

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Leisure Facilities Cabinet Sub-Committee**
held on Wednesday, 17th June, 2009 in Committee Suite 2, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach. CW11 1HZ

Present

Councillor A Knowles (Chairman)
Councillors D Brown, R Domleo and F Keegan

In attendance

Advisory Members:

Councillors D Flude, J Hammond and R Westwood

Officers:

Guy Kilminster, Head of Health and Wellbeing
Rob Hyde, Service Development Manager
Mark Wheelton, Leisure and Green Spaces Manager
Keith Pickton, Interim Leisure Services Manager
Carol Jones, Legal and Democratic Services

Apologies

Councillor A Arnold (Advisory Member)

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2009 be approved as a correct record.

11 STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING EVENTS FEEDBACK

At its meeting held on 20 April 2009, the Sub-Committee had agreed that consultants be commissioned to provide an options appraisal for the future delivery of leisure facilities in Cheshire East.

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Health and Well-Being which outlined current independent “thinking” and conclusions in respect of strategic commissioning within Leisure and Culture.

It was noted that the contract for an Options Appraisal was to be awarded shortly and the conclusions outlined in the report would be used to inform the consultant’s evaluation as the Authority moved towards a strategic commissioning model of procurement.

The report included a summary of four national events organised by IDeA with the intention of increasing understanding of the re-orientation of public services around the “commissioning model”. The events had been held in Birmingham, Ipswich, Rochdale and London respectively. The Service Development Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the key strategic issues which had emerged. Members made comments, as appropriate.

- Working effectively within LSPs to define need, and influence decision-making on priority outcomes and commissioning was important in raising the profile of culture and sport. It was important, therefore, that the current practice of using different data sets be replaced with a pooling of information using common data sets. Combining information and expertise at the planning stage was critical in the strategic commissioning processes. Councils had shown that by investing in shared need assessments at the outset, the contribution of culture and sport was better recognised.
- It would be important to consider how culture and leisure contributions could feed into the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) framework as a tool to support ambitions for the area.
- There were tensions between a “needs-led” approach to service planning and delivery which was perceived by some as rationing services to particular client groups. The way in which public services was perceived was changing and services should be aimed at meeting needs of local people rather than being defined around services currently offered by providers.
- Although Trusts had formerly been considered a reasonable option for the delivery of culture and leisure services on behalf of local authorities, this was no longer appropriate. There was a tendency for them to feel disempowered and isolated from the new commissioning framework agenda. This was particularly true in small districts with small trusts or small contracts where “client” capacity no longer existed in the Council. Many providers were too small and were only able to operate facilities rather than commission voluntary and community organisations to assist in their delivery.

During discussion, a Member referred to a community group with which he was associated. The Group had little difficulty raising funds for sporting and other physical activities, but was unable to attract volunteers. As a consequence, it had now sponsored a Street Sports scheme operated by the Borough Council for young people up to 19 years of age.

- Investing in third sector capability would be advantageous in the longer term, but there were capacity issues within both the third sector and local authorities. Voluntary organisations associated with sport and culture did not perceive themselves as part of the third sector, a consequence of which was that they excluded themselves from capacity-building support which was more generally available in the health and community care sectors, with many of them seeing themselves as being “entitled to” or “in need” of grant aid rather than perceiving themselves as providers of public services.

It was important for the local authority, Primary Care Trust (PCT) and other key agencies to help improve their capacity to enable them to become commissioning bodies, but this would be a longer-term aim.

A Member commented that for some local branches of the larger, national voluntary organisations, their principal focus was on fund-raising to ensure their continued existence at local level. The high-level strategic “thinking” did not feature in their day-to-day business operation. Moreover, funding which was allocated to central offices of national charities was often not diverted to local level. A paradigm shift was required if local organisations were to perceive themselves as being providers of public services and therefore, become more autonomous.

- In response to a Member’s question about progress on the needs assessment, the Sub-Committee was informed that there was no budget to fund this survey; however, the consultant was examining delivery options, using inherited data.
- A Member expressed disappointment that the principal purpose of embarking on the review across Cheshire East had been with the aim of adopting alternative strategies in respect of its leisure facilities and making a recommendation to Cabinet on how these should impact on the Authority’s priorities, rather than improving the efficiency of the facilities already provided.
- Members discussed access to facilities, particularly access by older people who were not traditional users of sports facilities. Reference was made to the “Active People” database from the Sport England survey which provided statistical information about

the levels of participation in sport and provided a “picture” of participation by local authority area.

- Whilst the database was of value, it did not identify people who were *not* participating in sport. It was noted that a number of private leisure facilities had declined to take part in the survey.
- The projected increase in people’s life expectancy in the UK presented challenges. Exercise offered the single most important way to keep healthy and there was a need to identify imaginative ways of keeping older people fit and healthy, and to understand the obstacles which prevented them taking part in sport and other physical activity. The Sub-Committee was informed that there was other research information available which could be used to inform the work on identifying barriers to participation.
- Brief reference was made to the need to provide diversionary activities for “NEETS” (ie young people “not in employment, education or training”). Members were referred to Appendix A of the report which identified a number of third sector activities appropriate for younger people.
- The issue of commissioning would need to be considered at LAP level (Local Area Partnerships). In view of the disparate nature of each of the LAPS it may be necessary for it to be dealt with at a much lower level; possibly neighbourhoods.
- A general comment was made that where facilities already existed in a community, the Council’s role should be to act as a facilitator, rather than set up in competition to provide the same facilities.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12 LEISURE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS APPRAISAL CONTRACT

At its meeting held on 20th April 2009, the Sub-Committee had agreed that consultants be commissioned to provide an options appraisal for the future delivery of leisure facilities in Cheshire East.

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Head of Health and Well-Being which set out the Options Appraisal Contract terms and conditions and the timetable. A copy of the proposed contract was also included within the report.

It was noted that of those invited to tender, seven had been provided with the draft contract and quotations were expected from the companies identified in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the timetable and information be noted; and
- (2) arrangements be made for the Sub-Committee to meet in late July/early August and again in week commencing 5 October 2009.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.00 am

Councillor A Knowles (Chairman)