

22 April 2013

Active Living (Sports Centres) Update

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr A Harris – Leisure and Culture

Report:

Scrutiny Panel Members will recall that they undertook a comprehensive review of Sport & Leisure in 2011. It was agreed that replacing the Council's aging, unattractive and increasingly expensive leisure centres should be a priority. This aspiration was to meet the philosophy of "more people, more active, more often" and thereby make a positive impact on the long-term health and well-being of Walsall's residents.

Cabinet have subsequently (24 October 2012) confirmed that the overriding purpose of its leisure services is to contribute to the health and wellbeing of local people.

It is recognised that the Council needs to address existing health inequalities in Walsall. The NHS Walsall Annual Public Health Report 2011/12 headline conclusion was that "the health of people in Walsall is generally worse than the England average" and "Life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas of Walsall is 11 years less (7 years for women) than in the least deprived areas." The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies has stated recently that: *"Regular activity (including cycling in gyms) helps prevent cancer, heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems such activity should be a part of your 150 minutes of physical activity each week; this can help to prevent or improve over 20 long-term conditions."*

Using data from Sport England, public health and other sources, the Working Smarter review identified nine key groups that were most in need of undertaking physical activity, who would benefit most from increased activity and were also those most likely and willing to make this change in their behaviour. The nine target groups are:-

- a) Single Parents
- b) Mid-life vocational workers
- c) Older people
- d) "Long-Term chronic Conditions"
- e) Men over 40
- f) Young People in Transition
- g) Overweight & Obese

- h) Looked after Children
- i) Children with Disabilities

Walsall's Health and Wellbeing Strategy will focus on how integrating a variety of approaches can contribute to physical activity and health and meet the Marmot principles. This will see the establishment of a borough-wide network of provision, comprising green spaces, community use of school-based facilities and the development of new and improved key strategic leisure centres. A Borough-wide strategic map of provision has also been developed. The partner providers include higher education, further education, the voluntary sector, sports colleges, schools and the Council.

Walsall's leisure centres are generally old, out-of-date, often not fit for purpose, unattractive, poorly designed and will become increasingly costly to manage. Some parts date back to the 1920s. Without major investment, research suggests the existing centres will be increasingly incapable of attracting the target groups specified above.

Considerable work has been undertaken to develop, analyse and challenge the business case supporting the provision of this project and its aspiration to provide the two leisure centres. New, well designed and attractive leisure facilities will attract more people and as a consequence more income. The business case has taken this into account and has increased income for swimming by 50%, outdoor sport by 75%, indoor sport by 50%, secondary sales by 50% and most significantly income from fitness by 211%. Officers have used data from Sport England's National Benchmarking Service at Sheffield Hallam University to substantiate these estimates.

As a result of this work, Cabinet agreed that a submission should be made to the Sport England "Iconic" facilities grant award scheme requesting a sizeable contribution towards the scheme. In addition, Sport England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has allocated one of the London 2012 Olympics' Legacy stainless steel swimming pools to be integrated into the scheme at Oak Park; there is a clear and obvious link between the Olympic Games, Sport England's legacy programme and Walsall's Paralympic gold medallist, Ellie Simmonds.

Full Planning applications to replace Oak Park Leisure Centre (13 December 2012) and Bloxwich Leisure Centre (4 April 2013) have now been achieved.

The Council is now seeking to undertake a procurement process to seek contractors to undertake construction works for the building of the two new leisure centres at Oak Park and Bloxwich. The results of the procurement exercise will be presented to Cabinet once the tender prices have been received and submissions evaluated.

By delivering the new "Active Living" centres at Oak Park and Bloxwich, the business case is focused on delivering several key outcomes, these being:-

- a) More people, more active, more often

- b) Maximise the Public Health benefit of activity to Walsall residents
- c) Replace aging and poorly designed leisure centres
- d) Have the potential to improve other facilities
- e) Address the Council's existing unmanaged leisure asset liability
- f) Build in a planned preventative maintenance budget to manage the Council's future asset liability
- g) Protect the employment of predominantly local staff
- h) Deliver Sport England's strategy on behalf of the Government to deliver a post London 2012 Olympics' legacy and "create a sporting habit for life"


By going out to tender, officers will then be able to clarify and confirm the actual build costs to replace the leisure centres at Oak Park and Bloxwich and this information will be presented to Cabinet in a subsequent report. The report to Cabinet on Wednesday 24 April 2013 seeks approval for officers to proceed with this work.

Recommendations:

That Members note the progress of this high profile scheme as a key way for the Council to make a significant contribution towards improving the health and well-being of its residents.

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