

Cheltenham Borough Council

Sports Facilities and Development Position Statement

A Baseline Statement of the Project Team

1. Summary

- 1.1 The best value review of sports facilities and development has now reached a point where the project team is able to provide a statement about the service currently provided to customers. In order to complete the review, the project team needs to understand what the stakeholders are seeking in order to ensure that both the current strategic direction of the service is right, and the vehicle for delivering that service is appropriate.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The purpose of this position statement is to summarise where the service is now. This baseline document will act as a precursor to determining what the service needs to achieve over the next five years, as defined by the improvement plan. This improvement plan will necessarily need to marry the short-term managerial goals of the Sport and Play Division (excluding the play element), with the broader aims of both 'Our town, our future', the Council's Cultural, Sports and Playing Pitch Strategies, and the aims of both staff and tenants.
- 2.2 This position statement includes a brief overview of both the consultation and benchmarking work that has been undertaken to date, and seeks to link this to the objectives of both the council and the division. The statement cites some specific indicators where this illustrates an aspect of the service in some way. However, the interpretation of these results has been kept to a minimum as the statement seeks to stimulate debate by encouraging people to draw their own conclusions. A brief commentary has also been included.
- 2.3 The review needs necessarily to be focused upon the customers to ensure that they receive a high quality service both now and in the future, and that the outcomes represent a step change in performance. Also, as an Investors in People organisation, the service needs to take account of staffing needs in order that they feel both valued and motivated, and are able to contribute positively to the review outcomes.

3. Background

The Present Service

- 3.1 Cheltenham Borough Council provides a major recreation facility at Tommy Taylors Lane to the north of the town centre. This facility includes both a recreation centre, with a swimming pool and an 8-court sports hall, and a sports stadium with a six-lane athletics track in the immediate vicinity. These facilities were let to a private contractor under CCT requirements in 1996. The facility is still run by Leisure Connection, but the contract is due to terminate in April 2003.

- 3.2 In addition to these facilities, Cheltenham Borough Council provides some 40 senior sports pitches and sports pavilions around the town which are maintained by the borough council but marketed and let by Leisure Connection. Leisure Connection are also responsible for marketing the 9-hole golf course, the boating lake and fishing which are all located near to the recreation centre.
- 3.3 The provision of these sports facilities costs Cheltenham Borough Council some £880,000 per year. The facilities, in turn, attract some 560,000 users per annum. (Sandford Lido, which is grant-aided by Cheltenham Borough Council appears to attract a further 130,000 users per annum). It is also worth noting that the swimming pool is due to close shortly for refurbishment, for which Cheltenham Borough Council has received a Lottery Fund Grant of £2.9 million.

4. Service Objectives

- 4.1 The provision of sports facilities and sports development both feature within 'Our town, our future'. Notably, one of the challenges set out in this document is to: "Promote mental and physical health, healthy lifestyles and communities...and to...increase access to recreation opportunities and facilities" under Living life to the full. The Council also seeks to: "...promote the artistic and cultural life of the town and increase and make the most of leisure activities and events" under An attractive and safe town.
- 4.2 These two elements highlight the two main objectives underpinning sport and recreation provision. On the one hand, its about delivering physical and mental well-being, while on the other hand its about giving people the opportunity to make full and worthwhile use of their leisure time.
- 4.3 This dual aim can also be seen in the fact that sport and recreation facilities are alluded to within the Cultural Strategy 2001 - 2006, whose vision is to: "...offer everyone in Cheltenham access to the best possible cultural opportunities, enhancing the town's reputation and environment, providing a better quality of life for all." The Council's Sports Strategy 1998 - 2003, on the other hand, aims to: "...fulfil people's needs by providing co-ordinated, dynamic and sustainable sport and play opportunities. We are committed to ensuring mental and physical benefits, enjoyment and value for money delivered in the heart of Cheltenham's community."
- 4.4 It is worth noting that in addition to the above, Cheltenham Borough Council has recently adopted a playing pitch strategy which commits Cheltenham Borough Council to:
- providing usable and viable green space within the Borough;
 - improving access to outdoor sports facilities;
 - reversing the decline in outdoor sports facilities and increasing participation; and
 - developing local sports clubs to meet their needs and aspirations within the Borough.

5. Profile/User Survey

- 5.1 Work has been done by both Leisure Connection and by the project team in order to identify the users who are using the facilities. The feedback would suggest that during 2001, 95% of the users are white, and that 69% are female. Nearly half (47%) are in the 30 - 44 age group, which has risen from 40% in 1999; while 35% are in the 16 - 29 age group, compared to 40% in 1999.

- 5.2 82% of the users travelled to the centre by car, compared to only 13% who walked. 67% of users travelled less than three miles to reach the centre. Nearly two-thirds come with family and friends, including a significant number of women with young families. 40% of the users come to swim - the most popular category - while the next most popular is the fitness suite with 31% of users. (The user survey carried out on behalf of the project team confirmed that swimming, the fitness suite and fitness/aerobics classes were the three most popular activities, in that order).
- 5.3 The user survey also identified the fact that most people use the centre to maintain or improve their fitness, or to entertain children. Most users visit the centre between one and three times a week. Most would like to use it more often but 'lack of time', 'work' or 'family commitments' made this difficult. On the whole, the centre is well-regarded. The key exception being general cleanliness, where some 40% of respondents deemed it to be poor or very poor.
- 5.4 61% of respondents felt the prices offered good value for money, and just over three quarters felt that staff helpfulness was good or excellent. The main improvements identified by the users were better wet-side changing and better cleanliness.
- 5.5 The main reason that non-users gave for not using the facility was 'lack of time', 'no interest in sports or recreation' and 'transport problems'. Over half of the non-users said that nothing would encourage them to use the centre (rising to 86% for respondents aged 65+). 22% of non-users used other leisure facilities - LA Fitness being the main one. When asked why they used these facilities and not the recreation centre, 42% stated that the facilities they use are closer to home.

6. Market Appraisal

- 6.1 There are 21 health and fitness facilities within a 15-minute off-peak drive time. The facilities within 15 minutes contain 729 stations¹. There are a further ten planning applications containing health and fitness elements being considered. Currently, it is estimated that there is an over-supply of 56 stations within a 15 minute drive time. This oversupply increases when taking into account planned facilities.
- 6.2 There are 11 sports halls within a 15 minute off-peak drive time. These 11 sports halls provide 34 courts. Current estimates would suggest that there is a small shortfall in court provision, but once planned provision is taken into account there will be an over-supply. There is also no unmet demand for swimming or athletics facilities.

7. Performance and Comparative Data

- 7.1 Year-on-year financial performance shown in Appendix A indicates that 1999 showed a peak in net profit and income, and this has declined since. During this time, swimming income has gone up 18%, but fitness income has remained static. Over the four years, income has gone up 4%, which in effect means that it has remained broadly static in real terms. Over the same period, salaries and wages have gone down by 8 - 10%.

¹ A station is.....

- 7.2 APSE² benchmarking data indicates that the subsidy per head for the recreation centre is high, along with the net cost per visit. Staff costs per admission is below average. Figures are set out in table 1 below. APSE also produce a composite index score which seeks to compare authorities on the basis of a) quality assurance and customer consultation, and b) human resources and people management. The centre scores well on the first index, but they score relatively badly on the second.
- 7.3 In terms of pricing policy, the recreation centre's charges tend to generally be below average. The Leisure Connection satisfaction surveys also show a steady decline over the three years 1999, 2000 and 2001. Satisfaction ratings concerning staff tend to be relatively good, along with the range of activities available at the centre. However, satisfaction ratings in respect of cleanliness and quality of equipment is low.

Table 1: APSE Comparative Performance Results 2001/02

	Cheltenham	Group Average
Subsidy per head	£1.54	£1.08
Income/expenditure ratio	61%	76.4%
Subsidy per opening hour	£160	£65.16
Staff cost per admission	£1.75	£1.91
Net cost per visit	£1.60	£0.84
Secondary spend is below average (% of total income)	17%	21%

8. Commentary

- 8.1 The first point to make is that the centre is well regarded and is seen as making a positive contribution to the quality of life in the town. However, it is clear from the user surveys that active sport or leisure activities are a personal life-style choice, and that if people do not choose to use the facilities, it is difficult to persuade them otherwise. In essence, this is the role of sports development, which has the longer term aim of promoting sports and active leisure time as an alternative to more sedentary lifestyles. In this respect, while sports development has had some notable successes, it is still too early to comment upon whether it has made a significant contribution to the quality of life of Cheltenham residents.
- 8.2 The second point to make is that the leisure centre's performance is generally at or below average. Financial performance has deteriorated and the response to this appears to have been to cut staffing costs rather than increase user numbers. It is appreciated that increasing user numbers is difficult, especially when there is already an apparent over-provision of sport and fitness facilities in the area. However, cut-backs may well be linked to the poor cleanliness ratings, suggesting that customers may perceive an air of neglect.

² APSE is the Association for Public Service Excellence who work with a wide range of authorities producing comparative performance data.

- 8.3 The scope of the current management contract includes a significant number of activities including bookings for the sports pitches. The user survey highlighted the fact that while most people were aware of the swimming pool, the fitness suite and the aerobics classes, there was little awareness of the other activities available. Many are only of particular interest to sports clubs, rather than the casual user. It therefore poses the question as to whether some of these facilities should be run as an aspect of sports development, rather than part of a commercial contract.

9. Themes

Value for Money

The user survey suggests that people feel the service does offer value for money. Comparing prices with other local authorities supports this view, as Cheltenham's prices are lower than average.

Accountability and Transparency

While the contractor does provide regular monthly reports, it has been evident from the review that the provision of basic management information has proved to be a problem. Needless to say, this presents a particular problem when it comes to considering open and transparent decision-making. By contracting-out the management of the facilities, Cheltenham Borough Council chose to distance itself from operational decision-making.

Good Governance

While Leisure Connection have their own customer feedback mechanisms, and good working relations have been developed with all the main sports clubs, the client-side part of the service is still at an early stage in terms of developing robust mechanisms for general user participation.

Partnership Working

The service works closely with all of the main sports clubs in the town in order to promote the Council's chosen priority sports of athletics, cricket, swimming, hockey and rugby. This is not to say that other sports are ignored, but more can be done. The recent withdrawal of support for the Cheltenham Sports Council highlights a problem in the way Cheltenham Borough Council has sought to fund sports clubs in the past.

Service Equity and Equality

Since over two-thirds of the leisure centre's users are women, many of whom bring their families, this service has a significant impact upon the health and well-being of women and young people. The service users are predominantly white, but the 5% non-white usage broadly reflects the composition of the wider population as a whole.

Continuous Service Improvement

Projected service performance is set out in Appendix B. While it is clear that some aspects of the service have genuinely improved, the gradual decline in other areas is a trend which needs to be reversed.

Sustainable Service Delivery

The main long-term goal of the service is to enhance local residents' quality of life. However, there is an issue in respect of travel to and from the centre, which is predominantly by car. Also, the recreation centre and the stadium consume a great deal of energy. Further work therefore needs to be done to see whether the centre is run as energy efficiently as possible.

10. Implications

Background Papers

Sports facilities and development review papers

Contact Officer

Richard Levett, Sports Facilities and Development
Project Team, 01242 264126,
RichardL@Cheltenham.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

Year-on-Year Comparison of Income and Expenditure

	1998	1999	2000	2001	Variance 1998 - 2001
	£s	£s	£s	£s	%
Sales					
Fitness Income	452,154	487,106	509,488	467,709	3%
Swimming	326,632	381,336	378,526	384,238	18%
Children's Activities	14,276	16,954	35,296	55,882	291%
Membership	13,319	15,346	18,688	9,044	-32%
Other Dry Side Income	311,158	367,207	330,559	272,846	-12%
Total Activities Income	1,117,539	1,267,949	1,272,557	1,189,719	6%
Secondary Income					
Bar	27,200	22,178	20,300	17,074	-37%
Café	155,442	142,670	141,816	141,460	-9%
Vending	64,910	69,847	71,633	72,273	11%
Banqueting	2,986	4,124	5,612	6,522	118%
Gaming	643	8	541	772	20%
Total Secondary Income	251,181	238,827	239,902	238,101	-5%
Total Income	1,368,720	1,506,776	1,512,459	1,427,820	4%
Expenditure					
Salaries and Wages	1,028,685	992,259	997,908	948,085	-8%
Other Wages	28,588	20,734	17,538	25,613	-10%
Purchases	135,262	157,221	147,101	153,382	13%
Utilities	152,831	163,689	142,945	170,890	12%
Premises Costs	333,564	329,507	387,284	452,461	36%
Marketing	52,883	39,674	48,723	65,796	24%
Capital Costs	55,833	68,760	59,082	62,249	11%
Other	1,412				-100%
Professional and Finance Fees	25,430	25,445	32,610	25,708	1%
Total Expenditure	1,814,488	1,797,289	1,833,191	1,904,184	5%
Operating Profit	-445,768	-290,513	-320,732	-476,364	7%
Management Fee	422,454	488,529	500,298	494,810	17%
Profit Share	0	0	-227	0	
Exceptional Items	0	0	0	-2,776	
Net Profit	-23,314	198,016	179,339	15,670	-167%

APPENDIX B

SPORT AND PLAY: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2002 TO 2007

Best Value Performance Indicators - NONE

		2000/01			
		previous estimate	actual	target	District Top 25%
ACPII1a	The number of swims and other visits per 1000 population	7000	6497	3150	7626
ACPII1b	the net cost per swim/visit	£0.91	£0.97	£1.18	£0.67

Other Government Performance Indicators - NONE

Local Performance Indicators

		2000/01				2001/02		2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
		previous estimate	actual	target	District Top 25%	current estimate	target	5 year targets				
	The number of children to whom we will deliver the non-curriculum TOPs programme	480	520	500		deleted						

Local Performance Indicators

	2000/01				2001/02		2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
To increase the number of TOPS community Clubs based at local sports Clubs by 15%	12	12	12		13	17	18	20	22	24	26
The number of young people participating in WCYG	126	96	120		156	158	160	170	170	180	180
The number of children attending the CGRP	18641	18641	23,330		deleted						
To maintain the average number of sessions used by children attending CHRP	1200	986	1200		902	1300	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200
To increase the number of Out of School Clubs attending the Playworkers Support Forum by 10%	30% of actual clubs operating	30%	40% of actual clubs operating		53%	55% of actual clubs operating	60%	65%	70%	70%	70%

Local Performance Indicators

	2000/01			2001/02		2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	
	previous estimate	actual	target	District Top 25%	current estimate	target	5 year targets				
The number of GP referral patients	680	720	600		deleted (see following LPI)						
To increase the number of doctors surgeries referring patients to the GP referral scheme by 20%	11	13	11		13	13	17	19	22	25	27