

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee
Date: 10 September 2024
Reporting officer: Danielle Lock, Leisure Manager
Subject: Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy update

Purpose and summary of report:

To update the Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee on the progress of the Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy.

Recommendations:

1. The Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee are asked to note the report and the updated action plan.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	There are no legal implications in this report.
Finance and Value for Money	Activity to date has been funded via existing budgets, Section 106 funds and external funding.
Corporate Plan	The strategy and related projects associated with its delivery are aligned with the strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan relating to objective #onecommunity
Climate Change	Local providers are secured where possible to reduce carbon emissions from transport. Plans for Cascades 2 include building specifications to make centre as energy efficient as possible. Promotion of activities in local parks/locations to reduce car travel to activity.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In October 2022, Gravesham Borough Council launched its five year Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy. The strategy's three key outcomes are to:
 1. Reduce health inequalities and increased participation levels
 2. Develop a network of accessible, flexible, sustainable and inclusive facilities
 3. Provide a programme of activities and interventions that will be attractive to all

- 1.2. By delivering on these outcomes the ambition is to have a Sport, Leisure and Recreation offer across the Borough that works with and encourages all local residents, visitors, organisations, businesses and communities to adopt a regular active and healthier lifestyle.

2. Action Plan

- 2.1. Appendix 1 within this report sets out the 2024/25 action plan and provides an update on the current progress and initiatives that are underway on each of the twelve objectives set out in the strategy. Some of the upcoming and completed initiatives from the last twelve months include the following:

Cascades 2

- 2.2. The council has a consented scheme for the replacement Cascades Leisure Centre, which is developed up to RIBA Stage 3 design. To move the project forward it remains subject to the positive outcome of securing funding from external sources, including Levelling Up Funding (LUF), of which the council is currently awaiting final confirmation and agreement from MHCLG to support.

Football Foundation funding

- 2.3. Football leagues across Gravesham have been awarded 6 years of funding support via the Football Foundation to improve 20 council owned pitches across 4 sites within the Borough. Investment and works so far have included herbicide and fertiliser applications, vertidrain and scarifying works and reseeding. The Council have been involved in supporting clubs with their funding applications, procuring and delivering the appropriate works and regular soil sampling and reporting to the Football Foundation to ensure quality is maintained. The works have already recognised by the Football Foundation and The Kent FA with Springhead Recreation ground being recognised as a 'Good' pitch site.

Tennis Court Refurbishments

- 2.4. Securing of £120k funding via the Lawn Tennis Association to improve the seven council owned tennis courts across three sites in the borough at Windmill Hill, Wombwell Park and Woodlands Park.

Springhead Recreation Ground

- 2.5. Funded via Section 106 money, works are currently underway at Springhead Recreation Ground to level off the second football pitch at site to remove the existing slope on the surface. Works will improve the playing surface and enable additional usage by local football clubs in future years.

Sports, Health and Wellbeing Network

- 2.6. Hosting the bi-annual Sports, Health and Wellbeing Network which attracts an average of 70 attendees across the fields of sport and health in addition to local community groups. The event combines information updates from sport and leisure partners along with the opportunity to network with other groups and organisations in the sector.

Female Football

- 2.7. Female football initiatives over the last twelve months include 'Just Play' ladies fitness classes which offer fitness coaching and skills development at a low cost and the delivery of the 'Girls Biggest Football Day' involving over 200 participants from local schools delivered in March to tie in with International Women's Day.

Active Kent & Medway Conference

- 2.8. The Leisure Team were invited to speak at the annual Active Kent & Medway Conference in October 2023 on the topic of 'Tackling Inequalities in Sport' to share the work delivered with partners, including Sports on Your Doorstep, with those from displaced communities and adults with learning difficulties.

Learn to Swim

- 2.9. The 'Learn to Swim - Engaging underprivileged youth' project funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, enabled young people identified by KCC Youth Services from low socio-economic backgrounds the opportunity to learn to swim at Cygnet Leisure Centre by coaches provided by Gravesend & Northfleet Swimming Club. Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd took all participants into their swim academy free of charge following the conclusion of the 12 week programme with plans to offer them lifeguard training to enable them to gain employment at the Leisure Centres when qualified.

Female Coaching

- 2.10. The female coaching project named 'She's a Leader' began in June 2024 and provides the opportunity for young women to obtain a sports coaching qualification to help tackle the underrepresentation of women in the coaching field. The project is funded by Active Kent & Medway and delivered by Sports 4 Change.

Summer Fun

- 2.11. Delivery of the council's annual Summer Fun programme with the focus on free sport and recreation themed activities in local parks.

3. Appendices

- 3.1. Appendix 1 – Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy Action Plan

4. Background Documents

- 4.1. Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy 2022-27

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Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	All sessions delivered under guidance of qualified coaches covered by their own insurance, DBS (where required) and will undertake health risk assessments of participants when they sign up. Replacement of a leisure centre is a large project for a district council, so it is important that the necessary resources are dedicated to this project to ensure that all risks are covered. The council does not have the necessary capacity or professional expertise in some of the areas required to deliver this complex and large scale project. In such instances support will be sought from professional external experts within the financial envelope provided for these services
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<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>
	a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data ? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No
	b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? n/a
	c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk .
Equality Impact Assessment	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
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Vision 12 within the strategy sets out the council's plans to ensure that all sports and leisure provision is open and accessible to all residents.
	<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>
Crime and Disorder	Intervention projects will aim to proactively tackle ASB in some areas. Any new developments (specifically Cascades 2) will be designed to mitigate historic issues within existing facility.
Digital and website implications	None at this stage.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	Working with partners who have expertise in delivering activities/interventions for vulnerable young people and adults. Coaches are qualified to a certain level and will have undertaken safeguarding training relevant to their sport.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan 2024/25 – Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy

Key outcomes

- 1 - Reduced health inequalities and increased participation levels.
- 2 - A network of accessible, flexible, sustainable, and inclusive facilities.
- 3 - To provide a programme of activities and interventions that will be attractive to all.

The Vision	Summary	Action plan	Key Outcomes
1. Renewed leisure centre offer	The council aims to develop a community health/well-being and family-focused leisure centre that can also meet various sports governing bodies' regional training and competition requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has embarked on the process of delivering new leisure centre provision at its Cascades site. • Awaiting outcome of funding from external sources. • Viability and financial stress tests have been undertaken so as to estimate operational revenue returns. 	1, 2, 3
2. Sports and leisure facilities in Gravesham	The Council aims to work closely with external partners and facilities to create a cohesive sport and leisure offer for residents and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review GBC-owned sport facilities with NGB's to explore opportunities to update existing buildings. This will include efforts to secure funding. • Work with local operators to support access and ensure that our facilities are accessible to everyone. • Apply for Football Foundation Pitch Power funding to improve GBC owned football pitches • Work on the Springhead Recreation site, using section 106 funds to level off football pitch 2 at site. • Tennis court refurbishment works awaiting completion following investment by the LTA. 	1, 2, 3
3. Partnership Working	The Council aims to work with local partners and the wider sporting community to promote an active and healthy population. It will also partner with local sports clubs, national governing bodies, and other organisations to realise its strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By maintaining a strong relationship with our partners, including The Gr@nd we can ensure that our focus remains on reducing health inequalities. • Support local sports clubs and wider sporting communities in obtaining grants. • Regularly attend local network/focus groups/engagement workshops/seminars to gather new ideas and receive support that can be implemented or replicated across the Borough to improve residents' health. 	1, 2, 3

4. Community Groups and Sports clubs	The Council works with local organisations to provide activities for those not normally active and offers support, training, and networking opportunities for clubs and community groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to grow the sport, health, and wellbeing Network. • Collaborate with local community groups, social housing organisations, NHS, and charities to gather feedback from individuals who require assistance in physical activity. This feedback will help us improve and better serve our community. • Providing opportunities to 'upskill' club volunteers -through coaching, safeguarding and first aid workshops. 	1, 2, 3
5. Communication, publicity, and community engagement	The Council will use publicity and promotional tools, branding, social media, and web-based support to make it easier for people to find activities and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Gravesham Everyday Active page with local updates. • Encourage organisations to upload their activities on to the AK&M activity finder . • GBC Comms to actively promote everyday active local activities and activity finder. 	1, 2, 3
6. Events and play	The council intends to back summer play schemes for children and plan future activities and interventions in the borough by using local data and community engagement methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The summer fun program continued in 2024, providing free or low-cost activities for families during the summer months. Review programme annually, look at new partnerships. • Use data tools such as the Active Lives Survey and National Statistics to pinpoint interventions across the Borough. 	1, 2, 3
7. A holistic journey – from fun sports and leisure to regional and national sports	The council's approach to sports and leisure involves providing opportunities for training and development for both amateur and professional sports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to provide small grants to local talented athletes. • Offering the FANs scheme to those who are selected for regional and national sport and signpost to Kent FANs. • Work closely with AK&M, the school games organiser and schools which receive the open school funding so connections between suitable local sports clubs and students can be developed. • The current leisure centre outline envisions that the Cascades site will be able to host regional sports activities. 	1, 2, 3

8. Links with local strategies	The sport, leisure, and active recreation strategy will work with and complement existing local strategies and the Council's Corporate Plan. It aims to work alongside and replace existing strategies and action plans related to sport and leisure, including those created by the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, Active Kent and Medway and Sport England.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review new corporate plan and current sport strategy to ensure any new targets are met. • Working in partnership with the Tourism and Heritage Manager to promote sports clubs, physical activity interventions on the new launched Visit Gravesend site. • Continue to meet with the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation to support any action plans that would benefit the Borough. 	1, 2, 3
9. Funding and Resources	The council intends to allocate resources and funding more efficiently for sports and leisure in line with strategic priorities. This may include providing small annual grants or in-kind support to local clubs, as well as seeking external funding for revenue sports and infrastructure facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide small grants to local sports clubs to support projects to boost participation. • Collaborate with local sports clubs, operators, and community groups to develop and submit bids for new local incentives to promote physical activity among residents. • Distribute information on upcoming capital/revenue grants that aim to maintain and enhance physical activity in the community. 	1, 2, 3
10. Outdoor sport and leisure active environments	The Council strives to safeguard and improve parks and open spaces for outdoor activities and active transportation connections. Future plans will build on recent active travel initiatives. Additionally, it plans to invest in safe play equipment for children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to play facilities (including MUGA and playpark) at Wombwell Park. 	1, 2, 3
11. Wider sports and leisure offer	The Council works to promote sports and leisure activities in Gravesham through culture and policy direction to allow them to thrive. While it cannot provide facilities and resources for all sports, it aims to offer family-friendly and experiential activities that promote fun, enjoyment, and stronger family bonds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use tools such as the Everyday active website and activity finder to support the local offer. • Use GBC comms as a way of promoting different activities across the Borough. • Use the summer fun program to advertise local clubs/leisure operators offers and raise awareness of their programs. 	1, 2, 3

<p>12. Accessibility and barrier to participation</p>	<p>The council provides accessible sports and leisure activities for all residents, including those with disabilities and ladies-only provision. They aim to remove barriers to participation and offer diverse needs such as low or free-cost facilities and outreach events. The leisure provision should balance accessibility, participation, and cost viability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain partnerships with organisations such as Mencap that are dedicated to supporting the needs of people with disabilities. • Attend forums and engage with individuals with disabilities to ensure that the services we provide meet their requirements. • Evaluate leisure centre programs to ensure that they are inclusive of the needs of the local demographics. 	<p>1, 2, 3</p>
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