



## **REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28TH JUNE 2016**

**SUBJECT: WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SPORT  
AND LEISURE STRATEGY**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of a recent Wales Audit Office (WAO) review of the development of a Sport & Leisure Strategy and the next steps to be taken by the Council in addressing the recommendations made by the WAO.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 In quarter 4 of the 2015/16 financial year, the WAO held discussions with Caerphilly County Borough Council and included a review of Sports & Leisure Services in its 2015/16 programme of work with the Council.
- 2.2 The scope of the review was limited to “the development of a Sports and Leisure Strategy” and consequently did not examine the wider aspects of Sport & Leisure Services such as regional working, National Exercise Referral, outdoor adventures/education and sports development.
- 2.3 A final report was published by the WAO in May 2016 (see Appendix 1 to this report) and this report sets out the recommendations in the WAO Report and the Authority’s next steps.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee will recall considering two reports (Strategic Review of Leisure Facilities, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2014 and Strategic Review of Outdoor Recreation Facilities, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015).
- 3.2 Both of these reports summarised work that had been completed in undertaking a very robust assessment of the facilities across the Authority and setting a strategic vision for the provision of facilities in the future. The latter review also progressed to Cabinet where the review recommendations were agreed.
- 3.3 The WAO work was undertaken in the final quarter of 2015/16 and, as stated above concentrated on the development of a Sport & Leisure Strategy by the Authority. The WAO produced its final report in May 2016. This report includes one key proposal for improvement which the Council should address over the next 12 months.

#### 4. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 4.1 Sport & Leisure Services contribute to delivering the Single Integrated Plan. The Service also plays a significant part in improving the health and wellbeing of our residents, improved educational outcomes and the regeneration of our communities
- 4.2 Sport and Leisure Services, through its provision of fitness related programmes and initiatives support the Welsh Government strategy of 'Creating an Active Wales'
- 4.3 Sport & Leisure Services contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:
- A sustainable Wales
  - A prosperous Wales
  - A healthier Wales
  - A more equal Wales
  - A Wales of cohesive communities.

#### 5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The WAO review sought to examine the Council's approach to developing its Sport and Leisure Strategy and in particular:-
- An agreed vision.
  - Delivery/project plan setting out the milestones in the development and implementation of the strategy.
  - Options appraisals assessing financial implications, risks and impacts.
  - Citizen and stakeholder engagement.
  - Governance and accountability mechanisms for reporting performance and monitoring the development and implementation of the strategy.
- 5.2 The WAO review concluded that the Council responded to its financial pressures by reviewing its leisure centres and outdoor recreation facilities but given its stronger financial position for 2016/17 onwards, the Council can now take stock to adopt a more holistic and strategic approach to reviewing its sports and leisure services.
- 5.3 In reaching this conclusion the WAO found that:-
- the Council has reviewed its core leisure facilities but did not yet have a clear vision or integrated Sports and Leisure Strategy that sets a clear direction for future leisure provision.
  - whilst there have been some good examples of stakeholder engagement, the Council lacks a project engagement plan for developing an integrated Sports and Leisure Strategy.
  - the Council has substantial budgetary pressures over the medium term but has not yet fully addressed the growing financial risks in Sports & Leisure Services, and
  - until recently, the Council's approach to addressing the challenges facing sports and leisure services has not been sufficiently strategic but the Council is now strengthening its project management arrangements.
- 5.4 The WAO Report has identified the following proposal for improvement to be addressed by the Council "*The Council needs to develop and agree a holistic vision and strategy for its sports and leisure services and set out how it will achieve this within the next 12 months*". In doing so, the Council should ensure that:
- there is effective corporate oversight of the process;
  - relevant expertise from across the Council is involved at an early stage;
  - there is a clear plan for public and stakeholder engagement;

- there are clear links to key corporate plans and priorities, particularly the medium term financial plan;
- options appraisals are undertaken based on a robust information base and the costs, benefits, risks and impacts of each of the options are assessed;
- appropriate consideration is given to the impact of the strategy and future service provision on economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being by applying the principles of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act;
- governance and accountability mechanisms are identified to report and monitor progress in developing and implementing the vision and strategy; and
- consideration is given to whether the capacity of the service to develop and implement an integrated sports and leisure strategy needs to be strengthened.

5.5 To build on the substantial review work already undertaken and in response to the WAO Proposal for Improvement, the Council has designated the development of the Sport & Leisure Strategy as one of the 13 improving Services Programmes which are subject to formal project management arrangements and regular reporting to the new Improving Services Programme Board (ISP Board).

5.6 The ISP Board has considered a report drafted by the Head of Community & Leisure Services and has agreed to the appointment of a Consultant to review all existing plans, strategies, policies and other documents and to work with key Authority personnel in developing an over-arching Sport and Leisure Strategy for the Council. In addition, the ISP project team has developed a brief for the ISP Board and this includes some draft timescales. This is included as Appendix 2 to this report for the Committee's reference.

5.7 The engagement of a Consultant is currently progressing with suitably experienced companies being requested to quote against the following brief:-

- (i) To establish a clear purpose for its business and other activities in Sport & Leisure.
- (ii) Analyse and recommend "placement" of the service into the future taking into account existing practice alongside exploring opportunities for development based on current and projected demand in the Sport & Leisure Industry.
- (iii) Establish a set of recommendations that is appropriate to the needs of the County Borough's communities and is affordable going forward.
- (iv) An assessment of the most appropriate operating model(s) for the Authority.
- (v) The preparation of a new, over-arching strategy, and delivery plan that:-
  - Fully takes into account national strategies/priorities as well as local needs and issues set in the context of financial constraints;
  - Places the future rationale, and appropriate operational models for Sports & Leisure in Caerphilly in accord with the "direction" being supported by Welsh Government;
  - Delivers a bespoke approach appropriate to the needs and demands of the communities in the County Borough.
- (vi) To suggest next steps as appropriate (eg: user engagement, etc.) that the Authority may need to take forward.

5.8 Obviously this is at a very early stage and future updates will need to be provided to the ISP Board and Scrutiny Committee once the consultancy work has been completed.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no significant equalities implications associated with this report.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no significant financial implications to report at this stage other than the consultancy costs of circa £5,000 + vat.

## **8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

## **9. CONSULTATIONS**

- 9.1 This report reflects the views of the listed consultees.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the outcome of the WAO review and the approach adopted by the Authority.
- 10.2 Officers to prepare suitable update report(s) to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with its Forward Work Programme.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Acts.

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Consultees: Christina Harray, Corporate Director – Communities  
Councillor Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure Services  
Gail Williams, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer  
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)  
Jeff Reynolds, Sports & Leisure Facilities Manager  
Jared Lougher, Sport & Leisure Development Manager  
Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Property Services  
Mike Eedy, Finance Manager

### Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - WAO Report – May 2016  
Appendix 2 - ISP Project Brief