

Sport and Leisure Strategy

1. Introduction

Our ambition is to ensure that the cultural, sporting and leisure opportunities of Oxford enhance the lives of all people in the city.

To achieve this ambition, the Council has adopted a series of aims, which reflect the varied ways in which leisure activities contribute to quality of life for both residents and visitors within Oxford. These aims are:

1. **To ensure equity of access and diversity of provision.**
2. **To encourage participation in healthier lifestyles.**
3. **To advance lifelong learning.**
4. **To protect and enhance the natural and built environment.**
5. **To enhance the recognition of Oxford through the pursuit of excellence, both locally and internationally.**
6. **To nurture and encourage community spirit and well-being.**

This document, the Sport and Leisure Strategy, outlines how the Council's work in relation to sport and leisure ensures the delivery of these aims, and how they contribute to the achievement of wider Cultural Strategy and Community Strategy aims. It covers a range of sport and leisure activities including mainstream sports like football and tennis, street sports activities, sports facilities and leisure centres, and the Council's sports and health development work.

2. Strategic context

How leisure fits into the bigger picture

In 2004, partner organisations in Oxford agreed a Community Strategy for the city, which agreed five themes:

1. Vibrant and inclusive economy
2. Safer communities
3. A better living environment
4. Opportunities for life
5. Active and healthy lifestyles

While cultural, sporting and leisure activities contribute to all of these themes, the vision statement for the active and healthy communities theme makes specific reference to cultural activities. It recognises that "good physical and mental health, and a sense of well-being require a healthy lifestyle and access to social, cultural and leisure activities".

The Cultural Strategy was agreed in 2002 and has two central objectives:

1. Ensuring that Oxford remains culturally rich for decades to come
2. Breaking down barriers that restrict access for residents and visitors

This Sport and Leisure Strategy outlines how the Council intends to deliver opportunities, activities and facilities for sport and leisure that enable equal access and opportunity for all. It:

- outlines how the Council's work in relation to sport and leisure contributes to the achievement of the Cultural Strategy and the Community Strategy.
- summarises the current level and quality of sport and leisure provision, and identifies areas that can be improved.

- highlights those aspects of our work in relation to sport and leisure that the Council has prioritised.
- outlines a series of actions that describe what the Council will do to drive forwards those areas that we have prioritised.

Alongside the Strategic Framework for Leisure, a Community Centres Strategy is also being developed. Although the Council's aims in relation to leisure may differ from those in relation to community centres, there are some significant areas of overlap. While community centres are primarily an opportunity for local communities to come together for social activities, many of them also host sporting, recreational and cultural activities. This means that, while the strategies are being developed individually, they will need to be consistent with one another in terms of their actions, so that the implementation of one does not adversely affect the desired outcome of the other. The Strategic Framework for Leisure and the Community Centres Strategy are being developed to be mutually supportive in achieving the Council's strategic aims.

3. Developing the Strategy

3.1 What we will focus on

This section outlines how different aspects of the Council's work in relation to sport and leisure can contribute to delivering the strategic aims in our overarching leisure strategy. An overview is provided of the areas in which we could make greatest improvement.

Cultural activities can play a significant role in the achievement of many of these aims. However, with limited resources and some ambitious objectives, we need to prioritise our resources on the most important aspects. In evaluating our priorities, we have considered:

- Customer feedback and consultation outcomes
- Market research
- Current level and quality of provision

Customer feedback in relation to sport and leisure provision has provided some clear messages as to what we should focus on in the future, and all of these are significant drivers for the development of sports and leisure provision. These messages include:

- Improving quality and increasing investment in sports facilities
- Increasing the range of activities that are provided
- Increasing awareness of the Slice card, which came out particularly strongly in a survey of non-users.

While we have commissioned some studies already into what we provide and how we provide it, other work remains to be done to provide a comprehensive picture of gaps in provision and areas for improvement. The **Indoor Leisure Facility Review and Operation Review**, undertaken by the consultancy firm Strategic Leisure, indicated that we should:

- Review our provision of leisure facilities
- Review our staffing structures
- Improve our marketing and promotion in relation to leisure facilities
- Review our general operating procedures

To build on these reviews, which looked at provision compared to national standards, we are also reviewing provision against similar cities and taking into account our local demographic factors, which will provide a more detailed impression of where we have over/under provision and how we should develop our services in the future.

There is limited performance information available for sport and leisure. Although we are able to record visitor numbers and uptake of certain activities, the different facilities run by the Council do not currently have consistent or integrated monitoring and measurement systems. This has made it difficult to gather robust performance information and hinders efforts to spread good practice across all facilities. Integrating and automating our performance and management systems is a key priority for our sport and leisure service, as this will enable us to benchmark much more effectively in the future.

In light of these factors, this Sport and Leisure Strategy highlights which aspects of our work in relation to sport and leisure have been prioritised for development and improvement, and what actions we will undertake to achieve our aims.

3.2 Intended approach

As highlighted in the Overarching Leisure Strategy and in line with all aspects of our cultural activities, our intention in relation to sport and leisure is to:

1. Use the principles outlined in Section 3 of the Overarching Leisure Strategy to determine our preferred level of involvement, preferred niche and preferred approach for each area of our activities.
2. Focus on service improvement
3. Focus on achieving efficiency gains, while maintaining effectiveness.

Most of the activities that fall within the remit of the Leisure Team and detailed within this strategy are within the scope of the Best Value Review that is currently underway. The Review will pose some serious questions regarding whether we are delivering our services in the most efficient and effective manner. The review will take account of non-council facilities (such as those run by the universities and the private sector) as well as comparing our provision and performance to that of other local authorities. This may result in the Council having to consider different methods of delivering certain activities and the approach that it adopts in different areas of work.

In addition to the Best Value Review, ongoing work to identify efficiency savings may give rise to some financial resources being made available to reallocate to some of the priorities identified in this strategy to which resources are not currently aligned. This should enable us to deliver a greater range of improved services within the same level of investment.

4. Strategy into action

What we intend to do

With limited resources and some ambitious objectives, we need to prioritise our resources on the most important aspects. In evaluating our priorities, we have considered all of the areas highlighted above as well as how specific activities can contribute to wider corporate commitments and priorities.

The Action Plans in Section 6 provide further information on what the Council has prioritised and the actions it intends to undertake in relation to sport and leisure.

4.1 Responsibility for delivery

Responsibility for delivering the actions outlined in this strategy and achieving our ambition in relation to sport and leisure lies primarily with the Leisure Team.

5. An evolving strategy Monitoring and review

The Overarching Leisure Strategy provides a broad overview of the priorities within our range of cultural services over the next 5 years to 2011, based on current circumstances. The four supporting strategies provide more detail about the actions that we intend to take to address these priorities over the same time scale. The delivery of these actions will be reviewed regularly: on a quarterly basis by the Business Manager for Leisure and Cultural Services and the Strategic Director for the Physical Environment, and every six months by regular reporting to our Scrutiny Committees..

5.1 Monitoring

Each of these strategies will need to be monitored regularly to ensure not only that we are completing the actions that we have identified but also that those actions are having their desired impacts and that levels of satisfaction and our performance show continuing improvement.

To enable effective monitoring and ensure that we achieve our aims, we will need to:

1. Identify key performance indicators
2. Establish robust and consistent mechanisms for capturing performance data
3. Identify comparators to enable us to compare our performance with other providers both within and outside local government
4. Establish targets to help us drive improvements

These indicators will need to cover several aspects of our culture, sport and leisure provision, including:

- Usage figures; covering overall use, number of new users and the number and range of new uses, e.g. provision for minority sports
- Financial information, such as expenditure on leisure provision, income received from charges, external investment secured.
- External recognition, either for Oxford as a brand and venue in regional and national arenas, or for the quality of the services we offer
- Satisfaction results, both through standard assessments and through the monitoring of complaints
- Internal management practices, relating to the frequency, quality and efficiency of maintenance and refurbishment programmes
- Community benefits, from the number of new interest or community groups established to the number of educational and recreational courses provided
- Wider benefits, relating to the economic benefit arising from increasing the number of instructors trained, or the community safety benefit of reduced crime and antisocial behaviour

Reference is made to many of these aspects in the Action Plans of the supporting strategies, and the frequency and nature of their monitoring will vary depending on the specific actions to which they relate.

5.2 Review

The strategies will also need to be reviewed regularly as local needs and circumstances change. Numerous factors might affect our strategic approach to cultural services, including:

- The appearance or disappearance of major competitors in provision of facilities

- Legislative changes
- Change in the political control of the Council
- Significant changes in performance
- Significant changes in satisfaction levels or customer feedback

The strategies will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they continue to provide an effective response to local needs and circumstances. In particular, this Sport and Leisure Strategy will need to be reviewed and revised in the light of the outcomes of the ongoing Best Value Review, and following the completion of the comprehensive facilities review, as well as in response to any subsequent changes to the emerging Community Centres Strategy. We will seek to engage users, non-users, residents and visitors alike, in the monitoring and review of these strategies.

6. Action Plan for Sport and Leisure

Aim 1: To ensure equity of access and diversity of provision

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Ensure that provision meets the needs and aspirations of diverse communities	4,5	2,5	Review level (standard), range (type) and location of provision	Undertake a comprehensive review of leisure facilities to ascertain citywide provision and assess the degree to which current provision is in line with community needs. Key Requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review of leisure against SE standards ○ Conditional review ○ Usage profiles ○ Customer research and consultation 	2006	Within existing resources
			Establish standards for provision that reflect demographic, geographic and user-specific needs	Improve the quality of service with in the Leisure Centres by working to the Leisure Quality standard 'Quest'; achieve quality status in at least 1 facility achieving the standard by April 2007 and 3 facilities achieving the standard by Dec 2007	2007	Within existing resources
			Ensure that provision caters for people with disabilities		2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Seek to resolve issues that user groups and clubs identify as having an adverse impact on the development of their sport, e.g. supporting clubs in addressing planning issues.		2006 onwards	Resource needs currently unknown
			Develop the Council's brand of 'Aspires' Fitness Facilities to Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre in 2006 and look to develop the brand in at least 1 other facility by 2007/8		2006	Within existing resources
Develop and deliver a balanced programme to redress imbalance in provision		Develop the Councils leisure Management System FLEX to a corporate operation ensuring user profiles are kept and utilised to enhance management information on usage trends	2006	Within existing resources		

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Ensure equity in the standard /quality of services and activities provided	4,5	5,6	Establish standards for balance between level and quality of provision	Continually review and develop facility programmes to meet the needs of the local communities	Ongoing	Within existing resources
			Assess provision against accepted standards	Establish management and refurbishment schedules for facilities	2006	Within existing resources
			Develop and deliver a balanced and resourced maintenance programme	Leisure Centres to develop a facility plan aimed at developing activities to maximise usage	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Develop and deliver a balanced programme to redress imbalance in provision		2006	Within existing resources
Reduce the impact of cost as a barrier to participation	1,5	2,6	Continue subsidised provision of leisure and cultural activities	Within the Leisure Centre's Marketing and Promotional Plan, Include and implement a comprehensive Advertising and awareness campaign of all facility offerings and detail pricing structures.	2006 onwards	Allocate resources from existing budgets
			Promote the Slice Card	Specifically target disadvantaged groups with the benefits of the Bonus Slice	Ongoing	Within existing resources
			Develop the Slice Card	Develop a comprehensive promotional campaign for leisure and recreational activities, including promotion of the Slice Card		
			Develop the Slice Card	Review coverage and benefits and investigate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options to extend benefits, including feasibility studies to assess potential for free sessions/activities for target groups Potential barriers to individuals and groups making use of the cards 	2006	Within existing resources
			Seek sponsorship to help deliver free and low costs activities	Obtain sponsorship for Children's Holiday Activities and Children's Party events	2006	Within existing resources
Identify and tackle perceived barriers to	2,5	2,8	Assess sites and facilities for fear of crime factors, e.g. lighting, signage, level of use	Provision of planned maintenance programmes	2006	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
participation, e.g. fear of crime				Ensure that operational standards and practices contribute towards the development of safer communities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Provide staffing at sites where appropriate	Provide door staff at venues/events considered a high risk to crime	As required	Within existing resources
			Ensure that facilities and staff are seen to be welcoming and helpful	Survey users to identify key factors in making them feel welcome and unwelcome at facilities, and enhance them	2006	Within existing resources
			Ensure that facilities and activities are seen to be open and available to all	Provide and promote culturally sensitive facilities, activities and amenities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Manage communication that may impact on fear of crime, e.g. dedicated leaflets, media relations.	Develop partnership working with Police, local groups and Neighbourhood Renewal.	As required	Within existing resources
				Develop a sense of belonging by establishing stronger links between local people and cultural facilities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
Address physical barriers to access	4,5	2,5	Work with public transport providers to improve accessibility	Assess accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians	2006	Within existing resources
				Work with transport providers to improve transport infrastructure and links to Centres such as Hinksey Pool. e.g. provide bus stop at Hinksey Pool in the summer	2006 onwards	Dependent on actions needed
			Establish a programme to ensure all sites and facilities are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant	Undertake essential DDA facility development works as detailed within the capital programme.	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Improve signage	Update signage to be consistent with Council standards	2006 onwards	Resources insufficient
Widen audiences and participation	4,5	2,3	Increase promotion of facilities and their use	Produce a Promotion and Advertising Plan and allocate sufficient resources to carry through the plan	2006	Within existing resources
				Develop a citywide sports development programme with links to regional partners such as the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP).	2006	Within existing resources
			Encourage non-participants to engage with physical activity	Engage with local and regional media providers to increase potential audience	2006 onwards	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Promote the use of alternative venues for events that are not traditionally associated with those venues	2007	Within existing resources
				Seek ways to continue activities for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, young people and the disabled currently funded through the Active Communities scheme	2006	Alternative funding needed
				Work with other providers (including the universities and private sector) to identify opportunities to encourage participation	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Develop and co-ordinate activities for young people through the Positive Futures programme	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Work with all partners including schools, community and interest groups, and non-users of facilities to establish and increase patronage	Working with Sport Development initiatives, develop outreach programmes with the potential to utilising facilities at schools, universities and colleges	2006	Within existing resources
				Undertake an audit of Section 106 agreements assigned to facilities within the city to maximise their uptake by the local communities they serve	2006	Within existing resources

Aim 2: To encourage participation in healthier lifestyles

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Promote and enable opportunities for physical activity	4,5	2,3	Develop and promote a positive image of physical activity personnel	Co-ordinate a programme of physical activity and sports coaching	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Seek to develop/implement an accreditation scheme	2006	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
			Provide information on physical activity and sport opportunity	Liaise with partners to develop a comprehensive and updated directory of physical activity and sport	2006	Partner resources sought
				Ensure that elected members receive full information on facilities, activities, events and schemes to enable them to encourage greater participation	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Make available a range of organised physical activities	Investigate options to enhance sports development and coaching opportunities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Review provision to ensure maximum possible availability of facilities and activities throughout the day to cater for all lifestyles, e.g. early morning swims, floodlit pitches.	2006 onwards	Resource needs currently unknown
				Develop targeted activities to attract non-active and socially excluded populations	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Encourage providers to run taster sessions to encourage new participants	2006	Within existing resources
			Attract back to council facilities former users who have switched to private facilities or have become non-active	Identify and address factors that led to former users going elsewhere for leisure activities	2006	Within existing resources
				Improve forward planning and develop solutions to enable users to continue using facilities despite changing circumstances, e.g. if roadworks are due or if certain amenities have to close.	2006 onwards	Resource needs currently unknown
				Generate a positive perception that council facilities are as good as privately run alternatives	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Support seniors in maintaining physical activity	Ensure that the range of activities provided caters for all ages and abilities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Develop a pricing policy and keep fees and charges under review to ensure affordability does not prevent participation in later years	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Work with seniors' clubs to identify further ways to support them	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Work with strategic partners, e.g. the Primary Care Trust to develop health	Enhance and develop the current GP Referral Scheme.	2006	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
			referral schemes	Continue the Healthy Walking initiative at Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre – investigate opportunity for expansion of the scheme	2006	Within existing resources
				Link with existing activities, e.g. walking tours	2006	Within existing resources

Aim 3: To advance lifelong learning

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Provide opportunities for lifelong learning	4,5	1,2	Maintain and increase links with schools to encourage use of facilities and sites for educational purposes	Work with schools & colleges to maximise the benefits of joint use agreements, including during vacations.	2006	Within existing resources
				Set-up School holiday programmes within the leisure facilities	2006	Within existing resources
			Provide structured programmes for learning, including summer play schemes	Develop new activities aimed at niche groups, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seniors Recreation ▪ Ladies only ▪ Ethnic only swimming ▪ Teenage Youths ▪ Disabled 	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
Encourage community involvement to increase skills and capacity	2,4	1,6	Develop stronger links with interest groups and community associations	Setup a joint consultative committee for the Barton Pool	2006	Within existing resources
				Investigate opportunities to develop coaching and mentoring schemes in local communities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources

Aim 4: To protect and enhance the natural and built environment

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Manage the environmental impacts of our own activities	3	4,7	Develop and implement an environmental policy	Develop policy to address main environmental impacts	2007	Within existing resources
				All Leisure facilities to undertake maintenance schedules, as per manufacturer/industry standards to ensure machinery and plant operate efficiently.	2008	Within existing resources
				Investigate replacing obsolete infrastructure in the most sustainable way possible	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Investigate and exploit opportunities to demonstrate good practice in relation to maintenance, refurbishment and new development.	2008	Within existing resources

Aim 5: To enhance the recognition of Oxford through the pursuit of excellence

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Seek out opportunities for regional / national events	1,4	6,10	Promote sites and facilities as attractions and potential venues, e.g. horticultural shows	Promote Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre as a venue for events such as exhibitions and community shows	2006	Within existing resources
				Develop links with regional media to increase coverage, and promote previous involvement with well known performers	2006	Within existing resources
Promote and celebrate excellence	4,5	6,10	Capitalise on opportunities springing from the London Olympics 2012	Develop multi-sports centres of excellence to nurture local people who are talented at sports	2007	Additional resources needed

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs	
	Community	Cultural					
in sport				Investigate opportunities to host/provide training facilities for visiting national teams	2006 onwards	Within existing resources	
				Investigate needs of the excelling participators	2007	Within existing resources	
				Support clubs and users in seeking to become more widely recognised in their field	Investigate potential for hosting larger competitive events and high level activities, including developments needed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • host tournaments at the ice rink • establish a National League RFC team in the city 	2006-07	Resource needs currently unknown
					Work with user groups to identify ways to increase club membership and enhance levels of performance	2006 onwards	Within existing resources

Aim 6: To nurture and encourage community spirit and well-being

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Enhance community engagement	2,5	2,9	Allow local communities to decide and influence their local needs and developments	Undertake regular consultation to identify needs and drive service improvements	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Constantly pursue customer feedback on the nature of the Leisure Centre Service; feed results into operational plans	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Undertake Non-user survey at least every two years	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Integrate the development of sport and leisure activities with the development of community centres	2006-07	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed Actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Seek to ensure that community centres provide a meeting point for local groups and communities, at which they can develop their own community-run recreational activities	2006-07	Within existing resources
Celebrate Oxford	1	10	Celebrate and promote Oxford's role within the wider world	Celebrate success within Oxford publicly, and promote successes widely to build on the city's reputation	2006 onwards	Within existing resources

Appendix 1 Strategic aims of the Community Strategy and the Cultural Strategy

Please use this table to identify which of the Community Strategy's aims this Green Spaces Strategy helps to achieve.

Numeric reference	Community Strategy Aim
1	A vibrant and inclusive economy
2	Safer communities
3	A better living environment
4	Opportunities for life
5	Active and healthy communities

Please use this table to identify which of the Cultural Strategy's aims this Green Spaces Strategy helps to achieve.

Numeric reference	Cultural Strategy Aim
1	To improve engagement with, and access to, formal and informal education and continuing professional development
2	To remove barriers which prevent anyone watching and participating in cultural activities
3	To improve the co-ordination and promotion of cultural activities
4	To protect and enhance the built and natural environments
5	To prioritise and fill gaps in culture facilities
6	To maintain and increase public and private resources to develop Oxford's cultural assets
7	To reduce negative environmental impact and ensure the long-term future of cultural organisations
8	To achieve more and better partnerships
9	To improve opportunities for children and young people
10	To develop civic pride through celebration of Oxford's talent