



Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee
23rd November 2020

REPORT TITLE:	The Development of a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral
REPORT OF:	Director of Neighbourhood Services

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the committee with the basis for a future strategy for “Sport and Physical Activity” on Wirral (formerly the Leisure Strategy).

The key focus of the strategy is to set out the priorities for sport and leisure facilities, services and activities and seeks to redress the balance between being a provider of facilities and tackling inequality through preventative, outreach and early intervention and prevention work across services. It is not a statutory requirement to have a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, but it is seen as good practice to outline the Council’s plans for leisure services for the period 2020-2025 based on the evidence base and emerging COVID19 landscape.

The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy will guide and influence both internal and external teams as well as external partners and investors including Planning Teams, Public Health, Constituency Team, Children’s and Adult Services, national governing bodies, local sports clubs, and community groups. It will also link, support, and complement other strategic documents across Council services - children’s, adults, and regeneration to name but a few, both established and in development.

The Vision for the Strategy is:

“To work with our residents and partners to provide accessible and affordable services that help to make physical activity a part of everyone's everyday lives”.

The strategy will therefore represent an important next step in how we help our residents to take up physical activity and remain active throughout their lives. The strategy will cover four key strategic priorities:

- Active people
- Active partnerships
- Active places
- Active open spaces

By engaging with our communities across these themes, we aim to engage with all our residents across the borough, ensuring a collaborative and inclusive approach to meet the needs of our communities. This strategy will support in the reduction of inequalities across the borough, from a sport and physical activity perspective. The Council remains ambitious about

delivering more support and services for our residents to ensure they have access to the best quality resources and facilities.

This is a key decision which affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is requested to;

- (1) Note and approve the new outline Sport and Physical Activity Strategy presented in this report and the accompanying appendix.
- (2) Authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to engage with residents, communities, and other stakeholders to design and deliver a fit-for-purpose and sustainable service that meets the differing needs of the communities within Wirral.
- (3) Include the strategy within the Committee's ongoing work programme.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 One of the challenges Wirral faces is reducing the stark health inequalities which exist between different parts of the borough and improving the life chances for all. Sport and physical activity can contribute significantly towards combatting this, due to its well documented and scientifically proven potential in improving a person's physical and mental wellbeing, individual development, and social and community development.
- 1.2 The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy will guide and influence both internal teams and external partners, Planning Teams, Public Health, Constituency Team, Children's and Adult Services, national governing bodies, local sports clubs, and community groups. We want any final strategy to be a consideration in planning decisions, the development of planning policy and the community funding panel decisions. The strategy will also be a key document that articulates the needs of Wirral residents as part of the Wirral Plan 2025.
- 1.3 It is not a statutory requirement to have a Sport and Physical Activity strategy, but it is seen as good practice in setting out the Council's priorities and plans for meeting sport and leisure needs. The Council's previous Leisure Strategy aligned with the Wirral Plan 2020 and placed a significant emphasis on outdoor spaces and tourism. In seeking to support the new Wirral 2025 Plan, this strategy, whilst continuing to support the benefits of outdoor space, will place a greater emphasis on inequality and the need to tackle the significant degree of health inequality across our Borough – magnified by the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic. It is not therefore a standalone strategy, but one which will be engineered towards population health.
- 1.4 The Sport England, Active Lives Survey (18/19) reports that 64% of people in Wirral are physically active (above the national average of 63.3%) with 22.6% of people physically inactive which means they do less than 30 minutes of weekly activity at a moderate level. The number of 'active' people in Wirral has been increasing since November 2014/15 from 159,500 to 168,300 and the number of inactive people has

been decreasing from 65,800 to 59,300. It is critical that as a borough we provide an offer that encourages and enables this audience to build physical activity into their everyday lives.

1.5 The benefits of our residents becoming more physically active result in a reduction in:

- The risk of diabetes by 50%
- The risk of developing mental health conditions and dementia by 30%
- The risk of Coronary Heart Disease and Stroke by 35%
- The likelihood of reduced loneliness and social isolation
- Reduced Involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime

As well as,

- Increases in skills development and academic achievement.

1.6 In 2014 it was estimated that the health cost of inactivity in Wirral related to cancer (GI), breast cancer, diabetes, coronary heart disease and cerebrovascular disease (stroke) was £7.3 million. ¹

1.7 Sport England commissioned the Sport Industry Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University to calculate the social impact and the economic importance of sport and physical activity in England. They found that when measured against costs of engagement and providing opportunities, for every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity, a return on investment of £3.91 was created for individuals and society. Across England the combined economic and social value of taking part in community sport and physical activity was £85.5billion (2017/18) (Measuring the Social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England, 2020).

1.8 Increasing physical activity has direct benefits for the local environment. Increasing the number of journeys made on foot or by bicycle will provide beneficial reductions in CO2 emissions that will significantly contribute to the Cool 2 climate change strategy for Wirral agenda.

1.9 This strategy will be the overarching document that supports the Draft Indoor and Built Facilities Strategy (2019) and will provide residents, external funders and all other stakeholders with the confidence in the borough's ability to work collaboratively in a range of ways to increase physical activity.

1.10 In developing a new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy which is fully aligned with the Wirral Plan 2025, we will further strengthen the working cross-working with internal and external services and partnerships to focus on prevention and intervention for better outcomes. We see this strategy as the first step in the Council becoming and being an "enabler of activity for the benefit of health and wellbeing."

1.11 The strategy will contribute towards the following outcomes within the Wirral Plan 2025:

Working for happy, active, and healthy lives, where people are supported, protected, and inspired to live independently:

¹ The Local Sport Profile Tool, (2014)

- Fewer people admitted to hospital or long-term care,
- Reduced levels of childhood obesity,
- An increase in the use of outdoor space for exercise and health,
- An increase in the number of people using the Council's leisure centres.

1.12 In order to achieve the outcomes, the strategic objectives have been defined in the following thematic areas: Active People, Active Partnerships, Active Places, and Active Open Spaces

1.13 In summary there are numerous health, social and community benefits to supporting residents live active and healthy lives.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 By not producing a draft Sport and Physical Activity Strategy Document for consultation, would mean the Council does not have an up to date or future Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. Although it is not a statutory requirement, the absence of a strategy would mean the Council is not complying with good practice and would limit the Council's influence over internal teams and key partners activities. The Council would not have a clearly laid out strategic position around increasing physical activity.

2.2 Many external funders such as Sport England and national governing bodies of sport require a clear strategic position and evidence base that can clearly articulate how the borough is working towards increasing physical activity levels and can be a prerequisite before funding applications will be considered.

2.3 As physical activity delivers health, social, environmental, and economic benefits. It is important that Wirral approaches the challenges in a collaborative, coordinated manner.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 In 2015 there was a major shift in central government's position regarding sport, from a focus on the number of participants, to the social good that sport and physical activity can deliver. The strategy 'Sporting Future, a new Strategy for an Active Nation' (2015), redefines what success looks like in sport, by concentrating on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development. This new approach informed the Merseyside Sport Partnership Strategic Framework (2017-2022), which sets out targets for reducing inactivity for children and adults within the borough. These key documents have been taken into account and will be reflected in the draft Strategy.

3.2 The health and wellbeing of Wirral will be a key factor in its ongoing success. Our ambition is to ensure that all Wirral residents have the opportunity, environment and support they need to lead active, healthy, and happier lives and to make physical activity an everyday natural choice. We want to create a fairer future for all of our residents where the supporting of healthy life choices will help our population to live their lives to the full for as long as possible.

Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral 2020 – 2025: The Priorities:

- 3.3 Four strategic priorities have been developed for the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

The four strategic priorities are:

Priority 1: Active People - To increase participation in sport and physical activity among Wirral residents, working to reduce barriers and recognise the benefits of an active lifestyle by providing relevant and accessible activities targeting residents and communities with the highest identified needs.

Priority 2: Active Partnerships - To develop strong partnerships and community networks to support the delivery of a dynamic and cohesive offer that provides inclusive activities for people of all abilities.

Priority 3: Active Place - To provide modern, accessible, affordable, energy efficient facilities offering a quality experience that encourages our residents to be more active more often.

Priority 4: Active Open Spaces - Influence place shaping to ensure a network of high quality and accessible spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

- 3.4 The Strategy expands on these priorities to describe what we are aiming to achieve and deliver.
- 3.5 A high-level delivery plan has been developed to guide the work of the team to implement the strategy. A more detailed action and delivery plan will be completed following full consultation with residents, communities and other stakeholders and the development of a comprehensive needs assessment. The final strategy will be outcomes based and will be monitored and refreshed annually in recognition of the success or otherwise of delivering on its aims, objectives, and targets, changing policy landscape, resources, partnerships and ongoing COVID19 implications.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 To move forward with the approach recommended in this report will require cross organisational collaboration supported by organisational design and development, including the facilitation of consultation and engagement work. The expectation is that any associated costs of this activity will be met within existing budgets. Any costs that arise as a result of the implementation of this strategy, will be detailed in any future reports.
- 4.2 The absence of any strategy would significantly jeopardise any discussions with communities, stakeholders, and strategic partners. The Council is unlikely to attract or have access to any nationally available funding streams in the event that it is unable to present a sound and strategic case, that demonstrates its strategic health and activity intentions in the short, medium and long term.

- 4.3 Many of the asset-based facilities that make up the Council's Leisure estate are old, tired, underutilised and in need of significant levels of capital investment just to maintain day to day operations and ensure Health & Safety compliance. The last condition survey undertaken on Leisure assets² suggested that approximately £15 million of works were required, and condition shortfalls were further illustrated during attempts to recommission buildings during the COVID19 pandemic. The outcome of this strategic approach is fundamental in attracting inward investment from national sporting bodies, to either modernise, redesign, decommission or rebuild the Council's existing assets. Without support, it is unlikely that any new facilities would be developed, and the Council would need to continue to fund works on deteriorating assets indefinitely at a time of extreme revenue deficiencies.
- 4.4 Modern attractive facilities are critical to maximising usage and in both retaining current and attracting new members to the Council's Invigor8 schemes. The committee is advised that memberships have been reducing in previous years. In addition to being a catalyst for health activity, this strategy will be designed to maximise any future leisure provisions, ensuring that future offers are both affordable and provide value for money for residents, whilst providing a service that meets the needs of the customer, and their expectations.
- 4.5 In addition to maximising any future leisure provisions, the strategy will also contribute to cost avoidance and reducing pressures in other areas of the Council e.g. in Children, Education and Families Directorate and in Adult Care and Health Directorate.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, legal advice will be sought where relevant, in relation to any proposed partnership arrangements, arising from the action plan.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 One of the principles of the new strategy is to make best use of available resources and community assets, and it is assumed that staffing and other costs connected with the delivery of the strategy will be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.
- 6.2 The report produced by BWB highlighted the need for improved technology to monitor and track customer usage to help the service better understand their existing customers and improve the whole customer journey. Officers have since responded to this, and a new IT management system will be rolled out in December 2020. The report also highlighted the need for systematic market and competitor analysis, which is being undertaken, on a case by case basis.
- 6.3 Many of the assets that make up the Council's Leisure estate are old, tired, underutilised and in need of significant levels of capital investment, just to maintain day to day operations, and ensure Health & Safety compliance. The last condition survey undertaken on Leisure assets suggested that approximately £15 million of works were

² Wirral Borough Council Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment- Draft Report, December 2019

required, and condition shortfalls were further illustrated during attempts to recommission buildings during the COVID19 pandemic.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 As referred to above, the absence of any strategy would significantly jeopardise any discussions with communities, stakeholders, and strategic partners. The Council is unlikely to attract or have access to any nationally available funding streams in the event that it is unable to present a sound and strategic case, that demonstrates its strategic health and activity intentions in the short, medium and long term.
- 7.2 With the ambition of supporting the residents of Wirral to live active and healthy lives, the reputational risk to the Council, would be substantial if we were not to move forward with the development of a strategy.
- 7.3 There are growing health inequalities across the borough, with COVID19 only enhancing these, and there would be a substantial risk to the Council if there was no intervention to support residents become more physically active. The costs relating to physical inactivity would only increase.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Some stakeholder engagement has already taken place as part of the 'Wirral Borough Council: Re-imagining Libraries, Leisure, Parks and Cultural Services' report produced in 2017, and within the Draft Indoor and Built Facilities Strategy produced in 2019, as a requirement for the Local Plan. This feedback was used to inform the needs assessment and the development of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.
- 8.2 Engagement has taken place with Sport England and The Football Foundation, as such the draft strategy and plans have been shared with them. Our strategy is aligned to their current strategy document – Towards an Active Nation, as well as their Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance, and the four pillars of outcomes, insight, interventions, and commitment have been incorporated within the creation of the Strategy.
- 8.3 Upon approval to progress the strategy, further engagement will take place at community level to test out the findings from the generic engagement and needs analysis, and to build a further understanding of the specific needs within each area. This engagement will also be used to seek ideas and suggestions for partnership arrangements, and to develop a network of community leaders and influencers to collaborate with to increase engagement with the service.
- 8.4 We will engage closely with local Ward Councillors in the development and establishment of the locally preferred options.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy is designed to increase participation and uptake from those groups that currently use the service least whilst having the highest needs. The strategy is aimed at reducing inequalities across the Borough and has been based on a full needs assessment; it aims to increase participation in areas of greatest need where the take-up is currently low, by providing services and activities that are relevant to, and valued by those communities.
- 9.2 As set out under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty (PSED), an equalities impact assessment was carried out during the development of the strategy.
- 9.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed, as is available at the following link, <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Modernising the leisure centres will reduce the environmental impact whilst investment will result in more attractive buildings which will enhance the local townscape.
- 10.2 Keeping leisure provision within local communities and increasing our outreach offer, will all serve to minimise emissions from car usage. Our leisure centres will all have cycle storage.
- 10.3 Where possible we will invest in environmentally friendly solutions and designs when we modernise our buildings, purchase new equipment in order to reduce our carbon footprint by supporting the outcomes of the Cool 2 climate change strategy for Wirral.
- 10.4 As a result of the initiatives outlined above, the content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

11.0 NEXT STEPS

- 11.1 The first meeting with Sport England to discuss the strategy and plans has taken place and following approval from members, the next step is to begin consultation with investors, stakeholders, community groups, sports clubs, and residents.
- 11.2 A final Strategy document will be created and presented back to members for final adoption following all consultation and engagement work.
- 11.3 The finalised strategy document will be ready to be published at the beginning of the next financial year, along with a detailed annual action plan with regular monitoring and evaluation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral 2025

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Borough Council Indoor and Built Facilities Strategy, draft report October 2019.

Wirral Playing Pitch strategy and Action Plan, 2016.

The Local Sport Profile Tool, 2014

Sport England Strategy, Towards an Active Nation 2016 – 2021.

Wirral Borough Council: Re-Imagining Libraries, Leisure, Parks and Cultural Services, Phase 2 Report, October 2017.

Measuring the Social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England, 2020.

Sport England – Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance 2019.

Wirral Borough Council Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment- Draft Report, December 2019

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date