

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**14 May 2012**

**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 VISITS/QUEST ACCREDITATION**

**Summary**

**This report provides Members with the results of the 2011/12 mystery shopper visits to the Council's main leisure facilities as well as the outcome of the recent Quest assessment at the Angel Centre. The report identifies a number of key areas for improvement, which are being addressed at 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 Over the past few years two visits have been undertaken at each of the facilities. Following the recent revisions to the Quest scheme, a decision was taken in the current year to utilise the services of Right Directions Limited to undertake one mystery visit and one health and safety audit at each of the indoor facilities. Given the enhanced focus upon health and safety in the Quest criteria it was believed this approach would better serve the Leisure Services Business Unit.
- 1.1.5 At Poulton Wood Golf Centre, not subject to Quest at present, two mystery visits were undertaken as usual.
- 1.1.6 The accepted "pass mark" for the mystery visits 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 82% is included in Leisure Service Performance Plans for the indoor leisure facilities and 75% for Poult Wood Golf Centre.

## 1.2 Results of Mystery Visits

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 81.6%. This is a slight decrease from the average score of 82.25% in 2010/11.

1.2.2 The scores for each facility in 2011/12 are listed below:

Facility	Visit 1 – Score (%)	Visit 2 – Score (%)	2011/12 Average Score (%)
Larkfield Leisure Centre	92	N/A	92
Angel Centre	73	N/A	73
Tonbridge Pool	78	N/A	78
Poult Wood Golf Centre	81	84	82.5

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 80%

1.2.4 Members will note from the above that the 2011/12 average scores for Larkfield Leisure Centre and Poult Wood Golf Centre were in the upper quartile of performance. Tonbridge Swimming Pool fell just below the upper quartile with Angel Centre hitting the industry mean score.

1.2.5 Members may recall that whilst Poult Wood Golf Centre is measured against the same criteria as the indoor sites, the criteria is designed for leisure centres and adapted for the Golf Centre which, in some areas, makes the scoring more challenging and therefore makes the latest level of scoring for the Centre especially pleasing.

1.2.6 Within each report, feedback is also provided on the key strengths of each facility. A summary of the key strengths is attached at **[Annex 1]**.

## 1.3 Improvements

1.3.1 Detailed reports are received for each facility after each visit and copies can be made available on request. 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 review of deep cleaning frequencies
  - Display of pool temperatures
  - Provision of separate recycling bins
  - Increased staff awareness of sales opportunities

- Angel Centre

- Improved access control at Reception
  - Receptionists to promote membership options and benefits
  - Reduced telephone response times
  - A review of deep cleaning frequencies

- Tonbridge Swimming Pool

- Clearer pricing on resale items
  - Response to feedback forms
  - Cross selling of Lifestyles at the Angel Centre

- Poult Wood Golf Centre

- Installation of light sensors and more environmental controls
  - Installation of baby changing facilities (now complete)
  - Inspection standard information sheets were not found in toilet areas
  - Provide recycling bins around the Centre

1.3.3 The results will be displayed on the customer information boards in each facility reception area and will be discussed at the facility Customer Panels.

## **1.4 Health & Safety Audits**

1.4.1 This new service offered by Right Directions Limited comprises a day long inspection by area of each facility by an industry health and safety expert.

1.4.2 All the audit questions asked are answered 'Yes' or 'No'. During the audit a sampling process is used to identify the effectiveness of the processes and activities in place. Those questions answered 'No' are followed up by an action point with recommended deadlines set, in order for the centre to prioritise the required action to take.

- 1.4.3 Similar to the mystery visitor reports the audits are closely allied to Quest criteria and supplement the annual Health & Safety Workplace Inspections undertaken by the Council's Health & Safety Officer.
- 1.4.4 The scoring is assessed in each area resulting in an overall percentage score. At present the product is new and therefore, benchmarking is not yet possible. The individual site scores are shown below:

Facility	Score (%)
Larkfield Leisure Centre	70
Angel Centre	68
Tonbridge Pool	83

- 1.4.5 In each case the Executive Summary recognised that '... the overall standard of Health & Safety throughout the Centre and evidenced within the formal documentation sampled was of a high standard; and it is clearly apparent that Health and Safety is being managed in a proactive manner.'
- 1.4.6 Inevitably a number of issues were raised at each site and an action plan has been incorporated within the LSBU Business Plan reported elsewhere in these papers. The Leisure Contracts Manager is encouraged by the standard of the reports and is committed to implementation of the action plans to ensure that improvements are implemented. It is the intention that the audits will be carried out annually in future and also be extended to include Poulton Wood Golf Centre.

## 1.5 Quest Assessment

- 1.5.1 The Board will recall the presentation at its last meeting outlining the significant changes to the Quest assessment process.
- 1.5.2 Members will recall that the assessment is now more heavily reliant upon the customer experience through the mystery shopper process and the impact of the services provided. The process is now a tougher, more relevant assessment designed to further challenge sites that had previously reached 'Excellent' status.
- 1.5.3 The Angel Centre underwent assessment at the end of February 2012 and was graded Good. This grade is subject to one item of statutory health and safety regulation being met within three months of the assessment and this has been addressed.
- 1.5.4 In specific terms, of the 11 modules assessed the Angel Centre received an Excellent in one module, Good in eight others and Satisfactory in two modules, resulting in the overall status of Good. Detailed analysis of the scores suggest that a number of the modules banded Good were at the high end of the band which provides encouragement for the future.
- 1.5.5 The first experience of assessment under the new scheme has led to a greater understanding of the process and the Leisure Contracts Manager has led a review

that resulted in the more recent Day One maintenance visit at Tonbridge Swimming Pool receiving Excellent status. It is hoped that this learning experience will hold the LSBU in good stead for future assessments.

## **1.6 Legal Implications**

1.6.1 None.

## **1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.7.1 The cost of the Mystery Shopper visits (£250 per visit) is met from the Leisure Services market research revenue budget. The health and safety audits are slightly dearer at £350 each. 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.

## **1.8 Risk Assessment**

1.8.1 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.

## **1.9 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.9.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

## **1.10 Conclusion/Recommendation**

1.10.1 It is encouraging that for all the mystery 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.

1.10.2 The mystery visit 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.

1.10.3 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that the 2011/12 Mystery Visit 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

Nil

Robert Styles  
Chief Leisure Officer

Maria Heslop  
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Not applicable
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	Not applicable
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*