

Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee

27 July 2021

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

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides committee with an update on the development of the future Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral Leisure Services (formerly Leisure Strategy).

In November 2020 the Council’s Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee approved the new outline Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, which gave approval for officers to commence engagement with residents, communities, and other stakeholders to design and deliver a fit-for-purpose and sustainable service and include the strategy within the Committee’s ongoing work programme.

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 work. 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 Covid-19 landscape.

This paper is an update of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy that affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

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

1. Note the progress made in the development of the outline Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.
2. Support the further development of the Strategy to be presented to committee in Autumn.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 One of the challenges Wirral faces is reducing the stark health inequalities that 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. The final strategy will 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. The final strategy will be integrated into the wider Childrens, Adult Social Care and Health agendas.
- 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 Covid-19 pandemic. It is not therefore a standalone strategy, but one that will be engineered towards population health.
- 1.4 The most recent Active Lives Survey conducted by Sport England indicated that 24% of Wirral's population is 'inactive'. Inactive is defined as 30 minutes of activity or less per week and also includes those that do not do any activity.
- 1.5 The Sport England, Active Lives Survey measuring activity levels of adults (16+) for the period of mid-Nov 2019 to mid-Nov 20 reported that the number of 'active' people in Wirral is 62.4% (take part in 150 minutes plus per week), 'fairly active' (30-149 minutes) is 13.6% and 'inactive' people has increased to 24% of the population. The report contained the first 8 months of the coronavirus restrictions (mid-March to mid-Nov 20) and is the national measure for sport and physical activity levels.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not to develop a new strategy. To not develop or approve 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 one would mean the council is not complying with good practice, which would limit the Council's influence over internal teams and key partners activities. We 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 considered and will be reflected in the draft Strategy.
- 3.2 In January 2021 Sport England unveiled their new 10-year strategy, 'Uniting the Movement'. The strategy, which runs until 2031, aims to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. Improving inclusivity and tackling deep-rooted inequalities is at the core of the strategy, recognising that there are too many people who have been left behind, and currently feel excluded from being active, which has been heightened by Covid-19.
- 3.3 Wirral Council's emerging strategy is fully aligned to the direction of travel of that of the new Sport England Strategy. Wirral Council have worked closely with colleagues at Sport England to shape our local thinking and approach.
- 3.4 As the Council continues to adapt and rebuild from the pandemic, the strategy recognises the important role sport and physical activity plays in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities, and rebuilding a stronger society for all.
- 3.5 The strategy highlights five 'big issues' that we need to address collectively to make a lasting difference:
 - 1) Recover and reinvent
 - 2) Connecting communities
 - 3) Positive experiences for children and young people
 - 4) Connecting with health and wellbeing

5) Active environments

- 3.6 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: Progress:

- 3.7 A key strategic stakeholder, who is pivotal to the future of sport and activity on Wirral, is Sport England as the national governing body for sport. Following committee approval, the Director of Neighbourhoods agreed that Sport England could commission Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) to undertake a diagnostic assessment of the Sport England Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance for Wirral Council.
- 3.8 Sport England produced its Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance to assist local authorities to take a strategic approach to maximise the contribution that sport and physical activity makes within a given local area, and to ensure that any local investment made is as effective as possible and is sustainable in the long term.
- 3.9 In summary the report identified the following findings:
- 3.10 (1) The Council is in the process of developing/refining a coherent set of outcomes in relation to sport & physical activity's contribution to health and well-being and the reduction of health inequalities underpinned by good levels of cross directorate buy-in. This emerging position appears to be gathering momentum.
- 3.11 (2) The Council's insight (in certain areas of the Council) is well developed, particularly in respect of its built and outdoor facilities evidence base. The development of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2020) has added further momentum to this process. Its community-level research into the needs and wants of residents, and specifically what interventions may influence a change in behaviour will require further attention (as identified in the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy), both in respect of its facility offer and wider outreach plans.
- 3.12 (3) Confirmation that the Council is moving away from its former silo-based approach to a much more collaborative cross-departmental approach to delivering services.
- 3.13 (4) There was recognition that Senior Officers and Council Elected Members are determined to reduce health inequalities and this ambition is widely supported. It was however identified as imperative the Council continues to communicate well and achieves community buy-in prior to the development of a detailed delivery plan.
- 3.14 (5) The Council needs to act decisively to put in place a long-term transformational plan for the Borough accompanied by a clear approach in respect of resourcing the associated work and facilitating its progress through its own decision-making process. The SOPG and Built Facilities Strategy evidence base validates an investment strategy for indoor facilities to address the fundamental strategic challenge of an ageing, inefficient indoor sport and physical activity stock.

3.15 A summary of the next steps for the authority are:

- **Stage 1 – Outcomes** - Ongoing work and support are required to develop insight with regard to community needs and wants in respect of addressing inactivity.
- **Stage 2 – Insight** - There is potential, using the current evidence base augmented by community consultation and through greater joint planning across the Council's Planning, Regeneration, Children's Services, Adult Services, Public Health and Financial teams to develop a more all-embracing 'place based' approach to influencing behaviour change.
- **Stage 3 – Interventions** – A single commission which comprises a Facilities Master Plan for the Borough which, in turn, informs a Leisure Investment Strategy, the rationale for this being that there is a need for the Council to build momentum with respect to its facility needs and to provide senior managers and Members with an overview of what is needed, the high-level capital cost and the revenue impact of an improved facility offer. Further investigation of interventions in the active environment (parks, open space, urban environment) and incorporation of active design principles into future proposals should be considered.
- **Stage 4 – Commitment** - Clarification is required with regard to the level of financial contribution the Council can make to the project and the level of support required from capitalised revenues.

3.16 The Council should determine its likely requirement for external financial support. A set of anticipated Key Performance Indicators should be developed both in the context of their own value and in the event of them being required to underpin Sport England capital investment.

3.17 Discussions have taken place with senior officers from all sections of the Council, and presentations to key Council Departmental Management Teams have also taken place on the four strategic priorities for the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and the potential future approach. These include Adults, Health, Children's, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods. Feedback and priorities from each of the teams has been determined and new opportunities for collaborative work have been identified to be included in the year one work Sport and Physical Activity Work Plan.

3.18 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.

- 3.19 Public consultation has begun to understand the motivations, needs and wants of our local residents in regard to being physically active. This is taking place on the Have Your Say platform. This survey is for all to complete with key front-line staff supporting our most vulnerable residents to contribute to the consultation. We are particularly targeting our 'inactive' residents through our network of support staff across the borough. The survey and associated ideas boards will be live from 8 June to 19 July 2021 and can be found here <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/sport-and-physical-activity-people>
- 3.20 A youth survey has been developed to capture the motivations, needs, and wants of our children and young people. The survey can be found here <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/sport-and-physical-activity-youngpeople>
- 3.21 Results of the public consultation will be presented to members for consideration at this meeting of the October or November committee.
- 3.22 A partner and stakeholder survey has been developed 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.
- 3.23 The survey can be found here https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/sport-and-physical-activity-partnerships/survey_tools/sport-and-physical-activity-engagement-partnerships
- 3.24 A number of external stakeholders have been consulted through their networks, and presentations have been given to groups such as Wirral Health Inequalities Group, Wirral Youth Collective, Bridge Forum and the Humanitarian Cell.
- 3.25 Leisure Services has received grant funding (£3,452) from Sport England to be included in a national project called Moving Communities, a programme designed to track participation at public leisure facilities and to provides new evidence of the Council's Leisure facilities performance, sustainability, and social value. <https://movingcommunities.org/>
- 3.26 Data from the Moving Communities platform will be regularly presented to members as part of the Leisure Service dashboard.
- 3.27 The Council have commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page to develop a Leisure Facilities Masterplan and Investment Strategy. This is due to be completed in July

2021 and presented to members in September. Sport England provided grant funding towards this piece of work.

- 3.28 The Leisure Facilities Masterplan and Investment Strategy will be informed by the Indoor Built Facilities Plan and recent Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Report and will provide members with the following:
- (1) An accurate, detailed summary showing the current state of its leisure facilities.
 - (2) Proposals in respect of the component parts and shape of all future leisure facilities in the Borough (this will need to consider formal and informal activities).
 - (3) Fully validated recommendations and proposals which explicitly detail where future leisure facilities within the Authority should be located (considering and agreeing the preferred option for all existing/new sites), the rationale for them (individually and collectively), their scale, scope, relationship to the community(s) serviced, to each other and other sport, leisure, cultural and community facilities.
 - (4) Provide cost forecasting detailing the estimated revenue cost/surplus generating potential and capital cost (including lifecycle costs) of all future leisure facilities in the Borough. – in the form of cost summaries and projections - detailing what to invest in, where, why and in what order.
- 3.29 The Council commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page to undertake the development and consultation of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy in conjunction with the specific requirements of Sport England. The process included an assessment of the quality of pitches used for sport throughout the borough as well as the supply and demand analysis. The resultant Playing Pitch Strategy is to be adopted by the Committee in the coming weeks.

Next Steps

- 3.30 Finalise consultation with residents, stakeholders, community groups, sports clubs, and potential investors.
- 3.31 A final Strategy document will be created and presented to members for final adoption following all consultation and engagement work in late Autumn.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A Facilities Master Plan for the Borough which, in turn, informs a Leisure Investment Strategy will provide senior managers and Members with an overview of the high-level capital cost and the revenue impact of an improved facility offer.
- 4.2 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. The last condition survey undertaken on Leisure assets suggested that approximately £15 million of works were required, and condition shortfalls were further illustrated during attempts to recommission buildings during the Covid-19 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.

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 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 required, and condition shortfalls were further illustrated during attempts to recommission buildings during the Covid-19 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 Covid-19 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 health and social costs relating to physical inactivity would only increase.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 We will engage closely with local Ward councillors in the development and establishment of the locally preferred options.
- 8.2 Public consultation has begun to understand the motivations, needs and wants of our local residents in regard to being physically active. This is taking place on the Have Your Say platform. This survey is for all to complete with key front-line staff supporting our most vulnerable residents to contribute to the consultation. We are particularly targeting our 'inactive' residents through our network of support staff across the borough. The survey and associated ideas boards will be live from 8 June to the 19 July 2021 and can be found here <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/sport-and-physical-activity-people>
- 8.3 Timeline
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| 8 June -19 July | Public Consultation live on the Have Your Say site |
| 20 July – 9 August | Intel and Analysis |
| 9 – 30 August | Finalise Report |
| 12 October | Presented to Committee |

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 The Equality Impact Assessment has been reviewed and this report makes no change to it. It 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 Investment in LED replacement is underway.
- 10.3 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 and active travel access with associated infrastructure facilities, under the government's 'gear change' initiative, will be considered and implemented where appropriate.

- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 As a result of the initiatives outlined above, the content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral 2025
- Appendix 2 – Wirral Council – Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Report 2021.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Creating an Active Wirral presentation November 2020
- Wirral Borough Council Indoor and Built Facilities Strategy, draft report October 2019.
- Wirral Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, 2016.
- Sport England Strategy, Uniting the Movement 2021 – 2031.
- 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.
- Merseyside Sport Partnership Strategic Framework (2017-2022)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee	November 2020