

CABINET
24 NOVEMBER 2009

WILTSHIRE LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY

Executive Summary

- (i) During 2008 the Joint Implementation Team agreed to fund a Review of Indoor Sports Facilities in Wiltshire in conjunction with Sport England.
- (ii) The objective of the Review was to produce data to enable officers to deliver an evidence based set of options for Wiltshire Council to consider in terms of broad policy, commissioning arrangements, future provision, funding and asset redeployment.
- (iii) It was also envisaged that the findings of the Review would provide a platform for the Council to engage with and consult stakeholders and local communities around a range of issues relating to the future provision of local sports facilities.
- (iv) This report is to update Cabinet on progress and to seek Cabinet's approval regarding the future direction of the Review.

Proposal

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) note the work being undertaken to develop the Leisure Facilities Strategy;
- (ii) approve the vision and objectives for the strategy;
- (iii) note the outline conclusions detailed in the report;
- (iv) note the positive links to the Workplace Transformation Programme which is now responsible for the development of the campus and multi-use estate across the authority;
- (v) authorise officers to work with the Workplace Transformation Programme on links with the MOD and explore potential opportunities to extend the concept of joint facilities in Wiltshire;

- (vi) endorse the approach that officers actively pursue links with educational establishments with the objective of improving access to sport and recreation facilities on school sites;
- (vii) authorise officers to work with the Cabinet member for Leisure, Sport and Culture to review the service options open to the Council and develop a proposal for consideration by the Cabinet and
- (viii) authorise officers to work with the Cabinet member for Leisure, Sport and Culture and enter into negotiations with DC Leisure to discuss terms on which the current partnership agreements might need to be extended for a further period.

Reason for Proposal

This report is to update Cabinet on progress and to seek Cabinet's approval regarding the future direction of the review.

GEORGE BATTEN

Corporate Director

Department for Transport, Environment and Leisure

CABINET
24 NOVEMBER 2009

WILTSHIRE LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY

Purpose

1. To seek Cabinet's opinion and approval with regard to the future direction of the Wiltshire Leisure Facilities Strategy.

Background

2. There are 23 indoor leisure centres within Wiltshire, offering well used and high profile services attracting in excess of 3.2 million visits each year from all sections of the community.
3. The annual revenue budget for all these facilities is £5.75 million. The frequency of usage varies significantly according to a range of circumstances. The independent survey commissioned by the Council indicates that approximately 8 -10% of Wiltshire residents use leisure facilities regularly.
4. The core areas of operation are concerned with swimming pools and fitness gyms. The former is a loss leader, the latter generates income. The operation of swimming pools generates 35% of income and incurs 47% of the total expenditure. Fitness facilities account for 25% of expenditure but generate 39% of income.
5. Swimming is the most popular sport within leisure facilities accounting for 38% of visits. This is followed by studio and fitness gym at 36%. Usage of sports hall and other areas accounts for the remainder.

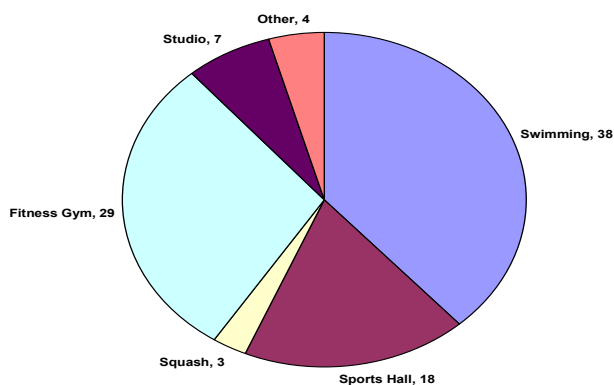


Figure 1. Usage of sports facilities expressed by percentage

6. On average 60% of the costs associated with the operation of a leisure facility, including a pool, are employee related, 17% are concerned with energy and utilities. Approximately 10% relates to maintenance, equipment, chemicals etc. The remaining 13% consists of various costs arising from catering, equipment and other administration.

The Value of Sport and Recreation

7. Sport and recreation make a substantial contribution to morale, health, community cohesion, personal development and social integration. Arguably, everyone deserves the right to be able to enjoy sport and recreation opportunities. Recent initiatives such as the Free Swimming Programme have done much to reduce financial barriers to access and have also had a positive effect on attendance figures.
8. People who take part in sport and active recreation regularly have higher levels of physical fitness, are less likely to suffer chronic illness and are more likely to be active in their local communities.
9. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 2 -10 in England rose from 9.9% to 13.7% between 1995 and 2003. The figure for the South West in 2001/02 was higher at 14%. Between 1997 and 2003 there was a 74% rise in new cases of diabetes. It is well documented that these numbers could be substantially reduced through greater physical activity.
10. In a series of academic review papers commissioned by Sport England 'Driving Up Participation: The Challenge for Sport' there is compelling evidence to show that sport and physical activity can have an important positive impact on health. This is primarily through the extent to which it contributes towards increasing physical activity. Current scientific evidence suggests that to derive a health benefit from physical activity it needs to be of at least moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week.
11. One of the specific papers 'Sport, Health and Economic Benefit' also concludes that greater emphasis should be placed on encouragement to take part in sport and exercise as an important component of preventative health care. Emphasis should be placed on increasing participation needs to be concentrated in the non-competitive, informal area of sport participation. This is where it is most likely to attract the groups that will yield the highest health benefits from participation, older age groups and lower socio economic groups.

The Government's 'Be Active Be Healthy Strategy (2009)'

12. The 'Be Active – Be Healthy' Strategy establishes a framework for the delivery of physical activity aligned with sport for the period leading up to 2012 Olympic Games. It aims to achieve a healthier, fitter nation by 2012 and beyond. The key elements of this strategy are:
 - £75 million 'Change4Life' to help families eat well and move more often;

- Partnership with Natural England aimed at increasing walking;
- Development of active challenge walking routes;
- Work to reduce short car journeys;
- Pilot scheme to encourage employers to incentivise active commuting;
- Plans to boost cycling activity;
- Further development of the Free Swimming Programme to get more swimmers into pools and a new 'Learn to Swim' package;
- Research work into the role that dance can play;
- Further support for health practitioners to encourage greater exercise;
- Pilot schemes to encourage the 16-22 year age range to remain active;
- Use the national planning policy review to assess the need to strengthen planning policy, or provide additional guidance on open space, sport and recreation, to help tackle obesity and support healthy communities.

13. The key aims of the national strategy are to:

- Lift 1 million people out of inactivity by reducing the proportion of the population who only achieve 30 minutes continuous physical activity on less than one day per week;
- Help 200,000 more people to realise the general health benefits of achieving 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days per week; and
- increase the average weekly duration of physical activity by approximately 5% over the baseline.

Sport England Strategy 2008 - 2011

14. In June 2008 Sport England published its new strategy for 2008 -11 which concentrates on the delivery of three key outcomes:

- Grow – a substantial and growing number of people from across the community who play sport;
- Sustain – everyone who plays sport, enjoys a quality experience and is able to fulfil their potential;
- Excel – talented people from all backgrounds are identified early and nurtured, and have the opportunity to progress to the elite level.

15. Sport England's role is to focus exclusively on developing and investing in sport and it has set specific measurable targets including getting 1 million people playing more sport by 2012/13.

Vision for the Wiltshire Leisure Facilities

16. The Leisure Facilities Strategy will dovetail with Wiltshire's Sustainable Community Strategy's aim for Wiltshire to become the Healthiest County by 2014. The provision of a range of high quality accessible facilities will be vitally important in order to increase participation and encourage more people to be more active, more often.
17. To achieve this goal, the Council needs to accept that it will be required to:
 - (i) Invest in the provision of high quality facilities which promote and encourage regular exercise for all of Wiltshire's residents.
 - (ii) Optimise the quality of service in order to meet the needs of all Wiltshire residents and those visiting the County.
 - (iii) Ensure that the price of participation is set at a level that allows everyone to make positive choices about healthy activity without cost being a barrier.
 - (iv) Develop a strategy that is sufficiently flexible to accommodate forecasted changes in the demand, demographic profiles, customer expectations and financial pressures.
 - (v) Ensure that facilities offer a vibrant and safe environment promoting a range of activity for different sections of the Wiltshire community according to need.
 - (vi) Continue to work with local organisations and strategic partners on projects and themes which will encourage more people to take part in physical activity more often.
 - (vii) Manage its leisure centres in a way that is always seen to provide good value for money and continually seek ways to reduce the cost of operation to the benefit of all Wiltshire residents.

Strategy Objectives

18. The objectives of the strategy are as follows:
 - (i) To provide a sound platform of research which enables evidence based decisions to be made.
 - (ii) To encourage and enable more people to become physically active by building physical activity into their daily lives.
 - (iii) To ensure that leisure facilities are strategically placed to respond to anticipated demographic changes.
 - (iv) To ensure that facilities meet customer expectations in terms of quality, value for money and the range of the activities available.

- (v) To position the role of leisure facilities to allow partnerships to be developed with other agencies to allow the efficient delivery of services with key partners.
- (vi) To consider opportunities to form 'Community Hubs' that include leisure centres (this could include new or existing facilities).
- (viii) To continue to reduce the carbon footprint of leisure facilities.
- (ix) The Review will identify policy options for all functions encompassed within sports facilities and set out recommendations for sports facility planning and investment framework. Facilities covered will include:
 - All built Facilities, indoor sports halls, swimming pools, public, private and charitable (including MOD, Education facilities etc.)
 - Major publicly accessible outdoor facilities.

Facility Management

- 19. The decision regarding the preferred commissioning option is a fundamental one that will have long term implications for services. Therefore it is of paramount importance that a thorough appraisal of all options is undertaken.
- 20. There is currently a mix of management options across Wiltshire, twelve facilities managed in partnership with an external provider, (DC Leisure) eight facilities managed in house and three grant aided by Wiltshire Council, which are managed by independent community organisations.
- 21. The two partnership agreements that the Council has with DC Leisure, run co-terminously and expire April 2011. This gives the Council the opportunity to determine the preferred commissioning option or options regarding the management of the facilities.
- 22. It is recommended that officers work with the Portfolio Holder to review the management options open to the Council and develop a proposal for consideration by the Cabinet.
- 23. It is, however, unlikely that the Leisure Facilities Strategy will be approved in time to enable Cabinet to finally determine the long-term procurement arrangements in advance of April 2011. It is suggested that Officers, together with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to enter into negotiations with DC Leisure to discuss terms to extend the current Partnership Agreements for a further period, if necessary.
- 24. For internally managed leisure estate, as Cabinet have agreed that maintenance and other property functions will be centralised within strategic property services, Leisure officers will continue to work closely with staff in this area.

Research

25. Substantial research has been undertaken enabling future decisions to be based on a robust evidence base (validated by Sport England) which will ensure that resources are applied in areas where the Council has a sound rationale for involvement. Twelve distinct areas of research have been carried out and the findings are summarised in **Appendix A**.
26. The review to date has also included a detailed assessment of related plans which occur at a national, regional and local level. This has been done to ensure that the Built Facilities Review is focussed on the areas where there is greatest need and to grasp the opportunities afforded by the creation of a new unitary authority to join up services.
27. Some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as identified by the review to date are set out in a SWOT analysis at **Appendix B**.

Conclusions

28. The outline conclusions of the research undertaken to date that will underpin the development of the Leisure Facilities Strategy are:
 - (i) There should be strategically placed facilities providing high quality services.
 - (ii) Minimum standards of provision should be set for all facilities, striking a 'deal' with customers.
 - (iii) There is a real opportunity to make an immediate impact by increasing the community use of sport and recreation facilities on educational premises. There is also a long-term opportunity to consider the inclusion of leisure centres and other community facilities in the Building Schools for the Future Programme.
 - (iv) The shortage of skilled instructors available to leisure centres needs to be addressed if the demand for provision of a greater number of alternative sports is to be met.
 - (v) Develop relationships with the MOD and explore potential opportunities to extend the concept of joint facilities within the Wiltshire garrison towns alongside other wider discussions with the MOD.
 - (vi) Encourage greater cross-boundary collaboration.
 - (vii) Establish a policy that ensures that greater time is allocated in the facilities for Sports Development-led programmes focusing on priority sports.
 - (viii) Establish a harmonised concessions policy and create a Wiltshire Membership card to enable easy access to all leisure facilities owned by Wiltshire Council.

- (ix) There is an identified shortfall in the number of learner pools. We do not have a 50 metre Olympic standard competition pool in Wiltshire, therefore our best swimmers have to travel long distances to train. The closest 50 metre swimming pool is located at Bath University
 - (x) Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 recognises the importance of well designed and well implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation in order to deliver a range of government objectives including health and well being. It is essential that the Leisure facilities Strategy complies with PPG 17 and as such is recognised as a strategy that can redress deficiencies through the planning process.
29. There are more inherent risks associated with the development of a strategy that achieves the objectives set out above; the key risks are highlighted in **Appendix C.**

Communications

30. Inevitably there will be difficult choices that will need to be made about priorities and the draft strategy, when complete, will provide a platform for the council to engage with, and consult stakeholders and local communities around a range of issues relating to the future provision of sports and leisure facilities.
31. A comprehensive Communications Strategy developed in partnership with the Service Director for Policy and Communications will be presented to Cabinet with the draft strategy when it has been completed.

Workplace Transformation Programme

32. The Leisure Facilities Strategy will link to the wider Workplace Transformation Programme (WTP) that was considered by Cabinet on 20 October 2009. Therefore, consideration will need to be given to opportunities to utilise current 'leisure assets' as part of a wider customer access approach, part of a mixed use 'campus', or simply as a 'drop in office' hot desk facility. Options regarding the future of the leisure facilities will not therefore be considered in isolation.
33. Consideration will also need to be given to the ICT requirements either as a general enabler or to enable staff and customers to use the leisure estate as a part of the 'drop in centres'. As such this all needs to be considered as part of the WTP.
34. Members will also recall that a decision has been made to treat all property assets owned by the Council as a corporate resource. As such any potential disposal of estate identified in the Leisure Facilities Strategy will be treated as a corporate resource and fall under the governance of the Workplace Transformation Programme.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

35. The contents and recommendations of this report do not have any direct environmental impact. There may be environmental issues connected with any options that form part of the Leisure Facilities Strategy but these will be dealt with as the strategy is developed.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

36. None at this stage. A detailed Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the Leisure Facilities Strategy.

Risk Assessment

37. The risks associated with the development of a leisure facilities strategy that achieves the objectives referred to in this report are highlighted in **Appendix C**.
38. There may be risk issues connected with specific proposals that are developed as part of the leisure facilities strategy but these will be dealt with as the strategy is developed.

Financial Implications

39. None at this stage
40. There will be financial issues connected with the Leisure Facilities Strategy. However these will be considered when the strategy is completed.

Legal Implications

41. None identified at this time.
42. Legal input will be required to both review the service options open to the Council and advise on any future negotiations to extend the current partnership agreements.

GEORGE BATTEN

Corporate Director

Department for Transport, Environment and Leisure

Report Authors:

Mark Smith

Service Director - Amenities and Leisure

Ext. 3767

26 October 2009

Robin Townsend

Head of Service - Leisure

Ext. 8474

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Be Active, Be Healthy: A Plan for Getting the Nation Moving
Department of Health

Sport England Strategy 2008 – 2011
Sport England

Planning Policy Guidance No 17
Office for the Deputy Prime Minister

Community Strategy for Wiltshire

Driving Up Participation: The Challenge for Sport
Academic papers commissioned by Sport England as contextual analysis to inform the preparation of the framework for Sport in England. Sport England 2004

Appendices:

Appendix A - Methodology

Appendix B - SWOT analysis

Appendix C - Risk Register