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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 8 January 2013  
**Subject:** Leisure Facilities Strategy Adoption  
**Report of:** Cllr Brian Spurr Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Services  
**Summary:** To adopt the Leisure Facilities Strategy.

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**Advising Officer:** Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities  
**Contact Officer:** Jill Dickinson, Head of Leisure Services  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Executive  
**Key Decision** Yes  
**Reason for urgency/  
exemption from call-in  
(if appropriate)** N/A

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

1. The Leisure Facilities Strategy will support the following Council priorities;
  - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
  - Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
  - Great universal services – bins, leisure and libraries.
  - Value for money – freezing council tax.

The Leisure Facilities Strategy will support the target to ensure the number of adults in Central Bedfordshire taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average.

### **Financial:**

2. The Leisure Facilities Strategy will be used to guide investment priorities including Central Bedfordshire Council's capital investment. The capital programme, approved at Council on 23 February 2012 includes funds for Leisure Strategy Implementation and together with Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre sports hall extension totalled £8m over 4 years from 2012/13 to 2015/16.

3. The additional costs to the Council's capital programme resulting from the Leisure Facilities Strategy are set out in paragraph 39 below. In a separate Leisure Capital Programme report to Executive on 8 January, Executive is being asked to recommend that the capital programme to be considered by Executive on 5 February 2013 reflects the funding required for the schemes listed, with Phase 2 of Flitwick Leisure Centre as a reserve scheme. These costs include the Leisure Facilities Strategy requirements not currently provided for at the Council's leisure centres, for example additional sports halls and other facilities which may be developed by other stakeholders such as schools. It is proposed to develop criteria where the CBC capital programme could be used to support the development of these facilities. Underlying principles for that criteria will comprise;
  - Evidence of need for that Facilities in the Leisure Facilities Strategy
  - Evidence of external partnership funding and/or invest to save opportunities for CBC
  - Scheme provides public access and increases capacity.
4. In order to secure appropriate new on-site facilities and off-site developer contributions in association with new development, an approach to setting planning standards to be adopted ultimately as Supplementary Planning Guidance will be developed. This work will be undertaken in 2013 and will involve producing a detailed fully costed action plan to identify all new or improved facilities required in the Leisure Facilities Strategy as determined by the audit and assessment and issues and options process. It will aggregate the total cost of delivering the action plan facilities across the planned development so that new development, where viable, makes a commensurate contribution, through Section 106 agreements under planning legislation in the short term. In the longer term there is the potential for the costings to be included in CBC's Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule.

**Legal:**

5. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality. This is dealt with in detail in the Equalities section of Corporate Implications.

**Risk Management:**

6. The following risks have been identified, which are considered in more detail below:
  - Failure to deliver the Council's priorities
  - Reputational risks
  - Risk to customer satisfaction.
7. Development of the Leisure Facilities Strategy forms part of the Council's Medium Term Plan "Delivering your Priorities-Our Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012-2016".

8. The production of a Leisure Strategy conforms to guidance provided by Sport England that strategic planning for sport is essential in delivering appropriate facilities in the right location. The Leisure Facilities Strategy provides defensible planning guidance for sport, including an improved evidence base for the identification of the level of developer contributions required to meet the Council's strategic objectives for sport.
9. Other risks, such as failure to discharge statutory responsibilities, failure of partnership working, procurement, environmental and financial risks could also be incurred during the implementation of the strategy. The strategy serves to minimise these risks by setting an agreed framework for development.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

10. Implementation of the Leisure Facilities Strategy will require appropriate staffing resources to ensure the Council has the capability and capacity to deliver capital investment proposals.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

11. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and 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.
12. The improvements to the leisure facilities aim to enhance customer experience and promote equality of opportunity, and make sport and physical activity a regular part of life for all.

**Public Health:**

13. Leisure facilities are a key community health resource. The Leisure Facilities Strategy aims to ensure there is a sustainable and high quality sport and physical activity infrastructure for local communities to engage in regular physical activity to help prevent ill health, generate long term improvements in overall levels of health and wellbeing and thereby reducing the costs to society for the NHS and social care.

**Community Safety:**

14. Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act the Council has a statutory duty to do all that is reasonable to prevent crime and disorder with its areas. Leisure facilities and the activities that they offer provide positive opportunities, particularly to young people, who may otherwise engage in activities that may be considered anti-social.

**Sustainability:**

15. The Leisure Facilities Strategy will seek to extend and improve facilities so that our customers participate in sport and physical activity through a network of good quality accessible and readily available public sport and recreation facilities, reducing the need for customers to travel to other local authority areas to participate in these activities.

16. Leisure Centres are significant contributors to the Council's carbon footprint (12%) and improving energy consumption/efficiency (which also has benefits in terms of running costs) will be an important consideration as part any key emerging preferred options.

**Procurement:**

17. Procurement of consultants to support CBC in developing all chapters of the Leisure Strategy was undertaken via a Sport England framework compliant with CBC procurement rules.
18. The Leisure Facilities Strategy will guide the Council's leisure facilities investment decisions, and any future Executive approval for capital investment in leisure facilities will be followed by a procurement process to identify appropriate professional project management support.

**Overview and Scrutiny:**

19. The Leisure Facilities Strategy was considered by Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 December 2012. The Committee agreed that the following recommendations be provided to the Executive to be considered prior to consideration of the emerging preferred options and the emerging capital investment priorities:-
- i. That the Committee feels the process of the review has been comprehensive to date.
  - ii. That the Committee is unable to comment in a meaningful way on the emerging preferred options for inclusion in the Strategy due to the lack of full financial information.
  - iii. That progress in relation to the development of the Leisure Facility Strategy has been slow to date.
  - iv. That the Committee urges the Executive to consider reopening Houghton Regis Swimming Pool with immediate effect with due consideration to financial implications.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Executive is recommended to:**

- 1. adopt Appendix A as the Council's Leisure Facilities Strategy;**
- 2. in response to Overview and Scrutiny;**
  - i. welcome the Committee's comment as to the comprehensive nature of the review;**
  - ii. invite the Committee to review the more detailed financial information regarding the leisure capital programme when it considers the overall capital programme proposals at its meeting on 17 January 2013;**
  - iii. note that development of the Leisure Strategy is progressing in accordance with the agreed timetable; and**

- iv. that consideration will be given to reopening Houghton Regis swimming pool once the outcome of the new Leisure Management Contract tendering process is complete where the revenue impact of doing so will be a priced option.**

## **BACKGROUND**

20. Development of the Leisure Strategy forms part of “Delivering your Priorities-Our Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012-2016” to make sure that we are able to keep Central Bedfordshire as a great place to live and work. The strategic purpose of the four chapters comprising the Leisure Strategy is to provide a framework for the prioritisation, provision and development of sport and recreation facilities and opportunities in Central Bedfordshire. By highlighting needs and opportunities for improvement, it will set the context for decisions about the priority and delivery of local provision up to 2031 to increase take up in sport and physical activity recreation supporting active lifestyles and improving public health.
21. The key drivers supporting the development of a Leisure Strategy for Central Bedfordshire are:
- i. To create a robust evidence base on which to base planning policy/standards.
  - ii. To secure appropriate leisure facilities & Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions to accompany new development.
  - iii. To inform Central Bedfordshire Council’s capital expenditure on new/improved facilities within its ownership.
  - iv. To support Central Bedfordshire Council’s responsibility for public health from 2013 by ensuring sustainable, high quality sport and physical activity infrastructure and opportunities are provided to enable CB residents to live active lives, prevent ill health, improve overall health & wellbeing, and reduce care costs.
  - v. To ensure the number of adults taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average.
22. The scope for the Leisure Strategy is broad and its implementation is phased.
- i. Chapter 1 Leisure Facilities (indoor sport and leisure centres, comprising a range of sport and leisure activities) commenced in January 2012. The need for subsequent research on facilities in community and village halls has been identified and commissioned to be reflected in a final Supplementary Planning document and will be used to inform the development of Chapter 3.
  - ii. Chapter 2 – Recreation and Open Space (a defined range of green spaces, providing formal and informal recreational activity facilities and opportunities) commenced in July 2012 and will be completed by June 2013.

- iii. Chapter 3 – Playing Pitches (outdoor formal, grass and artificially-surfaced sports playing pitches) commenced in October 2012 and will be completed by June 2013.
  - iv. Chapter 4 – Physical Activity (a defined range of physical activity classes, sports, exercises etc. undertaken indoors and outdoor) commenced in October 2012 and will be completed by May 2013.
23. Each Chapter of the Leisure Strategy has been prepared to provide guidance to assist all parties involved in its delivery. It is intended that Chapters 1 to 3 will be ultimately adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents following adoption of the Council's Development Strategy proposed for early 2014.
24. Until the Development Strategy is adopted, once approved by the Council's Executive as the Council's Leisure Facilities Strategy, it will attract some weight in decisions reached on planning applications. Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy will not be developed into a Supplementary Planning Document, but will provide a strategic approach to physical activity together with a detailed programme of activities.

## METHODOLOGY

25. The development stages for all Chapters within the Leisure Strategy follow the same recommended methodology from Sport England and include;
26. **Audit & Assessment** - Stage 1 comprises an audit and assessment which gathers evidence using the relevant methodology and research tools for each chapter. Facilities inspections and stakeholder feedback is then combined with the audit evidence to detail both the current and future provision required to meet the sport and recreation needs of Central Bedfordshire residents now and to 2031. For the Leisure Facilities Strategy early consultation with Members and wider stakeholders in May 2012 considered initial findings.
27. **Issues & Options Report** - Stage 2 is the Issues and Options Report which presents the key findings arising from the audit and assessment of each chapter and highlights the main issues affecting provision now and in the future. These key issues are presented for consultation with a range of options to address the issues. For the Leisure Facilities Strategy consultation with Members on 8 November 2012 was followed by wider stakeholders on 19 and 21 November 2012 and with Overview and Scrutiny on 13 December 2012. The consultation has validated the audit and assessment and gained broad consensus on the key findings and issues and options.
28. **Leisure Facilities Strategy** - At stage 3, the preferred options are identified and developed into policies on provision standards and future requirements which form the final strategy.

29. **Action Plan.** Stage 4. As set out in paragraph 4 of the financial implications, once the Leisure Facilities Strategy has been approved, a detailed and fully costed action plan will be developed in 2013. This will be required to define the strategy's requirements for appropriate new on-site facilities, and to adopt an approach to the calculation of CIL and S106 developer contributions required in association with new development.
30. **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Adoption** – At stage 5 the strategy and action plans for Chapters 1 to 3 will undergo the formal consultation required for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and will be recommended for adoption by the Council as SPD's.
31. **Consultation**
- A Communications Plan for each of the Leisure Strategy chapters defines the opportunities when a variety of stakeholders would be updated and consulted on the progress of each strategy. The list below highlights the major consultation opportunities for Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy. At each stage consultation responses have been incorporated in the development of this chapter and details of these can be found in the statement of community involvement.
32.     i.    Mar-Jul 2012 – Site consultation with Facilities owners/operators
- ii.   May 2012 - Central Bedfordshire Council Member Initial Consultation
- iii.   May 2012 – Stakeholder Initial Consultation Events
- iv.   Nov 2012 – Audit & Assessment Report and Issues & Options Report
- a.   on-line consultation
- b.   CBC Member consultation
- c.   Stakeholder consultation events
- v.    Summer 2013 - Supplementary Planning Document formal consultation.

## **LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY KEY FINDINGS FROM AUDIT AND ASSESSMENT**

33.    The main themes can be summarised as follows;
- i.    There is a low supply of facilities in Central Bedfordshire. This relates to swimming pools, sports halls, squash courts, indoor bowls, indoor tennis and health and fitness equipment.
- ii.   Facilities are well located to serve the needs of local residents
- iii.   Overall demand for these facilities is met because residents also use facilities in neighbouring authority areas.
- iv.   The leisure Facilities stock is aging with the need to invest to prevent a decline in use.

- v. Facilities are at capacity and in some cases operate above the threshold for comfortable use at peak times. Additional capacity is required to reduce pressure on these facilities.
- vi. Rationalisation of the existing stock with newly built facilities in new locations within the growth area of Leighton Linlade and Houghton Regis would not serve those growing populations any better than the existing facilities locations do and may disadvantage existing users.

## **LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY KEY THEMES**

34. Leisure Facilities Strategy Key themes include;
35. (a) Planning for leisure facilities requirements by geographical areas known as Place Making areas to increase capacity of provision including;
- i. Priorities for refurbishment
  - ii. Priorities for new facilities
  - iii. Improving public access to new and existing leisure facilities at other facilities
  - iv. Facilitating National Governing bodies sporting aspirations on Facilities provision.
36. The Leisure Facilities Strategy sets out strategic and general priorities. The strategic priorities are as follows:
- West area: New Leisure Centre at Flitwick comprising 8 lane 25m pool and 4 court sports halls and a range of other sports facilities.
  - Leighton Linsalde/Rural South: Refurbishment of Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre. New sports hall in the growth area.
  - Dunstable/Houghton Regis: Refurbishment of Dunstable Leisure Centre. Consider reopening Houghton Regis swimming pool at existing centre for short term provision. Longer term, in the context of Houghton Regis North development, New Houghton Regis Leisure Centre comprising 6 lane 25m pool and 6 court sports hall and a range of other sports facilities.
  - East: Refurbishment of Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre. New sports hall at Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre, and a new sports hall at Eatonbury School, Arlesey.

## **LEISURE CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

37. The Leisure Facilities Strategy will guide the Council's Leisure Capital Programme which is the subject of a separate report being considered by Executive on 8 January 2013. Each Chapter of the Leisure Strategy has been prepared to provide guidance to assist all parties involved in its delivery, and is not restricted to delivery by CBC alone.



38. The additional costs to the Council's capital programme resulting from the Leisure Facilities Strategy are set out in paragraph 39 below. The delivery of Flitwick Leisure Centre is phased. Phase 1 commences in 2013 which involves relocating football pitches. Phase 2 is re building Flitwick Leisure Centre to commence in 2014. In a separate Leisure Capital Programme report to Executive on 8 January, Executive is being asked to recommend that the capital programme to be considered by Executive on 5 February 2013 will reflect the funding required for the schemes listed, with Phase 2 of Flitwick Leisure Centre as a reserve scheme.

39.

<b>Table 1</b>						
	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>Total £</b>
	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's	000's
Approved budget November 2012	1,000	3,050	2,000	2,000	0	8,050
Amounts approved October 2012	1040	1,446	0	0	0	2,486
<b>Budget remaining</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,564</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,564</b>
<b>Requirements</b>						
1 Leisure Strategy Development of Chapters 2, 3 and 4	0	30	0	0	0	30
2 Sandy Athletics Track and Leisure Centre	0	150	0	0	0	150
3 Houghton Regis Leisure Centre potential reopening Swimming Pool	0	150	0	0	0	150
4 Refurbish Dunstable Leisure Centre	0	0	0	2,300	0	2,300
5 Development with stakeholders	0	500	500	500	500	2,000
6 Flitwick Leisure Centre - Phase 1 - Football pitches		500	700			1,200
<b>total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,330</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>2,800</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>5,830</b>
<b>Variance</b>		<b>-234</b>	<b>-800</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>266</b>

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

40. The Leisure Strategy was subject of a report to Overview and Scrutiny on 13 December 2012. The Committee agreed that the following recommendations be provided to the Executive to be considered prior to consideration of the emerging preferred options and the emerging capital investment priorities:-

41. i. That the Committee feels the process of the review has been comprehensive to date.
42. ii. That the Committee is unable to comment in a meaningful way on the emerging preferred options for inclusion in the Strategy due to the lack of full financial information.

43.      iii.    That progress in relation to the development of the Leisure Facilities Strategy has been slow to date.
44.      iv.    That the Committee urges the Executive to consider reopening Houghton Regis Swimming Pool with immediate effect with due consideration to financial implications.
45.    In response to the Committee's recommendations in paragraph 41, Executive is asked to welcome the Committee's comment. Paragraphs 26 -32 of this report outline the robust methodology followed when developing this strategy, which is endorsed by Sport England.
46.    In response to the recommendation in paragraph 42 the financial implication of the Leisure Facilities Strategy to Central Bedfordshire Council is set out in paragraphs 37-39 of this report which is included in the capital programme Overview and Scrutiny Committee may review when it considers the overall capital programme proposals at it's meeting on 17 January 2013.
- 47    In response to the recommendation in paragraph 43, the development of the Leisure Strategy is progressing in accordance with its agreed timetable. The scope and phasing of the Strategy is set out in paragraph 22 of this report.
- 48    In response to the recommendation in paragraph 44, procurement of a new leisure management contract for Flitwick Leisure Centre, Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre, Sandy Sports and Community Centre and Houghton Regis Leisure Centre contract will be carried out in 2013. Consideration will be given to reopening Houghton Regis swimming pool once the outcome of the new Leisure Management Contract tendering process is complete where the revenue impact of doing so will be a priced option.

## **CONCLUSION**

49.    The Leisure Facilities Strategy delivers a number of the Council's key priorities. When adopted as a Supplementary Planning document, the Council will be able to use it as robust evidence for development management purposes. It will also direct Council investment, and facilitate and enable stakeholders to encourage community access to sports facilities across Central Bedfordshire.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – **Leisure Facilities Strategy**

**Background papers and their location:** (open to public inspection)

Audit and Assessment at [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Issues and Options at [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Statement of community involvement. [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)