



## REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28TH OCTOBER 2014

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIC REVIEW OF LEISURE FACILITIES**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of elected Member consultation on the above review and to set out next steps.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Authority currently operates 11 Leisure Centres which comprise a mix of joint use Centres co-located on school sites and Centres which are on non-school sites and are open to the public all day. The “youngest” of these Centres is Newbridge which was built in the early-mid 90’s.
- 2.2 The reality of this Leisure Centre provision is that the stock is ageing and the level of use and subsequent subsidy varies across the Centres. This is illustrated in the table below:

Centre	Annual Visitor Numbers	Annual Revenue Cost (£) 2013/14	Priority 1,2, 3 Maintenance liability (£)	Subsidy per User 2013/14 (£)	Subsidy per user for first 5 months of 2014/15 (£)
CAERPHILLY *	280,000	384,500	930,000	1.37	1.18
NEWBRIDGE *	275,000	383,000	330,000	1.40	0.82
RISCA *	225,000	447,000	320,000	1.99	1.23
HEOLDDU *	131,000	300,000	1,070,000	2.29	2.01
CEFN FFOREST *	103,000	269,000	30,000	2.61	1.88
PONTLLANFRAITH	90,000	131,000	126,000	1.46	1.53
ST CENYDD	77,000	92,000	10,000	1.20	0.87
BEDWAS * (Pool only)	67,000	187,000	90,000	2.79	2.49
SUE NOAKE	31,000	46,000	85,000	1.48	2.14
NEW TREDEGAR	14,000	103,000	70,000	7.36	7.10
<b>TOTAL (£)</b>	<b>£1.3M</b>	<b>£2.3M</b>	<b>£3.55M</b>		

\* Denotes Centres with Swimming Pool

- 2.3 The Authority has never had the benefit of a long-term strategy for Sport & Leisure. This is not helpful in the current climate when key financial decisions need to be made and when Sport & Leisure can have a significant positive impact on the activity levels and resultant long-term health benefits of our population.
- 2.4 Sport & Leisure staff have been working on an overall Sport & Leisure Strategy. In developing the strategy it has become clear that there is however, an urgent need for the Section of the Strategy relating to Leisure Centres to be completed.

- 2.5 A Strategic Review of Leisure Facilities has therefore been undertaken by Leisure staff working with the LDP team in planning and regeneration. The review is based on key data and statistics to inform strategic thinking on future Leisure Centre provision. The document was sent to all Members on 23rd June 2014 requesting comments by the end of July 2014.
- 2.6 This report therefore outlines the context to this review and the responses received from elected Members during the consultation period.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 Sport & Leisure Services contribute to delivering the Corporate Improvement Objective four and to 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. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 As stated above, the review of Leisure Facilities represents one part of a wider Sport and Leisure Strategy which is being developed.
- 4.2 The review is based on a range of factors and statistics including:
- Condition of existing facilities
  - Actual & latent demand
  - Population & Housing projections
  - Travel distances & times
  - Education reform proposals
  - Other (Neighbouring LA & Private Sector facilities)
- 4.3 Weightings were applied to each of the above factors which resulted in an overall score and rank order for the existing facility mix.
- 4.4 It discusses a range of conclusions based on LDP strategy areas (Heads of Valley Regeneration Area (HOVRA), Northern Connections Corridors (NCC), Southern Connections Corridor (SCC)) and arrives at some key recommendations.
- 4.5 The conclusions reached within the review are detailed below:
- 4.5.1 HOVRA:
- Deprivation & inactivity are high
  - There is a need to improve strategic Leisure infrastructure
  - Undertaking a rationalisation strategy in the NCC could address both NCC & HOVRA issues
- 4.5.2 NCC:
- There is a need to rationalise Leisure Centre provision
  - Transport links good
  - 2 high quality centres are suggested, one of which should be located for ease of access from HOVRA
- 4.5.3 SCC:
- Caerphilly Leisure Centre is in urgent need of redevelopment or replacement
  - Bedwas has high running and subsidy costs so “Caerphilly Leisure Centre” development should address these issues
  - The second strategic SCC Centre should be located in Risca.

#### 4.5.4 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS:

- The school rationalisation programme is essential in helping to inform future Leisure provision
- Leisure Managers need to have a role in the design of 21st Century Schools to ensure strategic fit.

4.6 As a result of these conclusions, the strategic review includes the following key recommendations:-

- (i) Rationalise the facilities in the SCC to two multi-functional Centres offering a wide variety of provision. The centres to be located in Risca and Caerphilly. This would mean the closure of other centres in the SCC such as Bedwas and St Cenydd.
- (ii) Rationalise the facilities in the NCC to two multi-functional Centres offering a wide variety of provision. One of the centres to be located in the Eastern part of the NCC at Newbridge and the other in the Northwest of the NCC (Bargoed or Aberbargoed) to assist in serving both the NCC and HOVRA while also replacing Heolddu Leisure Centre. This would mean closure of other centres in the NCC such as Cefn Fforest.
- (iii) Where Leisure Centre provision currently exists on some comprehensive school sites, the basic facility for the delivery of the school curriculum (and community usage where appropriate) should be offered to the school in the first instance with appropriate funding.

4.7 In terms of a timeline, the conclusions and recommendations arising from the review represent an over arching strategic framework upon which future decisions (MTPF, etc) can be based.

4.8 An indicative timeline could include:

- 2014/15 – Agreement on conclusions and recommendations arising from review, user consultation and adoption of strategy.
- 2014/15 – Decision required on future Leisure centre provision in the Caerphilly basin.
- Longer term – rationalisation of NCC/HOVRA Leisure Centre provision to one potential new multi-functional centre. This will be dependant on availability of funding.
- 2019/20 awards – consideration of longer term maintenance /refurbishment solutions for Newbridge & Risca Leisure Centres.
- 2014/15 awards – commence discussions with secondary heads relating to new delivery models for joint use centres.

4.9 The review document was sent to all elected Members on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014 requesting any comments before the end of July 2014. Unfortunately only three Members responded to the consultation. The comments received have been anonymised and outlined below with the relevant officer response also included.

- (i) Member Comment 1 – History of Bedwas swimming pool and its development of the school site in 1971 in lieu of a sports hall. If Bedwas pool is to close then it should be replaced with a sports hall.

Officer Response - While the strategy recommends four strategic, multi-functional Leisure Centres it also takes account of joint use facilities on school sites. Delivery of the strategy would necessitate discussions with schools to reach mutually beneficial conclusions.

- (ii) Member Comment 2 - Querying the costs of a new Leisure Centre in Caerphilly, management of and usage levels at Rhymney and outlining the difficulty associated with aligning plans for a Centre in the Northwest of the NCC with the 21st Century Schools Strategy.

Officer Response - The development of a new Leisure Centre (or enhancing the existing one) in Caerphilly would need to be the subject of a Business Case. This could form part of a wider Business Case on delivery of the whole Leisure Centre Strategy.

- The Leisure Centre at Rhymney Comprehensive only provides a sports hall and artificial pitch. It is essentially a school facility and is not managed as a traditional Leisure Centre.
- The Leisure Centre in the Northwest of the NCC is the one that requires long-term planning and will be informed by a range of factors including school rationalisation and planned housing developments.

- (iii) Member Comment 3 - Dissatisfaction that Cefn Fforest is not one of the four strategic Leisure Centres as it appears to have a significant level of usage. Queried numbers using the pool.

Officer Response – The level of swimming pool use for 2013/14 ranked from lowest usage to highest is:

Bedwas	-	42,095
Cefn Fforest	-	58,792
Risca	-	59,140
Heolddu	-	65,845
Caerphilly	-	100,706
Newbridge	-	113,921

The level of subsidy per user for each centre with a swimming pool for the 2013/14 financial year is as follows:

Bedwas	-	£2.79
Cefn Fforest	-	£2.61
Risca	-	£1.99
Heolddu	-	£2.29
Caerphilly	-	£1.37
Newbridge	-	£1.40

It should also be remembered that the draft strategy reaches its conclusions based on a range of factors (outlined in section 4.2 of this report) and not just based on usage.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no significant equalities implications associated with this report as the report discusses a future strategy for Leisure Centre Provision across the County Borough. There are relevant comments included in the draft document in section 5 (g).
- 5.2 If the recommendations arising from the review are approved then delivery is likely to have positive equalities implications as new or improved facilities are developed to comply with modern building regulations with resultant levels of improved accessibility.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The current and short to medium term financial climate makes it virtually impossible for the Authority to continue to maintain its large number of aging Leisure Centres with a combined priority 1, 2 and 3 maintenance cost of £3.3 million. In this regard, it is important for members to realise that any strategy is set against a backdrop of the Authority having less money to spend and not more. In this regard the leisure service is likely to have a budget reduction of circa 20% over the next three years. The strategic review will therefore result in rationalisation of leisure provision to achieve a lesser number of better quality facilities.
- 6.2 The review and its recommendations represent a long-term proposal (10+ years) for the Authority's Leisure Centre infrastructure. The cost of delivering the recommendations will need to be the subject of a Business Plan which can be developed once the recommendations are agreed in principle.
- 6.3 It is important for the Committee to be aware that there is currently no provision in the capital programme to deliver the recommendations.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are obvious personnel implications associated with the rationalisation of Leisure Centre provision and these would need to be dealt with on a case by case basis in accordance with the Authority's HR policies and procedures as the strategy develops.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 The review represents a vision for the Authority's Leisure Centre stock which has not been in place since the Authority was created in 1996. The document is crucial as the Authority needs to make key financial decisions whilst also recognising the positive impact that activity can have on the health of the population.
- 8.2 The review has been independently drafted and is based on robust data across a wide range of factors
- 8.3 Importantly, the conclusions and recommendations in the review are based on rationalisation for the modern age – closure of some facilities resulting in leisure centre provision which consists of a lower number of higher quality facilities. In this regard there are recent examples across the UK where this can be delivered to result in improved usage and income.

## **9. CONSULTATIONS**

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

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and to endorse conclusions and recommendations arising from the strategic review, prior to wider consultation with service users, etc followed by consideration by Cabinet.

## **11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 To ensure that the Authority has a strategic vision for its Leisure Centre provision and that Medium Term Financial decisions take account of that strategic vision.

## 12. STATUTORY POWER

### 12.1 Local Government Acts.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Strategic Review of Leisure Facilities – October 2014