

Report to Leader of the Council

Subject: Further Council Service Changes Due to COVID-19

Date: 23 March 2020

Author: Acting Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

For the Leader of the Council to authorise, until further notice:

The temporary closure of Council operated children's play parks and the Gedling Country Park Café 1881.

The temporary closure of all Council owned public toilets.

Key Decision

This is a key decision as it is likely to have significant impact on residents living in two or more wards.

Recommendations

That the Leader of the Council:

- 1) Authorises the closure, to the public, until further notice, of Council operated children's play areas and play facilities in Council parks and open spaces, from close of business on 23 March 2020;
- 2) Authorises the closure, to the public, until further notice, of Council operated public conveniences from close of business on 23 March 2020;
- 3) Authorises the closure, until further notice, of Gedling Country Park Café, Café 1881 from close of business on 23 March 2020; and
- 4) Delegates responsibility to the relevant Director to take any operational decisions and actions arising from this decision.

1 Background

- 1.1 Following on from the recent measures recommended by government in relation to isolation and reduced social contact during the Covid -19 pandemic, and the closure of the Council's Leisure and Community centres, it is now necessary to further review how Council operations and buildings are run.
- 1.2 Following the announcement from government last week in respect of the closure of schools, pubs and restaurants and the improvement in the weather, there has been an uptake in the use of the Council's parks and children's play areas over the weekend. As large groups congregate in play areas, there is an increased risk of infection from Covid-19 and this is completely contrary to government and public health advice.
- 1.2 The Council needs to protect residents and take whatever steps are necessary to support guidance on social distancing to reduce the risk of Covid-19 spreading further. As such, it is necessary to close children's play areas and facilities, such as ball courts, cafes and public conveniences, in Council run parks, until such time as social distancing is relaxed.
- 1.3 At present, the parks themselves will remain open to facilitate exercise for residents but this will remain under review.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that from close of business on Monday 23rd March 2020, children's play areas and play facilities in Council's parks and open spaces and public conveniences are closed to the public until further notice. This is to reduce social contact and the resulting risk of infection from Covid-19 and is consistent with government and public health guidance on social distancing.
- 2.2 It is proposed that from close of business on Monday 23rd March 2020, Café 1881 at Gedling Country Park closes to the public until further notice. It has also been agreed that Arnot Hill Park Kiosk will close until further notice. This premises is currently leased on a 25 year lease but it has been agreed with the tenant that the premises will close until further notice.
- 2.3 It is likely that there may be further operational decisions and actions to be taken as a result of these closures, a delegation to Director level to deal with these matters is proposed, to ensure the Executive are not overburdened with operational decisions.
- 2.4 Whilst it is proposed that these measures are approved until further notice, the Council will of course keep this situation and government and Public Health England advice under review and will ensure that normal services

resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 An alternative option is for operations to continue as at present. Government guidance is clear that social distancing measures are necessary to protect the public. The Council has a responsibility to its residents to ensure that they remain healthy and safe. These measures, although severe are considered absolutely necessary at the current time to reduce social contact in our parks and open spaces. They will be kept under review.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Gedling Country Park Café is operated on an open book basis in a joint partnership with Nottingham City Council, with both parties taking an equal share of profits. Ceasing trading will result in a loss of net profits of c£1,700 per month.

There are no significant financial implications associated with the other closures outlined in this report.

5 Equality Impact

- 5.1 There are positive impacts on employees in respect to disability, age, and gender. Employees in these groups will be protected from unnecessary exposure to the viral infection through the policy decision proposed.
- 5.2 There will be negative impacts on a range of service users who fall within the protected characteristics of disability and potentially age due to the reduced opportunity to participate in activities. Other than the equality impacts identified the equality impacts are neutral. No further actions are recommended as a result of this equality impact review.

6 Appendices

- 6.1 None

6 Background Papers

- 6.1 No specific background papers have been identified but government guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response> has been relied on.

7 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 To take proportionate action in relation to the current COVID-19 pandemic aimed at protecting the residents of the Borough and Council staff and to

ensure that measures in respect of social distancing are supported in our parks and open spaces.