

## Notice of KEY Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	<p><b>Temporary closure due to coronavirus of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Havering library service</li> <li>• Havering music school</li> <li>• Fairkytes Arts Centre</li> <li>• Sports/Arts events and activities</li> </ul>
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Viddy Persaud
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Jane West
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	<p>Gareth Nicholson, AD Customer, Culture, Communications</p> <p><a href="mailto:Gareth.nicholson@havering.gov.uk">Gareth.nicholson@havering.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Financial summary:</b>	
<b>Reason decision is Key</b>	<i>(c) Significant effect on two or more Wards</i>
<b>Date notice given of intended decision:</b>	<u>19 March 2020</u>
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	<i>Towns &amp; Communities</i>
<b>Is it an urgent decision?</b>	yes
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	<i>Yes. Under urgency powers as agreed by Councillor Wise on 19/3/20</i>

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering  
Places making Havering  
Opportunities making Havering

□  
□  
□

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Connections making Havering

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## Part A – Report seeking decision

### DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

1.1 This executive decision will have the effect of temporarily suspending services and closing venues relating to:

- Havering Library Service (all ten libraries across the borough)
- Havering Music School – suspend all services apart from examinations (and when exam boards take action suspend those too)
- Fairkytes Arts Centre, Hornchurch
- Culture, Arts and Sports activities including Easter activity programmes

1.2 The suspension of service is as a direct impact of government and medical guidance around coronavirus. It is informed by all relevant emergency and business continuity plans and governed by the Council's strategic Gold objective: *To work together to co-ordinate an effective response to Coronavirus, to preserve life, to minimise the impact on Havering's communities and business, and facilitate recovery and the return to normality.*

1.3 A timely suspension of the above services will meet that Gold objective because it ensures an earlier return to normal than might be the case if staff were to fall ill. Eight library staff and 4 music school staff are already self-isolating. The suspensions are intended to minimise risk to the public associated with contracting coronavirus at one of these venues, give clear direction to the public, and afford opportunities for staff to either work from home or be directed towards more essential activity.

1.4 The decision is informed by consultation with professional leads within departments, much-reduced footfall at these venues, questions from some service users asking why we have not already closed, and of course relevant government guidance on Coronavirus, including on social distancing. It should be noted that other local authorities are at this stage in decision-making. On 17<sup>th</sup> March The City of London closed all Libraries, and Reading Borough Council closed all of its libraries, leisure centres, community centres and civic buildings until further notice. A number more have subsequently followed.

1.5 The decision takes into account that many of the users of these services are older residents or residents with underlying health conditions or vulnerabilities. While this does not apply in the case of the music school, the volume of children using the school and the nature of the venue means that any single identified case or risk of a case could multiply quickly.

1.6 An early decision will:

- Provide welfare and clarity for staff, freeing them up to carry out other work in the service of the community
- Demonstrate to the community the seriousness of the risk that is present, thereby encouraging them to take action themselves. I am concerned that an appearance that services like libraries are open for business as normal encourages residents to perceive they are free to do likewise, which runs contrary to the official guidance.

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### **Mitigations**

1.7 Staff have been working on ideas and options to continue parts of these services during the suspensions. Some activities in libraries will happen remotely through video conferencing – baby bounce sessions being one example. We will promote our electronic book service and encourage those who have e-readers such as Kindles to consider lending them to residents who are staying at home but are well. The music school is developing online lesson resources for students. Fines have been cancelled to relieve stress on residents who may have books they can't return (we are still encouraging renewals by phone or online)

1.8 Staff who are able to work from home will still be working throughout this time. Both the library and music school are in the early stages of new strategy development. Suspension of normal service will allow more resource to go in to research and development of those strategies from home. Staff will also be available for redeployment in other areas.

### **Financial implications – Library service**

1.9 The financial implications to the library service are minimal. Income for rental of rooms will drop to zero in any event as residents take more action to keep themselves safe and well. Utility costs and costs of security services and services to bank cash will reduce. Income from fines would reduce by approximately £5,000 per month. This is offset by savings related to the inability to implement funded library opening hours extensions as provided for by the 2020/21 budget.

### **Financial implications – music school**

1.10 A suspension of the music school would mean that direct debits worth approximately £54,000 per month would not be collected. We will ask for financial donations to the Friends of Havering Music School charity from parents whose children take advantage of online sessions. We are liaising with the Arts Council to identify if any central government support may be forthcoming.

1.11 Staff paid on sessional contracts for whom hours are regular will continue to be paid. All of these staff are DBS checked and may be available for redeployment. They are all being asked to consider the actions musicians can take to support the social fabric of the borough at what is a difficult time for many residents. In short, music can add some normality and joy into lives in a dark period.

### **Financial implications – Fairkytes and sports/arts**

1.12 The financial impact on these services is minimal in the short term. Footfall and bookings are reducing. The impact is likely to be less than £20,000

### **Commentary – risks**

1.13 There may be a perception from some members of the community that closing libraries is either 'defeatist' or is closing too early. But there is a far greater risk of closing too late – libraries are virtually impossible to keep sanitised and every book returned could well have a significant impact.

1.14 Taking the action recommended in this decision will keep staff safe, enable a return to normality at the earliest possible opportunity and demonstrate to the

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community that coronavirus is something they must take seriously.

### **Communications message – for agreement**

DRAFT

*We're really sorry to announce that all of our ten libraries, Havering Music School and our sports and arts activity programmes are suspended until further notice. Libraries and Fairkytes Arts Centre will close effective Friday morning and the Music School will close immediately. The Music School will remain open for examinations unless exam boards cancel but there will be restrictions put on movement.*

*This action is to protect residents and staff and ensure that everyone is able to act on government advice around coronavirus.*

*Our brilliant staff will be working on different ways to support our communities during this time. Books, music and physical activity are even more vital in times like these. Stay tuned to our social media for further announcements on different ways you can help us support our residents.*

*All of these services will re-open as soon as it is safe to do so. Thank you for your support.*

### **AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

**Council Constitution, Part 3, Section 3.1 (h)**

**(h)The Chief Executive or any other SLT member is authorised to discharge the relevant functions of the Council where:**

**(ii) as a matter of urgency in other cases, it is necessary that action should be taken before the date of a meeting of a body in whom the power of decision rests**

### **STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

This decision is taken to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Gold strategy for the management of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Keeping the libraries, Music School and Fairkytes open would be counter to government advice in relation to 'social distancing' and out of line with other institutions decisions. It is also increasingly unviable to keep these services open given the increasing need for staff to self-isolate due to potential exposure to Coronavirus as the illness spreads.

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**PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

Councillor Viddy Persaud and the Leader have been consulted as have trade unions.

**NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Gareth Nicholson, AD Customer, Culture, Communications

Designation:

Signature: GDN

Date: 18 March 2020

## Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

*There is no legal obstacle to the temporary closure of these services given the Council's legal powers to deal with the Coronavirus national emergency, however it should be noted that there may be contractual implications as a result of the action being taken which are not evident from the content of this report*

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

*The temporary closure of the libraries will not cause a base budget pressure as there is additional budget this year available to increase opening hours. In fact, this action will free up funding for the closure of the Music School and Fairkytes, although it may not absorb the full costs.*

*The closure of the Music School will cause a significant loss of income. It is impossible to predict when the School will be able to reopen. It is not unreasonable to expect that a half year's income will be lost, estimated at £324,000.*

*The closure of Faikytes is estimated to be at a cost of £20,000.*

*These budget implications will be tracked closely during the year.*

### HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

*Under the Council's emergency flu pandemic plan, the council can ask staff to accept redeployment into other areas of work. Staff who are no longer required to work in the Libraries, Music School or at Fairkytes will be considered for allocation to urgent new work resulting from the Coronavirus emergency.*

### EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

1.1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- 1.2. (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- 1.3. (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;

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1.4. (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

1.5. Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

1.6. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

The suspension of services may disproportionately impact those residents that have limited mobility, are elderly, or do not own a car. However, as the service will be reinstated once the workforce numbers increase sufficiently to allow this, residents will have the opportunity to once again enjoy the services. They will be advised as soon as circumstances change or the services are reinstated.



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**HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

*The purpose of this decision is to protect the public and staff from the impact of Coronavirus.*

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

*None*

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**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

*Delete as applicable*

Proposal NOT agreed because

**Details of decision maker**

Signed

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Committee Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_