

**Report of:** Sharon Cosgrove, Strategic Director Physical Environment

**Title:** Strategic Framework for Leisure

**Ward:** All

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**Key Decision:** Yes

**Lead Member:** Mary Clarkson

**Scrutiny responsibility:** Environment

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Executive Board agrees to:

1. Approve the Overarching Leisure Strategy, the Green Spaces Strategy and the Sport and Leisure Strategy for public consultation, in line with the requirements of the Policy Framework

### **1. Summary**

1.1 Three strategies within the Strategic Framework for Leisure are submitted for Executive Board's approval to go out for public consultation. The strategic framework has been revised and the strategies have been developed to clarify our strategic aims in relation to leisure, highlight areas that we have prioritised for improvement, and reflect on our position within the market and indicate how this will be developed in the future.

### **2. How does it fit with the Council's Vision and strategic aims?**

2.1 The strategies submitted for approval to go out for consultation respond to the aim in the Council's Vision statement of "providing more and improved affordable leisure activities". The nature of the range of activities undertaken and services provided also mean that these strategies can contribute to the achievement of other strategic aims, including improving the environment, making Oxford a safer city, and improving dialogue and consultation.

### 3. Background and context

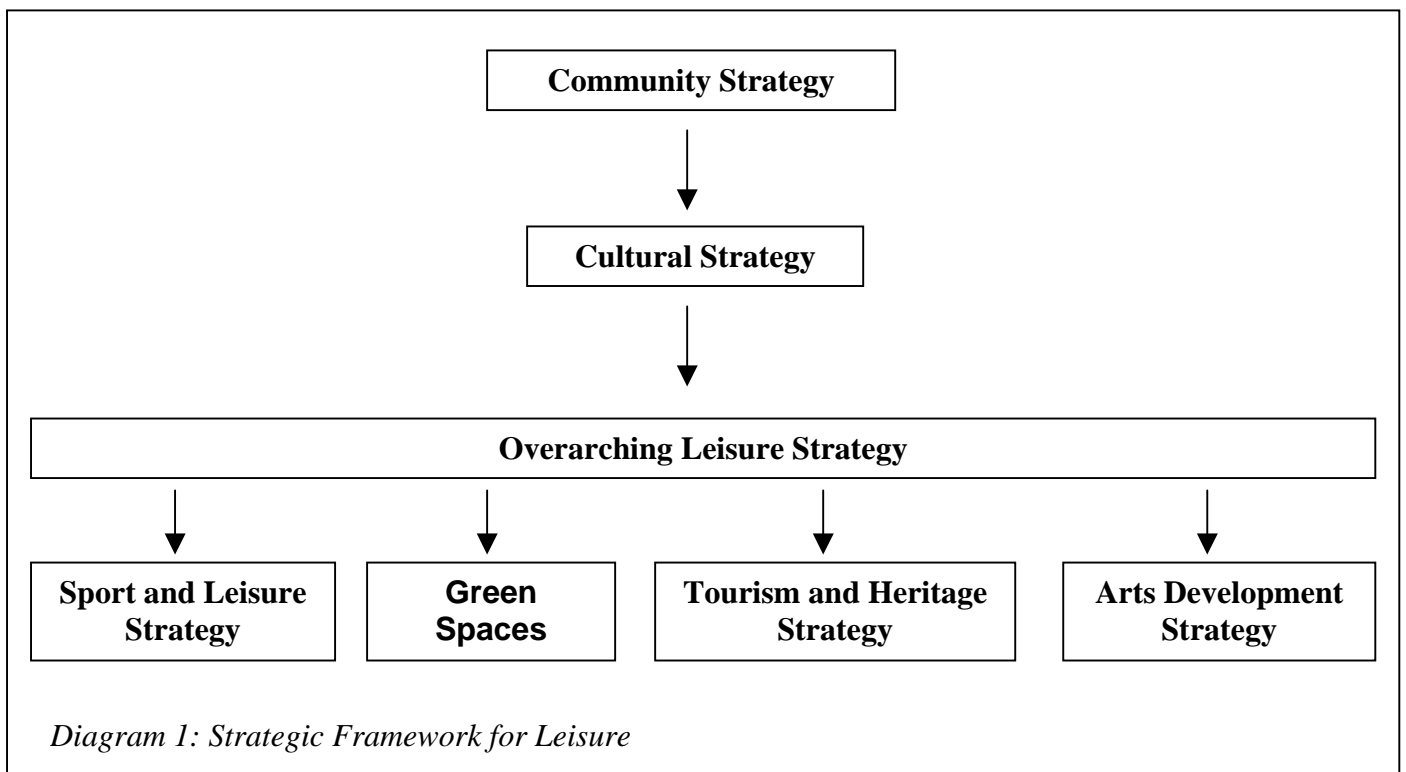
3.1 In May 2005, EB approved for consultation three strategies within the Strategic Framework for Leisure, subject to numerous changes to the content of the documents. Following the departure of the former Business Manager for Leisure and Parks, a cross-unit working group was established between Leisure and Parks and Strategy and Review, to revise the strategies. The working group decided to start with a clean slate and to review not just the strategies themselves but the strategic framework within which they sit.

3.2 The documents submitted for approval today have been developed by:

- Focusing on high-level strategic intentions;
- Structuring the documents around key strategic aims for cultural, sport and leisure services;
- Reflecting more closely how these strategic aims contribute to those of the Community Strategy and the Cultural Strategy, beneath which the Strategic Framework for Leisure sits;
- Ensuring consistency of format and approach across the strategies under development;
- Basing the stated intentions on evidence of need, whether from performance data, customer feedback, or market analysis.

### 4. Strategic Framework for Leisure

4.1 The Strategic Framework for Leisure is shown diagrammatically below.



4.2 The Overarching Leisure Strategy outlines, in broad terms, how the strategic aims for culture, sport and leisure are delivered across the full range of cultural activities within the authority. This Overarching Strategy is underpinned by four “thematic” strategies, which provide more information on how each of the themed areas of the Council’s work contribute to the achievement of the strategic aims. These thematic strategies

are, in turn, supported by a series of actions plans, which detail what actions the Council intends to undertake in order to deliver on those strategic aims. These action plans are contained within each of the thematic strategies.

## **5. Details of others who have been consulted**

- 5.1 Many of the priorities and actions identified within the strategies have been based on the outcomes of consultation and in-depth research on the current issues relating to leisure.
- 5.2 The report and associated strategies have been to SMB, and earlier drafts of the Overarching Leisure Strategy and the Green Spaces Strategy have been the subject of a cross-party discussion.
- 5.3 Consultation with members of Scrutiny and Area Committees, the public, stakeholders and interested groups will take place once EB has approved that the consultation drafts can be released. This is due to the timescales involved in getting the strategies finalised by the end of the financial year.

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 Many of the activities prioritised within the strategies are achievable within existing resources. Where the current allocation of resources is not sufficient to allow all prioritised activities to be delivered, this is noted in the relevant strategy. The Best Value Review of Leisure and the ongoing search for efficiency gains should release some resources for reallocation to currently unbudgeted activities. It is not certain at this stage whether this will be sufficient to ensure that all prioritised actions can be delivered within overall current resource provision.

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 No immediate legal implications have been identified in relation to the approval of these strategies for consultation. However, some of the activities identified within the strategies relate to s106 agreements, lease arrangements and statutory duties relating to biodiversity and conservation.

## **8. Staffing implications**

- 8.1 Some staffing implications may arise from some of the priorities identified in the strategies as some activities are time-intensive, for example seeking recognition under the Green Flag scheme requires significant investment of time. The recent restructure in Culture, Sport and Leisure, the prioritisation that has occurred in developing these strategies and the forthcoming Best Value Review may all yield opportunities to release and reallocate staff time. The extent to which this is possible is not yet clear.

## **9. Other possible means of achieving the objectives**

- 9.1 Of the strategic aims for leisure outlined in the introduction to each strategy, aims 2-6 could be implemented and delivered in a piece-meal fashion with no co-ordination. This approach would jeopardise the achievement of aim 1 as there would no effective means of evaluating the equity of provision.

## **10. The grounds for recommending a particular option**

10.1 In order to achieve aim 1 (ensuring equity of access and diversity of provision) a co-ordinated, strategic and evidence-based approach to the full suite of cultural activities is necessary. It is therefore recommended that the three strategies be approved for consultation as the basis of the strategic development of our cultural services.

## **11. The timetable for action following the decision**

11.1 Following EB approval 28 days of public consultation will be undertaken. Responses to the consultation will be evaluated and the documents amended in light of that evaluation. The documents will then be submitted to EB for final approval on 30 January 2006 and to Council on 13 February 2006.

11.2 The remaining documents in the Strategic Framework for Leisure (The Tourism and Heritage Strategy and the Arts Development Strategy) will both be developed over the coming months, in line with the format developed for the Green Spaces and Sport and Leisure Strategies. Work on these two outstanding strategies will incorporate any work already undertaken and will focus on providing consistency across the Strategic Framework for Leisure.

## **12. List of appendices**

- Overarching Leisure Strategy
- Green Spaces Strategy
- Sport and Leisure Strategy

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Mark Clarkson

Strategic Director: Sharon Cosgrove

Legal and Democratic Services: Jeremy Thomas

Financial Management: Mike Baish

Human Resources: Anne-Marie Scott

Background papers: None