

Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee

17 November 2021

REPORT TITLE:	A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral (2021-2026)
REPORT OF:	Director of Neighbourhood Services

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee with the 5-year strategy, "Creating an Active Wirral, A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral". It provides an overview of the collaborative process, needs analysis and strategic priorities required to increase sport and activity levels in the borough to deliver a reduction in health and social inequalities.

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 2021-2026, based on the evidence base, public consultation and the current Covid-19 landscape.

The report will also inform of the outcome of the public consultation that was completed following member approval at the July committee meeting. The consultation received over 750 responses.

The public consultation has assisted in providing overall direction for the strategy and having now incorporated this public feedback, officers are seeking approval for the finalised strategy to be formally adopted by the council.

The report and strategy are aligned to the priorities of the Wirral Plan 2026:

- Active and healthy lives
- Safe and pleasant communities
- Sustainable environment
- Brighter futures
- Inclusive economy

The vision for the strategy is: To make sport and physical activity part of everyone's everyday life.

The four strategic themes are:

- **Theme 1: Active People** - To provide opportunities for all Wirral residents to be more active
- **Theme 2: Active Partnerships** - To build partnerships and collaborations that provide inclusive activities for all
- **Theme 3: Active Places and Spaces** - Influence place-shaping to ensure a network of high quality and accessible spaces that make it easier for people to be active.
- **Theme 4: Active Facilities** - To create accessible, affordable, environmentally sustainable facilities offering a quality opportunity and environment that encourages Wirral residents to be more active, more often.

This matter affects residents in all Wards within the Borough.

This report is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2021-2026) / Creating an Active Wirral.
2. Request the Director of Neighbourhoods to develop the next stage of a delivery plan to be reported back to a future meeting of this committee.

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 of sport, local sports clubs, and community groups. This 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 2026. The final strategy will be integrated into the wider Children's, Adult Social Care and Health agendas, as well as linking into all aspect of the wider Wirral 2026 plan: focusing on the contribution sport and physical activity provides to each of the thematic areas, active and healthy lives, safe and pleasant communities, sustainable environment, inclusive economy and brighter futures for all.
- 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 2026 Plan, this strategy, whilst continuing to support and build on 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.
- 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% (an increase of 3,900 residents in the last 12 months) 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 progress with the development of a new strategy.
- 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 Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) 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 are reflected in the 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 The strategy highlights five 'big issues' that Sport England 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
- 3.4 Wirral Council's 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.
- 3.5 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.

- 3.6 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
- 3.7 This strategy will support the Council's Economic Strategy and wider regeneration place aspirations in delivering over 21,000 new and affordable homes. The strategy will play an active and effective role alongside all partners to shape and achieve "good growth" for Wirral; creating great places for people to live, work, learn and enjoy, with active travel solutions linked to walking and cycling, and ensuring Wirral's infrastructure is sustainable for the future.

4.0 Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral 2021 – 2026: Progress since previous report:

- 4.1 The public consultation which ran from 8 June until 19 July 2021 focussed on three key areas; adults, young people, and organisations & partners.
- 4.2 The findings of the adults' consultation are as follows:

Adult Responses:	
<u>What matters most in terms of Sports and Physical Activity?</u>	Personal fitness and health (73%)
<u>What Activities Do you currently undertake?</u>	Walking (50.5%)
	Swimming (35.8%)
	Cycling (33.9%)
<u>How much time do you like to be active for?</u>	1 – 3 hours (44.1%)
<u>Where are you when you are active?</u>	Council leisure centres (76.1%)
<u>Preferences for Activities</u>	Increase in availability of different/additional exercise classes (40.9%)
	Sports specific coaching (33.3%)
	Family activities (34.9%)
	Sessions lasting one hour (60.2%) or 45 minutes (43.3%)
	Taking place at evening (45.2%) or morning (34.7%)
	<u>Additional Comments:</u>
	Lack of swimming sessions
	Not enough variety of classes/sessions offered
More outdoor activities including swimming.	
<u>Barriers to Physical Activity</u>	Life commitments (39.5%)
	Activity timing (35.2%)

	Cost (33.1%)
	Lack of appropriate facilities (22.8%)
<u>Recommendations for encouraging activity</u>	Increasing activities in resident's locality (73.4%)
	Provisioning activities outside of leisure centres (30.4%)

4.3 A youth survey was developed to capture the motivation, needs, and wants of our young people in Wirral and captured the following results:

Young People Responses:	
<u>What matters most in terms of Sports and Physical Activity?</u>	Socialising with friends (54%)
<u>What Activities Do you currently undertake?</u>	Playing outside (60.5%)
	Football (44.1%)
	Walking (24.4%)
<u>How much time do you like to be active for?</u>	30 minutes – 1 hour (32.7%)
<u>Where are you when you are active?</u>	Local parks or open spaces (76.1%)
<u>Preferences for Activity</u>	Sport specific coaching (44.2%)
	Holiday sport programmes (16.7%)
	Sport competitions (16.7%)
	Sessions lasting one hour (47.7%) or 30 minutes (20.5%)
	Taking place at twilight (25.6%) or any time of day (25.6%)
<u>Barriers to Physical Activity</u>	Not knowing what activities were available (over 73.4%)
	Cost (50.4%)
	Fear of trying activities (43.2%)
	Not knowing anybody (33.1%)
	Issues related to transport (31.7%)
	<u>Additional Comments:</u>
	Need to improve cycle lane safety (33%)
<u>Recommendations for encouraging activity</u>	Increasing activities in locality (41.5%)
	Being able to bring a friend or relative (23.7%)
	Providing beginner sessions or classes (20.2%)
	Trial activities at schools (13.3%)

4.4 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.

- 4.5 21 partners provided information within the consultation on ways of encouraging physical activity with residents, and the results were:

Organisation & Partner Responses:				
<u>How could activity levels be improved across the Borough?</u>	Encourage outdoor activity (23.5%)			
	Barrier: Lack of venues for hire (11.8%)			
	Barrier: Difficulty finding information (11.8%)			
	Barrier: Cost (11.8%)			
	Barrier Accessibility (11.8%)			
<u>Top 5 things Partners thought worked well with Wirral Council</u>	Achieving outcomes (14.3%)			
	Delivering a good quality offer (14.3%)			
	Good communications between teams (9.5%)			
	Created new projects (9.5%)			
	Acquired funding for project development (4.8%)			
<u>Top 5 things partners thought didn't work well with Wirral Council</u>	Lack of communication (14.3%)			
	Lack of successful outcomes (9.5%)			
	Project did not happen (9.5%)			
	Lack of financial investment (9.5%)			
	Lack of time and resource (4.8%)			
<u>Levels of satisfaction from working with the council:</u>	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied
	30%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%

- 4.6 The council has commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page LTD to develop a Leisure Facilities Masterplan and Investment Strategy. The plan is due to be completed in the next few weeks and presented to members at a future meeting of this committee. Sport England provided grant funding towards this piece of work.
- 4.7 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:
- An accurate, detailed summary showing the current state of its leisure facilities.
 - 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).

- 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.
- 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.

4.8 Wirral Council's Planning Team have commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page LTD 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 will be published soon.

Next Steps

- 4.9 An adoption of the Strategy document and approval to begin the action plan ready for presentation in April 2022.
- 4.10 Launch of the new Active Wirral brand and accompanying communications campaign.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is acknowledged that upfront investment in physical activity could lead to longer term reductions in costs of other whole system costs including front-line public sector (children's, adults etc) and health services.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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. The last condition survey undertaken on Leisure assets (2016) 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. This figure is only likely to increase in the event that the council commissions a new condition survey, discussions around which are currently taking place. 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.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is no legal requirement to have a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, as the Council's Leisure Services are non- statutory. However, it is seen as good practice to outline the council's plans for the period 2021-2026, based on the evidence, public consultation and the current Covid-19 landscape.
- 6.2 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.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 Improvements in IT provision through an updated mobile app, new digital membership system and online and virtual classes are some of the benefits that will increase activity levels not within a facility or open space.

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.

9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Public consultation was undertaken, engaging with residents, particularly those who were inactive, to understand the motivations, needs and wants in regard to being physically active. This took place on the Have Your Say platform, with the survey going live on the 8 June 2021, and lasted 6 weeks, until 19 July 2021. The consultation was

used to inform the basis of the strategy, realigning the outline, with the wants and needs of the residents in the community.

- 9.2 Three independent consultations were undertaken, each with a different target group; adults, young people and partnerships. Each questionnaire was developed to enable residents to share their views about sport and physical activity, and an opportunity to provide free text answers was also provided. Furthermore, an ideas board was set up to allow residents to submit their own ideas, which other users could engage with through approval and comments.
- 9.3 The online consultation platform reached 2,963 people and in total over 750 residents provided feedback. Whilst the survey is not representative of the Wirral Residents population, it does provide detailed information from those who engaged with the survey. Within the new strategy under the Active People strand, officers will continue to engage with our residents to further our understanding of their wants and needs.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 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> .

11.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Modernising the leisure centres will reduce the environmental impact whilst investment will result in more attractive buildings which will enhance the local townscape.
- 11.2 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 and active travel access with associated infrastructure facilities, under the government's 'gear change' initiative, will be considered and implemented where appropriate.
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 As a result of the initiatives outlined above, the content and recommendations contained within this report are expected to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

11.5 Officers are in the process of applying for capital funds, administered by Salix, on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to decarbonise our leisure facilities in line with the climate emergency plan, whilst also looking to save on utility costs through efficiencies delivered by retrofitted modern technology.

12.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are a number of social value implications that are directly associated with this committee report. 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 provide new evidence of the council's Leisure facilities performance, sustainability, and social value.

<https://movingcommunities.org/>

12.2 Moving Communities social value calculator shows Wirral's Leisure centres have generated, in monetary terms; £930,294 of Subjective Wellbeing, £11,078 of Educational Attainment, £362,994 of Physical and Mental Health value and £424,771 in reduced crime in the last 12 months. The combined Social Value of the Leisure Centres is £1,729,137 over the last 12 months, with an average social value of £131.76 per person. This was collected during the COVID period and additional data is required to reinforce our position now more services are being reopened.

12.3 Data from the Moving Communities platform will be regularly presented to members as part of the Leisure Service dashboard and will be used as a baseline to monitor the social value added, as a result of the implementation of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

12.4 In addition, it is envisaged that the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy will have other social value benefits for both the organisation, and the wider community, developing and building back communities post covid, creating local opportunities for local people to thrive, especially in the most deprived areas.

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APPENDICES

Creating an Active Wirral, a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Wirral 2026

Wirral Council – Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Report 2021

Sport and Physical Activity Strategy Public Consultation Report

Sport and Physical Activity Strategy Needs Analysis

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, 2021

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)

Department of Culture, Media and Sport: Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, 2015

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee	November 2020
Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee	July 2021