

**Report to: Environment Overview & Scrutiny – 15th November 2004
LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY**

<p>Report of: Strategic Director (Physical Environment)</p> <p>Report Author: Tony Stephens Leisure & Parks Business Manager Tel no. 01865 252621 Email: tstephens@oxford.gov.uk</p> <p>Lead Member Responsible: Councillor Maureen Christian Culture, Events and Tourism</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Responsibility: Environment</p> <p>Key Decision: YES</p>	<p>WARDS AFFECTED ALL</p>
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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report brings to Environment Scrutiny details of the strategic assessment undertaken in respect of the City's leisure facilities prior to issuing the public consultation on how future leisure provision should be provided.

Staffing Implications – There are no short term staffing implications in relation to the public consultation process proposed.

Financial Implications – Costs of conducting the consultation process are included within the existing revenue budget for the Leisure and Parks business unit.

The Environment Scrutiny Committee is asked to COMMENT on the details outlined in the report, endorse the preparation of a 'White Paper' for public consultation and to make any appropriate recommendations to Executive Board:

1.0 Introduction

In September 2003 the City Council, through its Leisure and Parks, Planning and Neighbourhood Renewal business units, commissioned a series of strategic assessments relating to green spaces, playing pitches, leisure facilities and community centres.

The purpose of these assessments is to assist the relevant business units and the City Council in strategically planning its current and future provision in these areas in order to meet the needs of the City's residents.

The findings from these assessments should inform our thinking on the strategic options to be considered when formulating a well developed and widely adopted set of strategies, strategies facilitated by the City Council but owned by all stakeholders.

The assessments will also inform the development of supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for future proposed developments and provide a framework for Section 106 agreements based on a quantitative and qualitative assessment of need.

This in turn will enable the final adopted strategies to be resourced through appropriate planning contributions and reduce reliance on the City Council's own funds in the medium to longer term.

The proposed process for taking forward the findings of the assessment is outlined in section 7.

2.0 Leisure Facilities strategic assessment

The provision of the Built Leisure Facilities is the most costly of the four elements, which were subject to an assessment, in terms of current City Council budget allocation. The Leisure Facilities Assessment has therefore been developed in advance of the other elements under the lead of the Leisure and Parks Business manager. The other elements will be led by:

Green Spaces	Tony Stephens/Michael Crofton-Briggs
Playing Pitches	Tony Stephens
Community Centres	Val Johnson

The key findings and recommendations from the other assessments will be reported to Executive Board and the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees for consideration and approval as they are finalised, The assessment of Leisure Facilities was undertaken by Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL), a well-established leisure consultancy practice with extensive experience across the country in both the public and commercial sectors. The methodologies used are based on a range of established standard modelling techniques used by Sport England and recognised market research organisations.

3.0 Key quantitative findings from assessment

The key findings of this assessment and strategic considerations are presented below, further detail can be found in the attached Executive Summary at Appendix 1.

3.1 Swimming Pools:

Based on demand analysis utilising the Sport England Participation rates there is currently almost double the level of water space in the City available for community access, than is actually required. This level of supply does not include the limited availability of the University pools, existing or planned commercial provision, or the new facility planned for Barton. There is therefore some potential to consider a reduction in the provision of water space provided by OCC, without compromising the expressed demand for this type of facility in the City. The closure of smaller pool facilities, in a poor condition, would not affect the accessibility of public provision, given the facility development proposal at Barton.

3.2 Sportshalls

Again using Sport England demand modelling techniques there is a need to provide additional sportshall access for community use in the City, but given that the demand identified equates to 2 courts, or half a 4 badminton court sportshall, the optimum means of addressing this need is to develop a new partnership arrangement over a school-based facility.

Any additional facility provision developed in the City, or any consolidation of existing sportshall provision, must be considered in the context of the need to maintain the supply/demand balance. The supply/demand model does, however, reflect the fact that there is limited community access to University sportshalls in the City.

3.3 Health and Fitness

The demand model utilising the British Market Research Bureau data (2003) and the 2001 census population data identified a demand in Oxford City for 662 fitness stations. The supply identified at the time of the assessment showed a supply of 625 fitness stations.

There was therefore a deficiency in provision of 37 stations. This 'gap' in provision has been addressed by the extension to health and fitness facilities at the Ferry Sports Centre and the provision for fitness at the David Lloyd facility opened in February 2004.

4.0 Key issues for consideration from the assessment

There are a number of key issues with the current stock of indoor sports and leisure facilities within the City. A full list of the key issues is listed within the executive summary of the Strategic Assessment (Appendix 1) however they can be summarised in the following:

4.1 Strategic Planning

Based on quantitative assessment of provision it is suggested that some facilities are no longer the right ones in the right place. Given the pressures on capital and revenue funding, the Council could choose to determine priorities, and decide whether it is better to have fewer, better quality, affordable facilities, rather than try to maintain out of date buildings which require significant subsidy.

There is potential to develop a strategic framework for indoor sports provision, based on a geographical spread of core facilities across the City; these will be supplemented by those provided by the commercial and university sectors. The strategic framework for future indoor sports provision in the City needs to be based on both a citywide and area based approach

The future framework for facility provision needs to link to, and reflect the national agenda for health improvement, through increased participation; this is only likely to be achieved through a planned approach to local facility provision, based on geographical locations of communities

There is currently no hierarchy or framework for strategic provision in the City, and therefore it is difficult to see how the various types and levels of provision reflect needs and there is also a need to develop local standards of community sports facility provision, based on a hierarchy, which establishes the need for provision on the basis of 'reasonable access'

Future community sports facility provision, either directly provided or facilitated through other providers also needs to respond to the demographic changes and trends in the City, to ensure it is both appropriate and sustainable

The regional role of the existing Ice Rink should not be disregarded in planning for the future although its location and accessibility could be reviewed.

4.2 Capital Investment

It has been recognised that the existing facilities are in need of significant investment and based on the assumption that the existing stock of indoor sports facilities remains unchanged, there will be the need to identify additional capital resources to support the required investment in facilities to maintain them.

There is also a need to invest capital in the Ice Rink specifically to prolong its lifespan however there is further potential link into the West End Development Plan, which identifies the role of leisure in extending and complementing the range of facilities in central Oxford, or to consider re-location.

As a major City, Oxford currently lacks any innovative commercial leisure provision, and there is potential for such a facility e.g. indoor snow, to act as a catalyst for regeneration/external investment in the Ice Rink site

4.3 Partnership Opportunities

There is potential to increase the amount of community access to school sports facilities in the City, to address local issues of accessibility and affordability, but this needs to be tackled through robust partnership agreements. Existing dual-use agreements are out-dated, need to be reviewed and renegotiated to provide a partnership approach based on outputs and outcomes rather than their existing format.

There is a need for better involvement and greater clarity over the role of the University and College sports facilities in the City; they do not presently 'fit' into a strategic context within the City, yet provide for significant community use e.g. Oxford Brookes fitness suite has 600 community members

The key requirement for Oxfordshire County Council is access to water space in the City for school swimming

4.4 Sports Development

There is a lack of co-ordinated sports development resources in the City, especially in relation to the development initiatives and programmes, which have been implemented at local and County level.

This lack of sports development support has resulted in a lack of club development across the City; particularly in respect of junior development. The exception is in cricket and rugby, which do have dedicated development resources.

There is potential to broaden the scope of sports development to make more effective use of available personnel resources, and develop the crucial local links between clubs and schools

5.0 Summary of Findings

The need for investment in the existing stock of indoor sports facilities in the City had been recognised as a priority by the previous Administration, and capital monies have been allocated accordingly including over the future period April 2005 – March 2007. The investment commitments have been made against the existing facility stock on the basis of both the condition and potential for enhancement of facility provision, which were originally identified in the Best Value Review of Community Buildings.

The commitment to provide more and better community sports facilities, which has driven the above capital investment commitment, does however ignore the potential for some level of consolidation within the City in relation to indoor sports facility provision. This understanding is based on:

- New facility provision in the commercial and education sectors, which has come about since the investment commitments in 2002
- New opportunities emerging for partnership working (e.g. LEA)

- The increasing role of the Universities and Colleges in providing indoor facilities in the City
- Ongoing public consultation and feedback, which must be reflected in the level, type and location of indoor sports provision
- Changing demographic trends
- The external funding support (Sport England) for provision of the new facility at Barton
- Potential for changing the relationship with the County Council over dual-use arrangements for indoor sports facility provision

6.0 Executive Summary recommendations

From the research, review and consultation undertaken, which have identified the key issues, the priority considerations in assessing facility needs in the City and therefore for wider consultation are identified as:

- Providing for additional indoor community sports facilities in the East of the City
- Consolidating existing indoor facility provision in the South of the City
- Considering the potential to deliver sport and leisure provision in different ways in the South of the City
- Developing additional commercial sport/leisure provision in the town centre, with the aim of improving/replacing the existing Ice Rink facility
- Improving the quality of existing facilities, where they 'fit' into the proposed strategic framework for provision in the City
- Renewing/re-negotiating partnership agreements for community access to sportshall facilities on education sites e.g. the key development sites for education in the City
- Continuing to provide and improving access to water space for Oxfordshire County Council schools
- Developing a local standard for indoor facility provision, based on reasonable access to a range of quality facilities
- Increasing sports development resources at local level in the City, to encourage, facilitate and support increased participation in sport and physical activity
- Considering re-programming of facilities to reflect potential new levels of provision as well as sports development and other strategic targets, (e.g. social exclusion, crime reduction and health improvement)

7.0 Proposed Consultation process and timeframe

To ensure widespread ownership of the emergent 'Facilities Strategy for Sport in Oxford' (working title only) there is a need to ensure adequate consultation on these diverse issues with a wide range of stakeholders.

This will include other local providers of facilities, sports clubs, governing bodies of sport as well as all internal stakeholders and the general public. A consultation plan is being drawn up at the time of writing this report.

The public consultation process is based on two key periods of separate consultation over the next 6 months or so, The first will be on the contents of a

'White Paper' document that asks respondents for their key views on a number of issues that emerge from options for consideration and the second on the draft public strategy itself. It is proposed that the first period is based on a 'user friendly' consultative document along the lines of that recently issued for the Street wardens consultation.

This proven consultative process that has been successfully employed during the development of similar facilities strategies in other authorities. The outline timetable is set out in Appendix 2.

8.0 Recommendations

Environment Overview and Scrutiny are asked to consider this report, endorse the 'White Paper' approach and COMMENT to the Executive Board.

Appendix 1 Leisure Facilities Strategic Assessment – Executive Summary