

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 MARCH 2012

SUBJECT:	<i>PROVIDE & MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY VALUE FOR MONEY LEISURE & CULTURE FACILITIES FOR WIRRAL RESIDENTS - UPDATE REPORT</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ALL</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES</i>
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	<i>COUNCILLOR LESLEY RENNIE CULTURE, TOURISM AND LEISURE</i>
KEY DECISION?	<i>NO</i>

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report updates Members on the current position of the Technical Services Delivery Plan that supports the Corporate Goal: 'Provide and maintain high quality, value for money leisure and cultural facilities for Wirral Residents' for which the key activity within the Departmental Plan is to 'Promote the Council's leisure facilities to encourage greater take-up of services'.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 In 2009 Cabinet approved a general marketing plan which included specific support for the promotion of the Council's Leisure centres. A marketing specialist from the Corporate Marketing Team was assigned to work full time on the development and implementation of a 'Sport and Recreation' Marketing Strategy.

The final strategy included projects and developments in **four** key areas;-

- The promotion and development of the Invigor8 product.
- The promotion of a targeted piece of work in partnership with the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) to increase adult participation.
- Building on the euphoria generated by the London 2012 Olympic Games.
- Promotion and development of Community Sports initiatives.

2.2 Promotion and development of the Invigor8 product

The Invigor8 product was launched in 2005 with the aim of increasing adult participation by offering a package of facilities that customers could use for a one off monthly fee. This included swimming, use of the fitness suite, squash courts and all sports courses were just some of the facilities available to customers during public opening hours. There are presently seven and a half thousand members realising about £150,000 per month to the Council and even in times of recession, this figure is growing. Planned fitness suite refurbishments at West Kirby Concourse and the Oval Leisure Centre and equipment renewals at Europa Pools, Leasowe Leisure and West

Kirby Centres should ensure that this figure continues to grow. An investment of £320,000 has now been made in renewing fitness equipment which is funded from the improved income levels and obviously will further enhance the “offer” to Wirral residents.

2.3 Promotion of adult participation in partnership with the ASA

In 2010 we were approached by the ASA to work in partnership with them on a targeted piece of promotional work, with the aim of increasing opportunities for customers to participate in a wide range of aquatic activities. The promotion plan was based on the market segmentation data in and around Leisure Centres (information on the age, gender, status of people in an area, plus assumptions on the likelihood to participate or otherwise in swimming activities) and involved reviewing swimming pool opening times, the promotion of specific aqua classes, promotion of the 60 plus swimming awareness campaign and promotion of the ‘Big Splash’ project.

2.4 Building on the euphoria of the London 2012 Olympic Games

With the upcoming arrival of the London 2012 Olympic Games, Sport and Recreation are looking to build on euphoria of the Games and engage with current and potentially new customers, by offering a full range of sports and physical activity programmes, these include:-

- Countdown activities – promotion of those events, games and organised activities linked to the Games in the weeks leading up to start of the Games.
- The Olympic Torch Relay in Birkenhead Park – the Torch will be coming to the Wirral on 1st June 2012 and will be working its way from the Wallasey Tunnel, to Birkenhead Park and then through Birkenhead to the Woodside Ferry Terminal. There will be a host of targeted activity organised by Schools and the Community within the Park celebrating everything that good about inter school competition and links to community clubs and organisations.
- Leisure Centre Legacy Exercise – targeted sports courses and Clubs within Leisure Centres to promote our own programmes and activities at the time of the Games.

2.5 Sports Development / Community Development

The Sport Development Unit delivers a number of projects that encourages individuals and community groups to take up sport and benefit from all sport has to offer, including healthier lifestyles, safer communities, improved opportunities for employment and community cohesion.

With external funding, the Unit works with targeted and vulnerable groups of all ages particularly in areas of deprivation (although not exclusively) to develop and deliver a range of activities from women’s only cycling groups, to running, boxercise, Zumba classes and football. Activities are delivered in both leisure centres and community settings

2.6 Sport England commissioned MORI to conduct a nation wide biannual survey, to measure the number of adults participating in at least 3 x 30 minutes of physical

activity every week. This was in part to contribute to the Government's aim of increasing adult participation by 1% year on year. This in turn was in response to London being awarded the London 2012 Olympic Games back in 2005 and Lord Coe's promise to inspire more young people to play more sport.

In 2005/6 Wirral's NI8 survey results indicated that 19.5% of the adult population were taking part in at least 3 x 30 minutes of physical activity per week. In 2009/11 the percentage was 25.5%, an increase of 6% in 5 years with Wirral being one of the very few Local Authorities achieving the Government's target and in terms of overall NI8 performance, being in the top 10% of Local Authorities in the country.

2.7 Access to Leisure Centres for Vulnerable Groups

A report was considered by the Scrutiny Committee in September 2011 on the provision made to increase access to Leisure Centres by vulnerable groups. This includes the Wirral Passport scheme and Lifestyles Health Referral Scheme and a targeted physical activity programme funded by the PCT. A more detailed update will be provided in June including recommendations for improvements to the Passport Scheme.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 Lack of investments in the fabric and equipment provided in Leisure Centres could result in a reduction in income.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No other options were considered in the preparation of this report.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 During 2011/ 2012 two specific customer consultations were undertaken to find out what was working well and what was not, both in terms of the provision of activities on offer at our leisure centres and the opinions of our users/ members.

Overall feedback was rated, across the board, as predominantly Excellent/ Good. Highlights include:

- 79% said that the choice of classes/activities was 'average' or better (58% 'good' or 'very good')
- 78% rated the availability of information average or better

- 5.2 In summing up and in terms of majority opinion, the reoccurring theme in terms of comments related to leisure centre staff with over 88% of respondents stating helpfulness and friendliness of staff was an influencing factor to repeat visits.
- 5.3 A second, more subject specific, consultation was carried out in August/ September. This was based on the recreational habits of our centre users with the aim being to find out preferred swim/ fitness suite times and their motivations.

- 5.4 With centre usage in mind, almost 75% of respondents identified swimming as the most common activity undertaken. Of this audience over half use the pool more than once a month. (22% more than once a week).
- 5.5 With fitness suite usage in mind, 39% used the facility at least once a month. Of this audience both early mornings and late evenings is the preferred time of day for participation.
- 5.6 The conclusion was that the fitness suites would be well used if it opened from 7.00 – 9.00am and that swimming pools would be well used if it opened from 7.00 – 9.00am. This is supported by the fact that 49% of respondents said that the current opening hours stopped them from swimming more.
- 5.7 Only 10% of respondents said that cost was an issue that stopped them from swimming. This suggests that the pricing of swimming is acceptable for the vast majority of customers.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 6.1 Most sports clubs are run by volunteers and the Sports Development Team actively encourages their involvement and development.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(b) No because there is no relevance to equality.

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 12.1 Members are requested to note the progress in achieving the Corporate Goal outlined in this report.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 13.1 The purpose of this report is to keep Members apprised of the progress in achieving this important Corporate Goal.

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APPENDICES

None

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	