

# NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

### LEISURE SERVICES TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1 MARCH 2007

#### Present

Councillor B Glynane	Chair
Councillor A McCutcheon	
Councillor A Simpson	
Dr M Gillespie	(Co-Optee) University of Northampton
I Redfern	Leisure Services Manager
T Tiff	Scrutiny Officer

#### 1 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from T Hall, Corporate Manager.

#### 2 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2006

Subject to the amendment of Dr Gillespie representing *the University of Northampton*, the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

#### 3 To approve the Chair's final report

At this point, I Redfern advised the Group that P Murphy, Government Lead Official, had requested the Council's Leisure Services to apply for TAES (Towards an Excellent Service) Accreditation. Leisure Services is expected to be awarded TAES and all of the Council's Cultural Services, including arts, museums and events will also go through this process.

A pilot has been set up for all Northamptonshire districts to apply for TAES and the achievement date is May/June 2007. As part of this process the Authority will put together a Cultural Strategy, which will include the Leisure Strategy. NBC has been given until the end of May to achieve TAES, but the other Northants district councils have until the end of June 2007.

The Task and Finish Group then amended the Chair's draft report, copy attached, for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2007.

The meeting concluded at 19.40 hours

## Northampton Borough Council

### Overview and Scrutiny

#### Report of the Leisure Services Task and Finish Group

#### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to review the objectives of the Service, to review the extent to which the Service meets these objectives and to review whether the Service provides 'value for money'. A copy of the Scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

#### **2 Context and Background**

- 2.1 A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established. Dr Mike Gillespie, Principal Lecturer and Field Leader at the University of Northampton, was co-opted as a member of the Group. Work commenced in September 2006 and concluded in February 2007.
- 2.2 The Group agreed that the following areas needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities: –
- User satisfaction survey results
  - Existing Leisure Services Policy/Strategy
  - Leisure Services Action/Business Plan
  - Financial information such as the cost of the service
  - Comparisons of a sample of other Local Authorities' Leisure Strategies
- 2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities as it demonstrates listening to local people and providing the services that they need. (Corporate Priority 1 refers). It also addresses several commitments under the Local Area Agreement, particularly within the Healthier Communities and Older People block.

#### **3 Background - Northampton Borough Council's Leisure Facilities**

- 3.1 The Council has three leisure centres - Mounts Baths, Danes Camp and Lings Forum - and a Sports Development Unit that creates a link with the community and the leisure centres.
- 3.2 75 exercise classes are offered over the three leisure centres. There is Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) accredited equipment in all three leisure centres. All three centres are accredited to the Quest quality standard, as is Sports Development.
- 3.3 Lings Forum
- Lings Forum no longer receives £143,000 of funding from Northamptonshire County Council, as Lings Academy no longer uses the facility during school hours as it has its own facility. Therefore, a new scheme that operates during the day has been introduced - Over 50's

days. Individuals can attend Lings Forum on a Friday, attend the exercise classes, gym, swimming pool and play bowls etc. Lunch is provided, as is a film showing at the Lings Cinema. Cost for the day is £7.50. When capacity has been reached for the Friday sessions a similar session on an additional day will be offered.

### 3.4 Danes Camp

Danes Camp Leisure Centre has been designated and awarded the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) regarding access to people with disabilities. The Centre has appropriate equipment and swimming pool, parking bays, signage, changing rooms, lifts, and lockers for disabled needs.

### 3.5 Mounts Baths

The centre has two swimming pools, a main pool and a teaching pool, fully equipped gym and a health suite, which includes a sauna, steam room, Turkish hot rooms and a plunge pool. A wide range of fitness classes is also offered.

## 4 Evidence Collection

4.1 In scoping this review it was decided that evidence would be collected from a variety of sources. The majority of the evidence has been grouped into three categories: -

- Objectives of the Service
- Extent to which the Service meets these objectives
- Value for money

## 5 Objectives of the Services

### 5.1 Leisure Services Aims

The Leisure Services Manager explained that the service has developed a set of aims, which have however never been formally adopted by this Council: -

- **Improve Health**  
Develop the use of sports and Leisure Services to achieve health improvement objectives.
- **Access and Participation**  
Provide affordable access to sporting and leisure opportunities for all and promote lifelong participation.
- **Community**  
Support and develop local communities by positively directing energies into sport and recreation and reducing crime and disorder.

- **Social Inclusion**

To increase participation in sport and physical activity by under-represented groups, including women and girls, people with disabilities and minority ethnic groups.

- **Customer Focus**

Provide a customer focused service and ensure a culture of continuous improvement.

- **Economic and Efficient Service**

Provide a cost effective and efficient Leisure Service. Increase income and reduce cost/subsidy.

- **Partnership Approach**

To work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sector organisations, plus other stakeholders to deliver services.

## **5.2 Leisure Services' Mission Statement**

Northampton Borough Council's Leisure Services mission statement is "*To provide a high quality, value for money Leisure Service that meets the needs and aspirations of the local Community*". Again, this has been developed internally but not formally adopted by the Council.

## **5.3 Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)**

5.3.1 The Portfolio Holder for Local Environment attended the meeting on 6 December 2006 (Copy of the minutes of that meeting attached at Appendix B).

5.3.2 In response to questions from the group, her views on key points in relation to the objectives of the service were: -

5.3.3 Northampton Borough Council's distinctive role in Leisure Service is ensuring or enabling adequate access to Leisure Services for the whole community (whether provided directly by Northampton Borough Council or not) to achieve the benefits described below. Leisure Services are a vehicle for delivery of Government objectives, through active partnerships.

5.3.4 The Administration has not formulated an explicit statement of objectives for Leisure Service. The Portfolio Holder suggested: –

**Objectives:** To help to ensure an active, healthy and well-integrated population across all sectors; to contribute to the attractiveness of Northampton's quality of life; at a reasonable cost.

**Benefits:** Reduced obesity, reduced incidence of acute and chronic health problems associated with inactivity (e.g. heart/circulatory diseases), improved ability of older people to lead independent lives, improved safety through ability to swim, new skills for young people, reduced anti-social behaviour through positive social activity and improved self-esteem, improved attractiveness of the town to current and potential residents, employers, visitors and investors.

- 5.3.5 The Leisure Strategy should define the aims of the service, objectives/targets and how they will be measured, who is responsible and how they will be held to account. It should state where Leisure Services wants to be in 5 years' time, for example, what needs to be done to get there and a broad timetable. It should state Council's policy regarding forms of provision and ownership. The public (users and non-users) should have the opportunity to be involved in developing the Strategy.
- 5.3.6 A high standard of leisure provision is one of the aspects of quality of life that investors, companies and individuals look at when deciding whether to come to a particular town. It is important for the projected growth of Northampton that the town can offer something attractive. Leisure facilities or activities are seen as a key part of regeneration, offering a focus for building communities and improving the environment. Growth in numbers of residents also implies a demand for more facilities, and possibly in different places. Whether or not the Council provides these directly, it has a role in assessing the need and facilitating the provision. Identifying suitable sites is a part of this.

#### **5.4 Evidence from N-Sport**

- 5.4.1 N-Sport is the countywide partnership which supports public leisure provision in Northamptonshire. The Director of N-Sport attended the meeting on 6 December 2006. A copy of the minutes of that meeting is attached at Appendix B.
- 5.4.2 The key points from the interview regarding the objectives to the Service are:
- 5.4.3 N-Sport has a three-year sports strategy, 2006-2009, and the future of the partnership has been agreed as 'Growing Northamptonshire through the power of sport.'
- 5.4.4 The Sports Partnership will have four strategic themes to which it will focus priorities, investment and support: -
- Sport
  - Physical activity
  - Community
  - Education and skills

### **6 Extent to which the Service meets these Objectives**

#### **6.1 Leisure Services Questionnaire**

- 6.1.1 The Task and Finish Group produced a web-based Leisure Services survey, and various groups, including the Council's Area Partnerships and Forums, were invited to participate. A copy of the survey is attached at Appendix C.
- 6.1.2 Thirty one responses were received from the website questionnaire and comments made include: -

- The need for additional sessions such as Yoga, Pilates, Ballroom Dancing
- The need for longer hours of opening

The above activities are already offered by the Council, and its Leisure Centres are open from 7.15am to 11.00pm.

6.1.3 A copy of the evaluation of the 31 completed questionnaires is attached at Appendix D.

6.1.4 The questionnaire was also emailed to local schools and 199 were completed by Kingsthorpe Community College. Comments made include:-

- The need for more leisure facilities in Kingsthorpe
- The need for public transport to and from the leisure centres
- The need longer opening hours
- The need for more activities including: -
- Rope climbing classes
- Astroturf
- Indoor play area
- Dancing classes
- Mixed games classes
- More facilities for girls
- Snow sports
- More clubs at the leisure centres

6.1.5 A copy of the evaluation of the 199 completed questionnaires from Kingsthorpe Community College is attached at Appendix E.

## **6.2 Evidence from the Leisure Services Manager**

6.2.1 The performance of leisure has improved year on year. For the last two years the service has focused on the Corporate Plan, and an equilibrium has been achieved offering a balanced programme in conjunction with health issues.

6.2.2 The Government has an initiative to increase public participation in moderate physical activity. It has set a target that 100,000 people per week should be exercising over the next ten years. (An increase in participation by 1% until 2010). Northampton is just below the national average of approximately 18.9% of people currently regularly exercising.

## **6.3 Evidence from the Economic Intelligence Manager**

6.3.1 The Economic Intelligence Manager provided information on the Growth Agenda and matching new builds against the number of leisure facilities that the borough currently has.

- 6.3.2 The main points of evidence regarding the extent to which the Service meets the objectives are: -
- 6.3.3 The town is facing a major expansion of the housing stock with an approximate target of 30,000 houses over the next 15 years. Associated population growth will need increased facilities.
- 6.3.4 Northamptonshire County Council is investigating the projected population for the next 15 years, and projects this to be 238,000. Should 30,000 houses be built in the next 15 years, in accordance with current statistics these could house an average of 2.3 people per household (based on the last five years figures) and it suggests that the population could expand by over 60,000. Add this to the current population of approximately 200,000 would give a population of over 260,000.
- 6.3.5 Leisure facilities are a key part of the economy, as people wanting to move to the town will look for the available facilities, such as, schools and leisure.
- 6.3.6 The calculation for the provision of swimming pools as per the Consultants' (PMP) report is calculated in square meters per head of population. This report shows that there is a shortage of 46 square metres of swimming facility. In comparison the swimming pools in Northampton Borough Council's leisure centres are: -
- Mounts Baths 366 square metres
  - Danes Camp 212 square metres
  - Lings Forum 250 square meters (reference the consultants' report)
- 6.3.7 The Economy Strategy will look at sports and leisure facilities. Organisations that operate Leisure Services will be consulted as part of the Economic Strategy process.
- 6.3.8 There needs to be a balance between the public's expectations for facilities and the supporting business plan for that facility that proves viability or not.

#### **6.4 Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)**

- 6.4.1 The key points of evidence from the interview in relation to the extent to which the Service meets these objectives are: -
- 6.4.2 Leisure Service is generally well regarded by customers and is well managed. Overall policy and aims, which link Leisure Services to key corporate goals, need to be defined. Improvement in the physical condition of Lings Forum is desirable.
- 6.4.3 It is not clear whether the service meets the needs of all sectors of a diverse community. There is a possible gap in provision for the northwest of the town, and a need to match supply with demand arising from growth. The town lacks a swimming pool suitable for competition, despite a thriving swimming club.
- 6.4.4 Some examples of how the service meets objectives: -

- Young children and their parents are catered for by special classes and a crèche.
- Activity for older children and adolescents is encouraged through concessionary rates, special sessions and the work of the sports development unit.
- Schemes addressing young people whose life styles put them at risk of ill health include the Body4Life initiative.
- The GP referral scheme and heart failure initiative apply to all ages but in practice particularly to people in their middle and later years.
- Facilities for clubs and groups during the daytime are well used by older people.
- The new gym equipment includes apparatus dedicated to people with a variety of physical impairments, which also benefits a proportion of older people.

6.4.5 Three key points to drive a Leisure Strategy for the next five years are: -

- Participation
- Matching resources with the growth agenda of the organisation
- Recognising young people's needs but also recognising the older person.

6.4.6 The Local Area Agreement (LAA) includes Government and other targets relating to:

- Promoting independent living for older people
- Improving quality of life and reducing social isolation for older people
- Reducing obesity in children and adults
- Ensuring children and young people achieve healthy lifestyles
- Increasing take-up of sports facilities

6.4.7 At present, success is measured by volume of use and income levels against expenditure. The Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) includes the performance indicator of number of swims per 1000 population (currently above target). Qualitative success is measured through the rigorous assessment involved in Quest and Charter Mark accreditation.

6.4.8 In future, the LAA performance management system will report on indicators related to those targets. The Council needs to be able to measure how the benefits are distributed within the community, for example, by age.

## **6.5 Evidence from N-Sport**

6.5.1 The key points from the interview regarding the extent to which the Service meets the objectives of the Service are:



6.5.2 The following has been achieved in working with Northampton Borough Council: -

- Every Day Sports Campaign
- Youth Games – Largest Team
- Workforce workshops – 128 attendees from Northampton Borough Council
- Provision of Active Sport
- 28 clubs accredited
- Support for Inclusive Fitness Gyms (IFI)

## **6.6 Improved Health Initiatives**

6.6.1 Northampton Borough Council is the market leader for the GP referral scheme, Body 4 Life (Children and Obesity) and the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Initiatives.

### **6.6.2 GP Referral Scheme**

The GP referral scheme is a national scheme that will continue to evolve.

Individuals are referred for a 12-week health programme by the GP, if the GP feels that they will benefit from a course of activity. The 12-week health programme comprises a guided induction and a monitored exercise programme. A health survey is undertaken and the doctor informs the Leisure Manager of the individual's capabilities. Often individuals continue to exercise regularly after the 12-week programme. If individuals to continue to use the health centres they are offered a discount to join the Council's leisure centres.

Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust provides £7,000 funding per year to the Council to administer the scheme.

### **6.6.3 Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Group**

The Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Group is a new Initiative that the Council has introduced and the Council is not aware of any other Local Authority that offer such an scheme.

### **6.6.4 Body 4 Life Initiative**

The Council's Leisure Service's Body 4 Life (Children and Obesity) Initiative has won an award. Structured groups are run by the School Health Advisors. The whole family is encouraged to attend. Each session consists of one hour physical exercise and one hour's education. Measurements are taken at the beginning of the 12-week programme and again at the end. This Initiative is seen as an example of best practice. Initially, each group comprised 20 children but it was felt that this was too large and it was reduced to 14 (plus parents). Three groups per year are taken, which coincides with school term time. Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust provides £6,000 funding per year and Northampton Borough Council provides the facility, staff and motivators such as T-shirts and water bottles. A weakness of the

Initiative is not having the resources to call the children back in six months time to see if the life change is continuing.

## **7 Value for Money**

### **7.1 Evidence from Corporate Manager (Community Safety, Leisure and Town Centre Operations)**

7.1.1 The Corporate Manager (Community Safety, Leisure and Town Centre Operations) provided evidence in the form of the Audit Commission Report 'Public Sports and Recreation Services – Making them Fit for the Future'.

7.1.2 This document provided an important contribution to the review. It identifies the benefits and objectives of strategic planning of sports and recreation provision and the appraisal of options. It states the key directions that Councils will have to take to meet these objectives. The document in particular details three options for provision of facilities: -

- Direct provision
- Trusts
- Private Sector provision

7.1.3 The document states:-

*“that strategic planning of sports and recreation is underdeveloped and is weakened by the lack of a robust assessment of current sports and recreation provision, community needs and future demands. Partnerships across councils, with the private sector and other external partners are rare. Councils are focussing on maintaining and managing the historic provision of sports and recreation facilities within their locality. Successful strategic engagement between Leisure Services and the health and education sectors is not common, and opportunities for better use of resources are being missed. This is most evident where there are two tiers of local government. There are nevertheless some good examples of the management of sports and recreation provision characterised by clarity of purpose and strong partnership working.*

*Councils’ approach to options appraisals is inconsistent and often limited despite a strong private sector and trust market. In the study’s survey two-fifths of councils based their management option decision on a desktop analysis. In a fifth of cases councils initially limited the breadth of options to be assessed and one in ten councils undertook no options appraisal at all. Market testing is limited with only one-third of councils in the survey market testing their services through a competitive tendering process. This process is often poorly managed and focussed on financial criteria. In these cases councils cannot demonstrate that they are delivering the best value option.”*

7.1.4 The Group recognised that some of its criticisms could be applied to Northampton Borough Council. In particular, there has not been a comprehensive assessment of need; the specific role of the Council in

meeting leisure need is not defined; and no approval of the different options for provision has been completed.

## **7.2 Leisure Services Annual Report 2005-2006**

Northampton Borough Council's Leisure Services Annual Report 2005-2006 gives a lot of information regarding achievements and gives a break down of each site. All three sites are accredited to the Leisure Charter Marker and have recently acquired Quest Accreditation, which is the highest standard for quality in the leisure industry. Mounts Baths was audited on 28 and 29 September 2006 and passed with a rate of upper 60/lower 70%. Lings Forum was audited on 9 and 10 November 2006 and Danes Camp during January 2007.

## **7.3 N-Sport**

N-Sport is looking to engage with the private sector, but cautiously. It is essential that there is a community-managed resource. If the private sector is relied on totally for leisure provision, there would be difficulties engaging with hard to reach groups.

## **7.4 Costs of the Service**

Costs of providing Leisure Services: -

- Income from the three centres is around £2.2 million
- Expenditure equates to £3.4 million
- Subsidy is therefore around £1.2 million

## **7.5 Retention Rate**

The national retention rate for gym attendance is three months. The retention rate for attendance at Northampton Borough Council's leisure centres is currently seven months.

## **7.6 Evidence from the Portfolio Holder (Local Environment)**

7.6.1 The main points of evidence regarding value for money are: -

7.6.2 Benchmarking with others is difficult given the variety of forms of provision and of objectives. However, there are networks that help to do this. The Audit Commission has recently published a study that should help to set the national scene. At a local level, year-on-year comparisons of costs are helpful in showing an improved VFM situation. The Leisure Service is one area where the unit cost approach (e.g. cost per swim) has great potential. An assessment of value must include the views of customers and community, gauged by growth in use and by direct surveys.

7.6.3 The Administration's expectations on financial effects will be reviewed as part of the budgetary process. There is no expectation that the net subsidy will grow.

## **7.7 Leisure Services Manager**

7.7.1 The Leisure Services Manager provided information on a Leisure Services quality accreditation scheme – TAES (Towards an Excellent Service).

- 7.7.2 Cultural Services (including Leisure Services) has been tasked with achieving accreditation in an improvement project known as Towards an Excellent Service, (TAES). This work is timed to contribute to Northampton Borough Council's next Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Direction of Travel Review.
- 7.7.3 Cultural Services is working with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and Sport England and has a mentor/consultant to guide it through the assessment process. The Council's Government Lead Official, Mr Murphy, has initiated the process.
- 7.7.4 Work has already commenced and Cultural Services will be externally validated on 5 and 6 June 2007.
- 7.7.5 The major benefit from this assessment will be the identification of the Services strengths and weaknesses and as a result of this a comprehensive Improvement Plan will be designed.
- 7.7.6 During the whole process staff and external stakeholders will be consulted in order to gain their perspective on the service delivery and performance.
- 7.7.7 If successful, Cultural Services and Leisure will be the only service area within the Council to have been awarded TAES.

## **8 Further Evidence**

8.1 Further evidence was received: -

- Desktop Research
- Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee

### **8.2 Desktop Research**

8.2.1 Desktop research was carried out with a number of Local Authorities regarding their leisure service provision and Leisure Services Strategies/Policies.

8.2.2 The following Local Authorities were contacted: -

- Ken Marriott Centre (75%\*), Rugby
- Furzefield Centre, (81%\*) Hertsmere
- Leicester Leys Leisure Centre (73%\*), Leicester
- Aylestone Leisure Centre (73%\*), Leicester
- George H Carnall Leisure Centre (78%\*), Greater Manchester
- Guildford Spectrum (89%\*), Guildford
- Waterfront Leisure Centre (72%\*) Greenwich
- Thame Leisure Centre (75%\*), South Oxfordshire

- Stratford Leisure and visitor centre (71%\*), Stratford upon Avon
- Sazon Pool and Leisure (71%\*), Stevenage
- Riverside Ice and Leisure (73%\*), Chelmsford
- Harborough Leisure Centre (75%\*), Market Harborough

The above percentages detail the Quest status 'pass mark.'

8.2.3 Leisure Strategies/Policies were received from three Local Authorities and the key points are: -

#### **8.2.4 Rugby Borough Council**

Rugby Borough Council's Strategy represents a wide range of regional, local and Leisure Service Plans and Policies and aims to address the needs of the community over a five-year period. The Strategy aims to act as a an advocacy document for the promotion and delivery of Leisure Services and represent the whole range of leisure opportunities available to the residents of the Borough. The Strategy is intended to work in partnership alongside the issues addressed in the Council's Corporate Plan and takes its lead from the views and needs of the local population.

#### **8.2.5 Hertsmere**

SMILE 2003-2006 is the Council's first Cultural and Leisure Strategy for Hertsmere and contains details of initiatives such as further investments in leisure buildings, improved provision for young people and a greater commitment to creating sporting opportunities. The aim of the document is to set out policy guidance to inform future decisions as to how the Council develops its leisure and cultural services over a three-year period.

#### **8.2.6 Guildford Borough Council**

Guildford Borough's Cultural Strategy – With a Little help from our Friends, is a detailed, living document that covers a five-year period (2002-2007). The successes and failures of the objectives set out in the Action Plan contained in the Strategy will be monitored regularly. The Strategy provides a framework for moving forward in the cultural sphere in Guildford. It is stated in the Strategy that the Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport is encouraging every Local Authority to produced a Cultural Strategy which will provide a direction for cultural provision within the area administered by that authority for the next five years or more.

#### **8.2.7 Leicester City Council**

A copy of Leicester City Council's Cultural Division's Service Plan 2006 –2010 has been obtained. The Service Plan represents a wide range of regional, local and Leisure Service Plans and Policies and aims to address the needs of the community over a four-year period. The Service Plan refers to the Cultural Strategy for the East Midlands 2006-2011 and a copy is attached to this briefing note. The Strategy is a detailed document covering a five-year period. It sets out a vision for

the East Midlands *as the place of choice for people to enjoy, create, work and participate in culture*. The Strategy, which is driven by Culture East Midlands (the Regional Cultural Consortium) has four key themes: -

- Supporting cultural opportunities for people and communities
- Fulfilling the potential of culture in regional opportunities and in national policies and programmes
- Getting culture valued in regional policy and planning
- Achieving sector sustainability

### **8.3 Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee (Northamptonshire County Council)**

- 8.3.1 Information regarding the work of this Committee was which includes: -
- 8.3.2 The Committee is potentially due to carry out a certain amount of work relevant to Leisure Services in the current year, but this is not a major focus of its work programme.
- 8.3.3 The Committee has short-listed a review of the 'role of cultural services in building healthier communities' as a Scrutiny project.
- 8.3.4 The Committee will also look at cultural/Leisure Services.

## **9 Conclusions**

- 9.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn: -.

### **9.2 The Objectives of the Service**

- 9.2.1 The Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- 9.2.2 Improved health in the form of initiatives such as the GP Referral Scheme, Body 4 Life (Children and Obesity) and the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Scheme links closely to leisure.
- 9.2.3 Leisure Services supports and develops local communities by positively directing energies into sport and recreation and reducing crime and disorder. There are a few partnership arrangements in place, such as, the sponsoring of six top athletes from the Trampolining Club. The athletes can use the gym free of charge.

### **9.3 Leisure Services Strategy**

- 9.3.1 The Council does not currently have a Leisure Services Strategy and the Task and Finish Group realises the need for one. Leisure Strategies are often produced for either a three or five-year period. A three-year Strategy would be appropriate for Northampton but it should make reference to longer-term issues such as the growth agenda and

the implications of the London Olympics and Paralympics Games in 2012. The Strategy should seek to develop, improve and re-design Leisure Services.

- 9.3.2 It is important that the role of Leisure Services in respect of the national and local health agenda is highlighted in the Strategy.
- 9.3.3 It should be acknowledged within the Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- 9.3.4 Participation in sport and physical activity by under-represented groups is encouraged through the promotion of the Leisure Card, by Sports Development promoting International Women's Day and Danes Camp Leisure Centre being designated and awarded the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) giving access to people with disabilities. The Strategy should recognise and build on this, with measurable outcome targets.
- 9.3.5 The Council should not produce its Leisure Strategy in isolation but appropriate partnerships should be examined and engaged with in the production of the Strategy.

#### **9.4 Vision for Leisure Services**

Leisure Services' current mission statement is *"To provide a high quality, value for money Leisure Service that meets the needs and aspirations of the Local Community"*. There is the need for a clear vision for Leisure Services and this should be produced in consultation with key stakeholders and partners

#### **9.5 Aims for Leisure Services**

- 9.5.1 The 'Aims for Leisure Services' is a key document but has not been formally approved by Cabinet. These 'Aims', developed internally by Leisure Services, are currently: -
  - Improve Health
  - Access and Participation
  - Community
  - Social Inclusion
  - Customer Focus
  - Economic and Efficient Service
  - Partnership Approach
- 9.5.2 There is a need therefore for appropriate Aims of Leisure Services to be adopted. Once adopted, all Leisure Services and Programmes should aim to address the following key Aims - To:
  - Improve Health
  - Enhance Social Inclusion
  - Promote access and Participation

- Develop Community

## **9.6 Appraisal of Options**

- 9.6.1 The Audit Commission's report *Public Sports and Recreation Services – Making them fit for the future* provided an important contribution to the review. It identifies the benefits and objectives of strategic planning of sports and recreation provision and the appraisal of options. A strategic approach, linking leisure and planning services should be introduced, as there is a need to examine the Council's current provision, for example, in accordance with the growth agenda.
- 9.6.2 There is a need for a 25-metre competition swimming pool in the town. The town has a very good swimming club but there is not the provision of a proper training pool for its use. From the evidence given by the Economic Intelligence Manager it can be concluded that the town is currently short of one swimming pool and this is before the 15 year growth of the population is considered.

## **9.7 Value for Money**

- 9.7.1 After collating all of the evidence it was concluded that from the information gathered the Task and Finish Group was unable to assess whether the Council's Leisure Services offered value for money. Regular monitoring and evaluation of Leisure Services is needed. A value for money assessment is required in the form of an options appraisal. The options appraisal should include long-term issues such as the growth agenda, the implications of the 2012 and the planning policy process. Therefore there is a need for a strategic approach, linking leisure and planning services.
- 9.7.2 The Economic Intelligence Manager should take account of the Leisure Services Task and Finish Group report in any future assessment of the relationship of leisure of the economic of the town.

## **Leisure Services Survey**

- 9.7.3 Thirty-one responses from the web based Leisure Services questionnaire is not a robust sample size. This questionnaire could be used as a template for future Leisure Services surveys. It was recognised from the comments received that there is a need for the Leisure Services facilities to be promoted.

## **10 Recommendations**

The Task and Finish Group recommends to Cabinet to that: -

### **Leisure Services Strategy**

- 10.1 A three-year Leisure Services Strategy for Northampton will be devised by December 2007, making reference to longer-term issues such as the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the Growth Agenda.
- 10.2 The role of Leisure Services in delivering Healthier Communities outcomes will be described in the Strategy.



- 10.3 It is recognised within the Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- 10.4 Northampton Borough Council engages with key partners, including Planning and Regeneration within the Council, WNDC and Northamptonshire County Council, in the development of the Leisure Strategy.

#### **Vision for Leisure Services**

- 10.5 A clear vision for the improvement and development for Leisure Services in Northampton will be established.

#### **Aims for Leisure Services**

- 10.6 The aims of Leisure Services are adopted as follows: -
- Leisure Services and Programmes should, wherever possible, address the following key areas: -
- To improve Health
  - Enhance Social Inclusion
  - Promote access and participation
  - Enhance community development

#### **Assessment of Needs and Appraisal of Options**

- 10.7 It ensures that the aims and objectives for Leisure Services will be supported by a clear monitoring and evaluation process.
- 10.8 A needs assessment of the leisure provision will be undertaken, particularly addressing the following: -
- The Growth Agenda
  - The implications of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics
  - Planning and Regeneration Policy process
  - Health Agenda
- 10.9 The value for money of Northampton Borough Council's major leisure facilities will be assessed and recommendations provided before any future decision on the provision of Leisure Services is made.
- 10.10 10.10 A thorough Options Appraisal process will be carried out before a decision on future provision is made.
- 10.11 10.11 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the relevant Corporate Managers (Planning, Regeneration and Leisure) for these areas to ensure that action is taken on the recommendations.

10.12 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the Chief Executive of the PCT and the Chair of Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

### **Planning Policy**

10.13 It ensures that the vision of Leisure Services will be included in the Local Development Planning Framework.

### **Leisure Services Survey**

10.1310.14 The Leisure Survey, as attached at Appendix C, will be used as a template for future Leisure Service questionnaires.