

CABINET 3 AUGUST 2004

SUSPENSION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Attached as an Appendix is a report outlining a scheme that will greatly enhance opportunities for disabled users of Applemore Health & Leisure Centre Gym. Although the scheme is self financing, Financial Regulations require that Members approve both the expenditure and the funding of the scheme prior to a commitment being entered into.

2. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Due to uncertainty around the grant funding process it has been necessary to commit the Council to the scheme without formal member approval. As a result, the Director of Resources has suspended Financial Regulations in order that the Council did not lose the opportunity to benefit from this scheme.

3. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENT

The Portfolio Holder supported this decision.

4. RECOMMENDED

It is recommended that the Director of Resources' decision to suspend Financial Regulations be noted.

For further information:

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Background Papers:

Report on IFI Status for Applemore Health and Leisure Centre

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 'Inclusive Fitness Initiative' (IFI) is a Sport England funded initiative set up to improve accessibility to Fitness facilities (Gyms) for disabled people.
- 1.2 Applemore Health and Leisure has been awarded IFI status and the purpose of this report is to demonstrate the benefits of IFI status to New Forest District Council, to outline a proposal and to seek approval for the financial arrangements.

2. Background

- 2.1 Research carried out on behalf of Sport England identified that there are physical and communication barriers preventing disabled people from accessing Fitness facilities and benefiting from fitness programmes. Following a successful pilot scheme, the IFI is working to identify 150 'not for profit' sites across the UK that can be accredited to the IFI and therefore recognized as offering a 'fully inclusive' facility and service.
- 2.2 The IFI offers a 'grant package' to accredited sites that includes 4 elements:
 - Equipment** – They will fund 6 pieces of Gym equipment from an accredited list to complement existing facilities to ensure that disabled people can access a comprehensive workout
 - Training** – Two levels of training are delivered to the site to ensure that all front line staff and Fitness Instructors understand the needs of disabled users and how to facilitate their specific needs. The training leads to nationally recognized NVQ3 qualification.
 - Marketing** – The grant supports sites to realise the spending power the disability market holds.
 - Sports development** – The IFI works with the site to develop opportunities for disabled people in the community.
- 2.3 The IFI intends that every disabled person within the Country has an accredited site within a reasonable traveling distance therefore each accredited site will be the only one within a 20 mile radius.
- 2.4 Applemore H&LC, following an initial Audit has been awarded IFI status in principal with a target launch date of September 2005.

3. Benefits of IFI Status to New Forest District Council

- 3.1 It is estimated that 20% of the population have a disability, and IFI status will improve accessibility for the whole community contributing significantly to the Council's objectives.
- 3.2 There is a high level of Kudos for the Centre and the Council in being one of only 150 accredited sites in the UK, and it gives the Centre a USP (Unique selling point) in the Market as well as providing excellent PR opportunities to the Council.

- 3.3 Being recognized and Promoted as an IFI site will increase usage of the Fitness facilities which in the medium to long term will have significant business and financial benefits.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The IFI grant package which has a total value of approx £40000 is conditional upon partnership funding, and the Council is expected to meet 30% of the total costs (equipment, training, and marketing) with the IFI meeting 70% of the costs. This represents a maximum investment to the Council of approx £12,000. The Council is required to meet the purchase cost of the equipment, and the temporary Marketing post, with the IFI making a 2 stage cash grant award to reflect their 70% commitment. The IFI will also meet directly the cost of the training, and Marketing resources.
- 4.2 The agreement is conditional upon the Centre demonstrating in the first 2 years that it has attracted additional disabled users and tracking their usage, which can be achieved through the MRM system and the Technogym key system.
- 4.3 The Centre is confident that IFI status and the associated investment in Marketing and training will significantly develop the Fitness Market for people with disabilities and income projections are based on additional gym users. It is also expected that there will be wider benefits for the whole Centre in terms of increased throughput and usage.
- 4.4 The financial implications are attached as appendix.1.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Centre Manager has consulted with other district Councils who have been awarded IFI status, and has worked closely with the Sports development Officer and Disability Coordinator in preparing the application.

6.0 Other Options

- 6.1 There are no other options that will provide the same level of benefit to the service. This is a unique opportunity that has now closed to further applicants.

7.0 Proposal

- 7.1 It is proposed that Applemore Health and Leisure Centre aims to have full accreditation by September 2005 and works closely with the IFI to set and monitor realistic objectives for increasing use of Profiles by disabled people.

8.0 Environmental Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental implications but the provision is expected to cut down the time spent travelling to appropriate facilities for disabled people in the community.

9.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

9.1 There are no crime and disorder implications

10.0 Conclusion

10.1 This is a unique opportunity that will have wide ranging benefits for Applemore H&LC, for the Council and for the local community.

11. Recommendation

11.1 It is recommended that the Council approves the proposal and the financial arrangements.