

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum (formerly LED Monitoring Forum) held at Online via Zoom app on 9 April 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.11 am

40 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2024 were noted as a true and accurate record.

41 Declarations of interest

There were none.

42 Public Speaking

No members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

43 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

44 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one item to be considered in private session (minute 49 refers).

45 LED Facilities and Activities report April 2024

The LED Facilities and Activities report for April 2024 was received and noted.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The number of memberships is growing, and numbers were back up to pre-Covid levels.
- The report set out that there were 24,285 visits to the swimming pools in February 2024. It was understood that this included junior swim activities and swim school, whereas the numbers on the KPI Dashboard related only to people using the pools on a pay-as-you-go basis.
- LED currently employ approximately 700 staff equating to around 300 full-time equivalent employees. Staff numbers have grown since the pandemic.
- The LED CEO provided an explanation of the trading and financial relationship between LED Community Leisure and its trading subsidiary, LED Enterprises Ltd, details of which had been set out previously in a report to this Forum on 11 April 2023.

46 LED KPI Dashboard March 2023 - April 2024

The Forum received and noted key details of the performance of LED Community Leisure for the period March 2023 – April 2024.

47 Leisure and Playing Pitch Requirements

The Chair welcomed Rachel Fowler and Liz Taylor, from Strategic Leisure.

Liz Taylor introduced this report which referred to a background paper considered by Cabinet on 27th March 2024 outlining significant challenges in meeting deadlines, demands and funding requests arising from Leisure Strategy Action Plan, the Playing Pitch Strategy 2024 and other programmes and assessments associated with the Council's leisure work programme.

Cabinet had formally considered the recommendations in the 27th March 2024 report and approved the appointment of Strategic Leisure to carry out a high-level options appraisal of the Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy 2021-2031 with an Implementation Plan, and possible options for delivery to inform decisions on the affordability of the Council's current and future leisure provision.

The Forum was asked to note the report and to oversee and steer the options appraisal work led by Strategic Leisure.

Liz Taylor outlined how Strategic Leisure intended to carry out the options appraisal, this being by way of a series of six workshops spaced 3-4 weeks apart, at the end of which a summary report would be produced reflecting the review, the options discussed and suggested next steps. It was proposed to start the process from the end of April 2024.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Members will be invited to the workshops along with guests, where appropriate.
- The appraisal will be a challenging process requiring members to make difficult decisions about the leisure services they feel the district needs and how this can be facilitated within the confines of the available finance.
- It is not irregular to appoint external consultants such as Strategic Leisure to carry out work of this nature. They are independent and impartial and very well connected nationally with other local authorities facing similar difficult decisions about their leisure provision, and therefore bring a level of expertise which this Council does not have access to in-house.
- Strategic Leisure are familiar with this Council and its leisure provision, having previously been commissioned to facilitate the development of the Leisure Strategy.
- Part of the purpose of the workshops is to help members to understand how different factors interlink, where this may not be obvious. For example, the condition and number of facilities, and the catchment areas they have are inextricably linked to their sustainability, since a smaller catchment area means that fewer people will use a facility and it will therefore be more difficult to generate income. A benchmarking exercise might also be appropriate to understand where East Devon's leisure charges sit, in a wider context.
- The cost for appointing Strategic Leisure for the options appraisal is relatively low, and within the cost allowed for running the Council's leisure facilities for the year.

48 **Cranbrook Leisure Centre**

The Assistant Director – Growth, Development and Prosperity introduced this report and asked the Forum to note the outcome of the Cranbrook town centre community consultation carried out in late 2023 and the progression of the Cranbrook town centre masterplan, and to note the establishment of a project for a Cranbrook Leisure Centre.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The project initiation document is currently being prepared which will confirm membership of the project team and set out the relationship with Sports England, the Sports England local delivery pilots, the local community and the town council.

- The Forum will receive six-monthly updates on this project.

RESOLVED

1. To note the outcome of the Cranbrook town centre community consultation and the progression of the Cranbrook town masterplan.
2. To note the establishment of a project for a Cranbrook Leisure Centre.

The meeting then went into private session.

49 **LED Service Management Fee 2024/25**

The Finance Director introduced this report which set out a final management fee request received from LED and a draft Service Level Agreement framework to be used for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years, for the Forum's consideration.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The additional request for £25,000 to support the work of the outreach service would enable LED to subsidise the up-front costs of setting up new groups with a view to changing behaviours and fostering a long-term love of physical activity. As an example, the funding could cover hall hire, instructor costs, training, equipment and upskilling members of the community, meaning that LED could deliver new groups at only a nominal cost to the user where passing on full costs at the outset would constitute a barrier to participation.
- The benefits of LED's outreach work align with the county council's priorities in social care and community inclusion and have the effect of covering some gaps in NHS services. It was recognised that by funding the outreach work, this Council is plugging a hole which arguably should be plugged by other agencies with a larger overall budget. However, the work also aligns with this Council's Public Health Strategy and delivery of outcomes set out in its Leisure Strategy and it was therefore considered appropriate and good value for money to support the spend.
- It was noted that the new Service Level Agreement framework does not come into effect until 2025 and if appropriate and necessary, it can be amended in the interim, following outcomes of the options appraisal being led by Strategic Leisure.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet

1. The request from LED to provide a budget allocation of £1,603,162 for the 2024/25 management service fee which includes £53,350 for its outreach payment.
2. To consider the additional request for a further £25,000 to support the work of the outreach service.
3. To agree the new Service Level Agreement framework to be used for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years subject to final agreement and sign off from the Director of Governance and Licensing and Monitoring Officer.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott

M Hall

S Hawkins (Chair)

N Hookway (Vice-Chair)

J Loudoun

A Toye

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
C Brown
G Jung
J Brown
R Collins
R Jefferies
M Rixson

Representatives of LED Community Leisure in attendance:

Karen Best, LED Finance Director
Janette Cass, Pavilion Manager
Andrew Dare, LED Fitness and Wellbeing Manager
Lottie Edwards, LED Community Engagement Manager
Peter Gilpin, LED CEO
Richard Purchase, Chairman of LED Board
Matt Wright, LED Director of Delivery

Representatives of Strategic Leisure in attendance:

Rachel Fowler
Liz Taylor

Officers in attendance:

Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Wood, Assistant Director Growth Development and Prosperity
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Tracy Hendren, Director of Housing, Health and Environment

Councillor apologies:

P Hayward
S Smith

Chair

Date: