



Report to Cabinet

Subject: Leisure & Community Facilities Strategy

Date: 26th July 2005

Author: Councillor Wendy Golland – Leisure Portfolio Holder

1. Purpose of the Report

To adopt the recommendations and aims of the draft Leisure & Community Facilities Strategy whilst taking into account decisions taken to date which affect them. A copy of the Executive Summary is attached at Appendix A

2. Background

Recent research undertaken by Mintel predicts a growth in consumer spending for health and fitness at 59% to 2007. The estimated costs of physical inactivity is £2 billion a year, this represents some 54,000 lives lost prematurely. A 10% increase in adult activity would benefit England by an estimated £500 million a year and could save around 600 lives. Given this information, it is clear that the role of Leisure and Community Services is central in providing local opportunities for health benefits.

As part of Gedling's Community Plan one of the key areas identified for leisure over the next five years is to provide a range of leisure facilities that meets the needs of the community. In order to address this challenge, Gedling Borough Council commissioned PinPoint Consulting to undertake a review of its Leisure and Community Centre provision to identify the range of issues and needs facing the facilities over the foreseeable future.

A number of key National strategies and policies were identified as having a potential impact on the Leisure Facilities Strategy; these included the Governments Sporting Future for all strategy (2000), Game Plan the Governments strategy for delivering sport and physical activity (2002), Sport England Policies, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), revised Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17), Saving Lives Our Healthier Nation (1999), Building Schools for the Future (2004).

The most significant policies having an impact on the strategy from the local context were identified as Gedling's Leisure Strategy (1999), Sports

Development Strategy (2001 – 2004), Gedling Community Plan (2003 – 2008) and the Gedling Local Plan Review.

Cabinet, at its meeting on the 6th May 2004, following a presentation by Pinpoint Consultancy on the Facilities Strategy, agreed to undertake further consultation with Stakeholders and Scrutiny Committees.

This work was undertaken and responses received from Gedling Indoor Bowls Club, Community & Quality of Life Committee and Services Scrutiny Committee, copies are attached at Appendix B.

The Borough Sports Development Strategy has been reviewed and a Sport & Physical Activity Strategy adopted in its place involving a range of partners. This document will inform the programming and future development needs of leisure and community facilities and therefore will need to be taken into account when considering the Leisure Facility Strategy recommendations.

Comments received from Scrutiny will also need to be taken into account although the Sport & Physical Activity Strategy will resolve the need for partnership working and the actions taken regarding Calverton Leisure Centre operational hours and the closure of Netherfield Community Centre resolve other issues raised.

The Leisure Facilities Strategy also needs to take into account recommendations from the 'Youth Strategy for Young People' provided by the Community & Quality of Life Committee. Although this document was drafted after the Facility Strategy, this will be possible using the Sport & Physical Activity Action Plan.

3. Proposal

The broad aim of the strategy is identified as:

“ To develop and optimise a wide range of leisure and community resources that are both accessible and promoted to all sections of the community, encouraging participation at a level of their choice and thereby improving the quality of life of individuals and the community as a whole”.

The strategy identifies the manner in which leisure and community facilities both underpins and is critical in overcoming a number of issues and addressing a range of needs across a broad spectrum of merging agendas including sports development, health and wellbeing, community development, community safety and crime reduction.

Leisure and Community provision was reviewed through the use of structured interviews with key stakeholders and partners, and questionnaire distribution to 20,000 households throughout the Borough. The results showed:

§ Overall attendances at the Council's five leisure centres increased from 1,045,538 in 2001/02 to 1,133,031 in 2002/03, which represented an 8.4%

- growth, whilst the attendances at the eight community centres reduced from 176,228 in 2001/02 to 169,575 in 2002/03 this, represented a 3.8% decline.
- § Compared to neighbouring districts of Nottinghamshire, Gedling ranked third out of seven districts in both dry and total attendances. Swimming ranked 5th.
 - § Gedling had adequate levels of swimming, sports hall and Indoor Bowls provision when compared to national standards. Where neighbouring provision was included, there was a potential overprovision.
 - § In the context of over provision, Calverton Leisure Centre and Gedling Indoor Bowls facility were not considered critical to Gedling's overall leisure facility provision.
 - § There was a potential over provision of facilities in Netherfield as a result of the development of the new St Georges Centre, and a potential surplus of Pond Hills Lane Community Centre.
 - § Redhill and Richard Herrod Leisure Centres were seen to be performing consistently in the top quartile of facilities when assessed using the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) national performance networks. Whilst the remainder of the facilities were performing in the second to third quartiles. Community Centres comparatively were performing in the second to third quartiles.

A number of key issues and needs were identified in the strategy, some of which have been acted upon, including a decision not to close Calverton Leisure Centre and some which will require a further report, these are summarised with each key issue below: -

Key Issues

- √ Our ageing stock of facilities are in need of repair, refurbishment and improvement. Estimated cost in the region of £3.5m over the next 5 years.
 - § Asset Management plans have identified repair and maintenance requirements and provision made in future budgets. Nottinghamshire County Council, owners of the Joint Use Centres also have identified funding and have a long-term rebuild/refurbishment plans for schools.
- √ The withdrawal of historical funding/subsidy from Nottinghamshire County Council for the three dual sites of Calverton, Redhill and Carlton Forum has resulted in the requirement of additional income to maintain the subsidy through increased facility income, savings in operational costs and or growth in revenue support.
 - § Additional usage, generated through the leisure centre DNA scheme, has secured additional income. Reduced operational costs at Calverton Leisure Centre have also been agreed.
- √ A decision on the future of Arnold Leisure Centre is required as the relative levels of subsidy into this facility are high due partly to low levels of income generation.
 - § Income generation is being examined targeting reprogramming of the theatre.
Closure of the centre is not an acceptable action unless a local improved facility can be provided.

- ∇ Consideration of the future of Calverton Leisure Centre is required, as a large proportion of its site is of non-standard size and the centre is not considered critical to the overall provision of facilities within the Borough.

 - § A decision to retain Calverton Leisure Centre has been agreed by Cabinet. Operational costs are to be reduced by reducing opening hours from September 2005..

- ∇ Carlton Forum and Redhill Leisure centre both require further investment to maintain and develop the sites.

 - § Both centres have received investment in fitness facilities, reception and outdoor facility provision.

- ∇ The operational and management structure within Richard Herrod Leisure Centre requires review.

Consideration is required on the future leasing of the bowls space at Richard Herrod by Gedling Indoor Bowls Club, on grounds of funding requirement for improvements, lease negotiation or alternative use of space.

 - § The licence with Gedling Indoor Bowls Club has been extended for a further year allowing the operation of the centre to be examined. The Bowls Club response will need to be considered in this process.

- ∇ Council Community Centres are under utilised and there is a general over provision of facilities in which community activities can take place. Gedling has one of the highest subsidy levels for community centres due to it choosing to manage the facilities directly itself. An opportunity exists for the Council to transfer the retained centres to local associations under a service level agreement.

 - § Netherfield Community Centre closed in September 2004 following the provision of St Georges Centre.

The possibility of developing Community Associations to operate the Borough centres is being progressed. The new provision at Honeywood Gardens will allow development of a Service Level Agreement, which could be adopted by other potential Associations.

- ∇ Consideration should be given to alternative methods of managing the Councils Leisure Centres and Community Centres for potential savings benefit. Further investigation is required to identify the potential financial benefits of forwarding this option.

 - § Procurement options for future operation of leisure centres is to be examined and associations for community centres.

Specific recommendations outlined in the Strategy: -

- ∇ Review and revise the current Sports Strategy to identify the key issues and needs that should better inform the needs of future facility development.

 - § The Sports Strategy has been reviewed and a Sport & Physical Activity Strategy produced with partners. Cabinet has adopted the strategy and action plan, which will influence facility use and development.

- ∇ Develop a partnership with the Wheldon School Sports College for the delivery of community sport.

§ The Sport & Physical Activity Strategy delivers this.
- ∇ Develop a Cultural Strategy to replace the outdated Leisure Strategy.

§ Adoption of the Borough Leisure Strategies will provide a new Cultural Strategy for the Borough. This will require a further decision item to be brought forward at a later date.
- ∇ Close the Bonington Theatre at Arnold Leisure Centre and transfer the programme of activities to a combination of the new theatre at Wheldon School, potential new theatre at Redhill Leisure Centre and entertainments venue at Richard Herrod.

§ Closure of the Bonington Theatre is not an acceptable action unless a local improved facility can be provided.
- ∇ Refocus the Richard Herrod Centre by finding alternative accommodation for the existing play group and to further utilise the space as a conference / business venue.

§ This recommendation has been acted upon and will provide an improved playgroup facility, new changing facilities for the sports pitches and allow increased access to the Millennium Suite.
- ∇ Rationalise the reception areas at Richard Herrod Leisure Centre into a single area and review the staffing structure.

Invest an appropriate level of capital into the necessary improvements to the bowls facility at Richard Herrod Leisure Centre and renew the lease with Gedling Indoor Bowls Club. The Council's level of investment together with the true value of available facilities should be reflected in the licence fee.

§ Comments received from the Bowls Club need to be considered when examining these recommendations and a further decision item brought at a future date.
- ∇ Identify the necessary level of community centre provision and (a) dispose of those facilities surplus to requirement (e.g. Netherfield) and (b) transfer the management of the remaining stock to associations through service level agreements whilst retaining an element of asset management and consider utilising the revenue savings for capacity building and community development.

§ Netherfield Community Centre has closed following the provision of a new facility at St Georges Centre.

The Honeywood Gardens Community Centre provision will be managed through an association, which will allow the associations delivery option to be examined in detail.
- ∇ To prioritise the Capital investment in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council, to carry out the necessary improvements to maintain and modernise the Leisure Centre stock.

- § Discussions are taking place with the County council regarding Asset Management whilst taking into account the possible rebuild or refurbishment of Joint Use school sites.
- ∇ Further investigate the procurement options in relation to the management of the service whilst considering the potential savings and other benefits to the Council.
For the Council to continue to maintain the successful operation of the remaining facilities, in particular the expanding health and fitness development through its revenue programme.
 - § Investment at Redhill and Carlton Forum in health and fitness has already been delivered.

Key Aims for the Strategy

- § Consolidating existing operational strengths and successes whilst developing and strengthening partnerships
- § Creating synergistic link between Sports and Facility Development.
- § Adopting a more strategic approach to the management and development of the leisure facilities to identify their key focus and priorities.
- § Developing and modernising facilities in line with customer expectations and changing trends.
- § Collaborating with Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Gedling Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Gedling Community and Voluntary Services (CVS), to establish areas of synergy, cooperation and sharing whereby policies and actions are agreed and shared thus avoiding duplication of effort and resources.
- § Considering the future management / transfer of leisure and community centres into Trusts / Associations / Private Sector management.

4. Resource Implications

Capital resources for the Council are limited and identification of opportunities for the development of the facilities provided will need to be examined carefully as an option for generating Capital funding along with improved income streams and reductions in revenue costs.

5. Recommendation

To adopt the Leisure & Community Facilities Strategy as amended by decisions taken on specific aspects as identified in the report.

6. Wards Affected

All Wards.