

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**19 May 2009**

**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 MYSTERY SHOPPER REPORTS**

**Summary**

**This report provides Members with the results of the 2008/09 mystery shopper visits to the Council's main leisure facilities. The report identifies a number of key areas for improvement, which will either be addressed immediately, or incorporated in the relevant service improvement plans for each facility.**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 Members may be aware that over the last few years mystery shopper visits have been undertaken at the Council's main leisure facilities.
- 1.1.2 The visits are undertaken by Right Directions Ltd, as the company's report format is closely allied to the Quest award criteria.
- 1.1.3 The mystery shopper rates the facility against a range of criteria including cleanliness, housekeeping, maintenance, customer care and supervision.
- 1.1.4 The accepted "pass mark" is 60%, and this has become recognised across the leisure industry as an acceptable standard. However, in recognition of the desire to continuously improve our services and be in the industry upper quartile a performance target of 75% (previously the upper quartile score) is included in Leisure Service Performance Plans for each facility, and the results are reported annually in the Council's Corporate Performance Plan.

**1.2 Results**

- 1.2.1 Members will note that the pass mark of 60% was achieved for all visits, and the overall average for all the facilities provided by this Council was 78.5%.
- 1.2.2 The scores for each facility in 2008/09 are listed below:

Facility	Visit 1 – Score (%)	Visit 2 – Score (%)	2008/09 Average Score (%)
Larkfield Leisure Centre	77	87	82
Angel Centre	74	85	79.5
Tonbridge Pool	75	86	80.5
Poult Wood Golf Centre	72	72	72

1.2.3 By using Right Directions Ltd the Council can compare performance against overall Quest Award ratings. The current Quest database of all registered sites shows:

- the 'pass mark' is 60%
- the industry mean is 73%
- the upper quartile score is 77%

1.2.4 Members will note from the above that the 2008/09 average scores for this Council's three indoor leisure facilities are all above the industry mean score, with all three indoor leisure sites in the upper quartile of performance.

1.2.5 Whilst Poult Wood Golf Centre is measured against the same criteria as the indoor sites, Members should note that the criteria is designed for leisure centres and adapted for the Golf Centre which, in some areas, makes the scoring more challenging.

### 1.3 Improvements

1.3.1 Detailed reports are received for each facility after each visit. The reports have been analysed, and a number of improvement actions have been identified for each facility. Where practicable improvements will be implemented without delay, with others being considered within relevant facility service improvement plans.

1.3.2 A summary of the key areas for improvement identified by Right Directions Ltd are detailed below:

- Larkfield Leisure Centre
  - Sales process
  - Toilet facilities (subsequently refurbished)
  - High level cleanliness
- Angel Centre
  - External decoration
  - Staff uniform
  - Marketing displays
  - Telephone answering

- Tonbridge Swimming Pool

Lifeguarding standards  
 Recycling opportunities  
 Redecoration of toilet area  
 High level cleanliness

- Poult Wood Golf Centre

Marketing  
 Car park area  
 Customer feedback area  
 Environmental – movement sensors for lighting

1.3.3 The results will be displayed on the customer information boards in each facility reception area; will be discussed at the facility customer panels and will also be published in Spotlight.

## 1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None.

## 1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The cost of the Mystery Shopper visits (£250 per visit) is met from the Leisure Services market research revenue budget. The reports are felt to offer good value for money in monitoring the performance of the Council's leisure facilities, and identifying improvements for the future.

## 1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 It is essential that the Council regularly monitors performance of its leisure facilities, and implements customer improvements to maintain and increase levels of attendance. The Council's leisure facilities are operated in an increasingly competitive market, and need to focus on service delivery arrangements.

## 1.7 Conclusion/Recommendation

1.7.1 It is encouraging that for all the visits undertaken, the scores for each of the leisure facilities achieved above the accepted "pass mark", and that on average this Council is performing very well compared to others.

1.7.2 The mystery shopper programme is considered to be a very useful means of measuring performance and identifying areas of improvement. This year's results will be considered carefully within the relevant service improvement plans for each facility.

1.7.3 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that the 2008/09 Mystery Shopper results be noted, the identified areas of improvement be addressed, and

the results be considered within the relevant service improvement plans for each facility.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

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File Reference: MG264/5/6

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