

To: City Executive Board

Date: 11 May 2017

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Fusion Lifestyle's Annual Service Plan 2017/18

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on Fusion Lifestyle's Annual Service Plan 2017/18

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of Scrutiny

Executive lead member: Councillor Linda Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Background

1. The Scrutiny Committee scrutinised Fusion Lifestyle's Annual Service Plan 2017/18 at a meeting on 2 May 2017. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport, Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services and Francois Smit, Sports and Partnership Manager at Fusion Lifestyle, for attending the meeting to present the report and answer questions.

Findings and recommendations

2. The Head of Community Services introduced the report. He highlighted the positive progress made in leisure participation since Fusion Lifestyles took over the running of city leisure centres in 2009. In that time annual visits to leisure centres had increased by 500,000 and the running costs had reduced from £2.4m per year to near zero. The one downside of this increased usage was that it made cleanliness and maintenance more challenging. He explained that the

targets remained ambitious - they were challenging but not impossible - and the service had a very good track record of achieving targets.

3. Cllr Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks & Sport highlighted some of the key focus areas for the forthcoming year:
 - Increasing participation by a minimum of 5% and by 15% for some target groups;
 - Continuing to reduce carbon emissions, in particular at Hinksey Outdoor Pool where they hoped to install a pool cover to reduce heat loss. This would be a logistical challenge due to the size and shape of the pool;
 - Better promotion of free swimming for under 17s;
 - Explore the viability of a crèche facility at Ferry Leisure Centre.
4. The Committee asked whether it was possible to distinguish between the numbers of visits to leisure centres and the numbers of individual users. It was not clear to what extent increases in participation were due to more people using leisure services, or whether it was more a case of the same people using them more frequently. The Head of Community Services said that visits were the benchmark used across the sector. Membership data could be provided as well but the numbers of casual users were hard to identify accurately. The Board Member said that not everyone liked to provide personal information in order to access leisure centres. Moving casual users onto reward cards or membership packages would be paramount to getting a better idea of the numbers of individual service users but it would not be possible to get the full picture without being prepared to turn people away. The Committee suggest that if capturing user numbers is an ambition then the Council and Fusion should formulate a plan for doing so.

Recommendation 1 - That the City Council and Fusion Lifestyle resolve the issue of whether or not to capture the numbers of individual service users (as far as practicably possible) as well as the numbers of visits, either by coming forward with a plan for doing so or by providing reasons why not.

5. The Committee commented that they would like to see added to the key focus areas listed in the covering report how Fusion plans to improve disability facilities at the centres. The Head of Community Services said encouraging inclusiveness was a fundamental objective of the Fusion contract. The Committee suggest that more could be made of this ambition in the Service Plan.

Recommendation 2 - That the Service Plan includes a greater emphasis on improving disabled access to leisure centres.

6. The Committee commented that there was no geographical analysis of users and that it would be useful to know things like how many users of Barton Leisure Centre lived in Barton, which communities were well served and which facilities were being used by former users of Temple Cowley Pools, for example. The Committee also asked what strategies were used to encourage usage in off-peak periods. Fusion Lifestyle's Sports and Partnership Group Manager provided assurance that people were using multiple facilities across the city. Geographical usage information was available and was used for marketing purposes. The

Board Member said that the usage data is constantly being reviewed and that she reviews performance data every month.

7. The Committee questioned whether it was feasible for city residents to be offered cheaper fees than people based outside of the city. The Board Member said it would be worth considering for concessions and in some cases this was already happening, for example free swimming classes for under-17s were available to residents only.
8. The Committee asked whether progress was being made in encouraging social prescribing. Fusion's Sport and Partnership Group Manager said that GP engagement with social prescribing was variable across the city and that his new role at Fusion was to develop a more corporate approach to social prescribing. Fusion also worked closely with Sport England and various mental health services but there was lots still to be done.
9. The Committee questioned how the Service Plan fits in with the Council's own strategies and commented that a strategy map would be useful. The Head of Community Services said that the Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy was the high level policy framework document that set the headline priorities and five year targets. The priorities and some of the targets in the annual Service Plan flowed from that strategy. The Board Member suggested that it would make more sense in future if the Service Plan was presented to members alongside the annual performance report for the previous year. This year the performance report had not been ready in time for the May CEB meeting cycle.

Recommendation 3 - That in future years Fusion Lifestyle Service Plans can be presented to the Scrutiny Committee for pre-decision scrutiny alongside performance data for the previous year. This is likely to mean the service plans going to CEB for endorsement in June/July rather than May in future years.

10. The Committee also requested geographical and seasonal information about leisure centre usage as part of the annual performance report, as well as feedback from user groups.

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List of background papers: None

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