

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES ADVISORY BOARD

11 January 2016

Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Part 1- Public

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

1 LEYBOURNE LAKES COUNTRY PARK – USER SURVEY RESULTS

Summary

This report informs Members of the results of the 2015 user survey carried out at Leybourne Lakes Country Park, and brings forward potential future improvements for consideration.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 A user survey was undertaken at Leybourne Lakes Country Park during the summer of 2015, as part of Leisure Services' ongoing market research programme. The survey consisted of 400 face to face interviews conducted at various locations within the Park, with interviews conducted from the end of July through to August. The previous survey at the Country Park was undertaken in the summer of 2010.

1.1.2 The 2015 survey covers five main areas:

- To profile the users of the Park;
- To identify the users' reasons for visiting the Park;
- To ascertain their satisfaction with aspects of the service and facilities;
- To find out users' reasons, if any, for dissatisfaction and
- To identify potential improvements to enhance customers' experience.

1.1.3 The survey enables the Council to gauge current feedback from visitors to the Park and assess the impact of any previous improvements undertaken since the last survey in 2010. Since the last survey improvements have included the installation of seating, renewal of fishing swims; path and fencing works, additional signage and the retender of the mobile catering service.

1.1.4 The survey is also essential in evidencing the need for improvements to support external funding bids.

1.2 Survey Results

- 1.2.1 A copy of the report's Executive Summary can be found at **[Annex 1]** and a full copy of the report can be made available to Members on request.
- 1.2.2 I am sure Members will be pleased to note the survey indicated that 98% of visitors were satisfied with the Park. This represents an increase of 1% since the last survey in 2010, and reflects the continued high standards being achieved.
- 1.2.3 A number of key areas at Leybourne Lakes Country Park continue to have extremely high satisfaction levels as shown below:

Area of Satisfaction	2015 Result
Condition of the path surfaces	99%
The attractiveness of the Park	96%
The presence of wildlife	95%
Signage in the Park	89%
Car Parking Facilities	98%
Cleanliness of the Park	94%

- 1.2.4 The main reason respondents gave for using the Park was to walk the dog or to engage in walks. Other high uses included feeding the birds, use of the children's play area, cycling and jogging.
- 1.2.5 Users travelled from a wide catchment area, however, the majority lived within five miles of the Park (59%): 7% had travelled more than 20 miles.
- 1.2.6 Of the 18 features rated by users for satisfaction only two scored any noticeable level of dissatisfaction. These were the toilet facilities (11%) and the refreshment facilities (33%).
- 1.2.7. With regard to the toilets, a more detailed look at the comments illustrated that whilst customers were satisfied with the cleanliness of the existing toilets, they would prefer them to be located further within the Park, and closer to the children's play area.
- 1.2.8. With regard to the current mobile catering offer, more than 100 comments related to the need to improve refreshment provision, with users saying that this would both enhance their experience, and encourage them to stay longer.

1.3 Potential Improvements

- 1.3.1 Users were asked to identify their most desired improvement at the Park from a list and were also given the opportunity to identify any other improvements through an Open question.
- 1.3.2 One improvement that was dominant was improved refreshment facilities. Users also supported the desire for a Visitor Centre, described in the survey as including

a café, watersports centre and educational facilities. What is clear from the survey is that if a lakeside facility of this nature could be provided it would meet the needs of those users seeking improvements at the Park and address identified areas of dissatisfaction. Members will be aware, through a separate report to this Board, that there is currently a Capital Plan Scheme for additional facilities at Leybourne Lakes Country Park and the User Survey has clearly indicated support for this project.

1.3.3 Other notable areas for improvement included;

- More activities for children – The Park has an existing play area and play sculptures around the main lake and additional play equipment has been installed since the user survey was undertaken.
- More circular walks/routes – Since the user survey was undertaken a new ‘Ocean Lake Circular Trail’ has been created and installed. Over the next two years a large wildflower meadow is due to be created that will also provide a new public walk.

1.4 Summary

1.4.1 The market survey results have highlighted that Leybourne Lakes Country Park continues to be well appreciated and highly valued by the local community. Overall satisfaction levels are extremely high and the results clearly reflect the positive impact of investment made in the Park by the Council and volunteers. It is, however, important that the existing facilities continue to be well maintained in the future as well as continuing to investigate future investment opportunities. A large number of positive comments were received and a selection are highlighted below:

“Everything here is wonderful we are so lucky to have it on our doorstep”

“Such a lovely place, water is so peaceful”

“We love coming here, it’s such a lovely area”

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 None.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 Where possible, any actions to meet customer needs will be delivered through existing revenue budgets. Where additional funding is required this may be achievable through developer contributions or other external funding.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 Asset Management, Healthy Lifestyles and Community.

1.9 Recommendation

1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

- 1) the 2015 market survey results for Leybourne Lakes Country Park user survey be noted
- 2) the results be shared with users of the Park and the Customer Panel, and
- 3) further investigation be undertaken on the potential provision of a lakeside facility to meet the expressed needs of users.

The Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services 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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Leybourne Lakes Park User Survey 2015

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