

Recommendations to the Executive from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Regarding the Leisure Strategy

The Overview and Strategy Management Commission considered a report from the Leisure Strategy Task Group on 22 March 2022. The agenda papers for this meeting can be accessed via the following link:

<http://decisionmaking.westberks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=118&MId=6167>

As a result of its investigations, the Leisure Strategy Task and Finish Group identified a number of issues, which if addressed could improve the Council's understanding of leisure needs, and future provision of Leisure Service.

None of the identified issues were considered significant enough to suggest that the Strategy should be deferred and amended prior to final publications. Instead, the Task Group considered that most could be addressed as part of the development of the Delivery Plan or as part of future engagement exercises.

Recommendations included:

- All future consultations to capture the home postcodes or town / village of respondents to facilitate identification and mitigation of any geographical gaps in the responses.
- Future consultations on leisure activity to better capture data on popular sports such as basketball and netball and consider more categories such as ice sports.
- Where data is only available at the national or regional level, consider whether additional work needs to be undertaken locally to understand if there are local variations.
- Consider how the leisure offer will need to adapt to take account of recent trends that have been accelerated by the Covid pandemic, such as exercising at home and the use of virtual classes, and whether greater use could be made of online platforms to engage local residents in physical activity, thereby addressing barriers of distance and cost.
- Ensure that future communications strategies involve two-way dialogue with existing and potential users rather than just one-way communication.
- Consider whether additional research is required to address the perceived lack of leisure facilities – particularly a swimming pool - in the east of the district and how best to respond to the barriers facing local residents.
- Explore options for reinstating community outreach programmes, and making more effective use of village / community halls for leisure activities in more remote communities.
- There needs to be a strong focus on children and young people, targeting the 50% who are currently inactive and consideration should be given on working with secondary schools to engage those pupils who do not engage in school sports.
- Undertaken additional work (possibly with GBA) to understand if there are any shortfalls in the local club / voluntary group network that affect particular sports / activities, locations, or demographics.
- Consider developing a central directory of clubs / voluntary groups in West Berkshire as part of the Leisure Strategy Delivery Plan.
- Consider whether further work is needed to clarify what respondents mean by 'people like me' and whether this is just related to ability / fitness or whether there are more nuanced factors at play.
- Future local communications programme should include inspiring stories / role models in order to normalise behaviour / show what 'people like me' can achieve

- Ensure that appropriate mitigation and messaging are put in place to reassure people who have concerns about returning to leisure centres after isolating due to Covid.
- Consider how demand for leisure activity will change as a result of the ageing population and also in response to changing working patterns.

The above recommendations were endorsed by the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and in accordance with Section 6.3.7 of the Constitution are hereby referred to the Executive for consideration and a formal response.