

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 13th July 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy 2021-2031

Report summary:

The report outlines the process for the issuing of a Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy and Action Plan for East Devon District Council which is attached with the report. The development of the Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy for the Council has followed Sport England's guidance having completed a Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Diagnostic report, undertaken a comprehensive consultation process with sports clubs, schools and Sports Governing Bodies. The draft Strategy was presented to the LED Monitoring Forum at its June 7th meeting so that a final version could receive final amendments before being issued for Cabinet to consider and approve. The Strategy and Action Plan have identified the need for additional resource with the creation of a Leisure Strategy enabler role to take forward the Action Plan's priorities. Without this additional capacity the ability to deliver the Strategy will be severely compromised.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet approve the Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2031.

That Cabinet recommend to Council a budget of £38,000 per annum for a Leisure Strategy enabler role; to be funded initially (3 years) from the Transformation Fund.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable East Devon District Council to adopt a 10 year Strategy for managing all its leisure facilities and provide a framework for action to make key decisions on its capital programme of improvements to the leisure assets, consider the future of the dual use sites and negotiate the management fee with its leisure operator LED.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets

- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

The initial officer assessment was that this might represent a medium risk and therefore an EIA was carried out. The Council were assisted in the completion of the EIA by Strategic Leisure. The EIA can be found in the background links and it had a residual risk finding of low, which is reflected in this section.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; The failure to produce a Leisure Strategy will make future decisions on how the Council provides its leisure offer and the finances for doing so much more complicated. The Leisure Strategy's purpose is to help the Council make informed strategic decisions on its leisure facilities and also the future funding model for LED its contracted leisure provider

Links to background information

[Leisure Strategy 2021-2031](#)

[Action Plan](#)

[Appendix 1 - Stakeholder Consultation](#)

[Appendix 2 – Supply and Demand Assessment](#)

[Appendix 3 - Community Leisure Survey Analysis](#)

[Appendix 4 - Sports Club Survey Analysis](#)

[Appendix 5 – School Survey Analysis](#)

[Site Quality Audits](#)

[NGB Consultation](#)

[Equality Impact Assessment](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Report in full

1. 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 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 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.

2. 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 Local Plan
- East Devon Public Health Plan
- EDDC Green Space Plan
- Public Open Space Strategy
- Play Areas Strategy

And also the Leisure Strategy will synergise with three further Council Strategies once they have been completed this year:

- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Culture Strategy
- Tourism Strategy

These strategies and plans alongside the Leisure Strategy will seek to achieve:

- 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.

These ambitions are set out in more detail within the visioning work undertaken with Councillors for the Leisure Strategy.

3. Stakeholder consultation

The development of the Strategy has included extensive engagement with identified key stakeholders to get their views on the challenge and opportunities for East Devon DC in terms of physical activity and leisure provision.

This has enabled an assessment of where East Devon DC is in terms of provision compared to need and opportunities and where it is compared to the SOPG process that was undertaken. This process has helped to identify key elements of work that are needed to underpin a future strategic approach to provision and delivery.

This consultation process has provided an 'Issues' paper for the Strategy that helped shape the Vision for the Leisure Strategy which was considered by Councillors at a zoom workshop on 4th May 2022. The results of the consultation will also form part of the evidence base for the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy which is currently under review to ensure there is synergy between the two processes and Strategies.

4. Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance (SOPG) Diagnostic

The purpose of the SOPG Diagnostic was to provide a position statement for East Devon DC to illustrate where we are in the process of thinking about, and planning for physical activity and leisure provision over the next 5-10 years. This work was carried out as the first stage of the Strategy development process and the report was considered and approved by Cabinet and Full Council in 2021/22.

The SOPG Diagnostic has:

- Provided an overview of the District:
- Headline demographic, health and socio economic review of the district
- Reviewed any existing needs assessment/supply/demand surveys
- Reviewed existing participation and activity levels and trends; where the gaps are, who is inactive, where and why?
- Reviewed local and regional strategies and policies specifically relating to health and wellbeing, plus corporate plan and local plan (and any specific housing development proposals that may impact future demand)
- Identified local priorities and why these are important- what does East Devon DC want to achieve through the provision of physical activity and leisure and why?
- Identified the Shared Outcomes to be achieved in relation to health and well-being
- Identified gaps in existing evidence base
- Described what East Devon DC currently provides, where and how
- Site visits of all Council facilities including dual use sites (Subject to Covid restrictions)
- Mapped all facilities by type and location
- Reviewed the community outreach service
- Reviewed the current arrangements with Leisure East Devon (LED) and what that delivers in terms of throughput and social value and the current cost of the service
- Reviewed each facility in relation to key strategic factors: meeting local need; community capacity; usage; whether adjacent/competition with other provision; financial (cost, investment, income generation); building condition; catchment areas; key users e.g. schools for curriculum delivery; dual use management arrangements/operating hours etc.
- Run the Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) to assess indicative future need

- Undertaken a Stakeholder consultation – engaged with identified key strategic stakeholders to get their views on the challenge and opportunities for East Devon DC in terms of physical activity and leisure provision
- Assessed where East Devon DC is now in terms of provision compared to need and opportunities and where it is compared to the SOPG process; this will identify key elements of work that are needed to underpin a future strategic approach to provision and delivery

5. Leisure Strategy- Key Issues

These key issues have been identified from the stakeholder consultation undertaken to date and the community survey (850+ responses).

Overall issue for East Devon DC – what is the Council's Vision for physical activity? What does the Council want physical activity to do in their district? And what therefore is the focus for the Council and their operator?

Built Assets

- Age and condition
- Activities offered
- Lack of investment in EDDC facilities
- Location
- Dated dual-use agreements which do not facilitate community access (particularly daytime), use nor taking part in physical activity
- Growth of Axminster and impact on demand; Flamingo Pool small and average quality offer but does have a hydro pool; migration seen to Chard
- Broadclyst poor quality asset
- Lack of indoor facilities in Cranbrook; nothing for young people; nothing for teenagers; College facilities managed commercially and already full of football; lack of indoor provision
- Proposed leisure centre in Cranbrook - £4m short on capital funding?
- Opportunity to
- Work more closely with Exeter City Council re built facilities
- Could Sidmouth be re-developed and co-located with GP surgery
- Asset transfer all outdoor facilities to Town Councils?
- Pitch investment priorities are Exmouth and Honiton
- Should the focus on investment be the Exmouth, Honiton and Axminster triangle?
- Retro-fitting of Cranbrook Community Centre is needed

Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Already many providers and lots offered
- Role of EDDC? At the moment is the work of Public Health and LED linked/different/complementary?
- Needs better co-ordination and joined-up approach
- Need for audit of existing offer before more is developed to optimise resources; develop offer based on existing networks
- Loss of Social Prescribers
- Volunteering
- GP Referral/Social Prescribing
- Links to the arts
- Should LED focus in the areas of deprivation e.g. Holiday Hunger programmes
- New app being developed – EDDC should be part of this and co-ordination would be better
- LED already doing a lot – working with GPs, online signposting etc.
- Memory cafes – could be the starting points for healthy walks etc.

The Great Outdoors

- Use of the natural active environment
- Safe walking, running and cycling routes
- Co-ordinated cycling routes – mapped and co-ordinated – residents and tourists
- Outdoor gyms
- Growing participation in wild swimming
- Growing participation in informal activities e.g. skateboarding, BMX
- Group exercise growing in popularity – how control use/access?
- Potential to link physical activity into some agricultural support work
- Exmouth seafront – is this a venue for physical activity?
- Residents like being active outdoors but want to feel safe

Urban v rural

- Isolation
- Accessibility
- Limited public transport; worse in more rural areas

Specific Sports

- Very limited indoor netball facilities – only two
- No regional netball facilities
- No netball facilities in Sidmouth
- Limited indoor tennis facilities; not all well used; Clubspark should be introduced to outdoor courts; bookings could then be on LED website?
- Gymnastics needs a site in Honiton
- Lack of 3Gs
- Youth offer under-developed -e.g. boxing, martial arts
- What is the role of sports clubs moving forward?
- Sea sports need more promotion and support
- Opportunity to develop Paddle tennis?
- Residents priority activities are swimming, walking and gardening; followed by cycling, the gym and GP Exercise Referral

Disability

- There is a need for improved disability facilities and access e.g. pool pods

Strategic Alignment

- EDDC Public Health Strategy – has to be driver
- Also Active Devon Strategy

Affordability

- Inconsistencies in concession pricing
- LED Membership – the same irrespective of facility mix offered

Demography

- East Devon has a predominantly older population; provision needs to meet their needs
- Community survey identifies daytime as the favoured time to take part in physical activity
- Reduction in young people taking part in physical activity
- There is a need to properly identify needs of each age group and then provide for them
- Cost is an issue for the elderly
- Residents think physical activity is very important – to stay fit, for enjoyment, to improve health

- Residents identify barriers to participation as: cost, time, poor quality facilities, lack of safe routes, lack of provision, inability access activities at the time they need them
- In general, residents want to be more active

Communication and Co-Ordination

- Lack of car parking in Sidmouth for physical activity facility
- Needs to be greater awareness of what is already happening and by whom? Audit mapping needed to focus resources in the future

Future Operational Management

- LED would like an annual agreement over management fee
- Risk allocation e.g. utility costs
- Need for capital investment in built assets

6. Future needs

The Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy clearly identifies, based on the consultations and gathering of evidence the following recommendations:

- Facilities that meet and leisure needs of East Devon's residents – this covers the future investment in our existing leisure assets portfolio, the need for additional provision of leisure facilities and the review of all existing dual use facility agreements.
- Effective partnerships delivering a sustainable community sport and leisure offer – creating new partnerships and re-engaging with Sport England on their Local Delivery Pilot in Cranbrook as well as exploring opportunities for new cycling and walking routes with Devon CC.
- Harnessing the value of the great outdoors – there are significant opportunities to make better use of the district's outstanding environment and its network of footpaths and cycleways to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Reviewing the exiting leisure management contract with LED – this includes the future relationship with our dual use sites.

7. Summary

The strategic review of all the leisure facilities is important as some are beginning to age and there is now an urgent need to plan and understand what their future maintenance costs will be for the Council's capital maintenance programme. Also as the 'Key Issues' document highlights what can the Council realistically afford over the next 10 to 20 years with the budgetary pressures being facing.

The challenges outlined in the report and within the Strategy whether it is planning the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan or trying to meet the leisure needs of all our communities (both existing and planned) means we will require the Strategy to help us carefully plan our future decisions. The Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy will ensure that the Council now has the evidence base and also the strategic framework (following Sport England's guidance) to make those decisions through a better understanding of the leisure needs of its communities. The Council will also need to be clear on what its leisure service will look like in future years and what savings could be achieved in relation to asset provision.

The ability to take forward the Strategy and its Action Plan internally requires the creation of additional capacity and the Strategy has identified the need for the creation of a Leisure Strategy enabler role. This role will drive forward those priorities specifically identified in the Action Plan linked to outreach health and wellbeing outcomes, including developing a co-ordinated programme

of activities that improve local residents physical wellbeing. This will involve working with existing partners such as LED but also forging new partnerships with Active Devon, Devon CC and sports organisations across the district. The post will also identify suitable external grants and funding opportunities from bodies such as Sport England and the Lottery to support health and wellbeing programmes in partnership with other organisations. The role will also work closely with internal services to help identify the Council's ambitions to create new leisure opportunities for its residents and communities to get active and be able to access health and wellbeing programmes such as in Cranbrook.

The Leisure Strategy will deliver the leisure ambitions within the Council Plan for supporting health & wellbeing within 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. The Strategy will be the starting point of multiple conversations across a wide range of issues as outlined in this report.

Financial implications:

The recommendation to Council is for the approval of a new post of "Leisure Strategy enabler role" this is estimated at a cost of up to £38k per annum with on costs. It is proposed initially for a 3 year period the cost is met from the Transformation Fund. There is a host of actions identified within the Strategy which will require careful financial consideration in terms of the affordability in delivery with differing options that can be considered in order to meet the desired outcomes. Actions will need to be worked through in more detail and specific requests for funding presented and considered by Cabinet and Council. Subject to Cabinet approval an amount has been included in the UKSPF Investment Plan for £38k for the Leisure Strategy Enabler role for 3 years, if successful the sum requested in this report will not be required. .

Legal implications:

The adoption of this strategy is a matter for Cabinet as it doesn't form part of the Policy Framework. Members should have regard to the public sector equality duty and related equalities impact assessment when considering adoption of this strategy. There are no other legal implications requiring comment.