
Meeting: Executive
Date: 23 August 2011
Subject: Development of a Leisure Facilities Strategy for Central Bedfordshire
Report of: Cllr Brian Spurr Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
Summary: The report proposes that the Council consider and adopt a strategic approach for leisure facilities, "Central Bedfordshire approach to Leisure Facilities".

Advising Officer: Alan Fleming, Acting Director Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Jane Moakes, Assistant Director, Community Safety, Public Protection, Waste and Leisure
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: ALL
Function of: Executive
Key Decision Yes
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate) This report is urgent as it is linked to the exempt report agenda item EX1.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The adoption of a strategic approach to leisure facilities will allow the Council to explore fully the use of its assets in a strategic manner and support the Council priority of promoting healthier lifestyles.

The review and proposals in respect of current leisure management contracts covering the north of Central Bedfordshire and the management of leisure services at Houghton Regis Leisure Centre, subject of the report EX1 on this agenda, will allow the Council to develop and adopt a strategic approach to the provision of leisure facilities across the area and balance this provision with other ways to support the community to access and undertake physical activity to improve their health.

Agreement and adoption of a document that sets out the Council's approach to leisure facilities will contribute to the Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy vision setting out the shared long term vision that reflects the views of our residents and communities, the issues that are most important to them and would make a real difference to their lives. It will contribute in that:

- people can access high quality leisure and cultural activities and the natural environment, which are enjoyed by all;
- our residents feel a sense of belonging to their local community, and are actively involved in community life; and
- our people are supported to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and there are fewer differences in the life experience between communities.

The approach also supports the priorities of:

Keeping our communities safe - increased provision of diversionary activities for young people; designed new estates to encourage safe routes to cycle and walk.

Nurturing a sense of pride and belonging - enriched people's lives by encouraging participation in regular volunteering, sport and physical activity and cultural activities.

Promoting health and reducing health inequalities - supported people to be more active and eat healthily and reduced differences in our health by focusing on people in areas and communities of the poorest health.

Through enabling the development of and supporting the provision and operation of leisure facilities a significant contribution is made to the Council's priority of *promoting healthier lifestyles*, enabling residents to lead healthier lifestyles by providing the opportunity for them to take part and enjoy physical activity and exercise at local facilities at an affordable price.

Financial:

The overall cost of the Leisure Service for 2011/12 is £1.3m; this is after achieving the agreed savings of £437,000 for 2011/12 as identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Further revenue savings have been agreed for 2012/13 of £386,000 in the MTFP; this will reduce the overall budget from £1.3m to £914,000 from 1 April 2013, for financial year 2013/14.

The Capital Programme budget allocation for 2011/12 is £1.7m. This includes provision for: Creasey Park Football Centre, leisure centre stock condition/asset management plan requirements for all centres, Flitwick Leisure Centre condition survey and other schemes under planning services (Swiss Garden Heritage Lottery Fund Project and Historic Building Grant Scheme).

Legal:

The proposal contained in this report has no legal implications. Leisure services are discretionary; however, these services and leisure facilities contribute significantly to the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, Council priorities, Public Health agenda and the nation's health and to the quality of life of local residents and communities.

Risk Management:

The absence of an agreed Council approach to leisure facilities could leave the Council vulnerable in determining and securing facilities in the future in line with the Local Development Framework.

The adoption of an agreed approach will assist as a framework against which to consider and assess options for reducing /maintaining/developing facilities in the future, in respect of financial and other pressures the Council may face.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

There are no implications in respect of this report; however, the service has recently been restructured with loss of a number of posts in line with the savings agreed in the MTFP.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and to foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This statutory duty includes requirements to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The provision of leisure facilities that are accessible to all with a range of relevant activities supports the Council's duty to promote equality. Promoting health and reducing health inequalities will underpin the approach to leisure facilities in the context of the growth, role of the other agencies, community, voluntary and private sector and Council priorities.

Improving the environment through the creation and enhancement of local green and open spaces near to where people live can make healthy lifestyles easier for all.

Equality Analysis will be undertaken as the Approach to Leisure Facilities is developed in order to obtain a clearer understanding of how different groups may be affected and to identify modifications which may need to be built into the strategy as it is developed.

Community Safety:

Opportunities for physical exercise and other activities can act as a diversion for people away from crime and anti social behaviour. Teenagers and young people are among the biggest lifestyle risk-takers and research has shown that targeted physical activity programmes can result in a reduction in crime rates and changed behaviour away from anti social activities.

Sustainability:

Planning Policy Guidance¹⁷ states that open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life. Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental and have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others. This is reflected in the Local Development Framework in policy CS3 (North Area) 'Healthy and Sustainable Communities'. The South Area Core Strategy also recognises this.

The link between people's health, the taking part in physical activity and exercise through a range of opportunities, from walking in the natural environment to exercising in leisure facilities or through sports clubs is well known. Providing sustainable leisure facilities such as improving accessibility and enhancing green space, making it more usable to wider sections of the community; to providing value for money energy efficient buildings for leisure activities supports sustainable growth.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:

- The views of Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be sought as part of the consultation process and full details of Overview and Scrutiny comments will be considered in an Appendix to the final report to the Executive.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. that the Executive

a) agrees to the development of a Leisure Facilities Strategy setting out Central Bedfordshire Council's Approach to Leisure Facilities; and

b) in agreeing a) above, that the recommendation in report EX1 with regard to the extension of current leisure contracts in the north of the area and the retendering of the contract for Houghton Regis, need to be agreed.

Reason for Recommendations:

The Council will have a formally agreed document that sets out the agreed approach to the future provision of leisure facilities that will be used to support and justify leisure facility requirements in planning obligation (s.106) negotiations with developers, and for inclusion within a community infrastructure levy, once developed.

Executive Summary

The strategy to be developed; 'Central Bedfordshire Approach to Leisure Facilities' will set out the context in which it has been drafted; the changing role of the Council, localism and changing financial landscape. It will be subject to formal consultation with key stakeholders and by Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to a report on the proposed final document for approval and adoption by Executive by December 2012.

A detailed project plan to develop the strategy will be agreed in consultation with the Executive Members.

Background

1. The strategy will enable a clear view to be gained on the quantum and location of facilities for the area. It has become apparent over recent months that a document of this nature, setting out the rationale, strategic context and other issues is essential to assist in considerations and decisions about the development of leisure facilities in the area, facing the Council, and other key stakeholders, now and in the future.
2. The proposed approach needs to be considered in the context of the changing role of the Council, the new responsibility for Public Health and the establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Board, the Localism agenda and the changing financial landscape within which we are operating. The latter is particularly pertinent given the historical revenue and capital budget contributions that the Council has made to provide, maintain and operate leisure facilities in the area.
3. The purposes of creating the 'Central Bedfordshire Approach to Leisure Facilities' is to identify what type of leisure facilities are needed in our communities now and in the future, recognising key demographic issues including:
 - current and forecast population of the area (from 252,900 in 2009 to 290,000 in 2021 and 335,000 in 2031);
 - projected changing age profile of the population with older people representing 19% of all people in 2021, compared to 15% in 2009;
 - significant housing growth with 54,000 units planned between 2001 and 2031, (2001 2021 : 33,000, 2021 2031 : 21,000);
 - level of physical activity with physical activity being a serious increasing health problem. Currently those reported to be physically active in Central Bedfordshire, both children and adults is better than the England average at 92.4% against 90.0% and 14.3% against 10.8% respectively.
4. The strategy document will propose a view and an approach for the provision of leisure facilities in the area; the second part will consider options on how facilities could be provided and operated in the future, type of operating models for facilities and options on the role of the Council.
5. The scope of the document will cover leisure facilities, that is: leisure centres, swimming pools, sports halls and health and fitness suites and playing pitches with reference to other sporting/leisure facilities as appropriate.
6. The strategy will aim to support the provision of flexible and fit for purpose leisure facilities across Central Bedfordshire giving opportunities for local communities to undertake formal activities within strategically located sites. It will be developed to ensure an evidence led approach to the strategic positioning of formal facilities through out the area, whilst promoting informal activities for all.

Current position

7. The Council has responsibility for 6 facilities, inherited from legacy district authorities of Mid and South Bedfordshire:

Dunstable Leisure Centre
Houghton Regis Leisure Centre
Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre, Leighton Linlade
Saxon Pool and Recreation Centre, Biggleswade
Flitwick Leisure Centre
Sandy Sports and Community Centre

8. Financial viability of leisure facilities will be a key element in the future when options on operating models are considered.

Next Steps and Consultation

9. To allow time for the development of the strategy, the proposals with regard to the extension of the leisure management contracts in the north, retendering of the Houghton Regis leisure centre contract and the associated financial implications as set out in report EX1, need to be agreed.
10. It is proposed that a project plan with detailed timetable is agreed in consultation with the Executive Members to enable the strategy to be developed over the next 12 – 18 months and that regular updates are provided to the Executive Members.
11. The key stakeholders who will be formally consulted include: Sport England, Public Health, Town and Parish Councils. A number of stakeholder discussions will also be held and information will be provided on the Council web site and comments invited from local residents.

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Central Bedfordshire Together Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2031
Central Bedfordshire Key Facts and Figures : January 2011
Central Bedfordshire : Town and Ward briefings
Central Bedfordshire : Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2010 (JSNA)
Planning Policy Guidance 17 : Planning for open space, sport and recreation
Sport England Active Space Toolkit

Location of papers:

Central Bedfordshire Council website:

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/images/KeyFactsAndFigures_January2011_tcm5-33697.pdf

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/statistics/ward-profiles/default.aspx>

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/statistics/joint-strategic-needs-assessment.aspx>

Sport England website:

<http://www.activeplaces.com/Index.asp?Authorise=true>