

Minutes

Economic Scrutiny Panel

30th January, 2007, Town Hall

Present: Councillors: Pape (in the Chair), Colledge, Cowper, Shaw, Simmons, Simpson and Stoddart

Also Present: Councillors: Gibbon, Hepplewhite, Kellett, Marsden and Robinson

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Hopgood & Rochford

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th December, 2007 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Scrutiny of Tourism

The Panel considered that draft report on the Scrutiny of Tourism in City of Durham and after several minor amendments agreed that the report be sent to the next Scrutiny Committee.

4. Any Other Business

There were no other matters to discuss.

Meeting terminated at 5.50 p.m.

Portfolio Member/Director/Head of Service Councillor Carol Woods / Head of Environment & Leisure Services	Portfolio Environment & Leisure
Subject Progress report on Leisure Strategy	Date 27.02.07
Contact Officer Nigel Dodds	Previous Minutes
Purpose of the report To update members of the Economic Scrutiny Committee	

Introduction

In June & July 2005, Economic Scrutiny carried out a process to review the Leisure Services Strategy. Following a presentation by the Leisure Services Manager, Scrutiny Committee decided to break down the review into 4 key areas.

- Stock Take
 - Improving and investing in existing facilities
- How do we work with young people?
- Exercise Referrals
 - Funding
 - Marketing
 - Partnerships
- Accessibility
 - Social Inclusion
 - Pricing Policy
 - Disability Act.

The following report outlines progress to date under the above headings and also looks at the recommendations set out in the Scrutiny report.

Stock Take

The initial report took an overview on what is provided now and how many people attend our facilities. Attendance figures are expected to reach the Performance Plan target of 617,604 visits this year. Although this is below the actual figure for 2005-06 of 631,444, I must stress that this figure and the previous years figures were inflated by the partnership arrangement between Abbey Leisure Centre and New college Durham (the college used the site to deliver all of their sports related courses whilst the building works were being undertaken for their new building).

It is also important to note that the Sport England Active Peoples survey 2006 has demonstrated that the district is in the upper quartile for the number of residents that regularly participate in Physical Activity. Indeed at 27% we have the highest uptake in the North East region.

A great deal of staffing resource has been allocated to investment in existing facilities, the development of the new leisure complex in Freeman's Place is a project in which Officers have dedicated considerable effort in contributing to the design team. A great deal of consultation and research has taken place, and our architects have commented on the detail we have covered within this project. The construction has begun and the funding is in place for what is a major investment for this service.

We continue to work with partners to resolve investment issues, in particular those that will resolve the problems of replacing old equipment. Through the process of financing the new leisure complex it was agreed to seek a partnership for the funding and joint operation of the fitness suite. The Council's Business Development Unit oversaw a procurement process in which a partner (Competition Line UK Ltd.) was selected. The partner has signed a contract worth in excess of £2 million with regards to the new complex and we are currently negotiating contracts for works and investment in existing sites.

In order to cover short term investment issues a capital sum of £55,000 was allocated in this financial year, and the service was able to take advantage of a buyers market and purchase 60 pieces of refurbished equipment at substantially discounted rates. A further £25,000 has been allocated in the 2007-08 capital finance programme. The service has also utilised external funding to purchase equipment for a re-launch of "spinning" which we intend to link into schools and we are currently looking into funding for some equipment to offer gym circuits that are suitable to both the junior and exercise referral market.

In January 2007 we were assessed by external inspectors under the UK quality scheme for sport and leisure (QUEST) and the five sites that undertook the assessment have all been recommended for registration to the scheme. This not only provides us with an externally accredited quality mark but also informs our improvement plans to ensure the service continues to improve. Our future plans for continuous improvement will be linked to the findings of these inspections.

Further investment has been targeted towards outdoor play and we have in partnership developed a number of play areas, Skate parks and multi games areas. Those that have been developed since the initial report are

Abbey Leisure Centre (Skate Park, Multi Games Area)
Coxhoe Leisure Centre (Multi Games Area)
Meadowfield (Skate Park, Multi Games Area)
Sherburn (Play Area, Multi Games Area)
Ludworth (Play Area)

Community Development are also working with a number of community groups throughout the district, with aims and objectives that improve leisure provision.

In addition to this work and in order to ensure a strategic approach to the provision of play we are currently working with consultants to develop a play strategy for the district.

All of the above actions show considerable investment and improvement in our existing stock and indeed the development of new leisure facilities.

How do we work with young people?

Many of the key strategic aims set out within the strategy link to young people, scrutiny also placed a great deal of emphasis on the service to positively engage with young people. This is a challenge and one that we have targeted resources. At the time of the initial scrutiny report the service was creating a baseline for the % number of visits to its Leisure facilities by under 16's. In 2005/06 this figure was 26%, 10% above the 2001 census figure for the number of under 16's living in the district. At

present the % number of visits are 29% (figures up to Dec 2006) and are well above the target of 25%.

Youth sessions have been established over the last 12 months in the Leisure Centres on Friday evenings with attendances of an average of 50 young people aged 8 - 18 per visiting each site each week (except Deerness as there is already an established and successful Youth Club at Bearpark at the same time). The sessions include multi-sports, dance, DJ workshops and taster sessions and the Abbey sessions have recently been developed in consultation with the young people to include non-contact boxing and beauty and makeup lessons.

We have opened access to our fitness suited to teenagers by piloting different schemes across the district, most have been successful and we will be assessing the best schemes before rolling out a Junior membership across the district.

A district wide Participation Strategy has been developed to link into the national Children and Young Peoples Plan and Every Child Matters Agenda to ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to influence local decision-making and services. Work to support this has included mystery shops in the leisure centres by children and young people to feedback on their opinions of our service provision. This was followed up with staff training for all front line staff on working with young people and the importance of the ECM agenda in ensuring that they receive the same rights as an adult.

Leisure Services are also producing a template Action Plan on how to develop our services for children and young people which will be developed over the next few months to become a corporate action plan for the City of Durham and feed into the LSP.

Durham City Councils Positive Futures continues to deliver diversionary activities for young people throughout the County Durham Area. Positive Futures work closely in partnership with many agencies including community safety and the County Durham Youth Engagement Service to ensure that the activities are sustainable, and meet objectives.

Friday Night Positive Futures Leisure Card - The Positive Futures Leisure card allow referrals to access the Friday evening sessions at the local leisure centres. Allowing these young people the opportunity to achieve in sport. It will develop specific skills with the support of coaches while developing trust and group co-ordination through teamwork.

Educational Sessions - Targets are set by the school for the young people to achieve some of these include improving communication with peers/teachers and P.F. staff, improve attendance at school, develop team skills, and these skills are to be transferred back into the school environment and also the local communities.

Saturday Midnight Football - Following the success of the Saturday Midnight football "Game On" the young people who were involved with the event carried out some consultation work and they decided they would like to continue to do Saturday night football, the young people involved completed the Youth Opportunity Fund and were successful in their bid which has enabled them and us to run a nine week football league at Soccarena. There are teams from the Durham and also the Chester-le-Street area's. When this nine week event is finished the Coalfields Regeneration Trust has invested more funding in Midnight football.

Leisure Services has been working more closely with the Education in the Community section of Durham County Council to promote links with the Youth Service. This includes a more co-ordinated approach to our delivery and joint marketing opportunities via the Young People's Action Group, where all partners work to develop a more comprehensive delivery programme and try to avoid duplication.

The Coxhoe Youth Room partnership is also piloting a joint training programme where the Youth Workers receive sports related training and our sports staff receive youth work training. If this proves successful and increases the quality of provision that the children and young people receive, this will be developed across the district.

Durham County Council is also working on a mapping exercise to allow parents, families and children and young people to access information on all Children's Services via one website. This is being lead by the LSP and feeds into the Children and Families Planning Group. The Leisure Development Manager represents the service on the C&YPPG, which ensures that all children's services link into the LSP outcomes and this group is the lead on ensuring that the ECM agenda is implemented across Durham and Chester-le-Street.

The section has a strong link with the Durham Schools Sports Development Manager and works closely to develop links from the curriculum activity programme into the community. This includes a jointly hosted dance programme with dance and exercise to music programmes within the primary and secondary curriculum, after school clubs and within all the sites. Our Physical Activities Co-ordinator and casual staff run taster sessions within the schools to promote our activities and holiday programmes. The section is also hoping to host a large sports camp over the summer months to develop talented players in a range of sports.

Exercise Referrals

We continue to provide this service through our partnership with Chester Le Street District Council and the newly formed County Durham Primary Care Trust. Although some of the recommendations have been actioned, it has been difficult to deliver on all. The PCT has undergone a significant change in the last 12 months re structuring to a county wide organisation. We have however been able to move forward by appointing an officer dedicated to exercise referrals and the potholder is expected to take up their position next month.

We have ran stories in City News that cover some of our lifestyle customers and the benefits they have taken from the scheme as well as articles relating to specific areas. The Healthy Horizons programme (scheme targeting the over 50's) is now established and currently being evaluated by external consultants. The FiSCH project (Child Obesity) is also growing and has committed funding from the PCT.

The Head of Environment & Leisure Services presented a report on the scheme to omt and it was agreed that funding for the partnership would be reviewed year on year.

Accessibility

Our Passport to leisure scheme has now been taken up by 283 residents; members can qualify for the scheme by one of the following criteria. Age (over 60) 77%, ability to pay (income support) or disability (allowances). We have recently reviewed the scheme and will be preparing reports in the new financial year with regards to how the scheme can change for the benefit of the wider community. We now have 20,000 people signed up to our scheme and will be looking into reporting procedures on the type of people during the next financial year.

Deerness leisure centre is now an Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) registered site and we have employed an activity coordinator to encourage participation from disabled groups. Minor alterations have been made to improve accessibility and the Head of Property Services is now working on plans to make changing areas and receptions more accessible. This work needs to be carefully planned in order to maximise the proposed partnership working with Competition Line.

The new leisure site has been designed with a priority on access and the Durham Access Group have been consulted at each stage, this process will continue through to the opening of the site and hopefully its long term operation.

Conclusion

The service continues to deliver upon its high level objectives of Social inclusion, Health, Anti Social Behaviour, Access to Sport and Education. We have taken additional duties such as the new facility and continue to deliver current service levels. We need to continue to work in partnership with both internal and external organisations in order to facilitate a diverse and high quality provision of services across the district. However, we as a service must focus upon the areas we are resourced to deliver upon and will rely heavily on Community Development and Safety to take the lead in more of the outreaching projects.