

**SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery))**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 7th April 2009, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) considered a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services proposing the adoption of a Sports Facilities Strategy for Huntingdonshire. This report summarises the Panel's discussions.

2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS

- 2.1 The Panel has been informed by the Executive Councillor for Leisure of the background to the Strategy and was reminded that in September 2008, the Cabinet had approved local standards for the five core sports facilities located within the District. The purpose of this Strategy therefore is to examine all other known sports facilities in Huntingdonshire, with a view to achieving an adequate range of facilities to meet future need.
- 2.2 Members have been advised that the Strategy attempts to identify all sports facilities available across Huntingdonshire, inclusive of those facilities owned by the private, voluntary and education sectors. The Panel has noted that the data collated has been compared with national recommended levels of provision for a given level of population and that the results will be used to inform the future provision of sports facilities within the District.
- 2.3 In calculating the required level of provision for headline facilities, growth anticipated in the District's population in future years, particularly in the St Neots area, has been taken into account. Members have also been advised that the Building Schools for the Future Programme will be an important factor in achieving an increased level of provision of sports facilities.
- 2.4 With regard to the levels of provision of facilities, Members have discussed the current level of uptake at existing facilities. Attention is drawn to the fact that there is rarely a lack of space for customers at the District's leisure centres. Moreover, satisfaction levels with sports provision currently are the highest of any authority in Cambridgeshire and they are improving. Precise data on the present level of uptake was not available, though it has been suggested that there is some unmet demand for facilities, which is not reflected in the Strategy. For example, a question has been raised as to the adequacy of provision for hockey. It has been suggested that both occupancy and unmet demand should be taken into account when planning new facilities.
- 2.5 The Panel has drawn attention to the fact that the required level of provision sometimes does not take into account some existing provision. For example, smaller sports halls have been discounted owing to their lack of flexibility. When smaller halls are taken into account, there is little difference between existing levels of provision and the projected need. This probably accounts for the findings on available space and on satisfaction levels.

- 2.6 The Panel has received assurances that the Leisure Development Service has adequate officer resources to assist sports clubs to obtain external funding, grant aid or sponsorship to enhance their facilities. In light of the Panel's previous study into Grant Aid, Members view this as particularly important. The establishment of links with leisure bodies is key in enabling clubs to benefit from available funding.
- 2.7 The Panel has commented that while 69% of the District's residents find it easy / fairly easy to get to a sport / leisure facility, the corollary of this is that one third of the population find this difficult. This also does not reflect the level of difficulty potential users experience in getting to facilities. This issue would need to be addressed if the exercise to match the population to the levels of facilities is to translate into actual usage.
- 2.8 Finally, the Panel has expressed their support for the adoption of the Sports Facilities Strategy on the understanding that the Council will not be solely responsible for providing new facilities.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is requested to take into consideration the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) as set out above during their deliberations on this item.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes and Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 7th April 2009.

Contact Officer: Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01480 388006