

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY LEISURE SERVICES TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Wednesday, 8 November 2006

PRESENT: Councillor Brendan Glynane Chair
Councillor Andrew Simpson
Dr M Gillespie, University of Northampton, Co-Optee
Thomas Hall, Corporate Manager
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brandon Eldred.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2006

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2006 were agreed as a true record.

3. WITNESS EVIDENCE - REGENERATION MANAGER

M Lorkins, Economic Intelligence Manager, gave the Task and Finish Group a brief resume of his role. He joined Northampton Borough Council approximately three months ago and has been tasked with writing an Economic Strategy for the Borough. As part of the Economic Strategy there is a need to look at all areas of the economy and one of these is the overall leisure provision that is currently provided in the Borough and what will be needed in the future.

The town is facing a major expansion of the housing stock with a n approximate target of 30,000 houses over the next 15 years. Associated population growth will need increased facilities.

Northamptonshire County Council is investigating the projected population for the next 15 years, and projects this to be 238,000. M Lorkins believes this could be understated.

Should 30,000 houses be built in the next 15 years , in accordance with current statistics these could house an average of 2.3 people per household (based on the last five years figures) and suggests that the population could expand by over 60,000. Add this to the current population of approximately 200,000 would give a population of over 260,000 .

The Task and Finish Group asked questions and heard:

- Most housing New builds will take place on the Daventry/South Northants side of the town within the West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC) growth area .
- Leisure facilities are a key part of the economy, as people wanting to move to the town will look for the available facilities, such as, schools and leisure
- The calculation for the provision of swimming pools as per the PMP report is calculated in square meters per head of population. This report shows that there is a

shortage of 346 square metres of swimming facility. In comparison the swimming pools in Northampton Borough Council's leisure centres are: -

- Mounts Baths 366 square metres
 - Danes Camp 212 square metres
 - Lings Forum 250 square meters (ref the PMP report)
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- From the PMP report it can be concluded that the town is currently short of one swimming pool and this is before the 15 year growth of the population is considered.
 - The Economy Strategy would wish to look at sports and leisure facilities. The decision to commission a report into leisure would be a decision made by M Lorkin's Corporate Manager/Director and Portfolio Holder and this decision has not yet been made. If a report were commissioned it is likely that a project or number of projects would be identified but the project/s would not be undertaken until further investigation were made into, amongst other issues, funding packages and business plans.
 - Funding of these project is not a simple task as there is a desire by one of the main funding bodies (EMDA) for developing the economy for high tech knowledge industries to re locate to the East Midlands
 - Graduates at Northampton Universities includes crafts, and arts sectors and the business school.
 - The Group felt that one of the reasons why the Council is interested in leisure is that it helps to make the town more appealing to those visiting/relocating.
 - The question was asked whether there were a difference in catering for the town's current population and the future population looking at the type of people that might be attracted. It was not possible to predict but was noted that four fifths of the towns population are already here and although future trend were not easy to project flexible facilities would be part of the answer.
 - If a report was to be commissioned it would be best to rely on the experts knowledge for answers and get them to give a number of options for the type of facilities that might be needed in 15 years.
 - Organisations that operate leisure services would be consulted as part of the Economic Strategy process.
 - There needs to be a balance between the public's expectations for facilities and the supporting business plan for that facility that proves viability or not.
 - The Economic Intelligence Manager was not in a position, at this stage, to give a value of the facilities required and how much they would be expected to attract people to the town. An attraction would have to be 'something special', if projecting long drive times to the facility. A major attraction can expand the drive time area and visitor numbers. There needs to be a clear vision.
 - There was no set timetable for commissioning a leisure report. It is envisaged that the Economic Strategy will be completed by August 2007. And it is envisaged that work on the Leisure Report may start early in 2007.
 - A copy of the commissioned report on the Atkins Redevelopment has been forwarded to M Lorkins.

The Chair commented that it would be beneficial for M Lorkins to consider the Overview and Scrutiny Leisure Services Task and Finish Group report when he started work on his Leisure

Report. A copy of the Group's final report would be forwarded to M Lorkins.

The Chair thanked M Lorkins for his interesting and informative address

That a copy of this Group's final report be forwarded to M Lorkins, Economic Intelligence Manager.

4. DEFINE QUESTIONS FOR WITNESS EVIDENCE (PORTFOLIO HOLDER)

The Task and Finish Group was informed that Councillor P Flavell, Portfolio Holder (Local Environment), had confirmed her attendance at the next meeting on 6 December 2006.

The Group then devised a set of core questions to be put to the Portfolio Holder in advance of the next meeting. A copy of the core questions would also be attached the agenda for the next meeting.

Core Questions to the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)

1 This Task and Finish Group's projected outcome is:-

To make recommendations to support the development of a clear and appropriately resourced Leisure Services Policy/Strategy

What do you think the Leisure Services Policy/Strategy should look like?

2 What is Northampton Borough Council's distinctive role in leisure provision?

3 What is the Administration's view on the objectives, purpose and benefits of Leisure Services?

4 How do you see Leisure Services contributing to the Government's agenda, for example, Health, LAA.

5 How does the Administration measure the success of Leisure Services?

6 What are the Administration's intentions for the future of leisure services in Northampton?

7 What does the Administration consider to be the role of leisure provision in growth and regeneration?

8 What are the potential leisure issues in the projected expansion of the town?

9 How does the Administration assess value for money?

10 What expectations does the Administration have about the financial effect of leisure services, including the level of subsidy?

- 11 What areas of improvement are needed in Leisure Services?
- 12 What do you consider to be the shortfalls/gaps in Leisure Services?
- 13 How does Leisure Services meet the objectives for:-
 - Youth
 - 20-30 year olds
 - 30-40 year olds
 - 40 plus
 - 70 plus

AGREED: (1) That the core questions as detailed above be circulated to the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment) in advance of the next meeting.

5. VISIT TO BEST PRACTICE COUNCIL - UPDATE

L Redfern, Leisure Services Manager, advised that he had identified two leisure centres that are in the same APSE family group as Northampton that are in close proximity:-

- The Dolphin Centre, Bromsgrove
- The Fox Hollies Centre, Birmingham

The Dolphin Centre was a new building. The Fox Hollies Centre was an older building, similar in age to Lings Forum.

L Redfern had recently visited Newark and Sherwood and Bury St Edmunds' Leisure Services. He found Bury St Edmunds to be a good example. The Centre had been recently refurbished due to fire damage. The Centre is run by a Trust.

The Group was reminded that the remit of its scope was about strategic issues rather than operational issues it was questioned whether a site visit would be best use of resources or whether the information could be gathered as part of best practice research. It was therefore suggested that the authorities that have been awarded Quest status, together with the two leisure centres detailed above, be contacted and asked if they could forward a copy of their Leisure Services Strategy/Policy, staffing structure and income and expenditure details. After receiving this information the Group could make an informed decision whether there is a need for a site visit to speak to the Authorities' Portfolio Holders and/or employees. Similar questions to those to be put to NBC's Portfolio Holder could be asked should there be a need for a visit.

The Group commented and heard:-

- There are no BVPIs for the satisfaction of leisure services
- Leisure Centres can work towards achieving the Charter Mark or Quest. All NBC's Leisure Centres have the charter mark and Lings Forum has just been awarded Quest status.
- The pass rate to obtain Quest status is 60%. It was suggested that Leisure Centres

that had been awarded Quest status with a 75% plus pass rate be contacted. I Redfern confirmed that he would contact Quest for details of Leisure Centres in this category.

AGREED: That Quest accredited Leisure Centres be contacted and details of their Leisure Services Strategy/Policy, staffing structure, income and expenditure details, whether the centre is IFI accredited and disabled usage statistics be requested. The findings to be presented to the next meeting.

6. SURVEY - YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON LEISURE SERVICES

The Group discussed the Money4Youth Consultation that was currently taking place.

As part of the Money4Youth Scheme, young people were asked to submit their ideas for leisure services. Young people have been asked to send ideas in for the Money4Youth Scheme so that they could be considered at the Youth Forum's meeting in December.

The Money4Youth Breakfast Meeting for Potential Organisational Partners took place on 7 November 2006, 9.0am to 11.0am, and M Gillespie, Co-optee, attended. The meeting sought to give people an idea of how the scheme works, and obtained information from potential partners about the sort of provision existing, in the pipeline already (to help Youth Forum avoid duplication in decision-making) and for 2007 to identify what sort of projects they might be able to help take from ideas into reality. Money4Youth has funding until the end of March 2008 and this factor was highlighted at the recent breakfast meeting. This Initiative gave young people ownership of the project.

The Group felt that there was a need for it to carry out a survey in addition to that undertaken as part of the Money4Youth Scheme. It was suggested that the survey be web based and the Council's Area Partnerships and Forums be notified of its existence. The possibility of offering an incentive, such as a free leisure card, for completion of the survey would be investigated.

M Gillespie confirmed that he had experience in compiling questionnaires and offered to produce a draft for the Group's consideration.

**AGREED: (1) That M Gillespie produces a draft questionnaire for the Group's consideration.
(2) The questionnaire be web based and the Council's Area Partnerships and Forums be notified of its existence
(3) The possibility of offering an incentive, such as a free leisure card, for completion of the survey be investigated.
(4) Survey results to be presented to the next meeting.**

7. OFFICERS REPORT - BASELINE DATA

I Redfern referred to the baseline information circulated with the agenda:-

- Competition

- Statistical Data

Competition

He emphasised that there was a lot of competition in respect of leisure facilities in Northampton. In particular, the JJB Health Club and Swimming Pool would be a big competitor to NBC as it was relatively low priced and would have a swimming pool. The Sports Academy based at Lings offers its facilities from 8pm; a range of schools are also opening up their facilities to the public in the evenings.

Leisure Card Usage

Regarding leisure card usage, Mounts Bath was given as an example:-

Once a week	18%
Once every 2 weeks	37.5%
Once a month	44.5%
Average number of visits Per customer per year	24.5 visits

IFI (Inclusive fitness Initiative) Accredited Equipment

Danes Camp is IFI accredited. However there is IFI accredited equipment at the other two gyms, but they do not have the ancillary facilities. The Group noted that the number of disabled users at Danes Camp had increased over the past 12 months.

Leisure Services Income and Expenditure

Details of Leisure Services income and expenditure for the previous three years were given. Expenditure rose sharply in 2005/06. Leisure services is the biggest user of all NBC facilities for gas and electricity.

Income for 2006/2007 was estimated to be in the region of £2.4 to £2.5 million.

The Chair thanked I Redfern and Leisure Services staff for providing comprehensive details for this and the previous meeting.

8. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The schedule of meeting was noted:-

6 December 2006

Agenda to include:-

Witness Evidence:-

N-Sport
Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)
NCC Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee Representative

Vanessa Brown
Councillor Penny Flavell

Survey results
Research – Quest accredited leisure centres

8 January 2007

Agenda to include:-

Finalise Chair's report

The meeting concluded at 8.35pm