



**To review the objectives of the Leisure Services,  
to review the extent to which the Service meets  
these objectives and to review whether the  
Service provides 'value for money'**



**NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report of the Overview and Scrutiny  
Leisure Services Task and Finish Group**

**MARCH 2007**

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## Foreword

The Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, comprising Councillors Brendan Glynane, Brandon Eldred, Arthur McCutcheon, Andrew Simpson and a co-opted member, Dr Mike Gillespie, Principal Lecturer and Field Leader, representing the University of Northampton, was set up to review the objectives of the Service, to review the extent to which the Service meets these objectives and to review whether the Service provides 'value for money'.

The review was a focussed piece of work that linked to the Council's corporate priorities and examined a range of information. The Task and Finish Group looked at what the needs for the provision of leisure were within the Borough of Northampton and the need for a Leisure Strategy for Northampton. Baseline information was received and desktop research carried out using the Internet. Interviews with the Portfolio Holder for Local Environment, senior staff from Northampton Borough Council and a representative of N-Sport were held. Surveys regarding leisure services provided by the Council were posted on the web site and sent to a variety of local groups and schools.

This review was carried out between September 2006 and January 2007.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'B Glynane'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Councillor Brendan Glynane**

Chair of the Leisure Services Task and Finish Group

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Task and Finish Group was set up to review the objectives of the Service, to review the extent to which the Service meets these objectives and to review whether the Service provides 'value for money'.

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

### **The Objectives of the Service**

- The Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- Improved health in the form of initiatives such as the GP Referral Scheme, Body 4 Life (Children and Obesity) and the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Scheme links closely to leisure.
- Leisure Services supports and develops local communities by positively directing energies into sport and recreation and reducing crime and disorder. There are a few partnership arrangements in place, such as, the sponsoring of six top athletes from the Trampolining Club. The athletes can use the gym free of charge.

### **The Extent to which the Service meets its Objectives**

#### **Leisure Services Strategy**

- The Council does not currently have a Leisure Services Strategy and the Task and Finish Group realises the need for one. Leisure Strategies are often produced for either a three or five-year period. A three-year Strategy would be appropriate for Northampton but it should make reference to longer-term issues such as the growth agenda and the implications of the London Olympics Games in 2012. The Strategy should seek to develop, improve and re-design Leisure Services.
- It is important that the role of Leisure Services in respect of the national and local health agenda is highlighted in the Strategy.
- It should be acknowledged within its Leisure Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- Participation in sport and physical activity by under-represented groups is encouraged through the promotion of the Leisure Card, by Sports Development promoting International Women's Day and Danes Camp Leisure Centre being designated and awarded the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) giving access to people with disabilities. The Strategy should recognise and build on this, with measurable outcome targets.

- The Council should not produce its Leisure Strategy in isolation but appropriate partnerships should be examined and engaged with in the production of the Strategy.

### **Vision for Leisure Services**

- Leisure Services' current mission statement is "*To provide a high quality, value for money Leisure Services that meets the needs and aspirations of the Local Community*". There is the need for a clear vision for Leisure Services and this should be produced in consultation with key stakeholders and partners

### **Aims for Leisure Services**

- The 'Aims for Leisure Services' is a key document but has not been formally approved by Cabinet. These 'Aims', developed internally by Leisure Services, are currently: -

- Improve Health
- Access and Participation
- Community
- Social Inclusion
- Customer Focus
- Economic and Efficient Service
- Partnership Approach

- There is a need therefore for appropriate Aims of Leisure Services to be adopted. Once adopted, all Leisure Services and Programmes should aim to address the following key Aims: -

- To improve Health
- Enhance Social Inclusion
- Promote access and Participation
- Develop Community

### **Appraisal of Options**

- The Audit Commission's report *Public Sports and Recreation Services – Making them fit for the future* provided an important contribution to the review. It identifies the benefits and objectives of strategic planning of sports and recreation provision and the appraisal of options. A strategic approach, linking leisure and planning services should be introduced, as there is a need to examine the Council's current provision, for example, in accordance with the growth agenda.
- There is a need for a 25-metre competition swimming pool in the town. The town has a very good swimming club but there is not the provision of a proper training pool for its use. From the evidence given by the Economic Intelligence Manager 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.

## **Value For Money**

- After collating all of the evidence it was concluded that from the information gathered the Task and Finish Group was unable to assess whether the Council's Leisure Services offered value for money. Regular monitoring and evaluation of Leisure Services is needed. A value for money assessment is required in the form of an options appraisal. The options appraisal should include long-term issues such as the growth agenda, the implications of the 2012 and the planning policy process. Therefore there is a need for a strategic approach, linking leisure and planning services.
- The Economic Intelligence Manager should take account of the Leisure Services Task and Finish Group report in any future assessment of the relationship of leisure of the economic of the town.

## **Leisure Services Survey**

- Thirty-one responses from the web based Leisure Services questionnaire is not a robust sample size. This questionnaire could be used as a template for future Leisure Services surveys. It was recognised from the comments received that there is a need for the Leisure Services facilities to be promoted.

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations, which are aimed at the production of a three year Leisure Services Strategy for Northampton. The Task and Finish Group asks Cabinet to consider implementing the following recommendations: -

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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## **Leisure Services Strategy**

- 1.1 A three-year Leisure Services Strategy for Northampton will be devised by December 2007, making reference to longer-term issues such as the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the Growth Agenda.**
- 1.2 The role of Leisure Services in delivering Healthier Communities outcomes will be described in the Strategy.**
- 1.3 It is recognised within the Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.**
- 1.4 Northampton Borough Council engages with key partners, including Planning and Regeneration within the Council, WNDC and Northamptonshire County Council, in the development of the Leisure Strategy.**

## **Vision for Leisure Services**

- 1.5 A clear vision for the improvement and development for Leisure Services in Northampton will be established.**

## **Aims for Leisure Services**

**1.6 The aims of Leisure Services are adopted as follows: -**

**Leisure Services and Programmes should, wherever possible, address the following key areas: -**

- **To improve Health**
- **Enhance Social Inclusion**
- **Promote access and participation**
- **Enhance community development**

## **Assessment of Needs and Appraisal of Options**

**1.7 It ensures that the aims and objectives for Leisure Services will be supported by a clear monitoring and evaluation process.**

**1.8 A needs assessment of the leisure provision will be undertaken, particularly addressing the following: -**

- **The Growth Agenda**
- **The implications of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics**
- **Planning and Regeneration Policy process**
- **Health Agenda**

**1.9 The value for money of Northampton Borough Council's major leisure facilities will be assessed and recommendations provided before any future decision on the provision of Leisure Services is made.**

**1.10 A thorough Options Appraisal process will be carried out before a decision on future provision is made.**

**1.11 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the relevant Corporate Managers (Planning, Regeneration and Leisure) for these areas to ensure that action is taken on the recommendations.**

**1.12 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the Chief Executive of the PCT and the Chair of Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration.**

## **Planning Policy**

**1.13 It ensures that the vision of Leisure Services will be included in the Local Development Planning Framework.**

## **Leisure Services Survey**

**10.14 The Leisure Survey, as attached at Appendix C, will be used as a template for future Leisure Services questionnaires.**

# Northampton Borough Council

## Overview and Scrutiny

### Report of the Leisure Services Task and Finish Group

#### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to review the objectives of the Service, to review the extent to which the Service meets these objectives and to review whether the Service provides 'value for money'. A copy of the Scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

#### 2 Context and Background

- 2.1 A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established. Dr Mike Gillespie, Principal Lecturer and Field Leader at the University of Northampton, was co-opted as a member of the Group. Work commenced in September 2006 and concluded in February 2007.
- 2.2 The Group agreed that the following areas needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities: –
- User satisfaction survey results
  - Existing Leisure Services Policy/Strategy
  - Leisure Services Action/Business Plan
  - Financial information such as the cost of the service
  - Comparisons of a sample of other Local Authorities' Leisure Strategies
- 2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities as it demonstrates listening to local people and providing the services that they need. (Corporate Priority 1 refers). It also addresses several commitments under the Local Area Agreement, particularly within the Healthier Communities and Older People block.

#### 3 Background - Northampton Borough Council's Leisure Facilities

- 3.1 The Council has three leisure centres - Mounts Baths, Danes Camp and Lings Forum - and a Sports Development Unit that creates a link with the community and the leisure centres.
- 3.2 75 exercise classes are offered over the three leisure centres. There is Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) accredited equipment in all three leisure centres. All three centres are accredited to the Quest quality standard, as is Sports Development.
- 3.3 Lings Forum
- Lings Forum no longer receives £143,000 of funding from Northamptonshire County Council, as Lings Academy no longer uses the facility during school hours as it has its own facility. Therefore, a new scheme that operates during the day has been introduced - Over 50's



days. Individuals can attend Lings Forum on a Friday, attend the exercise classes, gym, swimming pool and play bowls etc. Lunch is provided, as is a film showing at the Lings Cinema. Cost for the day is £7.50. When capacity has been reached for the Friday sessions a similar session on an additional day will be offered.

### 3.4 Danes Camp

Danes Camp Leisure Centre has been designated and awarded the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) regarding access to people with disabilities. The Centre has appropriate equipment and swimming pool, parking bays, signage, changing rooms, lifts, and lockers for disabled needs.

### 3.5 Mounts Baths

The centre has two swimming pools, a main pool and a teaching pool, fully equipped gym and a health suite, which includes a sauna, steam room, Turkish hot rooms and a plunge pool. A wide range of fitness classes is also offered.

## 4 Evidence Collection

4.1 In scoping this review it was decided that evidence would be collected from a variety of sources. The majority of the evidence has been grouped into three categories: -

- Objectives of the Service
- Extent to which the Service meets these objectives
- Value for money

## 5 Objectives of the Services

### 5.1 Leisure Services Aims

The Leisure Services Manager explained that the service has developed a set of aims, which have however never been formally adopted by this Council: -

- **Improve Health**  
Develop the use of sports and Leisure Services to achieve health improvement objectives.
- **Access and Participation**  
Provide affordable access to sporting and leisure opportunities for all and promote lifelong participation.
- **Community**  
Support and develop local communities by positively directing energies into sport and recreation and reducing crime and disorder.

- **Social Inclusion**

To increase participation in sport and physical activity by under-represented groups, including women and girls, people with disabilities and minority ethnic groups.

- **Customer Focus**

Provide a customer focused service and ensure a culture of continuous improvement.

- **Economic and Efficient Service**

Provide a cost effective and efficient Leisure Service. Increase income and reduce cost/subsidy.

- **Partnership Approach**

To work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sector organisations, plus other stakeholders to deliver services.

## **5.2 Leisure Services' Mission Statement**

Northampton Borough Council's Leisure Services mission statement is "*To provide a high quality, value for money Leisure Service that meets the needs and aspirations of the local Community*". Again, this has been developed internally but not formally adopted by the Council.

## **5.3 Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)**

5.3.1 The Portfolio Holder for Local Environment attended the meeting on 6 December 2006 (Copy of the minutes of that meeting attached at Appendix B).

5.3.2 In response to questions from the group, her views on key points in relation to the objectives of the service were: -

5.3.3 Northampton Borough Council's distinctive role in Leisure Service is ensuring or enabling adequate access to Leisure Services for the whole community (whether provided directly by Northampton Borough Council or not) to achieve the benefits described below. Leisure Services are a vehicle for delivery of Government objectives, through active partnerships.

5.3.4 The Administration has not formulated an explicit statement of objectives for Leisure Service. The Portfolio Holder suggested: –

**Objectives:** To help to ensure an active, healthy and well-integrated population across all sectors; to contribute to the attractiveness of Northampton's quality of life; at a reasonable cost.

**Benefits:** Reduced obesity, reduced incidence of acute and chronic health problems associated with inactivity (e.g. heart/circulatory diseases), improved ability of older people to lead independent lives, improved safety through ability to swim, new skills for young people, reduced anti-social behaviour through positive social activity and improved self-esteem, improved attractiveness of the town to current and potential residents, employers, visitors and investors.

- 5.3.5 The Leisure Strategy should define the aims of the service, objectives/targets and how they will be measured, who is responsible and how they will be held to account. It should state where Leisure Services wants to be in 5 years' time, for example, what needs to be done to get there and a broad timetable. It should state Council's policy regarding forms of provision and ownership. The public (users and non-users) should have the opportunity to be involved in developing the Strategy.
- 5.3.6 A high standard of leisure provision is one of the aspects of quality of life that investors, companies and individuals look at when deciding whether to come to a particular town. It is important for the projected growth of Northampton that the town can offer something attractive. Leisure facilities or activities are seen as a key part of regeneration, offering a focus for building communities and improving the environment. Growth in numbers of residents also implies a demand for more facilities, and possibly in different places. Whether or not the Council provides these directly, it has a role in assessing the need and facilitating the provision. Identifying suitable sites is a part of this.

#### **5.4 Evidence from N-Sport**

- 5.4.1 N-Sport is the countywide partnership which supports public leisure provision in Northamptonshire. The Director of N-Sport attended the meeting on 6 December 2006. A copy of the minutes of that meeting is attached at Appendix B.
- 5.4.2 The key points from the interview regarding the objectives to the Service are:
- 5.4.3 N-Sport has a three-year sports strategy, 2006-2009, and the future of the partnership has been agreed as 'Growing Northamptonshire through the power of sport.'
- 5.4.4 The Sports Partnership will have four strategic themes to which it will focus priorities, investment and support: -
- Sport
  - Physical activity
  - Community
  - Education and skills

### **6 Extent to which the Service meets these Objectives**

#### **6.1 Leisure Services Questionnaire**

- 6.1.1 The Task and Finish Group produced a web-based Leisure Services survey, and various groups, including the Council's Area Partnerships and Forums, were invited to participate. A copy of the survey is attached at Appendix C.
- 6.1.2 Thirty one responses were received from the website questionnaire and comments made include: -

- The need for additional sessions such as Yoga, Pilates, Ballroom Dancing
- The need for longer hours of opening

The above activities are already offered by the Council, and its Leisure Centres are open from 7.15am to 11.00pm.

6.1.3 A copy of the evaluation of the 31 completed questionnaires is attached at Appendix D.

6.1.4 The questionnaire was also emailed to local schools and 199 were completed by Kingsthorpe Community College. Comments made include:-

- The need for more leisure facilities in Kingsthorpe
- The need for public transport to and from the leisure centres
- The need longer opening hours
- The need for more activities including: -
- Rope climbing classes
- Astroturf
- Indoor play area
- Dancing classes
- Mixed games classes
- More facilities for girls
- Snow sports
- More clubs at the leisure centres

6.1.5 A copy of the evaluation of the 199 completed questionnaires from Kingsthorpe Community College is attached at Appendix E.

## **6.2 Evidence from the Leisure Services Manager**

6.2.1 The performance of leisure has improved year on year. For the last two years the service has focused on the Corporate Plan, and an equilibrium has been achieved offering a balanced programme in conjunction with health issues.

6.2.2 The Government has an initiative to increase public participation in moderate physical activity. It has set a target that 100,000 people per week should be exercising over the next ten years. (An increase in participation by 1% until 2010). Northampton is just below the national average of approximately 18.9% of people currently regularly exercising.

## **6.3 Evidence from the Economic Intelligence Manager**

6.3.1 The Economic Intelligence Manager provided information on the Growth Agenda and matching new builds against the number of leisure facilities that the borough currently has.

- 6.3.2 The main points of evidence regarding the extent to which the Service meets the objectives are: -
- 6.3.3 The town is facing a major expansion of the housing stock with an approximate target of 30,000 houses over the next 15 years. Associated population growth will need increased facilities.
- 6.3.4 Northamptonshire County Council is investigating the projected population for the next 15 years, and projects this to be 238,000. 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 it 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.
- 6.3.5 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.
- 6.3.6 The calculation for the provision of swimming pools as per the Consultants' (PMP) report is calculated in square meters per head of population. This report shows that there is a shortage of 46 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 (reference the consultants' report)
- 6.3.7 The Economy Strategy will look at sports and leisure facilities. Organisations that operate Leisure Services will be consulted as part of the Economic Strategy process.
- 6.3.8 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.

#### **6.4 Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)**

- 6.4.1 The key points of evidence from the interview in relation to the extent to which the Service meets these objectives are: -
- 6.4.2 Leisure Service is generally well regarded by customers and is well managed. Overall policy and aims, which link Leisure Services to key corporate goals, need to be defined. Improvement in the physical condition of Lings Forum is desirable.
- 6.4.3 It is not clear whether the service meets the needs of all sectors of a diverse community. There is a possible gap in provision for the northwest of the town, and a need to match supply with demand arising from growth. The town lacks a swimming pool suitable for competition, despite a thriving swimming club.
- 6.4.4 Some examples of how the service meets objectives: -

- Young children and their parents are catered for by special classes and a crèche.
- Activity for older children and adolescents is encouraged through concessionary rates, special sessions and the work of the sports development unit.
- Schemes addressing young people whose life styles put them at risk of ill health include the Body4Life initiative.
- The GP referral scheme and heart failure initiative apply to all ages but in practice particularly to people in their middle and later years.
- Facilities for clubs and groups during the daytime are well used by older people.
- The new gym equipment includes apparatus dedicated to people with a variety of physical impairments, which also benefits a proportion of older people.

6.4.5 Three key points to drive a Leisure Strategy for the next five years are: -

- Participation
- Matching resources with the growth agenda of the organisation
- Recognising young people's needs but also recognising the older person.

6.4.6 The Local Area Agreement (LAA) includes Government and other targets relating to:

- Promoting independent living for older people
- Improving quality of life and reducing social isolation for older people
- Reducing obesity in children and adults
- Ensuring children and young people achieve healthy lifestyles
- Increasing take-up of sports facilities

6.4.7 At present, success is measured by volume of use and income levels against expenditure. The Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) includes the performance indicator of number of swims per 1000 population (currently above target). Qualitative success is measured through the rigorous assessment involved in Quest and Charter Mark accreditation.

6.4.8 In future, the LAA performance management system will report on indicators related to those targets. The Council needs to be able to measure how the benefits are distributed within the community, for example, by age.

## **6.5 Evidence from N-Sport**

6.5.1 The key points from the interview regarding the extent to which the Service meets the objectives of the Service are:

6.5.2 The following has been achieved in working with Northampton Borough Council: -

- Every Day Sports Campaign
- Youth Games – Largest Team
- Workforce workshops – 128 attendees from Northampton Borough Council
- Provision of Active Sport
- 28 clubs accredited
- Support for Inclusive Fitness Gyms (IFI)

## **6.6 Improved Health Initiatives**

6.6.1 Northampton Borough Council is the market leader for the GP referral scheme, Body 4 Life (Children and Obesity) and the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Initiatives.

### **6.6.2 GP Referral Scheme**

The GP referral scheme is a national scheme that will continue to evolve.

Individuals are referred for a 12-week health programme by the GP, if the GP feels that they will benefit from a course of activity. The 12-week health programme comprises a guided induction and a monitored exercise programme. A health survey is undertaken and the doctor informs the Leisure Manager of the individual's capabilities. Often individuals continue to exercise regularly after the 12-week programme. If individuals to continue to use the health centres they are offered a discount to join the Council's leisure centres.

Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust provides £7,000 funding per year to the Council to administer the scheme.

### **6.6.3 Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Group**

The Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Group is a new Initiative that the Council has introduced and the Council is not aware of any other Local Authority that offer such an scheme.

### **6.6.4 Body 4 Life Initiative**

The Council's Leisure Service's Body 4 Life (Children and Obesity) Initiative has won an award. Structured groups are run by the School Health Advisors. The whole family is encouraged to attend. Each session consists of one hour physical exercise and one hour's education. Measurements are taken at the beginning of the 12-week programme and again at the end. This Initiative is seen as an example of best practice. Initially, each group comprised 20 children but it was felt that this was too large and it was reduced to 14 (plus parents). Three groups per year are taken, which coincides with school term time. Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust provides £6,000 funding per year and Northampton Borough Council provides the facility, staff and motivators such as T-shirts and water bottles. A weakness of the

Initiative is not having the resources to call the children back in six months time to see if the life change is continuing.

## **7 Value for Money**

### **7.1 Evidence from Corporate Manager (Community Safety, Leisure and Town Centre Operations)**

7.1.1 The Corporate Manager (Community Safety, Leisure and Town Centre Operations) provided evidence in the form of the Audit Commission Report 'Public Sports and Recreation Services – Making them Fit for the Future'.

7.1.2 This document provided an important contribution to the review. It identifies the benefits and objectives of strategic planning of sports and recreation provision and the appraisal of options. It states the key directions that Councils will have to take to meet these objectives. The document in particular details three options for provision of facilities: -

- Direct provision
- Trusts
- Private Sector provision

7.1.3 The document states:-

*“that strategic planning of sports and recreation is underdeveloped and is weakened by the lack of a robust assessment of current sports and recreation provision, community needs and future demands. Partnerships across councils, with the private sector and other external partners are rare. Councils are focussing on maintaining and managing the historic provision of sports and recreation facilities within their locality. Successful strategic engagement between Leisure Services and the health and education sectors is not common, and opportunities for better use of resources are being missed. This is most evident where there are two tiers of local government. There are nevertheless some good examples of the management of sports and recreation provision characterised by clarity of purpose and strong partnership working.*

*Councils’ approach to options appraisals is inconsistent and often limited despite a strong private sector and trust market. In the study’s survey two-fifths of councils based their management option decision on a desktop analysis. In a fifth of cases councils initially limited the breadth of options to be assessed and one in ten councils undertook no options appraisal at all. Market testing is limited with only one-third of councils in the survey market testing their services through a competitive tendering process. This process is often poorly managed and focussed on financial criteria. In these cases councils cannot demonstrate that they are delivering the best value option.”*

7.1.4 The Group recognised that some of its criticisms could be applied to Northampton Borough Council. In particular, there has not been a comprehensive assessment of need; the specific role of the Council in



meeting leisure need is not defined; and no approval of the different options for provision has been completed.

## **7.2 Leisure Services Annual Report 2005-2006**

Northampton Borough Council's Leisure Services Annual Report 2005-2006 gives a lot of information regarding achievements and gives a break down of each site. All three sites are accredited to the Leisure Charter Marker and have recently acquired Quest Accreditation, which is the highest standard for quality in the leisure industry. Mounts Baths was audited on 28 and 29 September 2006 and passed with a rate of upper 60/lower 70%. Lings Forum was audited on 9 and 10 November 2006 and Danes Camp during January 2007.

## **7.3 N-Sport**

N-Sport is looking to engage with the private sector, but cautiously. It is essential that there is a community-managed resource. If the private sector is relied on totally for leisure provision, there would be difficulties engaging with hard to reach groups.

## **7.4 Costs of the Service**

Costs of providing Leisure Services: -

- Income from the three centres is around £2.2 million
- Expenditure equates to £3.4 million
- Subsidy is therefore around £1.2 million

## **7.5 Retention Rate**

The national retention rate for gym attendance is three months. The retention rate for attendance at Northampton Borough Council's leisure centres is currently seven months.

## **7.6 Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)**

7.6.1 The main points of evidence regarding value for money are: -

7.6.2 Benchmarking with others is difficult given the variety of forms of provision and of objectives. However, there are networks that help to do this. The Audit Commission has recently published a study that should help to set the national scene. At a local level, year-on-year comparisons of costs are helpful in showing an improved VFM situation. The Leisure Service is one area where the unit cost approach (e.g. cost per swim) has great potential. An assessment of value must include the views of customers and community, gauged by growth in use and by direct surveys.

7.6.3 The Administration's expectations on financial effects will be reviewed as part of the budgetary process. There is no expectation that the net subsidy will grow.

## **7.7 Leisure Services Manager**

7.7.1 The Leisure Services Manager provided information on a Leisure Services quality accreditation scheme – TAES (Towards an Excellent Service).

- 7.7.2 Cultural Services (including Leisure Services) has been tasked with achieving accreditation in an improvement project known as Towards an Excellent Service, (TAES). This work is timed to contribute to Northampton Borough Council's next Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Direction of Travel Review.
- 7.7.3 Cultural Services is working with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and Sport England and has a mentor/consultant to guide it through the assessment process. The Council's Government Lead Official, Mr Murphy, has initiated the process.
- 7.7.4 Work has already commenced and Cultural Services will be externally validated on 5 and 6 June 2007.
- 7.7.5 The major benefit from this assessment will be the identification of the Services strengths and weaknesses and as a result of this a comprehensive Improvement Plan will be designed.
- 7.7.6 During the whole process staff and external stakeholders will be consulted in order to gain their perspective on the service delivery and performance.
- 7.7.7 If successful, Cultural Services and Leisure will be the only service area within the Council to have been awarded TAES.

## **8 Further Evidence**

8.1 Further evidence was received: -

- Desktop Research
- Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee

### **8.2 Desktop Research**

8.2.1 Desktop research was carried out with a number of Local Authorities regarding their leisure service provision and Leisure Services Strategies/Policies.

8.2.2 The following Local Authorities were contacted: -

- Ken Marriott Centre (75%\*), Rugby
- Furzefield Centre, (81%\*) Hertsmere
- Leicester Leys Leisure Centre (73%\*), Leicester
- Aylestone Leisure Centre (73%\*), Leicester
- George H Carnall Leisure Centre (78%\*), Greater Manchester
- Guildford Spectrum (89%\*), Guildford
- Waterfront Leisure Centre (72%\*) Greenwich
- Thame Leisure Centre (75%\*), South Oxfordshire

- Stratford Leisure and visitor centre (71%\*), Stratford upon Avon
- Sazon Pool and Leisure (71%\*), Stevenage
- Riverside Ice and Leisure (73%\*), Chelmsford
- Harborough Leisure Centre (75%\*), Market Harborough

The above percentages detail the Quest status 'pass mark.'

8.2.3 Leisure Strategies/Policies were received from three Local Authorities and the key points are: -

#### **8.2.4 Rugby Borough Council**

Rugby Borough Council's Strategy represents a wide range of regional, local and Leisure Service Plans and Policies and aims to address the needs of the community over a five-year period. The Strategy aims to act as an advocacy document for the promotion and delivery of Leisure Services and represent the whole range of leisure opportunities available to the residents of the Borough. The Strategy is intended to work in partnership alongside the issues addressed in the Council's Corporate Plan and takes its lead from the views and needs of the local population.

#### **8.2.5 Hertsmere**

SMILE 2003-2006 is the Council's first Cultural and Leisure Strategy for Hertsmere and contains details of initiatives such as further investments in leisure buildings, improved provision for young people and a greater commitment to creating sporting opportunities. The aim of the document is to set out policy guidance to inform future decisions as to how the Council develops its leisure and cultural services over a three-year period.

#### **8.2.6 Guildford Borough Council**

Guildford Borough's Cultural Strategy – With a Little help from our Friends, is a detailed, living document that covers a five-year period (2002-2007). The successes and failures of the objectives set out in the Action Plan contained in the Strategy will be monitored regularly. The Strategy provides a framework for moving forward in the cultural sphere in Guildford. It is stated in the Strategy that the Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport is encouraging every Local Authority to produce a Cultural Strategy which will provide a direction for cultural provision within the area administered by that authority for the next five years or more.

#### **8.2.7 Leicester City Council**

A copy of Leicester City Council's Cultural Division's Service Plan 2006 –2010 has been obtained. The Service Plan represents a wide range of regional, local and Leisure Service Plans and Policies and aims to address the needs of the community over a four-year period. The Service Plan refers to the Cultural Strategy for the East Midlands 2006-2011 and a copy is attached to this briefing note. The Strategy is a detailed document covering a five-year period. It sets out a vision for

the East Midlands *as the place of choice for people to enjoy, create, work and participate in culture*. The Strategy, which is driven by Culture East Midlands (the Regional Cultural Consortium) has four key themes: -

- Supporting cultural opportunities for people and communities
- Fulfilling the potential of culture in regional opportunities and in national policies and programmes
- Getting culture valued in regional policy and planning
- Achieving sector sustainability

### **8.3 Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee (Northamptonshire County Council)**

- 8.3.1 Information regarding the work of this Committee was which includes: -
- 8.3.2 The Committee is potentially due to carry out a certain amount of work relevant to Leisure Services in the current year, but this is not a major focus of its work programme.
- 8.3.3 The Committee has short-listed a review of the 'role of cultural services in building healthier communities' as a Scrutiny project.
- 8.3.4 The Committee will also look at cultural/Leisure Services.

## **9 Conclusions**

- 9.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn: -.

### **9.2 The Objectives of the Service**

- 9.2.1 The Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- 9.2.2 Improved health in the form of initiatives such as the GP Referral Scheme, Body 4 Life (Children and Obesity) and the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Scheme links closely to leisure.
- 9.2.3 Leisure Services supports and develops local communities by positively directing energies into sport and recreation and reducing crime and disorder. There are a few partnership arrangements in place, such as, the sponsoring of six top athletes from the Trampolining Club. The athletes can use the gym free of charge.

### **9.3 Leisure Services Strategy**

- 9.3.1 The Council does not currently have a Leisure Services Strategy and the Task and Finish Group realises the need for one. Leisure Strategies are often produced for either a three or five-year period. A three-year Strategy would be appropriate for Northampton but it should make reference to longer-term issues such as the growth agenda and

the implications of the London Olympics and Paralympics Games in 2012. The Strategy should seek to develop, improve and re-design Leisure Services.

- 9.3.2 It is important that the role of Leisure Services in respect of the national and local health agenda is highlighted in the Strategy.
- 9.3.3 It should be acknowledged within the Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- 9.3.4 Participation in sport and physical activity by under-represented groups is encouraged through the promotion of the Leisure Card, by Sports Development promoting International Women's Day and Danes Camp Leisure Centre being designated and awarded the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) giving access to people with disabilities. The Strategy should recognise and build on this, with measurable outcome targets.
- 9.3.5 The Council should not produce its Leisure Strategy in isolation but appropriate partnerships should be examined and engaged with in the production of the Strategy.

#### **9.4 Vision for Leisure Services**

Leisure Services' current mission statement is *"To provide a high quality, value for money Leisure Service that meets the needs and aspirations of the Local Community"*. There is the need for a clear vision for Leisure Services and this should be produced in consultation with key stakeholders and partners

#### **9.5 Aims for Leisure Services**

- 9.5.1 The 'Aims for Leisure Services' is a key document but has not been formally approved by Cabinet. These 'Aims', developed internally by Leisure Services, are currently: -
  - Improve Health
  - Access and Participation
  - Community
  - Social Inclusion
  - Customer Focus
  - Economic and Efficient Service
  - Partnership Approach
- 9.5.2 There is a need therefore for appropriate Aims of Leisure Services to be adopted. Once adopted, all Leisure Services and Programmes should aim to address the following key Aims - To:
  - Improve Health
  - Enhance Social Inclusion
  - Promote access and Participation

- Develop Community

## **9.6 Appraisal of Options**

- 9.6.1 The Audit Commission's report *Public Sports and Recreation Services – Making them fit for the future* provided an important contribution to the review. It identifies the benefits and objectives of strategic planning of sports and recreation provision and the appraisal of options. A strategic approach, linking leisure and planning services should be introduced, as there is a need to examine the Council's current provision, for example, in accordance with the growth agenda.
- 9.6.2 There is a need for a 25-metre competition swimming pool in the town. The town has a very good swimming club but there is not the provision of a proper training pool for its use. From the evidence given by the Economic Intelligence Manager 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.

## **9.7 Value for Money**

- 9.7.1 After collating all of the evidence it was concluded that from the information gathered the Task and Finish Group was unable to assess whether the Council's Leisure Services offered value for money. Regular monitoring and evaluation of Leisure Services is needed. A value for money assessment is required in the form of an options appraisal. The options appraisal should include long-term issues such as the growth agenda, the implications of the 2012 and the planning policy process. Therefore there is a need for a strategic approach, linking leisure and planning services.
- 9.7.2 The Economic Intelligence Manager should take account of the Leisure Services Task and Finish Group report in any future assessment of the relationship of leisure of the economic of the town.

## **Leisure Services Survey**

- 9.7.3 Thirty-one responses from the web based Leisure Services questionnaire is not a robust sample size. This questionnaire could be used as a template for future Leisure Services surveys. It was recognised from the comments received that there is a need for the Leisure Services facilities to be promoted.

## **10 Recommendations**

The Task and Finish Group recommends to Cabinet to that: -

### **Leisure Services Strategy**

- 10.1 A three-year Leisure Services Strategy for Northampton will be devised by December 2007, making reference to longer-term issues such as the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the Growth Agenda.
- 10.2 The role of Leisure Services in delivering Healthier Communities outcomes will be described in the Strategy.

- 10.3 It is recognised within the Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- 10.4 Northampton Borough Council engages with key partners, including Planning and Regeneration within the Council, WNDC and Northamptonshire County Council, in the development of the Leisure Strategy.

### **Vision for Leisure Services**

- 10.5 A clear vision for the improvement and development for Leisure Services in Northampton will be established.

### **Aims for Leisure Services**

- 10.6 The aims of Leisure Services are adopted as follows: -
- Leisure Services and Programmes should, wherever possible, address the following key areas: -
- To improve Health
  - Enhance Social Inclusion
  - Promote access and participation
  - Enhance community development

### **Assessment of Needs and Appraisal of Options**

- 10.7 It ensures that the aims and objectives for Leisure Services will be supported by a clear monitoring and evaluation process.
- 10.8 A needs assessment of the leisure provision will be undertaken, particularly addressing the following: -
- The Growth Agenda
  - The implications of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics
  - Planning and Regeneration Policy process
  - Health Agenda
- 10.9 The value for money of Northampton Borough Council's major leisure facilities will be assessed and recommendations provided before any future decision on the provision of Leisure Services is made..
- 10.10 A thorough Options Appraisal process will be carried out before a decision on future provision is made
- 10.11 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the relevant Corporate Managers (Planning, Regeneration and Leisure) for these areas to ensure that action is taken on the recommendations.
- 10.12 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the Chief Executive of the PCT and the Chair of Northamptonshire

County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

**Planning Policy**

10.13 It ensures that the vision of Leisure Services will be included in the Local Development Planning Framework

**Leisure Services Survey**

10.14 The Leisure Survey, as attached at Appendix C, will be used as a template for future Leisure Service questionnaires



## Appendices

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**LEISURE SERVICES TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

**1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review**

- To review the objectives of the Service
- To review the extent to which the Service meets these objectives
- To review whether the Service provides 'value for money'.

**2. Outcomes Required**

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

**3. Information Required**

- User satisfaction survey results
- Existing Leisure Services Policy/Strategy
- Leisure Services Action/Business Plan
- Financial information such as the cost of the service

**4. Format of Information**

- Officer reports/presentations
- Baseline data
- Best practice external to Northampton; e.g. Visits to other Local Authorities
- Witness interview with the Portfolio Holder
- Customer Survey
- Young People's Survey.
- Information on the general health of the citizens of Northampton

**5. Methods Used to Gather Information**

- Minutes of the meetings
- Desktop research
- Customers views on leisure services
- Young people's views on leisure services – Youth Forum to be asked to carry out the survey
- Evidence from Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee

- Evidence from Northampton PCT
- Evidence from an expert - Fellow researcher at Northampton University
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holder

## **6. Co-Options to the Review Committee**

M Burrows, Chief Executive Northampton PCT and the Health Professor at Northampton University to be asked to become a co-optee of this Task and Finish Group.

## **7. Evidence gathering Timetable**

September 2006 to January 2007

12 September	Scope the review
10 October	Evidence gathering
8 November	Evidence gathering
6 December	Evidence gathering
8 January 2007	Finalise Chair's report

## **8. Responsible Officers**

Lead Officer	Thomas Hall
Co-ordinator	Tracy Tiff

## **9. Resources and Budgets**

I Redfern, Leisure Services Manager, to provide support and advice.

Possible expert evidence and research.

## **10. Final report resented by:**

Completed by 8 January 2007. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

## **11. Monitoring procedure:**

Review the impact of the report after six months (July/August 2007)

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**LEISURE SERVICES TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

**6 December 2006**

**Present:**

Councillor Brendan Glynane	(Chair)
Councillor Brandon Eldred	
Councillor Arthur McCutcheon	
Dr Mike Gillespie	UNC (Co Optee)
Thomas Hall	Corporate Manager
Ian Redfern	Leisure Services Manager
Tracy Tiff	Scrutiny Officer

**Witnesses**

Vanessa Brown	N-Sport
Councillor Penny Flavell	Portfolio Holder

**1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Simpson.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves.

**2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2006 were agreed as a true record.

**3 Witness Evidence**

**3a) N-Sport**

V Brown, Director, N-Sport, gave the Task and Finish Group a brief presentation on Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire Sport.

It was emphasised that:-

- N-Sport had won Team of the Year 2006 in the Northamptonshire Business Awards
- N-Sport was runners up in the Community Investment Award
- N-Sport had been set up via DCMS funding and represents the county strategic and delivery agencies of sport and physical activity for Northamptonshire
- N-Sport works with its partners including:-
  - 3000 participants
  - 200 coaching courses
  - 267 young volunteers
  - 97 clubs accredited
- The following has been achieved in working with Northampton Borough Council:-
  - Every Day Sports Campaign
  - Youth Games – Largest Team
  - Workforce workshops – 128 attendees from NBC
  - Provision of Active Sport
  - 28 clubs accredited
  - Support for Inclusive Fitness Gyms (IFI)
- The following has been achieved in working with Northamptonshire Borough:-
  - Support for funding for Street Football Programme
  - Support for Quest and presentation at the Conference
  - Spring Boroughs Support
  - Promotional events – Cricket Ground and Saints Walk
  - Promotion of Community Sport Network
- N-Sport has a three-year sports strategy 2006-2009 and the future of the partnership has been agreed as 'Growing Northamptonshire through the power of sport.'
- The Sports Partnership will have four strategic themes to which it will focus priorities, investment and support:-
  - Sport
  - Physical activity
  - Community
  - Education and skills

The Task and Finish Group asked questions and heard:-

- HE and FE co-ordinators link with young people through the college structure and with Community Sport.
- DCMS funding must go back into sport. N-Sport engages with young people to ascertain the activities they require and to explain the available opportunities. It is important for young people to be aware of clubs such as the athletics club. When they are ready to develop their preferred sport it is important that they know who to contact and where to go.
- A BME (Black, ethnic and minorities group) Officer is employed in the Spring Boroughs ward to engage with young people. From March 2007, Kingdom Hall will be used for the co-ordination of a multi games

area. Basketball will be provided for boys and dance for girls. The programme will comprise of education and exercise. At the end of the 10-week session there will be a basketball tournament and a dance session. A further bid has been submitted for another multi games area.

- It is a decision for the borough and district councils to decide how they best use the Community Sports Network
- The telephone survey that was carried out recently will be used by the Government department as a baseline regarding a delivery system for sport. Benchmark data will be issued to the Leisure Services Manager.
- There is good data to support GP referrals in this area. GPs are encouraged to utilise the scheme. It is essential as it demonstrates the value of physical activity.
- N-Sport has made a commitment to roll out the Community Sports Network to all districts in the county. There is an established network in Corby and a relatively new network in Northampton.
- N-Sport is in the process of implementing a performance measurement system that will measure performance management and value for money.
- The growth agenda to the town is key. For example, when the Royal and Deringate Theatres were refurbished, funding was put in for a theatre that the town will need in 10-15 years time. A similar line of thinking should apply to leisure facilities in the town.
- N-Sport is looking to engage with the private sector, but cautiously. It is essential that there is a community-managed resource. If the private sector was relied on totally for leisure provision, there would be difficulties engaging with hard to reach groups.
- Community provision should be used in a way that encourages the use of open spaces. N-Sport has acquired information regarding community development from Cambridge that has been used as a benchmark.
- A lot of dialogue has taken place regarding how urban sports can engage young people. A great centre (Adrenaline LA) for urban sports has been developed at the north of the county.

The Chair thanked V Brown for her informative and interesting address.

### **3(b) Portfolio Holder**

Councillor Flavell advised that she took up her role as Portfolio Holder in June 2006 and her main emphasis has been on planning.

The Task and Finish Group had at its last meeting developed a set of core questions to put to the Portfolio Holder and her responses were given at the meeting: -

#### **1. What should the leisure policy and strategy look like?**

Strategy should define aims of the service, objectives/targets and how they will be measured, who is responsible and how they will be held to

account. It should state where we want to be in say 5 years' time, what needs to be done to get there and a broad timetable. It should state council's policy regarding forms of provision and ownership. The public (users and non-users) should have the opportunity to be involved in developing the strategy.

## **2. What is NBC's distinctive role in leisure provision?**

Ensuring or enabling adequate access to leisure services for the whole community (whether provided directly by NBC or not) to achieve the benefits described below. NBC leisure services are a vehicle for delivery of government objectives, through active partnerships.

## **3. What are the objectives, purpose and benefits of leisure services?**

The administration has not formulated an explicit statement of objectives for this service, and looks forward to the task and finish group's proposals. However, the group will probably want to consider the following –

**Objectives:** To help to ensure an active, healthy and well-integrated population across all sectors; to contribute to the attractiveness of Northampton's quality of life; at a reasonable cost.

**Benefits:** reduced obesity, reduced incidence of acute and chronic health problems associated with inactivity (e.g. heart/circulatory diseases), improved ability of older people to lead independent lives, improved safety through ability to swim, new skills for young people, reduced anti-social behaviour through positive social activity and improved self-esteem, improved attractiveness of the town to current and potential residents, employers, visitors and investors

## **4. How do leisure services contribute to Govt agenda for health, LAA etc?**

See benefits above. LAA includes Govt and other targets relating to:

- Promoting independent living for older people
- Improving quality of life and reducing social isolation for older people
- Reducing obesity in children and adults
- Ensuring children and young people achieve healthy lifestyles
- Increasing take-up of sports facilities

## **5. How is success measured?**

At present, by volume of use and income levels against expenditure. The Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) includes the performance indicator of number of swims per 1000 population (currently above target). Qualitative success is measured through the rigorous assessment involved in Quest and Charter Mark accreditation.

In future, the LAA performance management system will report on indicators related to those targets. We need to be able to measure how the benefits are distributed within the community, e.g. by age.

## **6. What are the administration's intentions for the future of the service?**

The administration will be discussing these in the near future, in the light of this overview and scrutiny review.

**7. What is the role of leisure services in growth and regeneration?**

**8. What are the issues for leisure in the projected expansion of the town?**

Taking these together, a high standard of leisure provision is one of the aspects of quality of life that investors, companies and individuals look at when deciding whether to come to a particular town. So it is important for the projected growth of Northampton that the town can offer something attractive. Leisure facilities or activities are seen as a key part of regeneration, offering a focus for building communities and improving the environment. Growth in numbers of residents also implies a demand for more facilities, and possibly in different places. Whether or not NBC provides these directly, it has a role in assessing the need and facilitating the provision. Identifying suitable sites is a part of this.

**9. How do we assess value for money?**

Benchmarking with others is difficult given the variety of forms of provision and of objectives. However, there are networks which help to do this. The audit commission has recently published a study which should help to set the national scene. At a local level, year-on-year comparisons of costs are helpful in showing an improved VFM situation. The leisure service is one area where the unit cost approach (e.g. cost per swim) has great potential. An assessment of value must include the views of customers and community, gauged by growth in use and by direct surveys.

**10. What are the administration's expectations on financial effects?**

At the time of writing, this will be reviewed as part of the budgetary process. There is no expectation that the net subsidy will grow.

**11. What areas of improvement are needed?**

The service is generally well regarded by customers and is well managed. Overall policy and aims, which link leisure services to key corporate goals, need to be defined, which is the work of this task and finish group. Improvement in the physical condition of Lings Forum is desirable.

**12. What are the shortfalls or gaps in the service?**

It is not clear whether the service meets the needs of all sectors of a diverse community. There is a possible gap in provision for the north-west of the town, and a need to match supply with demand arising from growth. The town lacks a swimming pool suitable for competition, despite a thriving swimming club.

**13. How does the service meet objectives for different age groups?**

Some examples - Young children and their parents are catered for by special classes and a crèche. Activity for older children and adolescents is encouraged through concessionary rates, special sessions and the work of the sports development unit. Schemes addressing young people whose life styles put them at risk of ill health include the Body4Life initiative. The GP referral scheme and heart failure initiative apply to all ages but in practice particularly to people in their middle and later years. Facilities for clubs and groups during the daytime are well used by older people. The



new gym equipment includes apparatus dedicated to people with a variety of physical impairments, which also benefits a proportion of older people.

The Task and Finish Group asked supplementary questions:-

**What in your opinion are the three key points to drive a Leisure Strategy for the next five years?**

- Participation
- Matching resources with the growth agenda of the organisation
- Recognising young people's needs but also recognising the older person.

**There is a concern how success is measured and that measures might not be congruent, is this because a Strategy is not in place?**

There needs to be a balance regarding how much money to spend but the Administration is open to proposals/options that this Task and Finish Group might propose. It may be that once options are articulated the Administration may discover it has a firm view.

I Redfern confirmed that in the past performance had been measured but over the past three years the following issues had been identified:-

- Increased participation
- Number of swimming pools per population

In the future there is the need for a robust Strategy. Performance measurement can be produced around the Strategy. The Audit Commission has published performance management measures and these could be used as a baseline, as appropriate.

**How will leisure services be determined in the light of the growth agenda?**

This is an issue that requires careful consideration as do WNDG and Section 106 agreements.

Councillor Flavell emphasised that some of the questions posed have proved difficult to answer at this stage.

The Chair thanked Councillor Flavell for her responses.

**4 Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee**

The Task and Finish Group was informed that neither the Chair or Deputy Chair of NCC's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee was able to attend

the meeting but had provided a brief précis of the work that the Committee was potentially due to carry out this year.

The Committee is potentially due to carry out a certain amount of work relevant to leisure services in the current year, but this is not a major focus of its work programme. The Committee has shortlisted a review of the 'role of cultural services in building healthier communities' as a scrutiny project that it may carry out at the beginning of 2007. It will also look at cultural/leisure services when scrutinising, for example, the NCC draft budget for 2007/2008 and the new Community Service Plan.

Councillor Eldred confirmed that he is a member of this Scrutiny Committee and commented that this Group's report might be of assistance to the Committee. When the report had been received by NBC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet he would present a copy to NCC's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee. Should the Committee set up a leisure services Working Group it might approach NBC for co-optees.

## **5 Desktop Research – Quest Status**

The Scrutiny Officer had undertaken research with Local Authorities that had obtained quest status with an assessment score of 70% or more. Five leisure services had responded and copies of their Leisure Services Policy/Strategy had been obtained. It was emphasised that some of the organisations contacted were in their third or fourth assessment, whereas NBC was in its first assessment. The average first time quest assessment mark was 60-65%.

The Task and Finish Group commented that elements of the other Local Authorities Strategies might be useful when the Group makes its proposals to what NBC's Leisure Strategy should contain.

## **6 Results of the Leisure Use Survey**

The results of the Leisure Use Survey were circulated. 31 responses had been received. It was noted that the public had asked for additional sessions such as yoga, Pilates, ballroom dancing and longer hours of opening. These sessions are already offered and the leisure centres are open from 7.15am to 11.00pm.

The Task and Finish Group commented that 31 was a very small sample but there was a need for the leisure services facilities to be promoted. There is a need for a robust sample size.

M Gillespie suggested that this could be a good project for one of his sports students to undertake and the survey questions could be used as a template for the future.

It was suggested that a recommendation of the final report could include that should a Leisure Services Strategy be developed that when it is circulated that a copy of the questionnaire be circulated with copies of the Strategy.

**AGREED: That a recommendation of the final report could include that should a Leisure Services Strategy be developed that when it is circulated that a copy of the questionnaire be circulated with copies of the Strategy.**

## **7 Baseline Data – Audit Commission Report: Public Sports and Recreation Services – Making them fit for the future**

T Hall advised that this document makes an important contribution to the review. It is useful in identifying the benefits and objectives and states the key directions that Councils will have to take to meet these objectives. The document in particular details:-

- Direct provision
- Trusts
- Private Sector provision

*It states that strategic planning of sports and recreation is underdeveloped and is weakened by the lack of a robust assessment of current sports and recreation provision, community needs and future demands. Partnerships across councils, with the private sector and other external partners are rare. Councils are focussing on maintaining and managing the historic provision of sports and recreation facilities within their locality. Successful strategic engagement between leisure services and the health and education sectors is not common, and opportunities for better use of resources are being missed. This is most evident where there are two tiers of local government. There are nevertheless some good examples of the management of sports and recreation provision characterised by clarity of purpose and strong partnership working.*

*Councils' approach to options appraisals is inconsistent and often limited despite a strong private sector and trust market. In the study's survey two-fifths of councils based their management option decision on a desk-top analysis. In a fifth of cases councils initially limited the breadth of options to be assessed and one in ten councils undertook no options appraisal at all. Market testing is limited with only one-third of councils in the survey market testing their services through a competitive tendering process. This process is often poorly managed and focussed on financial criteria. In these cases councils cannot demonstrate that they are delivering the best value option.*

The Group was advised to take note of this document particularly strategic planning and the appraisal of options. There is a need to examine the Council's current provision, for example, the growth agenda and an appropriate way of meeting this and to examine appropriate partnerships.

**A potential recommendation might be that NCC's and NBC's Leisure**

**Service Strategies marry up.** It was noted that N-Sport's Strategy represents NCC.

## **8 Date of Next meeting**

The next meeting was noted as 8 January 2007 commencing at 6pm. This meeting would be utilised as a free flow workshop facilitated by Dr Gillespie.

A final meeting would then be arranged to finalise the Chair's report.

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm

## Leisure Use Survey

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this survey is to gather information regarding current leisure service and facility use in Northampton. In addition, we are hoping to get feedback from you regarding any thoughts you might have in terms of facilities and/or programmes that you would like to see on offer. Responses obtained through this questionnaire will help to evaluate current use of Council leisure service, as well as providing valuable feedback with respect to shaping future provision. Thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to this survey.

.....

1. Do you currently use Northampton Borough Council (NBC) leisure facilities (i.e. Lings Forum, Danes Camp, Mounts Baths)?

Yes

No

If yes, please go to question 2. If no, please go to question 4.

2. Which facility/facilities do you use (please list)?

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3. How many days per week, on average, do you typically use NBC leisure facilities?

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4. Do you currently participate in NBC leisure service programmes?

Yes

No

If yes, please go to question 5. If no, please go to question 9.

5. Which programmes do you participate in (please list)?

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6. How many days per week, on average, do you typically use the NBC leisure programmes listed in your response to question 5?

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7. Are there service/programmes not offered that you would like to see available?

Yes

No

If yes, what services/programmes would you like to see offered (please list)

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8. Overall, what is your level of satisfaction regarding NBC leisure services and facilities (1 = low satisfaction, 10 = high satisfaction).

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

9. Do you currently use a private (i.e. non-NBC) leisure facility?

Yes

No

If yes, which facility/facilities do you use?

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10. If you don't currently utilise NBC leisure services and/or facilities, please list the reason(s) why.

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11. Are there programmes and/or facilities that, if available, would encourage you to participate in NBC leisure services?

Yes

No

If yes, please list the programmes and/or facilities you would like to see offered.

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12. Please provide any additional comments that you would like to make regarding NBC leisure facilities and services.

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!





Once	Three times	Four times	Five times
<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

7. Are there service/programmes not offered that you would like to see available?

Yes **9** No **13**

If yes, what services/programmes would you like to see offered (please list)

- Beginner spin classes (4)**
- Better parking (Mounts Pay and display is expensive) Parking at rear is always full (2)**
- Fun Keep fit classes**
- Salsa classes**
- Latin and ballroom dancing for young people**
- Cleaner, better swimming pools**
- Classes for aged 10 plus**
- Affordable facilities**
- Abs classes**

8. Overall, what is your level of satisfaction regarding NBC leisure services and facilities (1 = low satisfaction, 10 = high satisfaction).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>5</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	

9. Do you currently use a private (i.e. non-NBC) leisure facility?

Yes No

**9** **19**

If yes, which facility/facilities do you use?

- Overstone Leisure Centre (3)**
- Fitness First (2)**
- Duston School Swimming Pool**
- Virgin Gym**
- LA Fitness**
- Market Harborough Leisure Centre – Outdoor cycling classes**
- The Mounts at the Hospital**
- Derngate Gym**

10. If you don't currently utilise NBC leisure services and/or facilities, please list the reason(s) why.

**Private gyms closer to home (3)**  
**Unsuitable locations (2)**  
**Lack of parking at the Mounts (2)**  
**Lack of privacy (no private showers or changing cubicles at the Mounts)**  
**Poor size of swimming pools**  
**Private gym nearer home has better facilities**  
**Too expensive**  
**Leisure services at hospital are cheaper**  
**Do not enjoy sport**  
**Lack of provision for my needs**

11. Are there programmes and/or facilities that, if available, would encourage you to participate in NBC leisure services?

Yes	No
<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

If yes, please list the programmes and/or facilities you would like to see offered.

**Ballroom dancing classes**  
**Better qualities facilities**  
**More adult only swimming**  
**Yoga**  
**Pilates**  
**Bowling**  
**Latin and salsa classes**  
**Badminton and squash coaching**  
**Early morning gym sessions**  
**Social network for gym/exercise classes**  
**Adult cycling classes**  
**Specific sessions for over 50's at the gym**  
**Relaxation classes**  
**Self defence for women**  
**Better parking at the Mounts**

12. Please provide any additional comments that you would like to make regarding NBC leisure facilities and services.

**Expensive for 12 year olds to use**  
**Cinema is first rate – excellent programming**  
**I am sure they are very good**  
**Good, high quality, generally clean and cheap**

**Service needs to be open longer hours**  
**More music clubs such as the Roadmender, live bands and gigs**  
**More exercise classes, for example, aerobic and circuit training**  
**Beginner spin must come back**  
**Class programme changes without consultation**

**Centre was not very clean last time I used it**  
**Too dirty and not very well run**  
**Floor in dance studio is always dirty**  
**Exercise equipment is dirty**  
**Need to improve the cleanliness of the centres, especially at Lings Forum**  
**Ladies showers at Mounts baths do not drain properly**  
**Need regular maintenance of spin bikes**  
**Pubs, clubs and fast food open 24 hours – distinct lack of anywhere healthy to go**  
**Lack of healthy snacks and no fair-trade**  
**Need improved food service**  
**Do not like Lings or Danes Camp**  
**“Less Chavs”**



6. How many days per week, on average, do you typically use the NBC leisure programmes listed in your response to question 5?

Once	Two Times	Three times	Four times	Five times	Once a month
<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

7. Are there service/programmes not offered that you would like to see available?

Yes **29** No **32**

If yes, what services/programmes would you like to see offered (please list)

<b>Slide waves (3)</b>	<b>Boxing (2)</b>	<b>Martial arts (5)</b>	<b>gymnastics</b>
<b>Skateboarding (2)</b>	<b>Skiing/snowboarding</b>		<b>bike classes</b>
<b>Dance classes</b>	<b>Ice Rink (3)</b>	<b>Rock climbing</b>	<b>Camping at weekends</b>
<b>Golf classes</b>			

8. Overall, what is your level of satisfaction regarding NBC leisure services and facilities (1 = low satisfaction, 10 = high satisfaction).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>2</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>

9. Do you currently use a private (i.e. non-NBC) leisure facility?

Yes No

**38** **136**

If yes, which facility/facilities do you use?

<b>Swimming (7)</b>	<b>MK (2)</b>	<b>Benham Sports (8)</b>	<b>Sol Central (3)</b>
<b>Cripps (3)</b>	<b>Overstone Pool</b>	<b>Esporta</b>	
<b>Brampton Riding Stables</b>	<b>Lazer Zone</b>	<b>Virgin Gym</b>	<b>Jogging Club</b>
<b>Towcester Pool</b>			
<b>Market Harborough Pool</b>			

10. If you don't currently utilise NBC leisure services and/or facilities, please list the reason(s) why.

<b>Cost of facilities (33)</b>	<b>Location (25)</b>	<b>Lack of time (11)</b>
<b>Waste of time (3)</b>	<b>Boring (3)</b>	<b>Too busy (5)</b>
<b>Parents' dislike centres</b>	<b>Parents cant take me (7)</b>	
<b>Not much for me</b>	<b>Opening hours</b>	<b>Need to be tidier (2)</b>
<b>Boring swimming on own</b>		

11. Are there programmes and/or facilities that, if available, would encourage you to participate in NBC leisure services?

Yes	No
<b>101</b>	<b>87</b>

If yes, please list the programmes and/or facilities you would like to see offered.

<b>Basketball (9)</b>	<b>Snooker (2)</b>	<b>Water slides/waves (10)</b>
<b>Skiing (2)</b>	<b>More children time in pool(2)</b>	<b>Football (7)</b>
<b>Dance (9)</b>	<b>Skating (11)</b>	<b>Rock climbing (4)</b>
<b>Ice skating (7)</b>	<b>Martial arts (3)</b>	<b>Rugby (2)</b>
<b>Boxing (2)</b>	<b>Swimming (3)</b>	<b>Snowboarding</b>
<b>Golf</b>	<b>Wrestling</b>	<b>Youth club</b>
<b>Ropes, zip wire</b>	<b>Abseiling</b>	<b>bowling</b>
<b>Roller jam</b>	<b>More sports teams</b>	<b>Acting</b>
<b>Majorettes</b>	<b>Table tennis</b>	<b>Snooker</b>
<b>Poker for children</b>	<b>Tanning beds</b>	<b>Cricket</b>
<b>Tennis</b>	<b>Discount for peak use</b>	

12. Please provide any additional comments that you would like to make regarding NBC leisure facilities and services.

**More leisure facilities in Kingsthorpe (33)**  
**Buses to and from the leisure centres (12)**  
**Cleaner facilities (9)**  
**Good facilities (5)**  
**Mounts Baths needs improving/decoration (4)**  
**Need for a skateboarding track (2)**  
**Need for cheaper facilities (3)**  
**Need more leisure activities (2)**  
**Mounts baths is very small (3)**  
**Need more swimming pools (2)**  
**Too expensive (4)**  
**Need skating lessons (2)**  
**Need more leisure centres (2)**  
**Pools too busy (4)**  
**Need more water slides (3)**  
**Need diving facilities (2)**  
**Facilities are average**  
**Lings Forum is good**  
**More staff is required**  
**More maps are needed**  
**Facilities are good**  
**Facilities are average**  
**Instructors are friendly**  
**More changing rooms required**  
**Heat of pool is inadequate**  
**Need longer opening hours**

**Leisure Centres are well organised**

**Refreshments could be cheaper**

**There should be free swimming lessons for children**

**Unfriendly clients**

**Need:-**

**Rope climbing classes**

**Astroturf**

**Indoor play area**

**Dancing classes**

**Mixed games classes**

**More facilities for girls (2)**

**“Escape”**

**Snowsports**

**More clubs at the leisure centres**

**Free water should be provided at gyms**

**Need longer opening hours**

**More and better lockers are required**