

Subject: Armed Forces Passport to
Leisure Review

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 17th March 2010

Report of: Head of Customer Services and ICT

Portfolio

Holder: Customer Services

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to consider amending the current provision of Armed Forces Passport to leisure, making it more inclusive and accessible to all members of our armed forces.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.
- Promoting the Borough (Economy)
 - Encouraging healthy and respectful communities (Health, Housing)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- There could be some opposition as some family members currently included within the scheme will no longer be able to utilise the leisure facilities. However, the proposition to extend the scheme for **all** armed service personnel regardless of residency and the additional option to use the scheme with an accompanying guest will mitigate against potential adverse publicity for the Authority in respect of this very successful scheme.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 With effect from the 1st April 2008, Members approved the introduction of free access to the leisure facilities in Rossendale for members of the armed services and their immediate family resident in the Borough. Terms and conditions were applied and robust administration procedures were put into place to ensure that the scheme would not be open to misuse. Applicants are required to provide evidence of military ID and confirmation that their main residence is in Rossendale. Immediate family has been defined as spouse/partner and dependant children of the applicant living and residing in Rossendale. There are currently 56 passes in issue for armed service personnel, 22 passes in issue for partners and 16 passes in issue for dependants.
- 4.2 The current Armed Forces Passport to Leisure scheme applies at the following Leisure facilities an sporting activity:
- Haslingden Pool (swimming)
 - Marl Pitts Pool (swimming)
 - Whitworth Leisure Facility (swimming and fitness suite)
 - Haslingden Sports Centre (fitness suite, squash, badminton, aerobics)
 - Rossendale Ski Slope (skiing)
 - Bacup Leisure Hall (squash)
- 4.3 The scheme has been very successful but feedback from users has shown that that the scheme could be further improved.
- 4.4 The Service Assurance Team currently provide administration for the scheme and it is responsible for issuing the leisure card pass, which should be presented at each leisure facility when members of the scheme are accessing the eligible services from Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT) and the Community Leisure Association of Whitworth (CLAW). It should be noted that the RLT and CLAW do not re-charge the Council for any of the associated costs.
- 4.5 **Option 1**
- Do nothing. Keep the scheme as it currently is.
- 4.6 **Option 2**
- Simplify the scheme: Remove the requirement for personnel to complete an application form and wait for a pass to be issued. Provide access to all armed forces personnel, regardless of residency with the additional option to use the leisure facilities with an accompanying guest. The only qualifying condition would be evidence of military ID, which would have to be presented at each facility when accessing the service.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 This proposal will contribute some non-cashable savings in staff administration time but only a minimal level of cashable savings from the removal of the requirement to issue identification cards.
- 5.2 At present there is not anticipated to be any significant impact upon the usage levels at facilities arising from this proposal, therefore there should be no financial impact on the current leisure services support to either CLAW or RLT.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 Included within report.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Rossendale are one of only a very few Local Authorities who have introduced the Armed forces Leisure pass.

The revision to the Armed Forces Leisure pass will eliminate the administration of the existing system and will result in some cost savings for Rossendale. It will remove the need to purchase unique cards for the scheme and will make use of the existing military identification cards.

- 8.2 The new process will be greatly simplified and streamlined resulting in no waiting times for customers for Leisure passes. It will prevent any people having to wait to use the Leisure facilities while there Leisure card was being processed, this will greatly improve customer satisfaction for the scheme.
- 8.3 Existing terms and conditions will be revised to reflect the proposed changes and appropriate communication will be sent out to all existing card holders.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 Armed forces personnel resident or visiting the borough may avail themselves of free access to leisure provided they are able to show valid military identification at each facility.
- 9.3 The free use is limited to armed forces personnel only and the immediate family would no longer be eligible for individual membership. However when any member of the armed forces presents valid military evidence when using the eligible facilities, they will also be entitled to admit 1 guest.

- 9.4 Current passport to Leisure Cards issued to Armed forces personnel and their families are honored until the expiry date. Thereafter only the family member currently in the armed forces would be eligible for free access to leisure on production of valid military identification.
- 9.5 Delegated authority for any amendments for the Armed forces Leisure pass to be given to the Head of Customer Services and ICT in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 Following consultation with other Authorities which have introduced similar schemes, it was identified that only Rossendale included provision of leisure facilities for the partners and dependants.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Is a Community Impact Assessment required No
- Is a Community Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No
- Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

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