

**LEISURE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MANAGEMENT REPORT
25 JUNE 2019**

STEAM AND SAUNA FACILITY PROPOSAL BLIDWORTH LEISURE CENTRE

1. REPORT PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval from Newark & Sherwood District Council, for the development and installation of a steam and sauna facility, at the Blidworth Leisure Centre.

2. BACKGROUND STEAM AND SAUNA PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Blidworth Leisure Centre opened during January 2009, after a refurbishment of the existing community centre on the site, by the District Council. This followed the Council's departure from Rainworth Leisure Centre, which was owned by Nottinghamshire County Council and operated by the District Council through a joint use agreement.
- 2.2 Blidworth Leisure Centre is the smallest site operated by A4T and as a consequence, has the smallest offer for the customers. The offer is ostensibly limited to a fitness suite and classes within the facility. However, customers who have an 'Activo' membership are able to use the other facilities of Newark, Southwell and Dukeries Leisure Centres, which does provide a greater offer of activities, for customers.
- 2.3 Whilst this is the case, the local offer is what initially attracts customers to the facility. It is the key factor when customers are assessing 'value for money' and comparing this to other offers within the area and which fit in with their circumstances. Through experience, customers in general, choose facilities initially based on location and value for money and once in the facility, it is the customer experience and continued value for money, which is the reason a customer will usually continue to stay with a facility/brand.
- 2.4 As a result of the relatively small membership base at the site, customer service at Blidworth is excellent, and customers receive 1-2-1 time by the dedicated and knowledgeable fitness team. This is reflected in the customer satisfaction feedback from members. From the automated customer surveys on our retention software system TRP (The Retention People), Blidworth is currently operating at 82% of satisfaction, compared to a national average of 52 (on 28th May 2019 due to scores changing daily). In addition, Blidworth has received a 'Platinum Medal Award' from TRP, for its continued high performance in customer satisfaction; this is a fantastic achievement for the staff at the site and for A4T in general.

3. CURRENT PERFORMANCE STEAM AND SAUNA PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The facility is open from 06:30 – 21:30 Monday to Thursday, 06:30 – 20:30 on Fridays and 08:00 – 18:00 Saturday and Sunday. The facility offers over 50 classes which include activities such as cycling, HiiTs, yoga, Pilates, boxing and kettlebells, which cover the offer of high intensity workouts, low intensity workouts and well-being for customers. In addition to this offer, the facility provides GP referrals and rehabilitation classes for recovering stroke and heart patients.

- 3.2 Although as stated above, Blidworth Leisure Centre has excellent customer satisfaction rates for customer services, feedback from customers state that Blidworth would benefit from increased activities and services, which would assist with increasing the current membership base, provide greater value for money at the site and retain existing members. Feedback from members identify a 'health suite' (sauna/steam) as a possible realistic option.
- 3.3 During 2017, as part of a development on Belle Vue Lane in Blidworth, Newark and Sherwood Homes and the District Council identified Blidworth Leisure Centre as the recipient of the 106 contribution. In 2019, confirmation from the Council was provided that there is £35,973.75 deposited with the Council awaiting drawn down by Active4Today, to support additional development or activity at the facility. However, from this amount, a £5,000 contribution has been identified to support the Blidworth Parish Council, with its plans to develop additional office space on the site; currently the Parish Council relies on hiring this from various organisations in the village. To date the Parish Council plans are in their infancy, however, discussions are taking place with Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) regarding leases and location.
- 3.4 In view of the above, the remaining 106 finance is £30,973.75; however, in the event the plans for the Parish Council do not come to fruition, their contribution of £5,000 would be passed on to the leisure centre. As Members will be aware, Blidworth Leisure Centre is owned by NSDC, with a lease to A4T as the operator.

4. PROPOSAL STEAM AND SAUNA PROPOSAL

- 4.1 As a result of the above information, A4T are proposing to introduce a sauna and steam room to the Blidworth Leisure Centre, which would hopefully enhance the current offer to members and attract new customers to the facility. It is proposed that this facility would include a 6/8 person sauna and an 8 person steam room. The facility would be attached to the existing building and joined through the current changing rooms to extend the 'wetside' provision. In addition this would keep costs as low as possible, as drainage and water exist in this area.
- 4.2 To date the project has not been subject to detailed financial modelling; however, work has been undertaken by the Council's Asset Management team, who have provided 'ball park' estimate for a development, within a range between £70K and £75K. This includes planning, development, obtaining quotes, managing the project and the delivery of the scheme to opening. At this stage and subject to planning, it is expected that the scheme has a build time of approximately 12 weeks and it is hoped the proposed new development could be open by November 2019 (subject to the necessary approvals).
- 4.3 In the event the scheme can be delivered within the financial cost envelope set out above, it would leave a balance to be found after the 106 contribution (circa £31K), of between £39K and £44K. The Board of A4T have agreed to meet this differentiation between the 106 finance and the cost of the scheme, through the existing A4T's reserves.
- 4.4 Attached at appendices I – IV are various visuals which have been provided by the Council's Asset Management business team and comprise of; the existing building, a visual of the proposed extension to house the new development, a plan of the existing building showing the relationship between the proposed new development set against the whole site and a plan showing the layout of the proposed new development, adjacent to the current changing rooms.

- 4.5 It is proposed that the facility would be provided to Activo members and fitness suite pay and play customers only, who are over 16 (in line with the current regulations used by A4T). This approach would add additional value for money to the membership package and in turn allow for other members to use the facility, who may use our A4T sites, including Southwell Leisure Centre.
- 4.6 It is proposed that the Members of Newark and Sherwood District Council approve the installation of a sauna and steam facility, at the Blidworth Leisure Centre and subject to the costs being within the cost envelope set out above, Active4Today commence with the development of this project, in partnership with the Council's Asset Management team. It is proposed that once this facility is developed, this will form part of the existing operating agreement between the Company and the council.

5. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In the event this proposal is approved, the facility can be used by all members across the A4T leisure centres and members of the Southwell Leisure Centre Trust. This would increase opportunities for members over the age of 16 and in addition be an additional resource for health and wellbeing within the group. All information will continue to be available in a number of formats in line with Active4Today's access requirements and those set out in the equalities and diversity policy.

For further information please contact Andy Carolan – Managing Director via email on andy.carolan@active4today.co.uk or via telephone by calling ext. 5704