



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9TH FEBRUARY 2021

**SUBJECT: WALES AUDIT OFFICE FOLLOW UP REVIEW OF THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A SPORT & LEISURE STRATEGY**

REPORT BY: INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Scrutiny of the findings of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report dated April 2020 following a follow up review of the development of the councils Sport & Active Recreation Strategy in October 2019 and to provide the WAO with an opportunity to verbally present their findings to the scrutiny committee.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In 2016 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) conducted a review of the councils Sport & Leisure Strategy, exploring the question 'Is the strategy likely to meet the future needs of the council and its citizens.'
- 2.2 The review in 2016 identified a number of areas that the council, given its stronger financial position needed to consider in order to develop a broader, more holistic approach to the delivery of sport and active recreation.
- 2.3 In October 2019 the WAO conducted a follow up review that asked the question 'can the council demonstrate that it has taken effective action to address our proposal for improvement issued in 2016'.
- 2.4 In November 2018, following period of robust and exhaustive customer and stakeholder consultation, Cabinet approved the Sport & Active Recreation Strategy 2019 – 2029.
- 2.5 The WAO follow up report was issued in April 2020 and concluded that overall the council had taken effective action to develop and agree a holistic vision for its sport and leisure services, but now needed to take some further important steps to deliver on its strategic ambition.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To update the scrutiny committee after the council formally adopted the Sport & Active Recreation Strategy 2019 – 2029 (SARS) in November 2018 and the WAO conducted a follow-up review in October 2019.
- 4.2 Despite the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, significant progress has been made in delivering against the ambition set out in the SARS.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The 2016 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 could take stock to adopt a more holistic and strategic approach to reviewing its sports and leisure services.
- 5.2 The 2016 WAO Report had 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.
- 5.3 Following a period of extensive and exhaustive customer and stakeholder consultations across a period of 10 weeks, on the 8th November 2018 the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny committee recommended to Cabinet that the SARS be approved. Cabinet endorsed the Sport & Active Recreation Strategy 2019 - 2029 on the 14th November 2018.

- 5.4 During 2019 the decision by the Authority to adopt the SARS was the subject of a judicial review in the high court launched by a local resident where the High Court Judge (Judge Swift) dismissed the challenge to the lawfulness of the decision of the respondent local authority, acting by its cabinet, to adopt a Strategy for the provision of Sports and Recreation facilities covering the ten year period from 2019 to 2029. The decision of the High Court Judge was then the subject of an appeal to the Court of Appeal and on 3rd March 2020 the Appeal Court Judges (Lord Justice Flaux, Lord Justice Haddon-Cave and Lord Justice Males) dismissed this appeal. The resident then sought permission to appeal against the decision of the Appeal Court Judges to the Supreme Court but this was denied.
- 5.5 In October 2019 the WAO conducted a follow up review that asked the question 'can the council demonstrate that it has taken effective action to address our proposal for improvement issued in 2016'.
- 5.6 Upon completion of the review the WAO concluded that overall the council had taken effective action to develop and agree a holistic vision for its sport and leisure services, but now needed to take some further important steps to deliver on its strategic ambition.
- 5.7 The WAO reached this position on the basis that;
- Following public and stakeholder engagement, Cabinet approved a ten - year sport and active recreation strategy, and;
 - The council now needs to strengthen its strategy delivery plan to set out the priorities for action, the work required and the timescales involved in delivering its Sport and Active Recreation Strategy.

Members are directed to pages 8-11 of the WAO follow up report (Appendix 1) for further details to support the above conclusion.

- 5.8 Despite the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, significant progress has been made in delivering against the ambitions set out in the SARS.
- 5.9 Officers will present a more detailed report to Scrutiny later in 2021 outlining progress made to date, however the list below provides members with some notable examples of how the SARS is delivering against its stated ambition and in accordance with a number of the key identified and stated tenets. These include;
- Development of a new 3G dual use pitch at Blackwood Comprehensive School
 - Major refurbishment of the Fitness Suite at Newbridge Leisure Centre;
 - The development of a Welsh Government funded athletics track in Oakdale;
 - Support for Lewis School, Pengam and Ysgol Cwm Rhymni, Fleur de Lys, in the development of two new 3G dual use football and rugby pitches;
 - New 3G dual use pitch at St Cenydd Comprehensive School / Leisure Centre;
 - The development of an online digital fitness platform to provide customers with continued access and support during the Covid 19 pandemic;
 - Working collaboratively with Play Wales and WG to access funding that supports and increases opportunity for play development through the medium

of sport and physical activity and enhanced play activity in our parks and tourism venues.

- 5.10 Members will also be aware of the current reporting mechanisms in place to support progress and delivery of the SARS through both the Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) and through Wellbeing Objective 5 that is reported twice annually to Scrutiny and reviews:

Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable development principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

1 – Aim to reduce health inequalities across the county borough

2 – Creating a place that supports a healthy lifestyle, including:

- Reducing the overweight and obesity in children.
- Understand and address what helps to encourage people to become more physically active.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The report has assumed that the council will remain able to continue its delivery of the SARS and meet the ambitions outlined within the Strategy in a post Covid 19 environment.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 The report links to a number of corporate well-being objectives, namely.

- Objective 1 – Improving education opportunities for all and improving the learning environment.
- Objective 5 – Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable development principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Objective 6 – Supporting citizens to remain independent and improve their wellbeing – helping keep older people involved and active in their communities.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It requires public bodies to think more about the long-term, working with people and communities, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales.
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.

- A more equal Wales.
- A Wales of cohesive communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.
- A globally responsible Wales.

The issues outlined in this report make a contribution across the seven well-being goals, but in particular to the following areas:

1. **A healthier Wales:** There is significant evidence to support the view that undertaking an active lifestyle has significant benefits in terms of reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease along with positive impacts upon mental health and body weight control.
2. **A Wales of cohesive communities:** Caerphilly County Borough Council have communicated a vision through the SARS ensuring it's effectively placed to deliver a well-connected, socially inclusive communities.
3. **A globally responsible Wales:** There is significant evidence to support the positive impact that leading a healthy, physically active lifestyle has upon the economic, social and cultural well-being of Welsh residents.
4. **A more equal Wales:** There is significant evidence to support the positive role that engaging in community activity can play in supporting people to fulfil their potential from both an educational and socio economic perspective.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equalities implication arising from this report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The report reflects the view of the listed consultees.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Jeff Reynolds, Sport & Leisure Services Facilities Manager

Consultees: Councillor Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member Learning & Achievement

Councillor Tudor Davies, Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny
Councillor Adrian Hussey, Vice Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny
Mark S Williams, Interim Corporate Director - Communities
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer
Jared Lougher, Sport & Leisure Services Development Manager

Background Papers:

- Report to Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee – 28th June 2016, WAO review of the development of a sport and leisure strategy
- Report to Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee – 8th November 2018, Draft Sport & Active Recreation Strategy 2019 – 2029
- Report to Cabinet – 14th November 2018, Draft Sport & Active Recreation Strategy 2019 – 2029

Appendix 1 – Wales Audit Office – Leisure Services Follow Up Review. April 2020