

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**22 May 2007**

**Report of the Chief Leisure Officer and the  
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken  
by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 REVIEW OF BOROUGH LEISURE STRATEGY**

**Summary**

**This report updates Members on the review of the Council's Borough Leisure Strategy and seeks Member endorsement as to the proposed way forward.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 The Borough Leisure Strategy (BLS) outlines this Council's key objectives for Leisure Services and the performance framework for achieving them over a five year period. The Strategy aims to ensure that identified leisure needs are translated into effective facility provision and service delivery on the ground, subject to the financial constraints within which the Council operates.

1.1.2 The existing Strategy is a Service Plan and links with the Council's Corporate Performance Plan, which provides the framework for change, development and review of all the Council's services on a corporate basis. The BLS, therefore, has an important role to play within the corporate policy context, and is designed to identify and respond to both the existing and future leisure needs of the communities within the borough. The Strategy coordinates partnership activity between various agencies and sectors, as well as assisting Council Members and Officers in decision making and performance management.

**1.2 Existing Strategy**

1.2.1 The existing BLS covered the five year period 2001-2006, and therefore needs to be updated and reviewed.

1.2.2 With the restructuring of Leisure Services alongside Planning and Transportation in January 2007, it was felt appropriate to defer the review of the Strategy until the new management and staffing arrangements, including some key new appointments, were in place and fully operational. In the meantime, the existing BLS is being retained as the policy framework document for the Service.

- 1.2.3 Members may also be aware of this Council's Local Cultural Strategy (LCS) which covers the period 2002-2007. The LCS was produced as a result of a government requirement for all local authorities to produce a Cultural Strategy, and aims "to improve opportunities for the whole community to access sustainable cultural experiences that satisfy individual needs, give pleasure and enjoyment, support a good quality of life, and reinforce local identity."
- 1.2.4 There is now no longer a requirement for local authorities to produce a separate Cultural Strategy and it is, therefore, felt appropriate to incorporate both documents into one, and name it the Borough Leisure and Arts Strategy.

### **1.3 Proposed Structure/Format**

- 1.3.1 Since the publication of the existing BLS in 2001, a number of factors have changed, reviews undertaken, and strategies developed within Leisure Services, which will influence the structure/format of the new Strategy for the next five years. In summary, these include:
- The Best Value Review of Leisure completed in 2005 and the production of a detailed 5-year Best Value Improvement Plan.
  - The introduction of an annual Business Plan for the Leisure Services Business Unit (see separate report in these papers).
  - The production of borough Playing Pitch and Play Strategies; an important input to the Local Development Framework.
  - The current production of an Open Space Strategy for the borough linked to the Local Development Framework.
  - The growing importance of delivering leisure facilities/services which address key corporate priorities, most notably young people, healthy living, and reducing crime and disorder.
  - The development of site specific development plans for the Council's principle areas of public open space.
  - The restructure of Leisure Services and the development of three Section Performance Plans, namely Indoor Leisure, Outdoor Leisure and Leisure Development.
  - The successful and continuing integration of Leisure services with Planning and Transportation Services and further opportunities for joint operational and project based working.
- 1.3.2 As a result of the above, it is proposed that whilst a number of the sections of the existing BLS should be retained, the new Strategy will be a more over-arching policy framework document, with less emphasis on detailed annual programmes

for each section of the Service. This detailed information is now incorporated in the plans and strategies detailed in sub-section 1.3.1, and in particular the Leisure Best Value Improvement Plan for Leisure Services.

- 1.3.3 One of the strengths of the existing BLS has been the identification of a number of cross-cutting themes that underpin the entire document. I have attached at **[Annex 1]** a list of the existing themes and those proposed for the revised Strategy for Member consideration. The proposed themes link to the Council's key corporate objectives; focus on the needs and aspirations of the local community; correspond to the interests of the Council's partners to make the most of links to other services and agencies and are compatible with the government's modernising agenda.

#### **1.4 Timescale/Consultation**

- 1.4.1 I have attached at **[Annex 2]** a proposed timescale for the review of the Strategy. Members will note that two periods of consultation have been allowed for within the timescale, and it is anticipated that the new Strategy will be completed and approved in early 2008.

- 1.4.2 Subject to Member comment at the meeting, it is proposed that the first phase of public consultation takes place during April/June 2007. This phase will aim to identify key issues to be considered within the Strategy and will involve liaison with the following groups:

- Statutory agencies for example Sport England, Arts Council, Natural England, Health Authority
- County Council and other district councils in Kent
- Local Parish/Town Councils
- Key partners/stakeholders for example Tonbridge Sports Association, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, Russet Homes
- Staff

- 1.4.3 The results of recent residents research reports will also be carefully considered, including the General BVPI Survey 2006/07, the Sport England Active Lifestyles survey, and customer surveys at the Council's own leisure facilities.

#### **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 The BLS is one of the plans and strategies which together comprise the Development Plan and, as a result, must be considered and if appropriate adopted in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.

## 1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 Taking into account the level of work involved in the review of the BLS, an external consultant will be appointed to assist the Council, with an estimated one-off cost to the Council in the region of £5,000. Following liaison with the Director of Finance, the cost of this work can be funded from the Leisure reserve.

## 1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 It is essential that the management and development of Leisure Services is undertaken within an approved policy framework. The new Strategy will assist in the identification of priority issues, will facilitate decision making for Members and Officers, assist with the effective use of resources, and enable performance to be measured on an objective basis.
- 1.7.2 The need for a Leisure Strategy is identified in the Service's Risk Register.

## 1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that:

- 1) a new Borough Leisure and Arts Strategy be developed in accordance with the approach outlined in the report
- 2) the proposed themes underpinning the new Strategy outlined at **[Annex 1]** to the report be agreed, and
- 3) the proposed timetable and phases of consultation detailed at **[Annex 2]** to the report be agreed.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendations, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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