



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

15 December 2022

Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Kelly Middleton - Cabinet Member: Leisure, Public Health and Well-Being, Equalities and Partnerships
Lead Director:	Felicity Mercer – Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services
Service Area:	Commercial Services (Operations)
Report Author:	Stuart Davidson – Service Delivery Manager: Operations
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes - 27 September 2022
Report considered by:	SMT – 08 November 2022 Business Briefing – 17 November 2022 Cabinet – 15 December 2022

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 1.1 Endorses the Telford & Wrekin Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy (2022-2032).
- 1.2 Delegates authority to the Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member: Leisure, Public Health and Well-Being, Equalities and Partnerships to progress the actions set out in paragraph 4.2 of this report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the key findings and recommendations of the Telford & Wrekin Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy.

3.0 Background

3.1 In October 2021 Cabinet approved the appointment of consultants to support the production of a new Indoor Sports and Leisure Strategy for the borough to replace the current Leisure Facilities Framework (2007-2027).

3.2 It is 15 years since the strategy was launched and despite the unprecedented and unforeseeable financial climate the Council has retained all of its leisure centres and added new and replaced, extended, or refurbished all of its leisure centre facilities. Investment into the Council's leisure facilities alongside investment to improve access to these services, such as through the extension of the free swimming offer, is key to helping residents be physically active and contributes towards improved physical and mental health and well-being. New facilities have been developed at Abraham Darby, Telford Tennis Centre, Telford Park and Telford Langley schools. Wellington, Oakengates, Newport, Horsehay, Telford Ice Rink and Telford Ski Centre have all been extended or refurbished.

3.3 Current council priorities, local drivers and the wider national sport and physical activity context have moved on and the need therefore exists to develop a new strategy for the borough.

3.4 The new 10 year Strategy will provide a framework to ensure that the Borough's indoor sports and leisure provision is able to meet current and future demand, contribute to council priorities and further increase community physical activity levels.

3.5 The Strategy will be used to inform future service planning including investment priorities. The council has already committed to investing £14m of capital funding into the development and maintenance of its leisure facilities (detailed below) over the next two years as part of its On Your Side programme:-

- Investment into a new swimming pool in the Dawley area.
- Investment into health & fitness facilities and all new equipment at Wellington (completed July 2022), Abraham Darby (November 2022) and Stirchley (February 2023).
- Investment to develop a new indoor cycling studio at Abraham Darby (October/November 2022)
- Investment to replace and upgrade Telford Athletics Stadium floodlighting with new LED lights (completed September 2022)
- Investment to replace the 3G artificial pitch surface and other works at Oakengates Leisure Centre (February/March 2023)
- Investment into improving the golf course at Horsehay, phase 1 tee renovation (completed September 2022), phase 2 scheme of works being developed for bunker, drainage and footpath works (spring 2023).

Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy

- Investment to improve facilities at Telford Ski Centre, currently developing a design brief for the extension and enhancement of the Nursery slope.
- Investment into the enhancement of facilities at Telford Tennis Centre, proposal to explore opportunity for Padel court provision.
- Investment into essential maintenance of leisure facilities across the borough
- Investment into a new leisure management and booking system
- Investment into free junior swimming lesson provision (Launched October 2022)

- 3.6 Significant local and national policy research, industry benchmarking, facility audits, public and stakeholder consultation and the use of the Sport England Facility Plan Modelling tool has been used to inform the development of the Strategy.
- 3.7 Sport specific consultation was undertaken with the respective National Governing Bodies of Sports (NGBs) to obtain their overview of local supply and demand, future needs and opportunities. Discussions were also held with representatives from the NHS and a number of local secondary Head Teachers to explore matters such as potential future co-location opportunities.
- 3.8 The Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) has been used to project the extent to which local Sports Hall and Swimming Pool provision is sufficient to meet current and future needs of the borough. This takes into account a range of factors such as facility location, age, size and hours of operation and mapping this against local demographic information and national participation data.
- 3.9 A number of stakeholder discussions were held to identify local priorities and priority groups. A resident's survey was completed to capture current physical activity levels, attitudes toward physical activity, key barriers to participation and potential encouragement factors. Themes emerging from the resident's survey were then explored in more detail through targeted focus groups including sessions with inactive residents, workers, older people, Asian women, and people with a disability.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 Key findings

- 4.1.1 The Council's leisure centres are considered to be well placed to serve local residents. All facilities were rated green and as being excellent or good through the facility audits, they are all of a high quality, clean and well maintained with evidence of ongoing investment. Benchmarking illustrates that all facilities are recovering well post-Covid and that swimming indicators are particularly strong, reflective of the council investment into free swimming for under 25's and £1 swimming for over 50's and concessionary groups.
- 4.1.2 Whilst improving physical activity levels across the board should be a focus for future service planning, particular importance should be given to

prioritising inactive communities and those communities most in need. To maximise community benefit leisure centres should offer activities for every stage of life to support physical and mental health.

- 4.1.3 The council has recently launched as part of its 10 by 10 initiative, an investment of £73k per year over the next 3 years, to fund up to two thousand free swimming lesson courses for children aged between 5 and 10 years who cannot currently swim. This investment will enable children across the borough to develop an essential life skill and benefit fully from the Council's free swimming initiative for all residents under 25.
- 4.1.4 Some 89% of survey respondents said that improving facilities would encourage participation and 42% of respondents were keen to do more exercise. Ensuring facilities and staff are welcoming and supportive was cited as being of significant importance.
- 4.1.5 Cost and lack of confidence were reported by residents as the two main barriers to participation. Limited accessibility to school based leisure sites, particularly swimming pools, during the school day was also identified as a barrier to participation, a theme that also came through strongly in the recent Dawley Swimming Pool consultation.
- 4.1.6 Sports hall provision within the borough is identified as being sufficient and well located to meet current and projected future need. The recommended priority is to continue work with a number of schools to increase accessible hours on school sites rather than the development of any additional provision.
- 4.1.7 The swimming pool modelling identifies that there are areas of current unmet demand for swimming provision within the borough, the highest level of unmet demand being in Dawley/Madeley. This unmet demand is projected to grow as the population increases, placing additional demands on the only public swimming pool in the south of the borough at Abraham Darby. As a consequence of this, projected demand by 2031 will be significantly greater than supply, resulting in significant capacity issues at Abraham Darby.
- 4.1.8 Whilst the modelling shows that there are a number of pools within a reasonable distance (as determined by the Facility Plan Model) of this area these are typically privately operated pools located in hotels or fitness facilities which are not accessible to a large proportion of residents living in the area.
- 4.1.9 Additionally it is considered likely that the local demand for swimming is significantly higher than that allowed for within the modelling tool as a consequence of the council's pro-active investment into free swimming for residents under 25 and swimming for £1 for over 50's and concessionary groups. As such, further adding to the projected unmet local demand for accessible swimming pool provision within the Dawley area.

- 4.1.10 As with sports halls opportunities should be explored to work with schools that have swimming facilities to provide additional community access.
- 4.1.11 There is a lack of a dedicated learner pool facility within the borough. However, the inclusion of a moveable floor within the facility at Abraham Darby provides a significant amount of additional shallow water space to support the learn to swim programme. Such provision also helps with accessibility and usability of the pool by people with disabilities or additional needs.
- 4.1.12 The Strategy recommends that the council should progress the provision of additional pool space in the Dawley area. The Council has already given a commitment to provide a new swimming pool and £1m has been identified as part of the On Your Side investment programme to further progress this commitment.
- 4.1.13 The provision of a new pool received strong local public support, with 84% of respondents strongly agreeing that a new swimming pool in Dawley would benefit the local community and 95% of respondents indicating that they or members of their family would like to swim more often. Further consultation is currently taking place to help develop the facility plans to ensure maximum community benefit.
- 4.1.14 There are no recognised national standards for health & fitness facility provision. However, local facility and latent demand modelling identifies that the size and location of the council facilities is good and that they offer sufficient capacity to realise the projected latent demand that exists within the borough. There is potential opportunity for future membership growth particularly at Abraham Darby and Wellington. As such, no significant changes are recommended,
- 4.1.15 The Strategy does, however, reference the importance of maintaining a programme of investment into the facilities in order to enable the service to meet customer aspirations in what is a very competitive market. Through its On Your Side investment programme the Council has already this year refurbished the fitness facilities at Wellington and installed all new equipment. Work to create a new indoor cycling studio at Abraham Darby refurbish the gym and install all new equipment was also completed earlier this month. The fitness equipment at Stirchley is due to be replaced early in 2023 and will include provision of additional adaptable equipment to enhance facilities for people with disabilities.
- 4.1.16 The Strategy has identified a limited supply of flexible studio type space, such spaces are both important to support the fitness offer but can also provide for a range of additional wellbeing and community services including social and community building activities, thereby extending the reach and impact of facilities. Two facilities have been identified as requiring studio space; Lawley and Horsehay Village Golf & Fitness Centre and Newport Swimming & Fitness Centre. Limited community space exists within the catchment area of Lawley and Horsehay Village Golf & Fitness Centre and as such the development of a flexible studio space at Horsehay could potentially also serve as a community centre.

4.1.17 Through the NGB consultation the Lawn Tennis Association identified the opportunity for Padel court provision at Telford Tennis Centre and Swim England identified the need to address levels of unmet demand for water space within borough. Cricket England highlighted an aspiration for indoor cricket facilities.

4.2 Key recommendations

4.2.1 Progress the provision of additional pool space in the Dawley area.

4.2.2 Development of a Business Case for the provision of a Studio space and Toning (Assisted Exercise) Suite at Lawley and Horsehay Village Golf and Fitness Centre.

4.2.3 Development of a Business Case for the provision of Padel court facilities at Telford Tennis Centre.

4.2.4 Work with education providers to maximise community access to education facilities.

4.2.5 Continue to support and facilitate community based sports and physical activity initiatives to further support public health initiatives, tackle inequalities and stimulate new markets.

5.0 **Alternative Options.**

5.1 The key findings and recommendations contained within the Strategy are based upon the associated research and evidence base and as such are considered to represent the 'best fit' in order to meet the current and projected future needs of the borough over the next 10 years and to contribute toward achieving council priorities.

5.2 In addition to the more traditional sport and physical activities an evaluation of potential commercial leisure opportunities has been undertaken. Investigations concluded that there are already high level of commercial leisure provision in the borough, therefore it is considered there are limited new commercial opportunities.

6.0 **Key Risks**

6.1 The identified action to increase the availability of school sports halls and swimming pools for community use is not directly within the Council's control, however, a number of additional Community Use Agreements have been developed including at Ercall Wood, Holly Trinity Academy, and Charlton School, and these could provide a potential template for discussion with other schools.

6.2 The average age of council swimming pool facilities within the borough is 39 years but notably, all have been refurbished since 2007. Most recently, Newport Pool underwent an extensive programme of refurbishment and funding has been identified to undertake planned essential maintenance works at Oakengates Leisure Centre and Wellington Civic and Leisure Centre over the next two years

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The Strategy supports the council to achieve the following priorities:

Priority 1 – every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The Council has already identified £5.28m of capital funding towards further improving its leisure offer as part of the wider On Your Side programme of investment. In addition to this £73k of revenue funding per year over the next 3 years has been made available to fund free swimming lessons as part of the 10 by 10 initiative.

8.2 Of the £5.28m a sum of £500k has been earmarked for the further development of facilities at the Telford Tennis Centre that could, subject to the development of the proposed business case, support the introduction of Padel facilities.

8.3 Within the On Your Side programme a capital allocation of £8.75million has been made available to support provision of a new swimming pool in Dawley with revenue funding of £350k per year. The capital allocation will be funded through prudential borrowing which has been accounted for in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

8.4 Any further costs and potential funding opportunities arising from the findings and recommendations of the Strategy will need to be considered as appropriate, and further financial implications considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Council has a duty pursuant to the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to take such steps as it considers appropriate to improve the health of people in its area. Producing an effective and current Leisure Strategy and implementing it is one way in which the Council can discharge this duty.

9.2 There are no HR implications arising from the recommendations within this report and any specific legal advice will be provided in relation to individual Business Cases and recommendations where necessary.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 The Strategy is Borough wide and as such impacts all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 The Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy has been jointly commissioned with the Public Health team in recognition of the important contribution such facilities and

services make to physical activity levels and the wider health and wellbeing of the community.

- 11.2 Current adult physical inactivity levels within the borough are above the national average, whilst inactivity levels within children are below the national average. Both nationally and locally clear links exist between areas of higher deprivation or greatest need and higher levels of physical inactivity. Covid has further increased the gap in activity levels between lower and higher socio-economic groups, widening existing inequalities.
- 11.3 Providing enhanced opportunities for physical activity will further support residents to live well in their communities and help address health inequalities, in particular amongst those who are currently inactive and over 45 years of age. Leisure facilities can also provide valuable social spaces enabling residents to come together and help address social isolation.
- 11.4 Leisure facilities and policies can play a key role in increasing physical activity levels. Beyond this, they have a wider role to play in strengthening and connecting communities and directly contribute to the local economy through tourism and employment. The social and economic value of such services should not be underestimated and will be further explored and quantified through the development of the proposed business cases.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 In developing this Strategy the needs and barriers of a range of groups with typically lower reported levels of physical activity than the wider population have actively been sought. The findings of this consultation will be used to help inform and shape future service development and delivery.
- 12.2 Leisure Services have been working closely with a range of internal and external stakeholders including Social Care colleagues and parent carer forums to develop an Inclusive Leisure Partnership Plan which aims to further encourage and support participation from people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and Autism.
- 12.3 The Plan is already being used to inform facility and equipment choices, activity programming and to develop specific staff training to break down barriers to access and to support participation.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 Leisure Centres are typically big consumers of power and as such are a focus for the council in support of its commitment to ensure its operations are carbon neutral by 2030. Recent investment has been made into improving the efficiency of facilities at Newport Pool, including the installation of an air source heat pump, replacing Telford Athletics Stadium floodlighting with new LED units and installing EV charging points at Horsehay Golf Centre.

Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy

13.2 Energy efficiency and sustainability planning will be central to both the development of any new facility plans and facility refurbishment works.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 Telford & Wrekin Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy: Cabinet 7 October 2021

15.0 Appendices

- A Telford & Wrekin Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy 2022-2032.

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	19/10/2022	25/10/2022	MB
Legal	30/11/2022	1/12/2022	EH