

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

## **Gravesham Borough Council**

**Report to:** Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 15 March 2021

**Reporting officer:** Adrian Hickmott, Leisure & Resilience Manager  
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**Subject:** The Development of a Sport, Lesiure & Active Recreation Strategy

### **Purpose and summary of report:**

To update Members on the current development of a Sport, Leisure & Active Recreation Strategy.

### **Recommendations:**

1. That the Cabinet Committee makes known its views on the report and in particular the main priorities, aims and objectives listed within the report so that the strategy can be formalised further.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Communities Directorate have in recent months implemented two key strategies; Arts & Cultural Strategy and a Tourism & Heritage Strategy. The third related strategy that is currently being developed is a Sport, Leisure & Active Recreation Strategy. This portfolio of strategies for the Communities Directorate will then help to provide a sound and coherent framework for improving and enhancing leisure, culture and tourism, in its widest sense for the foreseeable future.
- 1.2 It is widely recognised that taking part in physical activity through sport and active recreation has the ability to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities and delivers a range of social, health, economic and environmental benefits. Gravesham has large scale health inequalities and, whilst improvements have been made in recent years, the difference experienced across the borough varies widely.
- 1.3 With this in mind, the Sport, Leisure & Active Recreation Strategy will outline a number of key priorities and actions which will provide a framework for talking inactivity, as well as linking in to wider developments such as future facility provision within the borough. Members of the committee are therefore asked to consider the points outlined under Section 5 of this report.

## 2. Local Picture

- 2.1 The 2019 Public Health England Local Health profile summarises that the health of people in Gravesham is generally similar to the England average. However, estimated levels of excess weight in adults (aged 18+) and physically active adults (aged 19+) are significantly worse than the England average, with 67.2% classed as overweight or obese. For children in year 6, the prevalence of obesity, including severe obesity, is rated at 20.4%, compared to a regional level of 16.8%, although comparable to the England average of 20.2%.
- 2.2 Sport England's 'Active Lives' Survey is a capturing tool which provides insight into the physical activity habits of the nation. The data looks at national, regional and local participation levels. The most recent survey covers May 2019 to May 2020 and shows that residents in Gravesham (aged 16+) are the least active in Kent with only 56.7%, reaching the recommended 150+ minutes of exercise per week. The national figures and those for Kent are currently 62.8% and 64.4% consecutively.
- 2.3 In addition to this, over one third, 33.8% of residents in Gravesham are classed as inactive, meaning they do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week. Nationally this figure stands at 25.5%. These figures demonstrate that efforts are required to encourage and to make it easier for the most inactive in the borough to do more physical activity.
- 2.1 With this in mind, the Borough's future sport and leisure offer cannot focus solely on formal participation at outdoor and indoor sports facilities, but there will be a need to reach under-represented groups and individuals who may not ordinarily be motivated to participate in sport, or who do not wish to pursue activities within a club environment, or perhaps find the traditional gym or leisure centre environment intimidating. We will therefore need to make full use of all the Borough's assets, including parks and open spaces to provide opportunities for informal recreation and promote healthy activities such as walking, running and cycling.
- 2.4 The strategy will be designed to ensure that the Council is better placed to deliver our own programmes, but we recognise that no one organisation can influence the changes in perception and behaviour required to create a more active and healthy population. As a district authority, the provision of sport and recreation is a discretionary function with a small core team of officers and so the need to work in partnership with other organisations across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors is vitally important to improve the sports and leisure offer, in order to help build stronger, healthier and more active communities.
- 2.5 The way we participate in physical activity has been significantly altered as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. With restrictions on movement, cancellation of grassroots sports and the closure of physical activity provision there have been fewer opportunities for people to take part in physical activity. Sport England's research, 'Understanding the Impact of Covid-19' estimates that the proportion of the population classed as active has dropped over 7% which equates to approximately 3 million less active adults. A number of facilities, organisations and clubs will have been affected in many different ways during the last year and so the new strategy will need to reflect this recovery going forward.

### 3. National, County and Local Priorities

3.1 Encouraging more people to become physically active is a countrywide challenge. By looking at national, county and local strategies, Gravesham Borough Council can ensure that our objectives align with other organisations who seek to improve participation in sport, leisure and active recreation.

3.2 **National Priorities** - Launched in January 2021, Sport England's 10 year strategy 'Uniting the Movement' highlights that sport and physical activity has a big role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all. Within this document, Sport England have highlighted five 'big issues' where they see the greatest potential for preventing and tackling inequalities in sport and physical activity. These are;

- Recover and Reinvent - Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation (the coronavirus pandemic) and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.
- Connecting Communities - Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.
- Positive experiences for children and young people - Focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.
- Connecting with health and wellbeing - Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.
- Active Environments - Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active

3.3 **Regional/County Priorities** - 'Towards an Active County 2017-21' is a strategic framework for Sport and Physical Activity in Kent and Medway, which aims to complement Sport England's strategy, whilst also providing a local context and nine priority themes. The framework document is being updated and out to consultation, but the current themes are:

- Increasing participation
- Supporting inactive people to become active
- Link to social agendas (health, education etc.)
- Opportunities for children & young people to be active
- Addressing inequalities in engagement with sport by targeting certain groups (women, lower socio-economic populations, black & ethnic minorities, disabled & older people)
- Improving facilities
- Supporting voluntary sector and volunteering
- Supporting talented performers
- Maximising the benefit of major events

3.4 **The Corporate Plan** - Gravesham Borough Council's 2019 to 2023 Corporate Plan has identified that physical activity is important in ensuring that residents are 'safe, healthy and active' Section two of the plan, 'Place' lays out the council's commitments towards this:

- Design a quality and affordable leisure offer –improved facilities and creative sports programmes to tackle local health inequalities
- Improve resident wellbeing – provide and preserve a suite of high quality play areas and promote opportunities for active lives
- Manage a programme of proactive healthy living interventions – work with partners to support and safeguard vulnerable residents.

#### **4. Open Space, Sport & Recreation Assessment**

- 4.1 Once finalised, the new strategy will need to be read in conjunction with the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment. This large piece of work was originally carried out in 2016, providing technical evidence based assessments covering the current provision of indoor sports facilities, playing pitches and open spaces across the borough. Further strategy and standards documents were also provided containing information on Gravesham’s specific needs, plus any demand shortfalls or surpluses. These documents provide strategic recommendations and support in order to inform planning application decisions and future corporate/strategic development opportunities as and when they arise.
- 4.2 Based on recommendations contained within the original 2016 Indoor Sports Assessment, a feasibility study for the future provision of council owned leisure centres within the borough is now underway. This work will concentrate solely on the future provision based at Cascades Leisure Centre and Cygnet Leisure Centre, of which this work will need to take into consideration other future major developments within the area, namely the Lower Thames Crossing, Ebbsfleet Garden City and the London Resort amongst others.

#### **5. Aims & Objectives**

- 5.1 The Sport, Leisure & Active Recreation Strategy will set out the Council’s aims, objectives and priorities for developing sports opportunities and facilities in the borough, and using sport and active recreation to develop and promote healthy lifestyles.
- 5.2 The strategy will:
- support continued work with partners at a local level, such as Kent Sport, GCLL, the Grand etc. to implement a shared vision for a more active and healthy population and to support a reduction in health inequalities across the borough and to encourage people to adopt healthier lifestyles.
  - complement and support where possible the delivery of existing and future sport and physical activity services of local organisations and local clubs.
  - provide a link with national, and regional strategies relating to sports and active recreation as well as existing local strategies, such as the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Assessment, Arts & Cultural Strategy and a Tourism & Heritage Strategy.

- help to target Council resources and funding more effectively, in line with corporate priorities, and help to attract external funding for the delivery of infrastructure and facilities improvements where deficiencies are highlighted.
  - provide further strategic support when considering sport and active recreation within the planning, policy and decision making processes of the Council.
  - consider both the strategic provision of formal and informal facilities, both indoor and outdoor; and their long-term management and the development of social infrastructure and support mechanisms to foster and support physical activity within the borough.
  - Active Environments – Protecting and improving the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active, including parks and open spaces, as well as active travel connections to these locations.
- 5.3 The council’s overall vision is **‘to have a Sport, Leisure and Recreation offer that works with and encourages all local residents, visitors, organisations, businesses and communities to adopt a regular active and healthier lifestyle. Utilising the full range of provision, planned and available indoor and outdoor sports, leisure, play and recreational spaces and organisations while removing barriers to participation and inequalities’.**

5.4 ‘Key outcomes within the strategy will be;

**5.4.1 Reduced health inequalities and increase participation levels**

For example by;

- *Using local insight data tools and intelligence (E.g. Active Lives data etc.) to target future activities and interventions across the borough.*
- *Closer partnership working with the Gr@nd, Kent Sport etc. in developing new ways to support and to make it easier for the inactive to become active.*
- *Using the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.*
- *Focussing on sport and physical activity’s ability to make better places to live and bring people together.*
- *Focussing on positive experiences for children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.*

**5.4.2 A network of accessible, flexible and sustainable facilities**

For example by;

- *Completion of feasibility study work on future provision of new leisure centre provision in the borough that act as central hubs to the wider leisure provision across the borough.*
- *Completion of other externally funded planned facilities e.g. Former Fleet Leisure etc. as well as in planned new development areas, e.g. Ebbsfleet Garden City, London Resort etc.*

- *Support and guidance for local clubs and organisations applying for external funding for improvements to local facilities.*
- *Using strategic evidence base documents (E.g. Open Space, Sport & Recreation Assessment) to inform future provision across the borough, both for formal and informal facilities.*

**5.4.3 To provide a programme of activities and interventions that will be attractive to all**

For example by;

- *To re-evaluate the council's own programme of activities, including the Summer Programme and Active Gravesham initiatives held throughout the year.*
- *Enhance usage of promotional tools, branding and web based support for it to be easier for users to find activities and support/ advice to take part in physical activity.*
- *To work with local organisations in providing a range of activities, especially for those residents that are not normally active.*
- *To build on the success of alternative activities that have become popular in recent times including during Covid-19, such as active travel, walking routes, cycling and running.*

**5.5 Gravesham's vision and priorities will only be realised by:**

- Changing the culture and community view of sport, leisure and activity.
- Addressing key inactivity trends and barriers to participation
- Bringing together sport, health, education, community safety, and many others to use sport and activity to improve the quality of people's lives
- Partners working together in a co-ordinated way to create and sustain opportunities for 'more people, to be more active, more often' in sport and active recreation activities.
- To use non-traditional interventions where feasible that encourages and supports physical activity through new technology.

## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 Further refinement will be made to the Sport, Leisure & Active Recreation Strategy over the next few months, which will also coincide with the publication of the Strategic Framework document for Kent & Medway, as well as updates via the Feasibility Study for future leisure centre provision. Sports and leisure organisations will also have the opportunity to be consulted on the draft strategy once published via the council's website and social media channels and via email databases where held.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
<b>Legal</b>	No implications at this stage
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	No additional budget requests at this point in time. Any future budgetary requirements will be sought following existing procedures i.e. via a Management Team report.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	This report is a positive action to raise the profile of Gravesham and to provide a strategic framework to reduce health inequalities, improved facilities where possible and partnership working with providers of facilities and associated activities.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? No</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>. No</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	#2 Place - Gravesham Borough Council's 2019 to 2023 Corporate Plan has identified that physical activity is important in ensuring that residents are 'safe, healthy and active' Section two of the plan, 'Place' lays out the council's vision for achieving this:
<b>Climate Change</b>	The strategy needs to complement the Council's carbon neutral commitments.
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	No
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	Not at this stage of development

**Safeguarding  
children and  
vulnerable adults**

No direct implications.