

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills, and
Community, Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 30th January 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director Community and
Greenspace

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills, and
Community

SUBJECT: Sport and Recreation Team

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide members with a report on the Council's Sport and Recreation Service. Reporting on the Sports Development and Leisure Centre Service from June 2022 to December 2022. Update on the new Leisure Centre building programme; recruitment of lifeguards and swimming instructors.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **The report be noted**
- ii) **Consider the progress and raise any questions or points for clarification**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The report provides information on how and what the service has delivered during the last 6 months. Service delivery has been extremely difficult as recruitment delays affected staff, regular customers and engagement with residents. The cost of living crisis is now affecting the service; some people are cutting back on how much they spend on Leisure.

4.0 SPORT AND RECREATION TEAM

4.1 The team has two distinct areas:

4.1.1 Sports Development Team

The Sports Development Team continues to be based at Frank Myler, supporting the operations of the building. There are 2 full time Officers, one part time (maternity leave until July 2023) a part time Community Sports Coach and 2 part time assistants that support Frank Myler Pavilion and grass pitch use.

4.1.2 **Leisure Centre Team**

Management of the Councils Leisure Centres. Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool – closed June 16 2022.

The Leisure Services Team has 58 contracted seats occupied. A vacant Leisure Attendant (LA) and Operations Manager at Kingsway and nine vacant Swimming Instructors (SI) across the sites. 66 casual seats occupied, supporting service delivery (including 32 LA, 12 SI). Significant number of Lifeguards recruited in November 2022. NPLQ course offered free to those aged 16+ not in work (funding from Onward Homes and Cheshire Police. Halton Education Partnership (HEP) supported communication of the opportunity across partner organisations. 50 applications received, 20 selected, 14 gained qualification, majority 16 and 17 year olds. Pre-employment checks are difficult for 16 and 17 year olds (producing the required identification). Two ILM Aquatics Apprentice posts established October 2022 remain vacant.

5.0 **SPORTS AND RECREATION SERVICE DELIVERY 2022**

5.1 **Active Halton overview**

5.1.1 Following the pandemic community classes increased steadily to 100+ weekly sessions, there has not been the return to pre covid levels and the demand for group exercise session has seen a decline locally, mirroring a national trend. Private operators have struggled to recruit instructors, also reducing number of classes offered. Latest JD Gym (St Helens – opened December 2022 as a Gym only). Industry trends will be monitored moving forward.

5.1.2 Fitness memberships at Leisure Centres are above Pre covid levels.

5.1.3 Lots of voluntary sectors sports opportunities across the borough, regular communications and increased social media

5.1.4 Football Foundation, Active Through Football Project: consortium, across 5 boroughs in the Liverpool City Region, £500,000 grant awarded, to target areas of deprivation and low participation. Football projects delivered locally, included sessions at Frank Myler and Brookvale Recreation Centre. Taster sessions to existing community groups delivered, such as, working with existing dementia group in Murdishaw community centre.

5.2 **Frank Myler Pavilion and Sports Ground**

5.2.1 Post pandemic, there are 18 indoor community bookings and 4 bookings for the MUGA (including 1 Sport Development sessions). Sessions include dance, football and rugby sessions, mature movers and dance/exercise classes for older adults. 29 teams are using the pitches on site.

5.2.2 The way classes are delivered and paid for has changed. Financial support provided to external community classes, who struggled to restart activity, however, still insufficient numbers returning and with cost of living crisis, many have become unsustainable.

5.3 Halton Sports Coach Scheme

- 5.3.1 Walk fit, Run fit sessions delivered regularly at Frank Myler following positive comments from participants. Sessions will start again, when the weather improves in the new year.
- 5.3.2 Community Football sessions, continue to be popular, especially with girls. New sessions introduced, children attending enjoy the recreational side, rather than competitive games and club environment.

6.0 LEISURE CENTRE SERVICE (LCS) ACTIVITY 2022

6.1 Brookvale

- 6.1.1 Refurbishment of Brookvale 3G Pitch and ancillary facilities work completed in May. In July, a community football tournament was held, as an official opening event for partners to view. The Council granted £303,284 from the Football Foundation, for the installation and improvement of ancillary facilities. Footfall at site has increased significantly. (circa 5,000 visits a month)

6.1.2 Kops N Kids

Monday evening football funded places, 31 free sessions offered.

- 6.1.3 Q1 & Q2 total visits 91,381 (15,150 fitness; 26,192 swim; 51,351 dry side – includes the new pitch users).

6.2 Kingsway

- 6.2.1 Hosted a number of large events, including annual schools sports hall athletics, roller derby competition, dance festival and gymnastics competition.

- 6.2.2 Q1 & Q2 total visits 103,030 (20,976 fitness, 54,470 swim, 27,584 dry side)

6.3 Swimming

6.3.1 Learn to Swim (LTS)

Active Halton 'Learn to Swim' Programme rebranded/ marketed as a single 'product'; a progressive programme/pathway, with defined stages and clear aims/objectives. The shaping of the programme/pathway is ongoing, with the development of existing services/sessions, alongside the introduction of new sessions.

6.3.2 School Swimming

Head teacher presentation in October, at Annual Health and Safety Briefing, outlining the new Active Halton 'School Swimming' Programme – details on what has changed, the aims/objectives of the project, benefits to schools and pupils and further information/guidance on what is required from schools. Highlighted the

importance of water safety education within schools and collaborative working with Active Halton.

6.3.3

Bookings – schools have been provided with a new booking form, which includes set session days/times. Bookings are split into 2 x 6 month blocks and each school within Halton is guaranteed at least one session per week over at least one 6 month block. This is to ensure that all pupils within Halton have the opportunity to learn to swim. Booking deadlines introduced.

6.3.4

Drowning Prevention Week

Royal Lifesaving Society UK Campaign (19th June – 26th June) – educate children/young people & parent/carers on how to enjoy the water safely. Water Safety information/educational messages displayed at the leisure centres, with free water safety resources available to all.

6.3.5

Sports Works

Swimming Lessons for children with special educational needs/disabilities. The Sports Works swimming lessons have been full to capacity since they returned in October 2021.

£1 Swims in place for School holidays to provide an affordable safe environment to swim, thus improving the physical and mental wellbeing.

7.0 **New Leisure Centre**

7.1 The new build Leisure Centre located on Moor Lane in Widnes, contract start date January 9th 2023. The contract period is 108 weeks thus completion is 5th February 2025. The build cost being circa £29m. The building will be a high quality, accessible and sustainable facility including 2 pools, a sports hall, gym, squash court, exercise studios, soft play, café, health consultation rooms and associated facilities. It will support the Council's vision of helping the inactive to become active and more residents to fulfil their potential by participating in sport and physical activity, thus improving their long-term health and wellbeing. The benefit of this project is that it will deliver a high quality facility that benefits the residents of the borough. Participation in sport will benefit all residents who participate thus helping them improve their long-term health and wellbeing.

7.2 Wates understand the importance of developing the potential of young people. To that end they have a strong and comprehensive programme of activities that will make a real difference across Halton Borough:

- Wates team to undertake 20 visits to school/colleges
- Site team to host 10 school visits
- Create and support 55 weeks of meaningful work experience for students
- Wates team to commit to 80 hours Volunteering in the local community
- Creating new and supporting existing Apprentices in achieving the training and qualification they need to progress their careers within the construction industry

7.3 Wates will also ensure training requirements are written into subcontractor orders.

The project team have created a Frequently Asked Question document, attached to this report.

8.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The benefit gained from being Active or involved in sport contributes towards achieving wider council priorities. Benefits that sport can bring to people and to society: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. The Sport and Recreation service and the voluntary sector sporting community make a significant contribution to the Public Health agenda.
- 8.2 Liverpool City Region have a shared strategic ambition to collaborate and develop the role Physical Activity can play in the region to support our common priorities and goals. Issues discussed have included, transport, economic, climate, health, community cohesion and inclusion.
- 8.3 Continue to work with colleagues to improve the Active Travel offer, to improve cycling and walking infrastructure to make environments more suitable for the active travel. People want to do more walking, running or cycling for everyday journeys, which is likely to link to the cost of living crisis and rising fuel prices potentially making driving less accessible.

9.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Council have been working closely with the contractors Wates on the new Leisure Centre scheme, commissioned via the SCAPE framework. They have been through a tender exercise with their supply chain, this being closely monitored by our costs consultants, who have confirmed that the scheme will deliver value for money given the current difficult economic position
- 9.2 The service has recovered from the impact of the pandemic, but there remains issues with recruitment, this is not unique to Leisure sector, the way people work has changed. Staff continue to work hard and look at different ways of running the service. Further customer engagement is required as the way residents access services has and will continue to change. The short-term position looks very challenging with our facilities continuing to age.
- 9.3 The Leisure Centres require specialist staff to open the buildings to the public, specifically the swimming pool. The service has experienced service delays, due to vacant posts, sickness and mechanical issues; the expectation is that this will continue.
- 9.4 The service does experience a high turnover of staff. Young people historically fill casual worker roles, such as Leisure Attendants, whilst they are in higher education and university. Swim England and the RLSS are working with local authorities to develop Workforce plans, to attract and retain people.
- 9.5 Merseyside Sports Partnership are currently responsible for taking forward Sport England funding in Merseyside, such as, Together Fund, Opening School Facilities.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

10.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The service engages with thousands of young people through a variety of coached activities, learn to swim programme, signposting to community sports clubs and activity to support and increase participation.

10.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The service provides volunteer opportunities and skill development in coaching, administration, fundraising and access to resources for those learning new skills. Support adult and lifelong learning, through fitness referral programmes. Lifeguard training will continue, however, the service will engage more with external contractors. Recruitment continues to be problematic. The Aquatics team are looking at a new workforce development model.

10.3 A Healthy Halton

Sport and Physical Activity links directly with priorities in Halton's Health and Wellbeing strategy, prevention being the key. Physical activity links with prevention of certain cancers, mental health problems and falls. We need to put the customer first, focus on those least active and transform how activity is provided, this has never been so important. Keeping active has been a focus throughout the pandemic it will continue to be a priority as the Nation moves forward.

10.4 A Safer Halton

The connection between sport and reducing anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime supported by key research. Sports activities and competitions, sports volunteering, sports leadership, sports training help develop individuals and communities, encourage healthier and more productive lifestyles and create inclusive communities and neighbourhoods that provide a shared identity and sense of place.

10.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The service supports groups looking to improve the areas where they live/work.

11.0 RISK ANALYSIS

11.1 Delivery and income affected by staff shortages.

11.2 Council Leisure Centre stock is old and of poor quality, mechanical failures leads to service delays.

12.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

12.1 The Sport and Recreation service is open and accessible. The service supports groups and individuals to be and stay active.

**13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

13.1 None