

Report to LED Monitoring Forum – 16th December 2020

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Topic: Leisure Strategy for East Devon – discussion paper

Background

Councils have legal duties for promoting wellbeing, both to individuals (Care Act 2014) and to the population across their areas (Local Govt, Act 2000). Intrinsic in this are new public health duties for improving the health of their populations including “giving information, providing services or facilities to promote healthy living and providing incentives to live more healthily” (Department of Health, 2012).

There is therefore a strong legislative framework within which local authorities should invest in the provision of sports, leisure, physical activity and open space services and infrastructure, although many leisure services and facilities are discretionary functions. Physical activity does not just include sporting and fitness activities. It includes use of our beaches, parks & gardens, play areas, Nature Reserves, allotments and community orchards in areas across the district and the contribution to active travel, walking and cycling. The Council has a relatively new Playing Pitch Strategy within which there are opportunities to increase the quality and quantity of pitch provision across the district and opportunities to secure external funding from sports governing bodies for facilities to be upgraded to meet the appropriate standards. There are an increasing number of national strategies, and local programmes and needs assessments that focus on the importance of increasing participation in sports and physical activity. These include:

- Sport England: Towards an Active Nation Strategy 2016-2021
- Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, HM Government 2015
- A Sporting Habit of Life 2012-2017: Sport England Strategy
- Healthy Lives, Healthy People: White paper published by the Department of Health 2010

The Council’s last Leisure Strategy was produced some 15yrs ago (to be confirmed) at the time of the creation of Leisure East Devon (LED) as a trust and so now requires an up-to-date overarching strategy to highlight our ambitions, and give future direction for sport, leisure and physical activity provision and support across the District.

What do we want to achieve?

When considering what our Leisure Strategy should look like and achieve for the Council it is worth considering that we already have in place the following adopted plans and strategies that will feed into and overlap the scope of a Leisure Strategy:

- East Devon Public Health Plan
- EDDC Green Space Plan
- Public Open Space Strategy
- Play Areas Strategy (being reviewed)

Perhaps we therefore don't need to bring together all the detailed plans covering the various contributory services and infrastructure which support physical activity and sport; but perhaps we need to set out our Council's vision and principles for sport and physical activity that are contained within these strategies and plans with a new vision for leisure that achieves:

- Promoting opportunities for all residents to be active and to participate in sporting and leisure activities to improve health and wellbeing, in high quality facilities or environments.
- Enabling an increase in the proportion of the adult population achieving the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guide levels from 66% to 70%; and to reduce those who are deemed inactive from 20.9% to 16% by 2021 (measured by Public Health Outcomes Framework).
- Support the aims of the Government's Childhood Obesity Plan 2016 for children to engage in 60 minutes of physical activity each day, with half of this being delivered in schools.
- Maintain our leisure centre provision through a model of community facilities in each of the District's main localities (Exmouth, Broadclyst, Honiton, Sidmouth, Ottery St Mary, Colyton, Axminster & Seaton).
- Enable the provision of other facilities across the District such as our green spaces, play areas, Nature Reserves, beaches etc. for multiple uses.
- Support the contribution made by voluntary organisations to grassroots sports clubs in promoting our commitment to physical and mental health wellbeing.

This approach could help the Leisure Strategy to help support and inform the emerging new Council Plan and its ambitions for supporting the health & wellbeing of our communities. It will also help focus the Council's understanding of how our community leisure facilities can help support not just physical and mental wellbeing but also social and community development and economic development too.

Recommendation

It was agreed at Cabinet that within the workscope of the Leisure Monitoring Forum that external advice could be sought to help consider aspects of the relationship with LED and its service operations and also to help the Council to develop a Leisure Strategy. It is therefore recommended that the Forum considers what sort of Leisure Strategy it should develop and the process for enabling its development before it is commissioned.