

COMMUNITY PDG - 27 June 2023

Public Question Time

Question:-

Nick Quinn

A long term court case has ended with the agreement that payments for Council Leisure Sessions are VAT free.

Your Finance Officers are in the process of claiming a refund of the overpaid VAT on Leisure sessions, going back to 2011.

An estimate of the amount being claimed is shown on the Corporate Management Table, on page 28, of your papers, where there is an entry for "Corporate VAT Refund" (under 'Major Changes to Income Levels').

The total shown is £2,998,700.

There will, no doubt, be debates over how this Leisure Refund is used, if it ever arrives, but my question relates to whether this Community PDG wishes to consider how the removal of this VAT requirement should affect Leisure session payments.

As Cllr Holdman might remember, in November 2022 after excluding the public, the previous Community PDG voted to give away its delegated authority to set the Leisure Pricing Strategy, for the remainder of 2022 and for 2023/2024, to the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing.

But, there is no longer a Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and the removal of VAT will produce a significant (20%) reduction in session prices.

My question is: In the light of the change in Cabinet responsibilities and the removal of the requirement to charge VAT on Leisure sessions, will this Community PDG consider taking back the responsibility for the Leisure Pricing Strategy and the setting of Leisure Session Charges?

Answer:-

Reflecting on the question raised I would like to thank Mr Quinn and reassure all that moving forwards the Community PDG will receive a report setting out the pricing strategy for the coming period, and discuss the recommendations. This will be scheduled in the autumn. These recommendations will then be escalated to Cabinet, or the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure. It is important to note that these reports and discussions are balanced with the commercial sensitivity associated with the competitive environment in which our leisure service operates.

