

Report on	Review of Facility Opening Hours within Leisure Services
Date of Meeting	Wednesday 4 th December 2019
Reporting Officer	Oliver McShane, Head of Leisure
Contact Officer	Chris Busby, Leisure Transformation Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek Member approval to change opening hours within Council operated leisure facilities, with an initial evaluation of current practices presented alongside an evaluation of a wide variety of customer-usage and benchmarking information to ascertain to what extent current access reflects customer demand.
2.0	Background
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council formed in April 2015 bringing together the three legacy Councils of Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt. Greenvale Leisure Centre came under Council Management in September 2017. This has resulted in a range of leisure/sporting facilities across the 3 areas having a variety of opening hours.
2.2	Ensuring facilities are available at times when they are in most demand is of fundamental importance to the ongoing access and success of all Leisure Centres.
2.3	Opening hours at many facilities have remained unchanged for a significant period, and may have failed to evolve to meet changing customer trends and expectations.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Current Opening Hours
3.1.1	Opening hours are currently inconsistent across the leisure estate and have generally failed to evolve to reflect changing customer needs and expectations. A summary of current facility opening hours is provided below:

	Site	Mon- Fri Opening Hours	Sat Opening Hours	Sun Opening Hours
	Greenvale Leisure Centre	6.30am-10pm	8am-4.30pm	12.noon-4.30pm
	Cookstown Leisure Centre	6.30am-10pm	9am-6pm	2-6pm
	Dungannon Leisure Centre	7am-10pm (Fri: 7am-9pm)	9am-5pm	1.45-6pm
	Maghera Leisure Centre	M, Tu, Th: 7.30am-10.00pm W, F: 6.30am-10.00pm	9am-5pm	11.30-6pm
3.1.2	In comparison with local competition there has been a clear movement to early morning midweek opening, with 77% of benchmarked sites offering access between 6-6.30am. Additionally, closing times within the private sector tend to be earlier than current arrangements, with the majority of facilities (83%) closing no later than 9pm.			
3.1.3	An analysis of facility usage found that Leisure Centres typically have high usage during early mornings, with lane swimming, gym use, and in particular, early morning fitness classes well attended.			
3.1.4	By contrast it was found that facility usage at the end of the evening (8-10pm) was low, with this period accounting for just 6.6% of daily usage, falling 66.2% from the 6-8.00pm period. Further analysis found that usage tailed off significantly in the late evening, with an average of just 15.3 users in facilities at 9pm, dropping further to 6.9 users by 9.30pm.			
3.2	Leisure Centres: Weekend Hours			
3.2.1	Opening hours on Saturday's are much more standardised within facilities, with Centre's opening between 8-9am and closing between 4.30-6pm. This is relatively consistent with industry trends			
3.2.2	An analysis of Centre usage found that that usage was generally higher in early mornings and again tailed off towards current closing times. The 3.30-6.00pm period typically accounts for 51 users per site, just 8.9% of daily usage.			
3.2.3	Current opening hours on Sunday's are much more varied, and are significantly different to local competition, with 80% of competing facilities opening before 10am on Sunday mornings and closing slightly earlier in the afternoon.			
3.2.4	This was consistent with customer usage patterns which showed usage tailing off throughout the afternoon, with usage dropping to an average of just 17 users per site during the 3.30-6.00pm period.			

3.3

Sports Arenas

3.3.1

Current Opening hour for Sports Arenas are detailed below:

Site	Mon- Fri Opening Hours	Sat Opening Hours	Sun Opening Hours
Meadowbank Sports Arena	9am-10pm	9am-5.30pm	11.30am-6pm
Mid Ulster Sports Arena	9am-10pm	9am-5pm	Subject to Booking

3.3.2

Whilst there are few external comparators for Sports Arenas, usage patterns midweek and on Saturdays observed within sites found that current opening hours efficiently meet customer demand, and there is no rationale for change.

3.3.3

The two sports arenas differ in their approach to Sunday opening, with MUSA opening only when bookings are made and MSA having set hours of 11.30-6.00pm (and opening earlier when bookings dictate).

3.3.4

An analysis of bookings over the previous 12 months found core hours of 10.00-4.00pm in both facilities, during which 86% of bookings took place.

3.3.5

There were, however, very few bookings in either facility at certain periods, particularly July and December. Thus an element of seasonality to Sunday opening, where facilities close for short periods (with staff hours reallocated to work on other days), is likely to be most efficient.

3.4

Impact on Bookings and Groups

3.4.1

Across all sites, fifteen external bookings would be impacted by proposed changes to opening hours

3.4.2

Some of these classes and clubs, for example swim club bookings already operate outside normal facility operating hours.

3.4.3

Prior to implementation, it is proposed that consultation will be carried out with all impacted bookings to facilitate a change in class time or venue.

3.4.4

Where this is not possible, and there is a strong user/ community need for the activity, arrangements will be made to allow the booking or club to continue operating as normal, with minimal facility staffing levels maintained.

3.5

Customer Feedback

3.5.1

Customer surveys were performed at all Leisure sites during a range of times and days to canvas user feedback to proposed opening hours.

3.5.2

User feedback indicated strong levels of support for proposed changes, with approximately 70% of users indicating they ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with

	proposals regarding earlier midweek opening and alterations to weekend opening hours, particularly increased access to facilities on Sunday mornings.												
3.6	Proposed Opening Hours												
3.6.1	<p>It is proposed that the facilities have revised opening hours as detailed above and as detailed in the table below.</p> <table><tr><th>Site</th><th>Mon- Fri Opening Hours</th><th>Sat Opening Hours</th><th>Sun Opening Hours</th></tr><tr><td>GLC, CLC, DLC, MLC</td><td>6.30am- 9pm</td><td>8am- 4.30pm</td><td>9am-4pm</td></tr><tr><td>MSA, MUSA</td><td>9am-10pm</td><td>9am-5pm</td><td>10-4pm *Seasonal Variations</td></tr></table>	Site	Mon- Fri Opening Hours	Sat Opening Hours	Sun Opening Hours	GLC, CLC, DLC, MLC	6.30am- 9pm	8am- 4.30pm	9am-4pm	MSA, MUSA	9am-10pm	9am-5pm	10-4pm *Seasonal Variations
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4.0	Other Considerations												
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications Financial: The changes in opening hours can be accommodated within existing revenue budgets. Human: Changes to opening hours will require alterations to employee working patterns. This has been considered within the review of leisure services, and included in negotiations with Trade Union officials. Risk Management: In line with council policy and procedures												
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments Equality & Good Relations Implications: A screening process was completed for proposed opening hours, and direct consultation was completed with local disability groups. No significant impact was found for Section 75 groups. Rural Needs Implications: In line with council policy and procedures												

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council adopt the opening times at Leisure Facilities as detailed above.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	None.