



PORTFOLIO: LEISURE

CABINET – 6th March 2002

Recreation Centre Review of Objectives

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council's Recreation Centre Service undertook its Best Value Review in 2000/2001 and was subsequently inspected by the Best Value inspectorate.
- 1.2 This report is the first of three that are the principal outcomes of the fundamental service review. This report is produced first to set direction and context for those that follow. The two reports to follow are:
 - a) The outcome of benchmarking our performance against other providers
 - b) The assessment of different ways in which the Service might be delivered

These reports will take a critical look at how well the Service is being delivered and what options there may be for change to the way this is done. Firstly though, it is important to be clear on what is expected of that Service - i.e. its objectives

- 1.3 One of the findings which was highlighted in the Inspectors Report was the business orientated management style which existed at the Centres and the effect this had had in progressively increasing usage and income levels.

The report said:

“There is a strong business ethos in the centres, which is unusual in dual use provision facilities that have not been subjected to the rigors of competition. The centre business plans provide a commercial business focus with the emphasis on financial performance. As a consequence the centres are high-income earners with strong marketing activity.”

“Income at each of the centres shows year on year increase over the last five years.”

“In terms of use of facilities, the centres achieve quite high levels of swims and other visits per 1000 population. New Forest centres attracted

7,219 visits per 1000 population in 1999/2000. falling just below the level of the best performing authorities (7,584).”

- 1.4 However the report went on to say that there was a need for the Council to review what it was trying to achieve in delivering services through the Recreation Centres particularly in the light of the emphasis on the Centres financial performance and the need to balance this against service objectives.

The report said:

‘There is an emphasis on meeting financial targets, which can limit the extent to which the needs of all members of the community can be met. For example, there is limited work to encourage low or non-participant groups to use the centres and irregular links with the council’s sports development team.’

‘There is also a concern regarding the “bottom line versus community objectives” scenario. Some of the sports development initiatives which relate to encouraging participation from all sectors of the community, particularly those that are recognised as being under-represented, are not pursued due to their financial impact. Centre Managers are reluctant to programme activities that will not earn the current “going rate” unless they can be programmed at quieter times.’

And it recommended that the Council should address the issue of non-users and social inclusion by determining the balance between meeting financial and community objectives and giving clear policy guidance to Centre Managers.

- 1.5 The implementation of a review of objectives was included as part of the improvement plan resulting from the Best Value process and the Council’s Leisure Portfolio Holder agreed that this should be a priority before undertaking an evaluation of alternative methods of service delivery.

- 1.6 It was agreed that the Leisure Review Panel should lead the process and this report presents the findings of the Leisure Review Panel after their review of Recreation Centre Objectives. (In addition, the officers have identified aspects, which Cabinet may also wish to consider). The Review Panel Resolved:

“That the Cabinet be informed that the vision and objectives contained within Section 5 of Report B are Supported by the Panel in order to move the recreation centre service forward and to strengthen its role in the community”.

2. THE REVIEW PROCESS

- 2.1 Given that the Best Value Review had indicated the need to look at Centre objectives in the widest sense a range of key stakeholders who were familiar with the Centres were called as witnesses to a meeting of the Review Panel to give their views on what they felt the service should be delivering.
 - 2.2 This was done in the context of District wide resident support demonstrated through the Citizen Panel consultation process. The survey undertaken in November 1999 showed that the Council Objective "Improving Leisure Facilities and open space; and encouraging healthy lifestyles", was felt to be the most important of the Councils Objectives with 82% of respondents in agreement. The panel also felt that only Tourism exceeded the Recreation Centre Service in level of achievement of its' objectives.
 - 2.3 In order to give some structure to the meeting all of the key witnesses were given a number of questions regarding the Recreation Centres service around which they should base their presentation on the day.
- # Those questions are included as Appendix 1.

3. EMERGING THEMES

- 3.1 The Review Panel met on the 11th September and as the key witnesses made their presentations the emerging key themes were noted in order to put the objectives review in to some sort of context.
- 3.2 This list of themes formed the basis for the suggested vision and key objectives considered by a further meeting of the Review Panel on the 18th September. The list of themes is included as Appendix 2.
- 3.3 It is also seen as important to understand how any newly agreed objectives helped to deliver the Council's strategy outlined in the Heart of The Forest. Those links are identified in Section 5 of the report.
- 3.4 In order to understand the type of activities and projects which may emerge in defining the objectives, examples of current activity for each category is also shown.

4. THE OVERALL CONTEXT

- 4.1 The inspectors recognised that the Council had a Leisure Strategy "Looking Ahead At Leisure" which although currently under review provided the policy framework within which any proposed objectives would sit.
- 4.2 Given that the Review is looking at the interface between financial and community objectives the key policies are:

Financial

Operation of the service:

To ensure that management of Council Leisure Service meets the Council's required standards of service delivery; and management

practice and recognition of the needs of the environment, and does so to provide Best Value to users and the council tax payer.

Management Approach:

To continue to develop the management of the service as efficient, effective, co-ordinated businesses by implementing good practice in business planning, marketing, customer care, quality and financial management.

Pricing and Hours of Operating:

To establish a scale of charges and hours of operation which will optimise both use of services and net income whilst still maintaining the desired level of service.

Operating Within Financial Targets:

To operate our services within financial targets which are set and reviewed at least annually.

Best Value Principles:

To operate services in accordance with best value principles, with particular regard to using all opportunities for income generation, whilst maintaining service standards.

Marketing:

To ensure the effective marketing of what it directly provides and co-operate with partners in order to meet policy objectives.

Community

Encouraging Participation:

To ensure the leisure services are available to the whole community in ways that address barriers that may exist to their participation, where possible encourage integration within the community.

Understanding needs:

To recognise there are individuals that do not participate in leisure activities due to disadvantage by income; gender; disability; location; age; mobility; other factors and to design service delivery in such a way as to understand the nature of the need and then seek to meet it.

Service Delivery:

To adopt forms of service delivery that enable a greater participation by making opportunities more accessible to those with low incomes.

Benefit of Leisure:

To acknowledge the positive role that the provision of leisure opportunities has in contributing to the enhancement of community safety through its effect on individuals, the community and the environment.

Lifestyles:

To encourage health lifestyles amongst the residents of the District through their regular participation in recreation and leisure activities.

Benefit of Participation:

To recognise the positive impact that participation in leisure activities has on the on the health and well being of the community and take account of this in service delivery and partnerships with others.

5. VISION AND KEY OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 Any vision for the service should be overarching, outward looking and describe what the service is trying to achieve for its customers.

The suggested vision for the Recreation Centre service is:

“A service which provides leisure and recreational facilities and opportunities accessible to all and working with other agencies makes a positive contribution to the quality of people’s lives across the District.”

- 5.2 This vision is underpinned by a number of key objectives which identify in more detail what the service is trying to achieve across the range of its customers and services and for the community in general. The proposed objectives for the recreation centres are:

- 5.2.1. To manage the service in such a way as to balance the physical and social needs of the community with its ability to pay for the services it receives but in such a way that price is not a major barrier to access.

Links to the Heart of the Forest are:

Leisure, Arts and Culture
Secure real Best Value
Manage our Finances
Equal Opportunity and Diversity

Current Activity

Peak and Off Peak Pricing
Concessionary Pricing Scheme
Special Promotions
Target Group Pricing Strategy
Fitness Direct

- 5.2.2 To put the Recreation Centres at the heart of our communities as a focal point for community activity recognising that the Recreation Centres have a strong physical presence within settlements and have greater potential to act as a centre of community endeavours and interests whilst creating greater ownership, community identity and involvement. In achieving this, Recreation Centres will seek to be an effective additional gateway to other Council and local services.

Links to the Heart of the Forest are:

Leisure, Arts and Culture
Develop a Community Strategy

Deliver Real Benefits
Work with Partners
Make use of New Technology

Current Activity

Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme
Centre Based Clubs
Youth Programmes
50+ Programmes
Information Kiosks
Dibden Bay Inquiry

- 5.2.3 To develop innovative partnerships and opportunities for joint working and funding with both the public and private sector and also recognising the valuable part local voluntary, statutory and other agencies can play within our community. This will assist us in maximising the use of resources in both direct and enabling activity and create a greater ownership by, and synergy with, our partners.

Links to the Heart of the Forest are:

Leisure, Arts and Culture
Work with Partners
Foster Innovation in Service Delivery
Secure a real Best Value

Current Activity

Corporate Packages
New Management Arrangements
Benchmarking
Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme
Healthy Horizons
Youth Projects
Clayfields Sports Centre

- 5.2.4 To make a contribution to opportunities for education and learning within our communities at all levels to include those starting new activities as well as excellence. In doing this we will wish to provide leadership through developing our employees and structures and by making close links with the local clubs, groups and educational establishments.

Links to the Heart of the Forest are:

Leisure, Arts and Culture
Work with Partners
Community Strategy
Develop our Employees
Young People
Older People
Equal Opportunity and Diversity

Current Activity

Instructed Courses
After School Clubs
Pre-School Play
Holiday Day Camps

- 5.2.5 To provide programmes, activities and opportunities which contribute to improving the quality of life of people in our communities particularly those with special needs. This will make its contribution to the national agenda of improving health, assisting young people, tackling crime and community safety all with an emphasis on social inclusion. In designing such opportunities we will be aware of the particular difficulties of access experienced by rural isolated communities and will engage in outreach activities where appropriate.

Links to the Heart of the Forest are:

Leisure, Arts and Culture
Crime, Disorder and Community Safety
Health
Social Inclusion
Young People
Older People
Equal Opportunity and Diversity

Current Activity

Diverse Activity Programme
Disabled Clubs
Youth Projects (Transport)
GP Exercise
Concessionary Pricing

6. THE WAY FORWARD

- 6.1 The proposal from the Review Panel for a Vision and Objectives for the Recreation Centres can now form the basis for discussion by the Cabinet.
- 6.2 Only when agreement has been reached on what the Service Objectives are can the actual Business/Service Plans and targets be developed.
- 6.3 Once The Cabinet have agreed a Vision and some objectives these will then be incorporated into an overall service plan for the recreation Centres. This is also a key outcome from the Best Value Review.
- 6.4 This plan will then be underpinned by key action points with timescales targeted for achievement and linked into each individual Recreation Centres business plan.
- 6.5 If adopted, the proposed vision and objectives do reflect a wider community involvement. The examples given in Section 5 do show however, that these objectives are already a feature of the Centres' work. In future, the level at which the service is delivered would, like all

services, be subject to the level of funding available bearing in mind other, competing services.

- 6.6 Any strategic changes which the Council makes in the delivery of its Leisure and Recreation service may well impact on the extent to which the proposed vision and objectives remain relevant and can be properly delivered.
- 6.7 Any resource implications will be identified as part of the ongoing budgeting and expenditure plan process.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A greater awareness across the service of key community outcomes may well have a positive effect on sustainability through improvements to the health, wealth and social wellbeing of communities.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Although the Review Panels' proposals reflects some work which is already happening they could be seen as widening the role of the Recreation Centres and setting an agenda for service delivery which to some extent assumes similar if not greater levels of resource in the future.
- 8.2 The implementation of any new service objectives will have to be assessed in terms of resources required and decisions made with regard costs and benefits of further implementation.
- 8.3 Any future proposals which may come forward which will help deliver any agreed objectives will have to be considered in relation to any other bids for funding and in the context of the Council's overall financial position.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Vision and Objectives were formulated by the Review Panel following extensive consultation with Key Stakeholders at a special meeting of the Leisure
Review Panel. A list of Key Stakeholders is included in Appendix 3.
- 9.2 The proposed Vision and Objectives were based on an outcome of this
consultation and the key themes which emerged. These are included in Appendix 2.
- 9.3 The proposed Vision and Objectives have been circulated to all the Key Stakeholders who attended the meeting for comment. To date none have been received.
- 9.4 The Employee side comments are as follows:
We are happy to support the proposed Vision and Objectives outlined in this report and pleased to see the degree of consultation undertaken, including with Employee Side representatives.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The extension of the Centres programmes of activities into the community and particular hard to reach groups have already been shown to have a beneficial effect on levels of crime and disorder. This approach is increasingly recognised nationally as important and has been the subject of a recent report published by The Youth Justice Board.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree the Vision and Objectives identified by the Review Panel for the Recreation Centres as detailed in Section 5 of this report.

For further information:

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Background Papers:

[j:sk:bob:reports:cabinet:2002:objectives]

LEISURE SERVICES REVIEW PANEL – 11 September 2001

REVIEW OF RECREATION CENTRE

Key Questions

- **What role do Recreation Centres play in the community?**
- **The cost of running each of the Centres has been identified and circulated.**

How do you feel about this in relation to the role you identified?

- **Would you like to see any changes in the role Centres currently fulfil in order to address the future more effectively?**
- **How should these changes be funded?**
- **In summary, what key objectives should the Centres be working towards?**

Emerging themes

- **Increased partnerships- opportunities for :**
- **Funding**
- **Joint working**
- **Outreach**
- **business**
- **Public service ethos / approach**
- **Programme : diverse/flexible/ involving**
- **Pricing policies – to be within public reach**
- **Need to increase opportunities**
- **Young people – retaining/ intensity**
- **Style of delivery**
- **Access**
- **Transport**
- **Investment**
- **Ownership and involvement**
- **Cost is not just a matter of money – cost to society of not providing- holistic approach – social obligation**
- **National agenda – inclusion, law and order, health**
- **Centres as a focal point for the community and communications**
- **Health benefits of the service – physical & mental**
- **Health outreach activities**
- **Service to isolated communities**
- **Centres for learning and education**
- **Gateway to other Council services ?**
- **Centres of excellence ?**
- **Concessionary scheme needs to cover specific target groups – inclusion of disaffected groups.**
- **More family opportunities**

LIST OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Rosemary Bascombe – Chairman - New Forest West Sports Council

Mark Bramwell – Principal – Totton College

Robin Dowell – Student – Totton College

Sharon Davies – Hampshire County Council Youth Service

Larry Nelson – Manager – Totton Recreation Centre

John McKenna – Chief Inspector – Ringwood Constabulary

Tony Maw – Headteacher – Ringwood School

Simon Beard – User Rep – Applemore Recreation Centre

Christine Stiling – Primary Care Trust

Jamie Cunliffe – Healthy Horizons Co-ordinator, Applemore Recreation Centre

Barry Rickman – NFDC Leisure Portfolio Holder

J J Dawson – NFDC Opposition Leisure Spokesman

Belinda Jones – Ringwood Recreation Centre User

Peter Harper – Ringwood Recreation Centre Club/Disabled Rep