



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17th OCTOBER 2022

THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF 2022-27

REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR ANN CRIMMINGS

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval of the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf 2022-2027 and inform Cabinet about the feedback from consultation in relation to the new Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf 2022-27 (Appendix 1).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Adoption of the proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 will provide the service with a framework for the development and delivery of the service over the next 5 years, ensuring that it meets and contributes to the Council's priorities, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-24. The new strategy builds on the progress made by the Leisure Service in delivering the previous Sport, Physical Activity and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2021.
- 3.2 Adoption of the proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 will guide the leadership and management of the service ensuring that it can continue to provide a diverse range of sport and leisure opportunities, that good quality indoor and outdoor facilities are maintained, that the Council can respond positively to a volatile and challenging trading environment and we continue to meet the needs of customers and the residents of RCT.

- 3.3 The proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 would provide a framework for the measurement of outcomes and demonstration of impact on the well-being of residents of RCT.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Sport, Physical Activity and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-21 focused primarily on increasing participation through investment in high quality facilities and opportunities and has informed the investment into the service over the last 5 years. The primary target of achieving over 10,000 Leisure for Life Members was achieved up to 2019/20 and is making steady progress back to this level following the service disruption caused by the Covid pandemic restrictions during 2020 to 2022.
- 4.2 The Covid 19 pandemic caused significant disruption to the service due to the national restrictions and the need for the service to support the required public health measures. It also led to significant disruption and alteration in the exercise behaviour patterns of residents due to a reduction in confidence, following government messages that indoor facilities were not safe environments to exercise. Changes in working routines and the evolution of hybrid working has disrupted historic usage patterns of customers who previously commuted to RCT for work but who now may reside outside RCT and hence no longer exercise in the County Borough.
- 4.3 The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 will allow the service to react to the potential pressures on public and personal finance in forecasted cost of living crisis.
- 4.4 Whilst the National Survey for Wales 21/22 finds that a lack of time (52% of respondents) to be the most common barrier to regular physical activity. The National Survey for Wales 21/22 also found 15% of respondents thought cost was a barrier. Recent consultations indicate that the rising cost of living could have a negative impact on participation levels in RCT and the impact of the rising cost of living on paid for leisure activities will continue to be monitored. This is currently mitigated by the wide range of concessionary and free opportunities that are available, such as The National Free Swimming Initiative for juniors and 60+ residents, support for armed forces and concessionary prices for qualifying Leisure for Life customers and the reduced prices for National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) customers. The proposed strategy also recognises the increased demand and opportunity for outdoor exercise and participation as accessible, low-cost options that will be developed.

- 4.5 The new strategy identifies 8 key areas for focus in the next 5 years and these will make a positive contribution to the Corporate Priorities of People and Place:

People: To enable more people to be more active, more often.

- I. Personalised support for inactive people to enable regular exercise. Such support includes the More Steps class which helps GP referral customers transition from exercise referral into regular exercise.
- II. Reducing identified barriers to regular exercise for less active people. A team of outreach staff will be developed to work in outlying areas to take exercise opportunities to these communities.
- III. Enabling people to exercise regularly on an independent basis. We will review and increase the opportunities for children and adults to learn to swim for it to become part of an active lifestyle.
- IV. Developing the people required to deliver regular exercise opportunities by the review and development of volunteer recruitment.

Place: Developing increased opportunities to be physically active on a regular basis within the following settings.

- V. Formal and informal outdoor places. Developing links with more schools and community providers.
- VI. Leisure Centres and Swimming pools. Use feedback and consultation to further develop services.
- VII. Schools and Community venues. To work with schools to develop school holiday provision.
- VIII. The virtual online environment. The development of an App to allow the booking of outdoor pitches

Services in these priority areas will be delivered by:

- Ensuring participation in sport and physical activity is accessible and inclusive for all by maintaining low cost, high value provision.
- Giving residents access to health and wellbeing information and activities through the GP referral schemes, and other health and wellbeing intervention programmes.
- Delivering quality indoor and outdoor sporting facilities and enhancing existing sporting and physical activity places, through the provision of opportunities and ensuring our venues encourage active travel through provision of bike parking facilities.
- Providing high quality parks infrastructure, including playgrounds.

- Supporting the voluntary, community and faith sectors to help build active communities, creating the capacity for meeting the needs of residents within their communities.

4.6 The impact of the pandemic on communities in RCT was high and many of those in disadvantaged and deprived communities were adversely affected. Tackling inequalities in health is therefore a key area of activity and this strategy is designed to increase participation in sport and physical activity, through further developing services for both active and inactive/less active residents and reducing barriers to participation. Barriers to regular physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle can include:

- A lack of confidence.
- Low motivation.
- Practical barriers such as: a lack of accessible opportunities, time, transport and childcare.
- Economic and “cost of living” barrier to accessing opportunities or equipment.
- Social barriers such as culture and a lack of inclusion.
- Psychological barriers such as “I’m not fit enough”.

The strategic priorities are focused on enabling more people to exercise independently on a regular basis and ensuring that they have the appropriate places and opportunities for regular sport and physical activity.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Socio-Economic Duty Impact Assessment has been completed for the proposal (Appendix 2) and was considered by the RCT Review Panel on the 23rd of September.

5.2 The Panel noted the need for the EqIA to specifically look at how the service will engage with women and girls, trans-gender people and those from the wider LGBTQ+ community and those from deprived communities given these groups face particular barriers to participating in leisure and exercise opportunities that meet their needs. The Panel noted the positive progress made to date in improving access for veterans, armed forces personnel, those with chronic health conditions (through the NERS programme) and young carers. Prior to publication, the Panel requested that the format and design of the strategy is reviewed to ensure it is accessible, particularly to those with visual impairment. This will be done should the strategy be approved by Cabinet.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Welsh Language Impact Assessment was undertaken (Appendix 3) and was considered by the RCT Review Panel on the 23rd September. Their feedback resulted in improvements and changes being made to the assessment particularly to strengthen the baseline data within the assessment. Overall, it has been concluded that the proposed strategy will have a positive impact on the Welsh language.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Public and key partner consultation was undertaken from 12th August 2022 for a period of 4 weeks. The consultation was undertaken using the Council's 'Let's Talk' platform. A link to the strategy and associated questionnaire was sent to 40,000 Leisure for Life App users via a push notification on 4 separate occasions during the consultation period. Social media posts were also used as well as emails to RCT staff and a general Council press release with headline points noted below. A précised analysis of the results is available in Appendix 4. A full evaluation can be accessed via Leisure, Sports and Parks.
- 7.2 The consultation questionnaire was completed by 104 visitors to the Let's Talk page.
- 7.3 93.5% of those answering the question felt that RCT has a vision of encouraging residents to lead an active and healthy lifestyle.
- 7.4 86% of those answering the questionnaire felt that RCT's vision will help residents lead an active and healthy lifestyle.
- 7.5 55% of those questioned felt that the current cost of living increases would affect their ability to take part in activities, whilst 26% said it would not affect their ability and 19% were undecided at this stage.
- 7.6 A selection of comments from residents can be seen below; a full list can be found in the full document In Appendix 4.

"I think the majority of bases are being covered, as it would be impossible to spread services to everyone. That of course would be the main aim".

"Exercise equipment in local parks usable by all"

"Creating more hubs which people can access in their communities".

"Its approach to the Welsh language is very positive and word of mouth is always the best way to inform others"

7.7 The Draft Strategy was subject to pre-scrutiny by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in February 2022, prior to the stakeholder and public consultation. Members welcomed the broader approach being taken to improve access to exercise through the use of online classes and outdoor facilities closer to people’s homes. Members wished to ensure the service is able to capture data about participation going forward as part of monitoring arrangements for the strategy. The objective to increase participation by the elderly and harder to reach groups was also highlighted by members as a positive goal with members enquiring about the use of the GP exercise referral scheme (NERS) in RCT. Members identified the need to consider the barriers people face when they need transport to access leisure facilities with Members wanting to see consideration of this issue specifically when the delivery plan to accompany the strategy is developed. Overall, members were supportive of the health and wellbeing focus of the plan and commended the service on its progress in increasing participation and recovery of leisure services in the wake of the pandemic.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 The Council is committed to providing a Leisure, Sport and Parks Service that meets the needs of residents and our customers. The Council currently commits significant resources to the service annually in addition to the annual total capital investment for the duration of the previous strategy of approximately £10m. While there are therefore no new financial implications as a result of the proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27, the rising cost of living pressures may increase the risk levels to open access participation, membership, and pay and play income. This will be monitored and activity to promote and encourage affordable access to leisure and sport activities will be prioritised.

8.2 The current 2022/23 budget for Operational Leisure is shown below:

Staffing Costs	£ 6,096,100
General Expenditure	£ 3,918,670
Capital Financing	£ 373,950
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£10,388,720
Income	£ -6,074,680
NET EXPENDITURE	£ 4,314,040

The Authority currently subsidises operational leisure by over £4.3 million annually.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. However, the following legislation was considered in the process of creating the proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27:

- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- The Welsh Language Standards (2018) (No7) Regulations 2018.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

10.1 The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 22-27 contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24 "Making a Difference" through a focus on the People and Place priorities when encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing.

10.2 The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 identifies 8 priority areas within the People and Place priority theses of the Corporate Plan, as described in paragraph 4.5 of this report, these being:

People:

- Personalised support to exercise.
- Reducing barriers to exercise.
- Enabling independent exercise.
- Developing people.

Place:

- Formal and informal outdoor spaces.
- Leisure centres and swimming pools.
- Schools and community venues.
- The virtual environment.

10.3 The Well-being of Future Generations Act 5 ways of working and the Sustainable Development principle underpins the strategy and informs the strategic approach taken.

- The strategy recognises the importance of supporting and enabling voluntary, community and faith organisations to create sustainable capacity to deliver exercise opportunities for their communities, over the long term.

- The strategy recognises the integrated impact of people being more active on their well-being and supports the national well-being goals of: resilience, health, equality, cohesive communities and the Welsh Language. Having a regular active lifestyle contributes to a persons' resilience, health and well-being. The strategy is aimed at supporting those residents who have less opportunity to participate, thus promoting more equal and cohesive communities, with access to Welsh Language information and provision.

11. ANY OTHER NATIONAL STRATEGIES THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT IS SEEKING TO ADDRESS

- 11.1 The proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 is aligned to "Embracing the Vision for Sport in Wales" which is the 2018 Sport Wales Strategy. In particular, the aims: To be person centred; To give every young person a great start; To ensure everyone has the opportunity to be active through sport; To bring people together for the long-term.

12. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 12.1 The document is strategic and is applicable to all electoral wards and residents of RCT.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 The proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 is designed to increase regular physical activity participation by all RCT residents across the Council's comprehensive range of indoor and outdoor physical activity and sports facilities.
- 13.2 The consultation indicated a high level of support for the strategic approach and the key aims of the document and the vision of the Strategy will make a significant contribution to the ambitions set out in the Corporate Strategy 2020-24.
- 13.3 The proposed Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27 is presented to Cabinet for consideration and formal adoption.

Other Information:

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

The draft Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 22-27 was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 15.02.22.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1: Draft Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 22-27

Appendix 2: Equality Impact and Socio-Economic Duty Assessment

Appendix 3: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

Appendix 4: Summary of key findings and insight from the public and key partner consultation

Officer to contact:

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