

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport

05 December 2016

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport – Councillor K Caan

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Executive Director Place

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Passport to Leisure and Learning – Re-launch and new online application process

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**Is this a key decision?**

**No** - Although the matter within the report can affect all wards in the City, it is not anticipated that the impact will be significant and it is therefore not deemed to be a key decision.

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**Executive Summary:**

The Passport to Leisure and Learning (PTLL) scheme is a concession scheme primarily for Coventry residents who are eligible for a means tested benefit. The aim of the scheme is to increase accessibility and encourage participation in learning and leisure opportunities across Coventry.

The current take up of the PTLL scheme is extremely low, with only 1,548 cards in circulation and valid. Consultation on the PTLL scheme, which took place in 2013 indicated that the current application and renewal system is expensive, outdated and bureaucratic. The process involves completing a lengthy manual application/renewal form and providing suitable identification alongside eligibility/benefit verification.

The Council cannot currently accurately quantify how many residents in the city would be eligible for the PTLL scheme, due to Data protection rules within the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).

There are 34,607 homes in the city that are in receipt of either a Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support payment via the Council's internal Benefits and Revenues team. Housing Tax benefit and Council Tax Support that meet the eligibility criteria for PTLL scheme. The Council are recommending targeting these 34,607 homes as part of a re-launch of the scheme.

Coventry residents on other qualifying benefits which are registered with the DWP will be able to apply for the PTLL card through an online application process.

**Recommendations:**

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport is recommended to approve:

- (1) That the council distributes PTLL cards to the 34,607 households in Coventry that currently receive Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.
- (2) The PTLL scheme will be free of charge, verification of proof of benefits will not be required and all cards issued will be valid until a unified card is implemented.
- (3) All other residents who are eligible for PTLL scheme through alternative qualifying benefits will have the opportunity apply for a card through an online application process.
- (4) The PTLL card will be issued to all foster carers looked after children and any children that are deemed to be at risk in Coventry.
- (5) A project team is established to include all key stakeholders, which will examine the feasibility of a unified concession card for all Coventry residents.

**List of Appendices included:**

Appendix A – results of the consultation exercise regarding PTLL  
Appendix B – the proposed online application form  
Appendix C – equalities impact assessment

**Other useful background papers:**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

**Report title:** Passport to Leisure and Learning – Re-launch and new online application process

## **1. Context (or background)**

1.1 The Passport to Leisure and Learning (PTLL) scheme is a concession scheme primarily for Coventry residents who are eligible for one of the means tested benefit's listed below.

- Jobseekers allowance
- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Attendance allowance
- Employment & Support Allowance / Incapacity Benefit
- Personal Independence Payment / Disability Living Allowance
- Working Tax Credit (Child Tax Credit alone does not apply)
- Universal Credit
- Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Carers Allowance
- Widows Benefit
- Industrial Death Benefit
- Bereavement Benefit

1.2 Current uptake of the PTLL card is very low, with 1548 cards currently in use, the total eligible population in Coventry is estimated at around 70,000 residents, and current take up is 0.45%.

1.3 Use of the PTLL card has declined by 50% between March 2014 until the present day.

1.4 Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support data provided by the Council's internal Benefits and Revenues team has identified 34,607 homes that would meet the qualifying criteria for the PTLL scheme. All of the remaining qualifying benefits are managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), due to data protection the Council cannot access information on which residents are claiming means tested benefits managed by the DWP.

1.5 The current application process for eligible residents requires the completion of a printed application form, proof of eligibility, a photographic identification document and a passport style photo that is included on the PTLL card for identification purposes.

1.6 The current charge for a PTLL card is £5.20 for an adult and £2.60 for a child. Non-residents can apply for a card the same eligibility criteria applies but charges increase to £16.30 for an adult and £8.15 for a child.

1.7 In March 2016 the contract with the Post Office for issuing the PTLL card was terminated by mutual consent, the PTLL card is now only issued at the venues listed below.

- Coventry Sports and Leisure Centre
- Alan Higgs Centre Allard Way
- Moat House Leisure and Neighbourhood Centre
- Xcel Leisure Centre
- Centre AT7
- Central Library
- Carers Trust

1.8 The current PTLL card is renewable on an annual basis; the existing renewal process for the PTLL card follows the same process as a first time application.

- 1.9 Looked after children and foster carers currently have to follow the same application process to access the PTLL scheme as a resident on a means tested benefit. There are currently 585 Looked after Children in the city who would be eligible for a card, and 515 Children at Risk (children subject to a protection plan).
- 1.9 A number of local providers offer variable levels of discount to cultural, leisure and learning opportunities including:
- Adult Education Service
  - Coventry Sports Foundation
  - Coventry Sports Trust
  - Parks
  - Allotments
  - Atrium Health
  - Belgrade Theatre
  - Coventry Cathedral
  - Henley Active
  - Coventry Heritage and Arts Trust
  - Library and Information Services
  - Midland Air Museum
  - Skydome Planet Ice
  - Tourist Information Centre
  - Warwick Arts Centre
- 1.8 826 residents responded to a Passport to Leisure and Learning scheme consultation held between January and March 2013. The main findings from the consultation were in relation to the cost of the card, the difficult and bureaucratic application process, issuing venues and the need to renew the PTLL card annually.

## **2 Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 (Option A) - All Coventry residents on a qualifying means tested benefit will receive / can apply for PTLL card with no charge (Recommended option)**
- 2.2 Coventry City Council's internal Benefits and Revenues team can identify 34,607 homes in the city that are in receipt of either a Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support payment – all of these households are eligible for a membership card. The Council are proposing to send:
- one PTLL card to all single parent households and further cards to cover all children living in that household, and;
  - two PTLL cards where two parents are recorded, again including further cards to cover all children living there.
- 2.3 The 1500 residents that are already members of the PTLL scheme will be sent a new card.
- 2.4 An online application system will be launched in December 2016 allowing residents that qualify for the PTLL scheme through a means tested benefit that is managed through the DWP to apply for a free PTLL card. A targeted communications and marketing strategy will be developed to increase awareness of the PTLL scheme and the online application process.
- 2.5 No photo or benefit verification will be required by applicants at the point of application, as access to scanners/smart phones and uploading information may be a barrier preventing

eligible residents to apply for the PTLL card. Once the PTLL card has been issued, providers may implement local identification & eligibility verification checks.

- 2.6 The PTLL card will not include a photo for identification purposes, providers are implementing local management arrangements.
- 2.7 The PTLL will not be renewable on an annual basis and will be valid until the launch of a unified Coventry concession card in late 2018. If a current member's benefit allocation alters they will be able to continue to use the card as if they were still in receipt of benefits.
- 2.8 The PTLL card will become part of the offer to potential foster carers. All existing foster carers, looked after children and children at risk will be supplied with a PTLL card through representatives from the People Directorate.
- 2.9 (Option B) - Continue with the existing PTLL scheme (not recommended)**
- 2.10 The Council continue to offer the current PTLL scheme, which has a limited take up of 0.45% of the eligible population.
- 2.11 The existing manual application system would remain, including the need for a passport photo and limited issuing venues across the city which is a major barrier to potential applicants for the scheme.
- 2.12 The Council would need to continue to apply a charge to access the PTLL scheme to cover general administration costs required to issue the card.
- 2.13 Take up of the PTLL card will continue the trend of decline, resulting in the most disadvantaged residents not accessing Leisure and Learning opportunities at concessionary prices.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 In terms of the specific discounts that respondents said encouraged them to get a Passport to Leisure and Learning Card, the Sports and Parks discounts received the highest response – it is also the most used discount, followed by Adult Education Service related discounts. Culture discounts proved to be the least encouraging and are also the least used; however, they are still used by over 1 in 4 respondents.
- 3.2 Almost a third of respondents said they use their card once or twice a week to claim a discount and a quarter said they use it this amount per month. A very low number said they never use it (1.7%).
- 3.3 There was a very clear message that the PTLL scheme is not well advertised and a number of advertising/promotional methods were suggested including; posters, leaflets, newspaper adverts and email alerts.
- 3.4 There was particular reference to the signing up and renewal processes in that they are too long, complicated and bureaucratic. It was also mentioned that too much paper work is required as suitable identification. Respondents also expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that the PTLL only lasts a year and that it is too expensive to keep renewing it and the costs to update the required photographs. Respondents suggested a reminder system so that members are alerted to the fact that their card is due to expire. This was a contributing factor to the high level of respondents that said they didn't have a card (59.0%).

- 3.5 It was also suggested that the eligibility criteria for the scheme is extended so that not just people on benefits are entitled to it. A number of respondents suggested that over 60s should be included in the eligibility criteria.
- 3.6 Almost two fifths of respondents said that they hadn't renewed or had never had a Passport to Leisure and Learning Card because they were not eligible and a quarter said that they were not aware of it. When asked what their 'Other' reasons were, respondents reinforced that it was due to these reasons and that the card is too expensive to renew and the activities are too expensive.

#### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 All residents eligible for a PTLL card through Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support will be sent a PTLL card in December 2016. The online application process and new PTLL website will go live for all other residents who would be eligible for the PTLL scheme in December 2016.
- 4.2 People Directorate will be issued with a supply of PTLL cards to send out to existing foster carers and their families in January 2017. They will be given a further supply in order to issue to new foster carer families. All children at risk will be addressed via this mail out.
- 4.3 A project group to include all key stake holders will be established in January 2017 to examine the feasibility of a unified concession card. It is intended if feasible the unified concession card would be launched late in 2018.

#### **5. Comments from the Executive Director Resources**

##### **5.1 Financial implications**

The cost of issuing the required number of Passport to Leisure and Learning cards will create a small - one off pressure on the existing budget of around £30k (worst case scenario), this is expected to affect the 2016/17 budget when the cards are issued.

A loss of future annual income (£10k) is offset by savings on annual production costs as it is not intended to issue any further cards after this issue.

##### **5.2 Legal implications**

The issuing of the PTLL card meets the following legislation:

#### **Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 as amended by s.12 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012** which states

“(1) “Each local authority must take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area” and “(3) The steps that may be taken under subsection (1) include:

- (a) providing information and advice;
- (b) providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living (whether by helping individuals to address behaviour that is detrimental to health or in any other way);
- (c) providing services or facilities for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of illness;
- (d) providing financial incentives to encourage individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles;
- (e) providing assistance (including financial assistance) to help individuals to minimise any risks to health arising from their accommodation or environment;

- (f) providing or participating in the provision of training for persons working or seeking to work in the field of health improvement;
- (g) making available the services of any person or any facilities and:

**S.22 of the Children Act 1989** which places a general duty on the local authority in relation to children looked after by them and (3) it shall be the duty of a local authority looking after any child:

- (a) to safeguard and promote his welfare; and
- (b) to make such use of services available for children cared for by their own parents as appears to the authority reasonable in his case. This particular legislation is used to reflect that the PTLT cards will be issued to all foster carers, looked after children and any children that are deemed to be at risk in Coventry.

## **6. Other implications**

### **6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?**

The provision of reduced cost sports, learning, leisure, arts and cultural activities through Passport to Leisure will support local people living longer and healthier lives as the uptake of physical activities is increased. The young people eligible for the card will have safe places to get active, learn and enjoy cultural activities at sports centres, education venues and museums and galleries, helping them to make a positive contribution to the city.

The card will enable many local facilities to be more accessible for almost a third of the city's population and will encourage a creative, active and vibrant city. It will help narrow the gap between the economically well off and the less well-off and will see different communities coming together to play sports, learn and visit cultural venues.

### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

The PTLT card will no longer feature photographic identification and the application process will not include the verification of a valid means tested benefit. The scheme is potentially open to abuse and as such providers will implement local proof of identification procedures.

The level of uptake of the card with providers is a risk, with the potential for increased usage of all venues at peak times. Providers are implementing local procedures for the management of PTLT usage and 6 monthly meetings with providers will be facilitated to monitor usage.

### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

There will be some one-off financial implications that need to be considered as part of the re-launch. Loss of income related to the scheme, however limited administration costs will remain as membership cards will need to be circulated to those eligible members who are not captured during the circulation to Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support during December.

### **6.4 Equalities / EIA**

An Equalities and Consultation Analysis has been undertaken and is appendix 3 attached. This assessment showed that there is likely to be a positive impact on protected characteristic groups and no adverse effects.

Consultation told us that by reducing the paperwork and bureaucracy previously associated with the card, those on the lowest incomes in the city will be more likely to engage in sport, education and cultural activities. There will also be a positive impact on the children of those on the lowest incomes as they too, will be eligible for a card. Those on disability benefits will also be eligible.

It is known that engaging in sports and physical activity could increase length of life, improve lifestyle and improve mental health. By re-launching the card and sending it directly to those eligible – a large majority of who live in disadvantage neighbourhoods – there is a much higher likelihood that it will be used and positively impact those who receive one.

Looked after children, children at risk, young people aged between 16 – 19 and asylum seekers are all eligible for a card.

### 6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

No impact.

### 6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

There would be no requirement for partners to manually issue the PTLL card to residents; there will be a small financial implication in relation to the commission charges to process applications – this will be lost to current administrators.

Encouraging participation in learning and leisure opportunities will have an impact on all of the providers; more of Coventry’s most disadvantaged residents should take part in more activities and the participating avenues.

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