

Agenda Item 97.

TITLE	Leisure Strategy
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 26 January 2017
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Director of People Services
LEAD MEMBER	Angus Ross, Executive Member for Environment

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Sustaining Wokingham Borough as a great place to live; an even better place to do business, through a corporate focus on improving health and sustaining the good wellbeing outcomes enjoyed by Borough residents by the provision of high quality leisure facilities.

RECOMMENDATION

That Executive agrees to ratify and endorse the Leisure Strategy, which has now been supported by feedback from an eight week period of public consultation.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The 21st Century Leisure Strategy seeks to fill a gap between the Council Vision and high-level strategies such as the Local Plan / MDD DPD; and much more detailed plans and strategies, such as the Playing Pitches Strategy and Leisure Contract specifications. The previous Leisure Strategy which covered as broad an agenda but in more detail expired in April 2016.

Background

The Council's last overarching Sport, Leisure and Recreation Strategy (2006-2016) has expired, and a replacement is overdue. The context has changed significantly since the last strategy was written. More than anything, the Council's budgetary pressures impacting upon available revenue and capital funds for leisure services and facilities has worsened significantly; whilst there is increasing momentum of population growth and housebuilding as the SDLs make progress.

This strategy sets out high-level objectives only as many other strategies and work programmes have set out the more detailed plans and priorities for individual projects or contributory and allied strategies. These include the Shaping Our New Communities (SONC) strategy; The playing pitches strategy; and the Managing Development Delivery Plan. At high level, the leisure strategy can provide the link between other high level strategies such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Council Plan, allowing detail to be reserved for programmes which will follow, such as the re-procurement plan for the Council's leisure contract; and the options for the various building works at the leisure centres and swimming pools.

The strategy aims to set out the high-level vision for the council, to include:

- The need for the Leisure Strategy;
- What we want to achieve;
- The strategic context including national sport and public health guidelines;
- Health and wellbeing indicators;
- Individual, social and community development: the local sports landscape; and
- Economic development

The strategy is a succinct document, written in plain English to encourage ownership amongst the wide range of stakeholders such as sports clubs and Parish Councils, and to be clear to residents on the council's leisure offer within the Borough.

We had a good number at 139, and good range of responses to the consultation. These were largely in favour of the strategy. There was nothing in the responses to suggest that the draft strategy was lacking in any detail. We have therefore not made any changes to the draft strategy that we now recommend for approval. As with any open public consultation, we did get a huge number of very helpful suggestions and comments, including feedback on the current facilities and activities on offer in the Borough, many of which are in the responsibility of the Council. These fall into the operational level of detail, and will be hugely useful to us in setting the new specification for the management of the leisure centres in the Borough, which will be going out to tender later this year. It is in this detail that the public consultation has proven most useful to us.

Analysis of Issues

The new strategy sets a direction for the provision of 21st century leisure opportunities for borough residents and how the council proposes to facilitate their provision. In setting out this vision, we have consulted the public, for a period from 28th October to 23rd December 2016, and the strategy aims are well supported by the public. We are compiling a report of the detail of the responses, and a summary will be available in the first week of January 2017. Those that have been seen, give some direction to the priorities we would wish to include within the specification for the management of the

leisure centres when this contract goes out to tender in March 2017.

The top level aims and principles of the strategy have been set out and have been endorsed by the Sports and Leisure Working Group following their meeting of 6th September 2016. Our Vision for the Borough is, “a great place to live, an even better place to do business.” Having a strategy for sport and leisure will show how these can contribute to this vision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

The following figures represent the cost to the council of the majority of major leisure items covered by the strategy: namely the Sports Development Team; The Country Parks Service; and the Leisure Centres Operational Contract. Together they cover their costs and provide a contribution to the general fund. These figures are included here with the intention of giving a figure as to the scope of the council’s leisure business streams. For year three (2018/19), we include additional income (£500,000) we should derive from the procurement of the Leisure Centres Operating Contract, showing the increase in contribution to the general fund, as included in the MTFP.

	The estimate of leisure services expenditure	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1) 2016/17	£2,364K expenditure £2,992K income (£628K saving)	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2) 2017/18	£2,364K expenditure £2,992K income (£628K saving)	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3) 2018/19	£2,364K expenditure £3,492K income (£1,128K saving)	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The strategy does not commit the council to spend on any particular projects. Detailed business cases for projects which support the aims of the strategy will be presented separately, each with their own financial business case.

The strategy does state that the Council should “*Deliver services and facilities which cover their delivery and maintenance costs, providing a significant and maximised income for the Council, which provides value to the council tax payer and gains maximum return on investment and sets fair levels of charges for the population.*” This sets a clear approach for the detailed projects which will come about as a result of adopting this strategy.

Cross-Council Implications

This strategy aims to give all Council departments the ability to link their work on leisure, or the needs of their service users to this strategy.

List of Background Papers
Consultation Responses to the Leisure Strategy, January 2017. Draft 21 st Century Leisure Strategy Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014-17 Wokingham Borough JSNA (online at: jsna.wokingham.gov.uk)

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