November**. [Read the consultation report](#).

Residents and businesses had another opportunity to scrutinise the proposed savings and have their say.

This included a range of options for finding further budget savings, such as increasing Council Tax and making changes to the way services are delivered, which may mean reducing or withdrawing services, or indeed making revised charges or working with partner organisations. The outcome of this consultation will be reported to Council in January 2024, with a full Council decision on 8 February 2024.

Closure of these facilities is being consulted on with the potential opportunity to transfer to the community following an Asset Based Community Transfer model for the facilities where an interested party would be willing to undertake the management of the building.

1,214 responses from the public plus 19 stakeholder groups have responded to the consultation. The Stakeholders aired a range of concerns, but in summary many groups will not be able to continue without these provisions. The Football Association have confirmed that all league football requires toilets as a minimum and adult football also require changing rooms and showers. Of the 190 teams, few will continue to operate with no pavilion or toilet facilities.

56% of the respondents stated that loss of the pavilions would have a major impact on them.

Whilst most of the respondents are sports clubs, and it is known from usage data that sports clubs are the primary user there are also other users of the pavilions. Youth and outreach sessions are run at a number of pavilions in the school holidays, group exercise also takes place at a number of the venues, run by individuals often as their own businesses and Knaphill Pre-school utilise one pavilion, providing much needed, affordable, Ofsted registered day care. The day care serves a much-needed community in that area and is very well utilised. SCC have made representation to highlight that losing this would be very detrimental to the local community.

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action) This section needs to be completed as evidence of what the positive impact is or what actions are being taken to mitigate any negative impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations			
Gender	Men				x		Of the 190 teams, 85% of them are male. 161 male teams operate across the Borough. This equates to around 5,100 males being active each week. Mitigations: Asset Based Community Transfer is being considered for each of the pavilions and a call for expressions of interest has gone out to the community. Specialist consultants in this field have been engaged to assist in the building of a framework process for both the community to follow but also for council officers and members to utilise. There are a limited number of privately provided venues across the borough, but all of these are also at capacity.
	Women				x		900 females participate in sport on our pitches on average each week and this has been steadily growing in the past 5 years (apart from the pandemic years) Mitigations as above.
Gender reassignment						x	Statistics are not collected on the number of people who have reassigned their gender. However, there it is assumed there will be no specific impact on this group in addition to the above.
Race	White					x	No stats are kept on the ethnicity of users. However, it is assumed there will be no specific impact in addition to that stated above. Mitigations as above.

	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups					x	As above. Work has been done with Woking Tigers to understand the wider impact on this group and a specific Community Asset transfer is being considered for them at Alpha Road Pavilion which would to a degree safeguard their provision. This will be dependant on Woking Tigers being able to fund the provision. WBC Funding Officer will support in identifying suitable funding sources.
	Asian/Asian British					x	As above. WBC and Woking Tigers have worked successfully to open football specifically to girls and women in the Canalside Ward. This is a group tradionaly difficult to engage with sport. The removal of sports pavilions will stop their participation. As with the above if we can arrange a CAT for Woking Tigers then this will mitigate the impact. Investigation in to using local school sites has taken place. Most schools already hire out space, so availability is very limited.
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British					x	No stats are kept on the ethnicity of users. However, it is assumed there will be no specific impact in addition to that stated above.
	Gypsies / travellers					x	No stats are kept on the ethnicity of users. However, it is assumed there will be no specific impact in addition to that stated above.
	Other ethnic group					x	No stats are kept on the ethnicity of users. However, it is assumed there will be no specific impact in addition to that stated above.
Disability	Physical					x	Specific data is not gathered on disability for those participating in activities. However, it is assumed there will be no specific impact in addition to that stated above. Mitigations: Activities provided by Sport in Mind, eg. walking football take place at sites.
	Sensory					x	As above.
	Learning difficulties					x	As above.
	Mental health					x	As above.

Sexual orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual					x	Statistics on participation are not captured for this group however it is assumed there will be no specific impact to that stated above.
Age	Older people (50+)					x	There is less participation by older people, however a Veterans group runs with approx. 60 participants throughout the football season. Data on cricket and rugby for this age group is not available. Mitigations as above.
	Younger people (16 - 25)					x	This and the group below are the primary age group that will be affected.
	Children (0-15)					x	130 of the teams are classed as junior, ie. 0-18years. A pre-school operates at one of the pavilions (Brookwood Country Park in Knaphill). If this were to close it would impact a significant number of children and associated families. (The nursery does also add a significant revenue to the pavilion, it hirers and as such it would not cost money independently to the football club. The nursery income subsidises the cost of football at that site). Mitigations as above.
Religion or belief	Faith Groups					x	No stats are kept on this group, however, it is assumed there will be no specific impact in addition to that stated above.
Pregnancy and maternity						x	The pregnant woman will not directly be affected although if they have other children who can no longer participate it might add to the burden at home.
Marriage and civil partnership						x	Statistics on participation are not captured for this group but it is assumed there will be no specific impact to that stated above.
Socio-economic background						x	There is an adverse impact on those on lower income. People with greater wealth may have the option to travel out of Borough to continue their participation.

Carers			x		Carers, those who care for children, would be utilising the sports coaching as a form of respite from their caring duties.
Other identified groups					None identified.

Action plan

Actions identified from EIA	Target completion date	Responsible Officer	Comments
<p>Hold meetings with groups that have shown an interest in taking on a community asset. This will include details of the process involved and timelines discussed. Where required sign posting to others who may be able to help with setting up charities or Community Interest Companies such as Active Surrey will be discussed.</p> <p>Initial preparation of business case information can start to be prepared but this will be limited until the information from WBC can be published around current running costs and obligations.</p> <p>Additional resources will be required to offer the support needed for each group once the CAT process is officially launched.</p>	<p>Process ready for sign off by Council in February 2024.</p> <p>Packs of information on each site to be launched as soon as possible (Ideally before sign off but awaiting confirmation that this is allowed).</p>	Head of Leisure and Communities	Meetings have taken place with those Clubs that have showed an interest in running a pavilion.
Work with Local Partnerships to identify all the appropriate documentation for the Community Asset Transfer.	January 2024	Head of Leisure and Communities	Documents in place
All documents to be reviewed by appropriate parties before implementation.	Before February 2024	Various	Documents to be reviewed by Property, Finance and Legal and CLT – Done. Next step for Council to sign off.
Review impact and mitigations. Identify any further action that can be	3–6-month review	Head of Leisure and Communities /Corporate	

taken			
Review EIA's of those submitting EOI keeping equalities at forefront. Groups will require support with this as they are likely to have minimal knowledge.	Ongoing	Head of Leisure and Communities	

Sign off

LEGAL SERVICES: Completed	DATE: 8 January 2024
STATEGIC DIRECTOR: Completed	DATE: 22 January 2024
REVIEW PANEL MEMBER: Completed	DATE: 4 January 2024