

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 8 January 2020

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Margaret Notley (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Teresa Callaghan, John Mead and Loraine Rossati.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.41pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alex Farquharson, Liz Harrington and Claire Parris.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 4 NOVEMBER 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 4 November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

3 **SPORTS AND LEISURE SCRUTINY REVIEW - EVIDENCE GATHERING**

Louise Gallagher-Smith (Sporting Futures) was in attendance at the meeting. She gave a presentation focussing on the accessibility/affordability of sporting clubs in Stevenage; the take up of leisure opportunities; and good practice.

In relation to good practice, Louise stated that Stevenage was a positive town for sports, including the Stevenage and North Herts Athletics Club (with over 400 members), numerous football opportunities, a healthy martial arts scene, and a very popular Park Run. One of the attractions of the Park Run was that it was free and accessible for all, and allowed participants to attend as and when they were available.

Louise advised that other areas of good practice included daytime health walks of various distances, primarily attended by retirees. SG1 radio had also been very helpful in highlighting a number of the more obscure sporting opportunities, and had been involved in extending the Stevenage Sporting Hall of Fame to include local paralympians and achievers in lesser known sports.

Louise commented that there was often difficulty in people knowing about sporting activities, and so it was hoped that an increased use of social media might help in this regard. It was also intended to develop a system linking up school activities with out of school activities.

In respect of the accessibility/affordability of sporting opportunities, Louise explained that this was variable, although some Gym offers were available and the Stevenage Community Trust were often helpful in supporting various initiatives. Sporting Futures had received funding through the Sports Premium, allowing children to access as much sport as possible, although there was often a reluctance on the part of parents to engage in such activities. A good deal of work had been carried out to ensure that facilities were accessible for the disabled.

Louise raised the issue of the Ridlins Athletics Track, used by the Stevenage Athletics Club, various running clubs and local schools, and which was coming to the end of its lifespan.

The Committee acknowledged that the need for SLL to balance sporting and cultural events at the Stevenage Leisure Centre, but Louise commented that regular sports bookings were often lost due to the need to use the Sports Hall for concerts etc.

Louise concluded by commending the Stevenage Cycle Hub at Fairlands Valley Park, which had strong links to local infants schools to encourage youngsters to ride and operated the Go Ride club on Friday evenings.

In reply to a Member question regarding Ridlins Athletics Track and associated buildings, Louise and the Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager commented that, whilst cleaning and patching had taken place over the past 5 years, the facility was in need of a complete refurbishment, the cost of which was estimated in the region of £1Million, of which a new running track was the most pressing and would cost circa £250,000. The facility was expensive to maintain, as income was minimal and annual expenditure was in the region of £200,000.

In relation to queries regarding opportunities for 15-19 year olds, officers agreed to provide Members with a list of current sporting/leisure initiatives in Stevenage directed towards this age group. The Committee asked officers to ensure that the Community Development Officers were kept up to date with such sporting/leisure initiatives, via the Stevenage Youth Engagement Group, so that relevant information could be imparted to potential users.

4 SPORTS AND LEISURE SCRUTINY REVIEW - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the draft recommendations in relation to the Sports and Leisure scrutiny review.

The recommendations contained in the document were supported by the Committee, subject to the following amendments and additions:

- Accessibility – Recommendation 1 to be sub-divided to link potential subsidised leisure activities to work carried out by the Stevenage Primary Care Network Social Prescribing Co-ordinators; and to consider the introduction of “cheap months” for certain activities to encourage those on limited means to take up leisure activities;
- Accessibility - Recommendation 3 amended to read – “The parking provision for the Aqua Park need to be reviewed and improved, owing to high demand in the summer months”;

- Accessibility – Recommendation 6 to be sub-divided to separate opportunities for apprenticeships and Saturday positions for young people;
- Marketing Opportunities – Recommendation 1 to be amended to replace “plus one” with “two for one” in respect of special offers;
- Marketing Opportunities – addition to Recommendation 3 to promote the range of activities at the Sailing Centre to maximise the use of the facility;
- Marketing Opportunities – similar addition to Recommendation 4 to support maximising the use of the Golf Course facilities;
- Marketing Opportunities – addition to Recommendation 6 to provide for the placing of directional signage to the cycle hub around Fairland Valley Park;
- Marketing Opportunities – additional Recommendation – consideration be given to the establishment of a standardised corporate brand for Sport Stevenage/Active Stevenage/Healthy Stevenage;
- Marketing Opportunities – additional Recommendation – a process be developed to ensure that Community Development Officers and Community Wardens be regularly briefed on the sporting/leisure activities on offer in their respective neighbourhood areas;
- Marketing Opportunities – additional Recommendation – consideration be given, possibly through the Stevenage Sports Partnership or Sporting Futures, to encouraging local schools to display advertising material relating to sports and leisure activities;
- Infrastructure Improvements – addition to Recommendation 1 to include the potential for selling FVP high ropes/refreshment events as birthday party packages;
- Infrastructure Improvements – addition to Recommendation 5 – subject to funding, consideration be given to the possibility of adapting the tennis courts at King George V Playing Fields into use for other physical activities should their continued use for tennis prove unviable;
- Infrastructure Improvements – additional Recommendation – clarity be given regarding the future viability of Ridlins Athletics Track and associated facilities, linked into the forthcoming locality reviews; and
- Liaison between SBC and SLL – addition to Recommendation 2 – the possible introduction of healthy food options at the Fairland Valley Park café should include alternative dietary requirements (such as vegetarian and vegan options).

The Chair made a general comment that, following on from site visits, Members were impressed with the sporting/leisure facilities on offer, the way they were being run, the commitment of staff associated with them, and the continuing focus on improvement.

Information provided by Members of the Committee in respect of disabled access to leisure and community facilities and comparable costs of certain leisure activities offered in other New Towns, namely Harlow, Basildon and Milton Keynes, it was agreed that:

- officers investigate the potential for all community facilities/Council owned facilities in Stevenage to be linked to a central www.accessable.co.uk website, which allowed disabled users to ascertain whether or not a facility was able to cater for their needs; and

- the Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager be requested to add comparable data relating to SBC to the table of cost information supplied for the provision of certain leisure facilities in Harlow, Basildon and Milton Keynes, and circulate this information the Committee Members.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR