



WORTHING BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee
12 September 2023

Key Decision [No]

Ward(s) Affected: All
Cabinet Portfolio: Culture & Leisure

New Leisure Principles for Worthing

Report by the Director for Place

Officer Contact Details

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to outline Worthing Council's approach for supporting the sport and leisure sector and to outline the headline principles that will guide the approach.
- 1.2. The key pillars of the Council's support to the sector reflect the vision of the Council: fair, green and local.
- 1.3. The report sets out the commitment to make the best use of Council assets to support the sector for the benefit of our residents together with the wider economic benefits associated with places that people value and enjoy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To develop a Sport and Leisure Advisory Group (outlined in 3.7) to be an effective reference group linking, and working with, an Officer / Member Working Group. To share and develop the principles with the

Advisory Group and engage them fully in the shaping of any Sport & Leisure Plan.

- 2.2 For the Officer / Member Working Group to manage progress and report back, and take influence from the Advisory Group and other local networks. To delegate to the Director for Place authority to agree the terms of reference for the working group in consultation with the Executive Member which shall include the requirement to report back to the Committee (at such intervals to be agreed in the terms of reference) with further recommendations to the Committee.
- 2.3 To further develop the principles, moving into the development of a Sport & Leisure Plan, as outlined in section 6. This should cross-reference to developing Service and Project Plans, as part of Our Plan, including alignment to Wellbeing and Young People's Principles and Plans.
- 2.4 For the Working Group to design and develop baseline data and outcome measures to be reported to the Committee within appropriate timeframes as directed by the terms of reference.

3. Context

- 3.1. According to the report ["Social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England" conducted by Sport Industry Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University \(2020\)](#), £1 spent on community sport and physical activity generates nearly £4 for the economy. This signifies the importance of this sector and the social and economic benefit that can be generated through coordinated activities and plans.
- 3.2 Further studies have also shown the significant health benefits of focusing on this sector. When we're young, being active helps our bodies develop properly, with a strong heart, healthy bones, muscles and brain development. As we get older, regular exercise reduces our risk of illness - from heart disease, stroke, colon and breast cancer to obesity and osteoporosis, among other conditions. Every year, leading an active lifestyle prevents 900,000 cases of diabetes and 93,000 cases of dementia (the leading cause of death in the UK) – a combined saving of £7.1 billion to the UK economy (Sport England - Uniting the Movement p.11).
- 3.3 Activity also has an especially pivotal role to play in levelling up communities, by bridging the gap between the 'have' and 'have nots'. Today, this value – otherwise known as the combined 'social community development' impact – of sport and physical activity is

estimated at £20bn to the UK. But that's nowhere near its full potential (Sport England - Uniting the Movement p.13).

3.4 A [recent report by the District Councils' Network and the King's Fund](#) demonstrates the valuable role Councils also play within Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), to take action on the wider determinants of health and to help shift the focus from treating illness towards preventing it. Resulting interventions from the Leisure Principles will contribute to this area, and more broadly to reducing health inequalities, as the Council has the ability to act as a convenor in local places.

3.5 The UK government provides support to the leisure sector via organisations such as Sport England. In developing Leisure Principles and a Plan in Worthing, the Council needs to be cognisant of these national policies, specifically Sport England's 10-year vision, which launched on 1st April 2021. The strategy is built on:

"We believe sport and physical activity has a big role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all." (Sport England Strategy)

The five big issues being focused on, through the strategy, are:

- 1.) **Recover and Reinvent** - Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.
- 2.) **Connecting Communities** - Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.
- 3.) **Positive experiences for children and young people** - Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.
- 4.) **Connecting with health and wellbeing** - Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.
- 5.) **Active Environments** - Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

- 3.6 Sport England have the following programmes available and should be targeted as part of the principles and Plan, whether by the Council or local clubs and organisations:
- **Small Grants Programme:** This fund seeks to develop opportunities for communities to get more people physically active and they will support new projects through providing National Lottery funding of between £300 and £15,000.
 - **Active Together:** This fund is a crowdfunding initiative that can match fund, up to £10,000, successful Crowdfunder campaigns from a total pot of £7.5m.
- 3.7 At a local level, the Council, in partnership with Adur District Council, developed the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy \(2021 - 2024\)](#). Whilst there are a number of cross-references and interventions this doesn't provide the pure focus on the leisure sector. Due to the change in political approach, the Council believes it's the right time to develop a dedicated sport and leisure approach for Worthing, built on community-led principles.
- 3.8 To ensure an immediate impact, the Council has started to build a database of sport and leisure contacts. Whilst still in its infancy, the intention is this database will quickly morph into an 'advisory' forum or group, which will help enable the sector to have a greater voice and connection to the Council. This group also provides scope to ensure the finalised principles and Plan are embedded in the community. This group needs to be developed, however the hope is this 'collective' will represent a good cross-section of the sector, including clubs, organisations and venues, all representing an interest in the sport and leisure sector across Worthing.
- 3.9 In addition, the Council has continued to support the sector by helping to facilitate outdoor water sports and fitness in our green and blue spaces, continued investment into sports pavilions, supporting local clubs, whilst also working in contractual partnership with South Downs Leisure Trust regarding the Council's leisure venues, including the award-winning Splashpoint Leisure Centre.
- 3.10 To support the development of the principles, the Council will also take lessons learnt from the development of areas such as the Active Beach Zone (which includes outdoor volleyball), whilst also utilising data and information gleaned from the Open Space, Recreation and Leisure Strategy that accompanied the Worthing Local Plan. Both aspects will be key data inputs in developing any Plan moving forward.

- 3.11 It's important to note that the development of the leisure principles and Plan will clearly reference the Council's commitment to being fair, green and local. Broadly this includes:
- **Fair:** Worthing Council believes in an inclusive, resilient economy which provides stability, high quality opportunities for all and a social safety net at its core.
 - **Green:** With partnerships and networks, providing effective tools to enable organisations to better understand their carbon footprint and take action to drive to net zero, supporting our ambition for Worthing to be net zero by 2045.
 - **Local:** Adopt an approach of community wealth building; a people-centred approach to local economic development that seeks to provide resilience where there is risk and local economic security where there is uncertainty.
- 3.12 Further details relating to the commitments above can be found in the [New Economic Principles for Worthing paper](#), presented to the Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee on 5 December 2022.
- 3.13 It should also be noted that the principles and Plan, will also investigate how the sport and leisure sector, partnering with the Council, can also positively contribute to health, wellbeing and young people provision in Worthing. More specifically, this report aligns and looks to collaborate on a number of interventions coming forward as part of the Wellbeing Principles for the Council as well as the Young People's Strategy.

4. Developing the Principles

- 4.1 The Council has undertaken preparatory work to assist in the development of the emergent principles, as outlined in Section 5. This involved a series of conversations, including with key stakeholders such as South Down Leisure, and a workshop which covered the following aspects:
- **Why are we doing this?:** This explored the rationale behind the Council's decision to establish the principles. Findings included the sense of capitalising on increased footfall into our open spaces (as a result of the pandemic), demographic shifts in the town, a new and dedicated political focus on leisure, a high number assets (both buildings and people) and an opportunity to connect leisure to wider issues that can positively impact society, environment and the economy.

- **What are our assets?:** In assessing the physical, financial and human assets, this signalled the excellent “blue and green spaces” at our disposal for which leisure can be facilitated and our built assets, not only Worthing Leisure Centre but emergent neighbourhood provision (e.g. tennis and basketball courts, outdoor gyms, skate parks, playgrounds etc). Finally, it was noted that the town has a large number of dedicated sport and leisure clubs, volunteers and staff which are the heartbeat of the local leisure scene.
 - **What are the opportunities?:** This focused on the possibility of establishing a coordinated leisure ‘conversation’ to enable and encourage a spirit of experimentation and innovation, executing a place-based and community-led approach (through the leisure lens) and thinking about the sector beyond the physical spaces. There was also a recognition that leisure provision can come in all shapes and sizes, therefore any principles or plan may need to define “leisure” in this context.
 - **What would we like to achieve?:** This was a wide-ranging discussion but specifically under leisure it was agreed that ‘more people more active’ and ‘no groups left behind’ were the primary aims. Whilst these need to be defined further, supplementary aspects included a need for an increased focus on young people, improved physical and mental wellbeing, providing safe and inclusive activities and a visible improvement plan for leisure facilities and assets.
- 4.2 As outlined throughout this report, the outcomes need to be qualified and tested with the community, whilst also encouraging participation to share their own experiences and perceptions of the sector in and around Worthing.

5. Emergent Principles

- 5.1. The Council are committed to supporting the sport and leisure sector and whilst these headline principles have been developed it should be noted that these need to be tested and agreed with the community.
- 5.2. The principles are intended to act as ‘guardrails’ to support the sector, with the intention of a more comprehensive Leisure Plan being developed through active community participation.
- 5.3. The principles have been developed through a number of routes. Firstly, an analysis of existing strategies across the Council and, secondly, an assessment of similar ambitions in both coastal and urban communities. Thirdly, an understanding of how this potentially maps against the Council’s strategic aims.

5.4. The emerging principles are as follows:

- **A place that encourages inclusive multi-generational and multi-purpose leisure participation** - ensuring all sectors of the community have access to provision
- **A place where sport and leisure clubs and organisations can set up and flourish, where the leisure sector can thrive on community empowerment and innovation** - encouraging local ownership and community development
- **A place where leisure is accessible, enabling better health and wellbeing outcomes** - ensuring cross-cutting work with health, wellbeing, reducing inequalities and work with community partners
- **A place that celebrates it's natural assets and actively encourages participation in our green and blue spaces** - enhancing the very spaces for the benefit of residents and visitors
- **Where leisure grows sustainably in our place** - championing activities and developments that have sustainability at its heart
- **A place that continuously evaluates the assets and investment required for leisure to flourish** - through establishing a programmed approach to capital investment in partnership with others

5.5. The statements will need to be refined with Worthing's sport and leisure community to achieve the necessary buy-in and support to deliver an effective plan.

5.6. As the principles develop, the intention is these will further align with other cross-cutting themes the Council are also working towards. This isn't an exhaustive list, however this could include how leisure can support our health and wellbeing outcomes and our young people strategies.

6. Our Roadmap

6.1. In addition to the specific commitments above we will also ensure our leisure ambitions are positioned in a way that allows for the delivery of these principles through the daily operations of the Council.

- 6.2. To ensure these principles are tested with the community, with the aim of establishing a Leisure Plan, we will develop a comprehensive roadmap in Q4 2023/24 to review relevant policies and strategies in order to move forward with these principles.
- 6.3. The timeline to develop a Plan could be reduced or extended depending on resource, scope and capacity. However, to achieve this and to ensure the best result the Council will work towards a minimum of a 6-month timetable.
- 6.4. It should be noted that the timeline is subject to change and the delivery of 'live' projects will still happen in parallel to the principles being agreed and the Plan coming forward.
- 6.5. In developing the Plan, the Council also needs to take into consideration a number factors, including:
- **Resourcing:** who will develop and lead the Leisure Plan?
 - **Expertise:** what skills and capabilities already exist that can help facilitate the Plan?
 - **Funding:** are there routes to funding to create and deliver the Plan? (e.g. Sport England)
 - **Managing Expectations:** framing this could help answer the resource, expertise and capacity questions.
 - **Momentum:** this needs to be built through early engagement with partner organisations and the community.
- 6.6. In the setting of the principles and a Plan, the Council also need to be mindful of the connections to the sub-regional agenda and ensure any resulting actions connect to the wider coastal economy in West Sussex and beyond.

7. Engagement and Communication

- 7.1. This document sets out plans to engage with the local organisations, venues and the wider community in order to develop the strategies and policies needed to respond to the principles and priorities laid out here.
- 7.2. The development of a network is in its infancy but the intention is to build a 'community of practice' to assist in developing the principles. This group or forum will be one of many opportunities for the community to engage with and be part of the principles development, as above.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The Council already invests significantly in the leisure sector within the Town through its support to South Downs Leisure Trust and the provision of sporting and recreational facilities within Parks and Open Spaces which have a combined budget of £2.2m.
- 8.2. Contained within the report are the actions required to support and develop the leisure sector in Worthing. It is expected that much of the costs of this programme will be funded from our existing budgets or via external funding. However, if this is not possible then members will be consulted on the release of additional resources.
- 8.3. As outlined in Section 5, it's anticipated the leisure principles will be led by the community, for the community, therefore the Council will play different roles in delivering the principles and the Plan, although this is initially seen in a supportive and facilitative role.

Finance Officer: Sarah Gobey

Date: 18th August 2023

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 9.2. s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation
- 9.3. Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Legal Officer: Erutoma Sakpere

Date: 26 July 2023

Background Papers

- [Driving Better Outcomes through Integrated Health Systems \(2023\)](#)
- [Active Sussex Strategy - Getting Sussex Moving \(2023\)](#)
- [New Economic Principles Paper - WJSSC \(December 2022\)](#)

- [Adur & Worthing Councils - Health & Wellbeing Strategy \(2021\)](#)
- [Sport England Strategy - Uniting the Movement \(2021\)](#)
- [Worthing Local Plan - Open Space, Recreation & Leisure Guidance Note \(2021\)](#)

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- This document describes a new approach to sport and leisure activity which reflects the objectives and priorities of the Council administration. As such it is intended to have an ongoing effect on the Borough's leisure approach and an action plan to support this will be developed to support this work. This will be done with support of the proposed working group to ensure we develop it with the participation of our communities.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- As a result of the principles, any activity drawn will have a positive social impact on residents and visitors to Worthing. Whether that be health and wellbeing outcomes, inclusion and equality or, in some aspects, talent identification.

2.2 Equality Issues

- This work will make a positive contribution to reducing inequalities and ensuring this provision is accessible and affordable for all.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- By engaging people in physical activity and leisure provision, it is hoped that this will reduce or limit the prevalence of anti-social behaviour across the Borough.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

- Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlines that "everyone has the right to rest and leisure".

3. Environmental

- Any resulting plan or projects therein will be considered and reviewed against the environmental lens, as per the Council's commitment to reducing our carbon footprint.

4. Governance

- Matter considered and no issues identified.