

BABERGH SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/21/10
FROM: Cabinet Member for Communities – Councillor Derek Davis	DATE OF MEETING: 05 July 2021
OFFICER: Assistant Director for Economic Development and Regeneration - Fiona Duhamel	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB300

REFRESH OF THE BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK COUNCILS JOINT LEISURE, SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the updated evidence base and the refreshed Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Strategy.
- 1.2 To understand and support the strategic shift within the refreshed document from a traditional approach to delivering 'sport' and 'leisure' to a more holistic way of encouraging 'physical activity' within our communities. This will increase opportunities to get more people more active in the districts.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 DO NOTHING (Not Recommended) – the current strategy is in place, however, no longer fits our wider aspirations to increase participation in our communities or reflects the updated evidence base we have now developed.
- 2.2 APPROVE (Recommended) – this refresh strategy considers the new housing numbers, key actions have been delivered since the previous evidence base and reflects national emphasis on increased community physical activity. It also reflects the current known impacts of COVID 19 on our district provision.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the refreshed Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Strategy, priority actions identified and supporting evidence base be approved.
- 3.2 That officers develop a comprehensive Action Plan for the next 3 year based on the priority actions identified in the Strategy..

REASON FOR DECISION

1. That the Councils have a clear strategy and action plan for Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity to support delivery across the Districts for the next 3 years and which reflects national and regional policies and strategies.

2. Developing an up to date Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy is a key strand of the Council emerging Wellbeing Strategy
3. To ensure the Councils have a strategy which is linked to key partner outcomes eg Clinical Commissioning Group priorities, Active Suffolk.
4. The refreshed evidence base and strategy will maximise the current assets across the district for our communities.

4. KEY INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 2017 the current Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Strategy was approved by the Councils. This was a robust policy position and has clear strategic priorities; these are outlined below.
 - 4.1.1 Children and Young People - Increase the number and frequency of children, young people (1-18 years) and families across the district regularly taking part in traditional and non-traditional sport and physical activity.
 - 4.1.2 Older People - Increase the number and frequency of older people regularly taking part in traditional and non-traditional sport and physical activity to reduce social isolation and to improve health and wellbeing.
 - 4.1.3 Volunteers - Increase the volunteer base of sport and physical activity clubs and groups to build capacity, resilience and support growth in participation levels.
 - 4.1.4 Mental Health - Increase active participation and benefits to participants with mental health issues through sport and physical activity.
 - 4.1.5 Physical and Learning Disabilities - Improve the engagement and uptake of those with physical and learning disabilities into community and leisure facilities, ensuring that facilities are accessible, and activities are available to all.
 - 4.1.6 Sports and Leisure Infrastructure - Support the provision of sustainable community sport and leisure facilities and the spaces and infrastructure that individuals, clubs, schools and groups can access and use to take part.
- 4.2 Since the strategy was adopted there has been substantial progress in the delivery of sport and leisure facilities across the districts; £2,030,000 investment in building new swimming facilities in Hadleigh; £2,400,000 investment in an extension and refurbishment of Kingfisher leisure Centre, Sudbury which have both been completed. There has been £1,200,000 invested in gym facilities at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, £200,000 refurbishment of Stradbroke Swimming Pool & Fitness Centre and £60,000 invested in gym facilities at Debenham Sports and Leisure Centre.
- 4.3 We have several Leisure and wellbeing schemes and programmes ranging from our active schools programme which targets inactive children through working with schools, offering a range of activities for children during school breaks and family

cooking opportunities. We have fit villages, women on wheel, Great East swim, free activities in our parks, G.P. referral scheme and health walks. We have active wellbeing scheme which is aimed at 50+ who are inactive people and working with the GP surgeries. A programme of events targeting people that have dementia through range of activities.

- 4.4 In addition to infrastructure delivery there have been a number of key strategies which have been adopted or are in development which have a fundamental impact on the provision of Sport, Leisure and physical Activity in our districts.
- 4.5 The Communities Strategy was adopted in 2019 and creates conditions for communities to thrive; to allow for volunteers, community leaders and publicly funded services to work together sustainably. This will ensure our communities remain great places to live in and work from.
- 4.6 The Well-being Strategy has been under development and the refreshed Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Strategy is one strand of the Well-being Strategy. The Well-being Strategy sets out what we want to achieve under the priority of good wellbeing for people in our communities. This strategy is designed to ensure that the Councils adopt a wellbeing culture in everything we do; that our work is inherently about people's quality of life, sense of place and of identity.
- 4.7 There have also been several changes locally and on a national scale that the current strategy does not necessarily consider, and which will have an impact on our desire to increase participation across the districts. Locally, the level of planned areas of housing growth in both districts, the impact of this growth and the demographic towards an aging population will impact upon types of provision required and supply and demand for sport and leisure provision.
- 4.8 National and regional policies and strategies will also have an impact upon facilities and participation. Changes to participation trends in both structured and informal forms of sport, leisure and physical exercise since the publication of Public Health England's "Everybody Active, Every Day" (2014) and the Government's "Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation" (2015) are complemented by the new Sport England Strategy "Uniting the Movement".
- 4.9 There are opportunities to grow new sports and leisure facilities in partnership with National Governing Bodies of Sport and key partners (Sport England, Active Suffolk, Most Active County). as well as opportunities to enhance and increase the local, community-based activities that promote fitness, health and wellbeing. Part of this will be working with our communities to communicate that being active is not just attending an exercise class or specific sports club but can be local activities like gardening, walking with a friend.
- 4.10 The new strategy reflects the potential long-term impact and financial viability of current sport and leisure provision as a result of Covid 19 which to date has been severe. The need to help local sports clubs and groups to recover post covid will be a key part of the new action planning. Encouraging organisations and clubs to think about future sustainability, succession planning and workforce or volunteering strategies will be an important part of their future. We have also been working with both Clinical Commissioning groups that cover the districts to better understand the impact that COVID-19 and in particular long COVID is having on our residents and local communities.

SUMMARY OF THE REFRESH OF THE STRATEGY

4.10.1 We commissioned Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy to update the Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Strategy, review and update evidence and audits in February 2021. There were SIX outputs we were seeking to achieve from the commission:

4.10.2 To update the evidence, base for indoor sport, leisure and physical activity facilities to account for recent investment in core facilities, future population growth and the changing demographic profile of the Districts.

4.10.3 To consider changes in participation trends and a strategic shift from 'sport' and 'leisure' to 'physical activity' in a more holistic sense linked to a stronger understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits of being active.

4.10.4 To identify opportunities to support this shift through enhanced and increased opportunities to be active in local, community settings as well as core sports and leisure facilities, particularly given the rural nature of the Districts.

4.10.5 To explore the current role and future potential of community facilities in providing access to sport and physical activity opportunities

4.10.6 To understand the impact of Covid-19 on facilities, services and providers and to assess the longer-term implications of the pandemic on the sustainability of sports and leisure provision across the Districts.

4.10.7 To identify priority areas and opportunities for investment into infrastructure, services, programmes and partnerships to inform development of a 'pipeline' of projects over the next five years.

Stakeholder Engagement

4.11 When we commissioned this work, we were aware that not only was the whole country still in the grip of the pandemic but also that many clubs were closed due to covid. It was therefore vital that we carried out extensive and meaningful engagement. A comprehensive programme of stakeholder and partner consultation was created and delivered.

4.12 This included discussions with 44 strategic stakeholders and 11 sport national governing bodies, and 254 responses to four bespoke surveys issued to Sports Clubs, Schools, Town and Parish Councils, Village Hall Committees and Voluntary Groups. Strategic stakeholders included District and County Council Officers, Leisure providers, Active Suffolk, health partners (including both CCG's) and community organisations such as Community Action Suffolk and One Life Suffolk.

4.13 There was an internal officer group that had representatives from across the Council to feed into the refresh of the strategy. There was also a stakeholder group which included Babergh and Mid Suffolk officers, SLC, representatives from both CCG's, Active Suffolk and Councillors to support the refresh of the strategy. In addition, we hosted two all Member workshops to review the proposed approach to the refreshed document and test draft outcomes and objectives.

Evidence base refresh

- 4.14 The audits of sport and leisure provision in the Districts have been updated and include both formal sports and leisure facilities and informal spaces and places that can accommodate physical activity including village halls, community centres and open spaces and playgrounds.
- 4.15 The audits found that 88% of parishes in Babergh (65 of 74) and 77% of parishes in Mid Suffolk (86 of 111) have at least one community building which is or could be used for formal and informal physical activity. Many village halls and community centres are well-used for group activities such as Fit Villages, yoga, fitness classes and dance but it is apparent that programming capacity is limited, and the space/functionality of these facilities does not always meet requirements of users.
- 4.16 There is a good supply of outdoor pitches and courts in Babergh but the condition of these is variable and many tennis and netball courts require resurfacing. All wards contain grass football pitches, but many are in a poor condition and there is high demand from football clubs for artificial grass pitches to accommodate all-weather match play and training.
- 4.17 Recent investment into the Councils' four core leisure facilities has significantly improved provision of public health and fitness facilities Sudbury, and the new swimming pool in Hadleigh provides high quality provision to support the growing population in this area of Babergh.
- 4.18 Updated supply and demand assessments undertaken shows a theoretical oversupply of swimming pool space in Babergh based on the estimated capacity during peak times across all of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. However, a large proportion of the existing supply of pool space is located on school sites with limited public access. Fully publicly accessible pool space is also largely dependent upon the new Hadleigh Pool and at Kingfisher LC in Sudbury.
- 4.19 There is a theoretical oversupply of swimming pool space in Mid Suffolk based on the estimated capacity during peak times across all of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. However, this includes the pool at MOD Wattisham where access is restricted to vetted clubs / community groups outside of Army use hours which will, in reality, significantly reduce its ability to meet local demand. Excluding MOD Wattisham would leave supply and demand broadly in balance but heavily reliant on the fully publicly available space provided at Mid Suffolk and Stradbroke leisure centres. The total water space also includes 3 small pools that currently only offer swimming lessons and a member only health club and spa facility which will be less accessible than a public swimming pool.
- 4.20 There is an undersupply of swimming lesson spaces in Mid Suffolk and large developments in Stowmarket, Thurston, Woolpit and surrounding area will likely place significant strain on the already stretched water space at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre.
- 4.21 The total supply of sports halls in Babergh is sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. However, a key challenge for sports hall provision in the District is that all of these are on education sites, limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of a number of sports halls is also an issue and the current oversupply could quickly shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life, are withdrawn from public use or deteriorate in quality to such extent as to significantly impact upon their ability to meet the needs of users.

- 4.22 The total supply of sports halls across Mid Suffolk is just about sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. However, as with the pool at MOD Wattisham, access to the sports hall is heavily restricted and if removed from the assessment, leaves an undersupply of sports hall space equivalent to 4 badminton courts.
- 4.23 Sports hall provision in Mid Suffolk is also heavily reliant upon education sites (4 of the 7 identified), limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of the only fully publicly accessible sports halls at Mid Suffolk LC and Debenham LC is also a key issue. As with Babergh, the current oversupply shown for Mid Suffolk could quickly shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life, deteriorate in quality or are withdrawn from public use.
- 4.24 The existing strategic priorities are weighted towards increasing participation and engagement by four identified target groups (older people, children and young people, disabled people and those experiencing mental health issues) with one additional priority focusing on enablers (volunteers) and one on the facilities and places for people to be active.
- 4.25 Whilst some people within these identified target groups will remain a priority moving forwards, these groups are currently too broadly defined and that there is an opportunity to re-frame the approach to ensure it focuses less upon a general cohort of the population and more upon the specific groups and localities that are most likely to be inactive and experience greatest health inequalities.

Summary of refreshed strategy and outcomes

- 4.26 The vision for the strategy will continue to be *“Mid Suffolk and Babergh will support, encourage and inspire their communities to be more active and achieve a better quality of life.”*
- 4.27 There is a subtle change proposed to the strategic aim which currently states *“To support and enable increased levels of sport and physical activity participation across Babergh and Mid Suffolk; to support the improvement of health and wellbeing within our communities, particularly those from disadvantaged groups”*. However, a proposed and subtle change to the Strategic Aim to replace ‘disadvantaged groups’ with *‘less active people experiencing greater health inequalities’*. This better reflects the outcome-based approach to providing support across the wider community for those who will benefit most from being more active rather than a focus on specific groups.
- 4.28 The proposed strategic outcomes reflect changes in the evidence base and future needs. The strategic outcomes fall into three distinct but interrelated ‘themes’ which form the building blocks of the updated LSPA Strategy. Active people, Active places and Spaces and Active Partnerships. There are six strategic outcomes in total:

Active People

1. Reduced levels of inactivity amongst communities and in localities experiencing greater health inequalities.
2. Increased opportunities for all residents to move more through an accessible, diverse and inclusive programme of activities.

Active places and spaces

3. Sustainable community sport, leisure and physical activity facilities that enable and support all residents to be active.
4. Green and open spaces providing formal and informal opportunities for all residents to be 'everyday active'.

Active partnerships

5. A strong, sustainable and strategically aligned ecosystem of partnerships supporting all residents to be more active.
6. A skilled, knowledgeable and enabled workforce and volunteer base supporting communities to be more active.

4.29 In addition Strategic Objectives above there are six reoccurring strategic issues regarding facilities provision which impact upon the district: Insufficient local swimming lesson provision and lack of public swimming opportunities; Limited community use of school facilities and high reliance on those who do have community use arrangements; limited capacity in community buildings that do not satisfy local requirements; Limited mid-scale multi indoor provision; Delay/non delivery of Suffolk FA's local Football Facilities plan and multiple organisations and groups working in isolation.

4.30 A pipeline of potential infrastructure projects has been identified which reflects the growing need to meet the future built provision across the Districts. These projects are described in Section 7.3 of the Sport, Leisure and physical activity strategy and are informed by the facility audits, supply and demand assessments, stakeholder engagement and a local understanding of the landscape of provision. They seek to address identified weaknesses or deficits in provision and increasing pressures on the capacity of existing facilities, particularly within areas of significant planned housing growth.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 The Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy makes specific reference to the Corporate Plan (2019-27) specifically: Community volunteers are skilled and able; continued support for Health and Wellbeing outcomes that prevent interventions; manage our corporate assets effectively; targeted grants to support Community capacity building and outcome-based commissioning.

5.2 There are direct links with the Communities Strategy as it creates conditions for communities to thrive; to allow for volunteers, community leaders and publicly funded services to work together sustainably. This will ensure our communities remain great places to live in and work from. The Well-being Strategy which is designed to ensure that the Councils adopt a wellbeing culture in everything we do; that our work is inherently about people's quality of life, sense of place and of identity.

5.3 The economic strategy objectives to rejuvenate our vibrant market towns, have thriving, attractive, sustainable and connected communities are linked to the strategy. As there is a pipeline of activities within the strategy to improve provision and connect the communities through partnerships.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. However, the implementation of the strategy could, in the future, have significant financial implications but these will be the subject of reports for consideration by both Cabinets.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 3c01 – Risk: The Councils are not aligned with Suffolk's health and care system plans or integrated within the multiagency locality arrangements. 3c02 – Risk: Collective accountability and responsibility for health and wellbeing outcomes across the organisation is unclear and not applied consistently.

- 9.2 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If investment opportunities are not identified or identified but not implemented, then resources will not be realised to contribute to the delivery of the strategy	2	2	<p>Prioritise the development of investment opportunities.</p> <p>Further detail on the future pipeline activities to ensure the investment opportunities are maximised</p>
If assets are not maximised, then opportunities could be missed and impact the delivery of the strategy	2	2	<p>Further work with the assets to ensure options have been considered.</p> <p>To facility linkages between assets and groups to maximise use and offer for the community</p>

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 There has been an extensive consultation process undertaken in refresh of the Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy - see section above. These are identified in the appendices of the strategy and include key stakeholders, sports clubs, schools and the voluntary sector.
- 10.2 There was a comprehensive programme was created with a wide range of stakeholder engagement which included 44 strategic stakeholders and 11 sport national governing bodies, and 254 responses to four bespoke surveys issues to Sports Clubs, Schools, Town and Parish Councils, Village Hall Committees and Voluntary Groups.

11. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 11.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report. However, a specific focus of the Councils' strategic approach is targeted at those in need. The main strategic aim references those from disadvantaged groups as do several the key priorities.
- 11.2 The broad direction of the strategy is a move towards a more community, inclusive and holistic approach. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) will need to be carried out when further work on the identified pipeline. Attached at Appendix E.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no direct environmental implications associated with this report. There are potential environmental issues regarding the future pipeline of actions with active travel and active play. These would be considered, and the implications assessed. Any additional built facilities would have associated environment impacts requiring assessment and mitigation.

13. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy – Update 2021	Attached
(b) Supply and Demand assessment	Attached
(c) Stakeholder engagement	Attached
(d) National Governing Board information	Attached
(e) Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) initial screening	Attached

14. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 14.1 Leisure Facilities Audit

Updated Play and Pitch Strategy Action Plan

The Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Strategy - BCa/17/32.

15. REPORT AUTHORS

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