

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

18 May 2010

**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 2009/10 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 a performance target of 77% is included in Leisure Service Performance Plans for each facility, and the results are reported annually in the Council's Corporate Performance Plan. The industry upper quartile now starts at 82%, an increase from last year of 5%.

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 81.1%. This is an increase from an average score of 78.5% in 2008/09.

1.2.2 The scores for each facility in 2009/10 are listed below:

| Facility | Visit 1 – Score (%) | Visit 2 – Score (%) | 2008/09 Average Score (%) |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Larkfield Leisure Centre | 86 | 83 | 84.5 |
| Angel Centre | 77 | 81 | 79 |
| Tonbridge Pool | 82 | 84 | 83 |
| Poult Wood Golf Centre | 79 | 77 | 78 |

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 76%
- the upper quartile score is 82%

1.2.4 Members will note from the above that the 2009/10 average scores for this Council's three indoor leisure facilities are all above the industry mean score, with two out of 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 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
 - A deep clean of the Swimming Pool Changing Rooms
 - Lifeguard vigilance
 - Minor maintenance issues
- Angel Centre
 - Refurbish Changing Areas

Security of storerooms
Deep clean of carpets

- Tonbridge Swimming Pool

Lifeguard vigilance
Café staff uniform
Redecoration of toilet area
Install recycling bins

- Poulton Wood Golf Centre

Car park area – bike rack, parent and child spaces
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 the Council's Corporate Performance Plan.

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", that on average this Council is performing very well compared to others, and the overall average score for all the facilities has increased compared to the previous year.

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 2009/10 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:

contact: Martin Guyton
Stephen Gregg

File Reference: MG264/5/6

Robert Styles
Chief Leisure Officer

Martin Coffin
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts