

## **Portfolio Holder for Housing Health and Well-being**

**Subject:** Armed Forces Leisure Membership  
**Date:** 28.07.2021  
**Author:** Kate Morris, Leisure Business Manager  
**Wards Affected** All

### **Purpose**

To agree the eligibility criteria for residents accessing the Armed Forces Leisure Membership.

### **Key Decision**

This is not a Key Decision.

### **Recommendation(s)**

#### **THAT the Portfolio Holder approves:**

- 1) the eligibility criteria of the armed forces leisure membership as follows:
  - Members must be a Gedling Borough resident
  - Members must be a veteran or currently serving in the 3 armed forces (Navy, Army and Royal Air Force)
- 2) armed forces leisure members can access free, unlimited use of the fitness suites at Calverton, Redhill and Carlton Forum Leisure Centres.

## **1 Background**

1.1 The Gedling Plan 2020-23 includes the following corporate action:

- Explore the options and implement a 'Gedling Forces Leisure Card' for all serving and retired armed forces personnel

In 2018, it was estimated by Nottinghamshire County Council that approximately

8% of Gedling's population were current or retired armed forces personnel, with 45% being over the age of 75yrs. This equated to approximately 9,000 armed forces personnel in total, not including people in the reserve force.

1.2 There are other leisure operators across the country providing a variety of offers to armed forces personnel. Examples include:

- Amber Valley providing free gym, swim, classes and rackets sports to current and retired armed forces personnel along with spouses/families and reservists.
- North East Derbyshire offering discounted gym and swim activities for veterans and serving personnel, but not extending this offer to family members or reservists.
- North Warwickshire Council offering a discounted health and fitness membership (45% discount) to serving or retired armed forces personnel only.

## **2 Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed that the Portfolio Holder approves:

- 1) the eligibility criteria of the armed forces leisure membership as follows:
  - Members must be a Gedling Borough resident
  - Members must be a veteran or currently serving in the 3 armed forces (Navy, Army and Royal Air Force)
- 2) armed forces leisure members can access free, unlimited use of the fitness suites at Calverton, Redhill and Carlton Forum Leisure Centres.

Applicants will prove their eligibility with documentation such as discharge papers, dog tags, identity card, etc.

## **3 Alternative Options**

3.1 An alternative option is to not offer an armed forces membership, however this is not deemed in line with the organisation's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Council could also consider extending this proposal to spouses, family members and reservists too, but due to the challenging financial position of the

Council and its leisure centres, and the potential number of applicants, this would make the viability of the membership scheme unsustainable.

#### **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The armed forces membership was launched in November 2020. Despite the leisure centres being closed from 30 December 2020 to 12 April 2021 due to Covid-19, there are 170 residents that have applied for this membership.

During the period 12 April to 30 June 2021, there have been 753 visits to the fitness suites by customers with the armed forces membership.

These visits have been subsidised by the Council at a cost of £5,735, when compared to the pay as you go rate for the fitness suite, and this would equate to £22,000 for a full year if the attendance figures remain the same over the next 9 months. This subsidy does not take into account any lost income from customers moving over from the monthly direct debit DNA health and fitness membership onto the free armed forces membership.

With planned marketing activity and the impact of Covid-19 reducing over time, there may be significant take up of this offer, meaning the subsidy of providing this membership may increase further.

#### **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications.

#### **6 Equalities Implications**

- 6.1 Although Armed Forces Personnel are not a specific protected characteristic defined by the Equalities Act 2010, research identifies experiences during service and the transition to civilian life mean that their mental ill health may be triggered by different factors ([www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)). In addition commercial disadvantage is another potential adverse experience due to the experience of serving members, veterans and their families.

This proposal to offer free unlimited use of fitness suites may have a positive impact on any veterans or current serving personnel in terms of their age, disability or financial exclusion.

#### **7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications**

7.1 Not applicable.

## **8 Appendices**

8.1 Not applicable.

## **9 Background Papers**

9.1 Not applicable.

## **10 Reasons for Recommendations**

10.1 Given the significant armed forces population in the Borough and the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant it is deemed appropriate to offer free, unlimited use of the fitness suites at Calverton, Redhill and Carlton Forum Leisure Centres for serving members and veterans.

10.2 With 8% of the Borough's population estimated to be current or retired armed forces personnel, the potential number of applicants for an armed forces scheme that also included personnel family members or reservists is not considered financially feasible.

### **Statutory Officer approval**

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

**On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer**

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

**On behalf of the Monitoring Officer**