

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 17TH DECEMBER, 2018

REFERENCE FROM HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 6TH NOVEMBER, 2018

“466 THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN LEISURE STRATEGY (REF) –

The Operational Manager, Neighbourhood Services, Healthy Living and Performance, advised that on 1st October, 2018 Cabinet had endorsed the Vale of Glamorgan Leisure Strategy and agreed that it be referred to the Scrutiny Committee for further consideration, prior to its return to Cabinet for formal adoption.

Members were advised that the Council’s absence of a Leisure Strategy was identified in the Wales Audit Office report “The Future of Leisure Services in Wales – Delivering with Less”, which cited the Vale of Glamorgan Council as the only example of good practice in Wales for the procurement of its Leisure Management Contract and that following extensive consultation and the use of an external and independent consultant a Strategy had now been produced.

The Strategy contained at Appendix A to the Cabinet Report commented on eight key areas. These being outdoor sport, indoor sport and leisure, sports development, parks and open spaces, outdoor activities, play, exercise referral and community centres. The Strategy also detailed current provision, issues and future objectives. The Strategy was linked to both the Council’s Corporate Plan and the Welsh Government’s Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and was designed to cover the next ten years and therefore was linked to the maximum time possible for the current Leisure Management Contract with Legacy Leisure.

Members were advised that a key theme of the Strategy was the need for the Council to continue to develop over the next ten years as an enabler and facilitator as opposed to a direct funder of leisure services. This would involve the continuation and development of partnerships and alliances to provide opportunities for people to enjoy physical activity. The action plan detailed areas of work such as fees and charges, raising awareness of services, opportunities to promote physical activities outdoors, potential for Community Asset Transfers, increased community access to education facilities, exploring future partnership opportunities and greater long term planning.

A Committee Member referred to the Committee’s previous meeting when a report was considered around single use sports facilities. The Member stated that the Committee referred the report to Cabinet requesting that the Committee receive an update on progress. The Member queried whether this was indicated within the Cabinet resolution. In reply, the Cabinet Member for Health Living and Social Care, with permission to speak, advised that a report would be coming back to Cabinet and

that the nothing had been closed. In addition, the Operational Manager stated that meetings with clubs and organisations had been held in order to discuss the proposals and the outcome of these would be reported back to Cabinet and there was then the potential for this report to be referred back to Scrutiny. He stated that he would need to clarify the Cabinet minutes for the relevant meeting.

In referring to page 32 of the Strategy and fees and charges, a Committee Member stated that increasing fees was at odds with increasing participation. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that most fees and charges were in relation to the Leisure Centre Contract, but what was also being considered was where Council subsidies applied were these reaching the right people. The Operational Manager added that the proposals were meant to increase participation and it was right for the Council to review where the subsidies were being allocated. In terms of single use facilities, the Operational Manager advised that the definition of this was not used by most clubs and organisations. It was hoped that following a review, this may lead to resources being made available and he highlighted that some subsidies were disproportionate to the number of people using the facilities. He added that some sports clubs presented no barriers when it came to participation and most had open membership and the key question for the Council was whether the Council was making the right use of resources.

With regard to the initiative for a Railway Walk in Penarth, the Operational Manager advised that this related to improving people's cycling skills as opposed to it being a sports track.

A Committee Member queried the overall vision of the Strategy. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that he would have liked the Strategy to be more specific in terms of Leisure Centres, but in light of the budgetary situation and the ten year period that the Strategy covered, the actions that were included were those that could be monitored and more likely to be progressed successfully. The Operational Manager, in commenting on the performance of the Vale, stated that the Vale of Glamorgan was ranked first in Wales in terms of public participation in sport and the Vale was one of the most efficient providers in Wales. The key aim of the Strategy was to bring all the Council's key priorities into one document and under its own umbrella.

With regard to marketing, a Committee Member stated that the Strategy could include greater detail. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that Legacy Leisure would say that it had been proactive around the use of social media but this was linked to the Leisure Centre Contract. Representatives of Legacy Leisure would be attending the next Scrutiny Committee meeting and the Operational Manager advised that the need for greater marketing could be raised then.

In reply to a query regarding reference to play, the Operational Manager advised that play came under sports development but he considered that more mention should've been given to play. He referred to the difficulty around funding and the need to secure additional money in order to ensure that the play schemes in place could continue. For this, Leisure Services would speak to colleagues in Social Services and Education. The Committee noted that this linked to play schemes organised at

Ysgol Y Deri, with a Member stating that some families had commented on how difficult it had been to get there.

A Committee Member then raised two points. The Member's first point related to whether it was realistic that it would cost the Council £19k for a person to maintain sports pitches as, when he had spoken to individual clubs, they had advised him that the costs did not go anywhere near this amount. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that the Strategy needed the involvement of clubs, which was important if the Strategy was to be reactive on the needs of service users. The associated costs would be considered where clubs agreed to take over the running of facilities. The Member's second query was in relation to consultation and the Member queried whether the consultation exercise had been carried out before the Strategy had been developed. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that service users were one element of the consultation exercise which was carried out before the Strategy had been pulled together. He also advised that in terms of clubs and individual organisations, opportunity was there for them to contribute. With regard to the single use sports clubs, the Operational Manager advised that the Council had received mixed feedback. Some organisations felt that they could take over management and some were keener than others to meet the costs that the Council provided. It was likely that some organisations would be self-sufficient but there was a wide and varied picture with a need for consolidation. He referred to other Local Authorities that were undertaking the same course of action and he stated that these were difficult questions to answer and it was not an easy process to go through.

A Committee Member stated that the Operational Manager should be heartened by the level of interest of the Committee's debate as this was an extremely important area. The Member referred to the use of technology in order to ascertain the level of exercise and participation that individuals undertook. The Member queried whether there was such a mechanism available. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that the focus of the service was increasing opportunity for play, activities and participation and he referred to the success of the National Exercise Referral Scheme, which was well used. He also stated that technology was an important element and the Council worked very closely with Sport Wales as they were a key funding partner. In regard to school participation, the Operational Manager referred to the half post of Sport Development available to every secondary school and the duty to provide intensive opportunity for exercise at primary schools. He also advised that he was disappointed that it was likely for the digital school survey to be removed from the school curriculum as this was a way of showing children what was available, particularly in a coastal Authority. This, he stated, was one issue with the Strategy as it was linked to the ten year contract with Legacy Leisure and so was less specific than it may have been. In terms of monitoring people's individual exercise regimes, the Operational Manager stated that this was something that the service was attempting to do but this would only be for people who had registered for a service.

In clarifying investment planned for Cliff Walk in Penarth, the Operational Manager stated that this could potentially include golf, but also other activities that linked to what was currently available at that location.

The Chairman queried the wording on page 21 regarding good quality provision and the wording of operation issues which was "Limited resources for Exercise Referral as a result of the grant; programme driven by specific criteria, and funded externally by Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government Funding and inclusion". The Chairman stated that this seemed confusing. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that this needed to be spelt out more clearly. The Chairman then queried action on page 36 and missing information around the need to promote awareness of the physical activity opportunities. This, the Operational Manager stated, could now be included.

The Committee then discussed the need for the Strategy to be reported back and it was agreed that the Strategy should be revised and for the amended document to be made more user friendly and for the amended version to be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee prior to its formal adoption by Cabinet.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Vale of Glamorgan Leisure Strategy be referred back to Cabinet for revision.

(2) T H A T the revised and amended Strategy be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee prior to formal adoption by Cabinet.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) That Committee felt that the Strategy was not very easy to read and some wording and terminology could be more user friendly."