

# LEISURE PROVISION TASK GROUP



**September 2014**



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
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## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP**



**Councillor Caroline Spencer (Chairman)**



**Councillors June Griffiths, Helen Jones, Luke Mallett**



**Councillors Chris Scurrall, Elaine Shannon, Sean Shannon**

### **SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS**

Amanda Scarce – Democratic Services Officer  
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## **Foreword from the Chairman**

The Leisure Provision Task Group had been asked by the Overview and Scrutiny Board to consider the proposed new Dolphin Centre Business Case Report as part of the Task Group's investigations and to ascertain a greater understanding of the make up of the budget of Leisure Services and the activities both provided by and facilitated by the Council.

Six meetings of the Leisure Provision Task Group have been held and the specific areas which have been investigated and reviewed by members have been:

- Terms of Reference/agreement to any specific areas where more detail required
- The new Dolphin Leisure Centre and the Business Case including budget breakdown and key risks
- Value for money and activities provided by BDC meeting the needs of residents throughout the District
- Provision for the disabled
- Sports and Arts Development
- Events Team
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Playing Pitches and Allotments
- The Council's statutory duty to provide any of these activities
- Promotion of activities provided by Bromsgrove District Council

Much of the background information was already available for members of the Leisure Provision Task Group from the recent Youth Provision, Artrix Outreach Provision and Older Peoples Task Group Final Reports.

Robust discussion has been held by members at all meetings and on behalf of the Leisure Provision Task Group, I would like to thank the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin, Sport and Physical Activity Development Manager, Laura Kerrigan for providing so much information and feedback which has been tremendously useful towards the recommendations put forward by the Leisure Provision Task Group for consideration of the Cabinet.

I know I speak again on behalf of the Leisure Provision Task Group in sincerely thanking our Democratic Services Officer, Amanda Scarce for all her support and efficiency throughout the Task Group's investigations.

Following the evidence made available and interviewing witnesses, the Leisure Provision Task Group have proposed 4 Recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet.

**Councillor Caroline Spencer**  
**Chairman of the Leisure Provision Task Group**

## Summary of Recommendations

After consideration of the evidence available and interviewing witnesses the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations:

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
(a) That charges for leisure facilities & services, such as the Dolphin Centre, should be used to promote usage and participation in leisure activities; and (b) That the Council's concession scheme should be publicised where appropriate to ensure price is not a barrier to participation in leisure activities.
<b>Financial Implications:</b> No additional costs/within existing budgets
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Within existing resources/officer time

<b>Recommendation 2</b>
That Members should familiarise themselves with the leisure activities available within their Wards via the information provided by the Sports Development Team and visit activities as appropriate.
<b>Financial Implications:</b> No additional costs
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Within existing resources

**Recommendation 3**

- (a) The noticeboard situated adjacent to Blockbuster by utilised;
- (b) A noticeboard be included in the list of requirements for the Phase 2 Works of the Town Centre; and
- (c) Whilst it was acknowledged that there were often problems with noticeboards being maintained and information displayed kept up to date, to minimise this it is recommended that these be maintained by the local ward councillor.

**Financial Implications:**

An estimated cost of £400 for the noticeboard plus installation costs.

**Resource Implications:**

Ward Member time in maintaining the noticeboards.

**Recommendation 4**Sports Hall Facility at the new Dolphin Centre

- (a) Officers to continue negotiations with BAM and look for alternative funding sources to fund a Sports Hall moving forward; and
- (b) If the negotiations with BAM are unsuccessful, then Cabinet reconsider and make recommendations to full Council for the facility to include a Sports Hall.

**Financial Implications:**

- (a) - Within existing budgets
- (b) –The estimated additional cost associated with including a Sports Hall into the construction of the new centre would be approximately £1.6m inclusive of professional fees. This would incur additional borrowing and due to the limitations of the prudential borrowing code, sufficient income would have to be generated to enable the additional funds to be borrowed.

**Resource Implications:**

- (a) Within existing project plan
- (b) Officer time

## **Background Information**

A topic proposal completed by Councillor Rita Dent was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

The aim of Councillor Dent's proposal was to ensure that the Leisure Provision provided by the Council was what the residents wanted and met their needs, together with identifying any possible duplication of activities and any possible savings that could be made.

Following discussion it was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board that a Task Group would be established to scrutinise the Leisure Provision and that Councillor Caroline Spencer would be appointed Chairman.

At the Board meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014 Members agreed both the Membership of the Task Group and its Terms of Reference and set a timescale for completion of the work of within 6 months of the date of its first meeting.

It should be noted that, although not within the terms of reference of the Task Group, but due to the fact that there was no Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting during May 2014, the Board asked Task Group Members to pre-scrutinise the Dolphin Centre Business Case which was due to be presented to Cabinet, on its behalf.

The Group held its first meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May and at the following meeting duly considered the Business Case report and the Chairman of the Task Group provided a short report containing its findings and a number of suggested recommendations at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014. Further information on this is provided in Chapter 3 of this report.

The Task Group held 6 meetings in total.



# Chapter 1

## **Value for Money and Meeting the Needs of Residents**

At an early stage of its investigations, the Task Group became aware that a great deal of work had already been carried out through various other task groups and that this work could be used as background and supporting information for its investigation. Members were keen to ensure that work was not duplicated in anyway and therefore wished to make reference to the work of the following previous task groups within this report. It was however acknowledged by the Task Group that some of the activities covered by these investigations were not provided by the Council.

### Older Peoples' Task Group

Whilst it was appreciated that this work was carried out in December 2009 it provided Members with some useful background information in respect of activities both available and provided by the Council, for Older People within the District. This investigation had culminated in the production on an Older People's Directory which contained useful information and details of various activities available. This had been included within the issue of the Together Bromsgrove magazine and launched at one of the events organised for Older People's Day in 2010.

It was also noted that the Bromsgrove Partnership were planning to introduce a leaflet signposting services available to Bromsgrove Over 50's in time for this year's Older People's Day on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

### Youth Provision Task Group

The Leisure Provision Task Group had agreed that the work of this Task Group was most useful to them as an in depth investigation had been carried out over a number of months and had culminated in a number of recommendations. The final report had been considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board's meeting in June 2013. It was noted that this Task Group's final report and recommendations were due to be reviewed in the near future.

This investigation had a number of key objectives:

- 1) To consider current arrangements for providing services to young people in the district.
- 2) To analyse opportunities for young people to participate in youth activities and how these opportunities might be extended.
- 3) To scrutinise the accessibility of current Bromsgrove District Council Services to young people and to identify any actions that could be taken to improve accessibility.
- 4) To assess the barriers to participating in youth activities facing young people living in the district and how these barriers could be overcome.

- 5) To assess actions that could be taken by the Council and others to improve marketing of local youth related events.
- 6) To investigate the potential for Bromsgrove District Council services and other service providers to address any current gaps in youth service provision.

There had also been a number of areas which the Youth Provision Task Group Members had wished to highlight, as although those groups referred to were not strictly “council” run they had received funding to support them and had shown areas of good practice. Members had also been of the opinion that they were of exceptional value to the communities they served. Those groups included the Bromsgrove Rugby Club, Stoke Parish Youth Club, Woodrush Youth Centre and the Lounge at Alvechurch.

By providing support (both financial and practical) to groups within the community it was clear that a large proportion of the work carried out provided value for money and again, by supporting groups within the community, they were not only meeting the needs of the residents but was able to be focused on what those residents wanted.

#### Artrix Outreach Provision Task Group

This more recent task group had completed its investigations and presented the results to the Board in March 2014. The Outreach Work was provided as part of the funding from the Council and it had a number of performance measures which needed to be met as part of the agreement between the Council and the Artrix. That performance information had been useful in ensuring that the work being carried out was both value for money and met the needs of the residents it focused on. The Members of the Task Group had been pleasantly surprised at the amount of Outreach Work which was carried out and the variety of activities available, through out the District. With its limited funds the Artrix tried to reach those that would benefit from the activities available the most and not making them cost restrictive if possible. The Artrix took the opportunity to apply for additional funding and provided specific activities aimed at particular groups within the community using that funding.

Members were keen to ensure that not only were the activities provided by the Council value for money but also met the needs of the residents. At one of its earliest meetings the Task Group therefore asked the Head of Service to provide it with details of the budget for Leisure Services, broken down into a number of specific areas; this included the Dolphin Centre, Sports Development, Recreation Grounds and Open Spaces, Football Pitches, Allotments, Arts & Culture (including the Bandstand, street theatre and other specific projects) and annual events such as the Christmas Light switch on and the Civic Bonfire.

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services explained to Members that for him, the key was to strengthen delivery in local areas by facilitating and enabling groups within the community, whilst being mindful that the groups/activities

were ones which the Council would want to be associated with. Good examples of where this had been successful were both the Rugby and Hockey Clubs and Bromsgrove Sporting; the Council had supported them in applying for funding whilst also meeting the wider agenda of health and wellbeing of residents. Details were also provided to the Task Group of a number of events which had been set up and which were run entirely by volunteers, this included the Couch to 5K run which took place at various venues throughout the District together with the Junior Park Run (this had been set up with funding from a County Councillors divisional funds) and had been a great success. Approximately 200 young people had taken part, with an average of around 60 per week. Members were informed that these activities were run entirely by volunteers who the Council had supported and trained as “run leaders”.

From interviews with the Sports Development Team it was clear to Members that the Team tried to reach out to all areas of the District and the Task Group was informed that when this proved difficult the team would, wherever possible bring them together in one place, for example this often applied to the activities organised for older people. From the information provided it was also clear to Members that the activities were all well attended. Some of the activities were of a developmental nature and had a limited shelf life, but often lead to clubs/groups being formed and in these circumstances the Council would help support those clubs/groups by providing for example a small pot of money or support in applying for funding, in other words the tools to help them progress. The aim was to provide something for everyone and to ensure that there was no duplication of activities.

During discussions with Officers Members raised concerned that, although they should be aware of what was taking place within their own Wards, that it would be useful for Sports Development to contact the local Ward Councillor where possible, as they may have useful local knowledge and be able to support the work of the Team in some way. The Task Group were informed that the Sports Development Team regularly provided all Members with details of the activities it provided and were also sent a top 3 of things which were happening together with the results of the county school games or information on any new projects which had been awarded funding. Where appropriate Sports Development also worked closely with the relevant Parish Council and found their support useful.

A previous recommendation from the Youth Provision Task Group had been *“That Bromsgrove District Councillors familiarise themselves with all facilities for young people within their Ward and build relationships with local providers where appropriate.”* The Task Group Members agreed that this should once again be reiterated to Members as it was clear from the information provided by the Sports Development Team that Members received the information and should therefore perhaps be more aware of what was available in their Ward and take the time to visit some of the activities in order to show support to Officers of the good work which was being carried out.

Members were mindful that, whilst it was useful providing information via leaflets and having specific websites, information could quickly become out of date and maintenance of these, particularly of websites, could be both costly and time consuming. This led Members to discuss more generally how the activities could be promoted more particularly to those who did not have access to the internet and suggested that an old fashioned noticeboard would be useful within the town centre for example. Members recalled that at one time there had been a number of noticeboards within the town centre, there had been one in the Mill Lane area, which was not only a busy cut through to other shops and the bus station, but also an area where the seating was well used. It was also brought to Members' attention that there was a noticeboard at the far end of the town centre, near to the old market hall site, which was currently not in use. It was felt that this could be utilized and whilst it was appreciated that noticeboards were also difficult to maintain and the information on them kept up to date, this could be done by the local Ward Councillor. Members further suggested that other noticeboards, which were not maintained by Parish Councils, such as the one in Sanders Park, could also be maintained by the local Ward Councillor –the relevant Ward Councillor and a member of the Task Group was happy to undertake this task at Sanders Park.

The noticeboard located by the old Market Hall site.



The Task Group received information on a wide range of activities provided by Leisure Services, which not only included organised or sports based activities but also details of the parks and open spaces available throughout the District, which were available for residents to enjoy all year round, together with details of the allotments which were available to rent. Members were pleased to note that for some allotment sites there was the option to rent a smaller plot in order for residents to get a taster before progressing to a full sized plot. The Task Group was also provided with information on BRAVO (Bromsgrove and Redditch Active Volunteering Opportunities) which had a wealth of sports clubs and organisations which played a key role in providing leisure activities for the people of both Redditch and Bromsgrove. This was a flexible programme and there was a wide variety of placements for volunteers to choose from ranging from IT support fro clubs to assistant coaches and health intervention for older people.

From the information provided and from the background information referred to in the previous task group reports Members were satisfied that not only was the Leisure Provision within the district value for money but also was focused on both meeting the needs and requirements of the residents wherever possible. It was acknowledged that there were a number of small suggestions which could be made to both support and promote the work of the Sports Development Team throughout the District. Members were also keen to ensure that any charges which were made for leisure activities, whether it be at the Dolphin Centre for a swimming session or an activity held out in the community, were not to the detriment of residents and did not mean that they were price restrictive in any way to those residents who might otherwise be in most need of the opportunity to participate in that activity.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

**Recommendation 1**

- (a) The noticeboard situated adjacent to Blockbuster by utilised;
- (b) A noticeboard be included in the list of requirements for the Phase 2 Works of the Town Centre; and
- (c) Whilst it was acknowledged that there were often problems with noticeboards being maintained and information displayed kept up to date, to minimise this it is recommended that these be maintained by the local ward councillor.

**Recommendation 2**

That Members should familiarise themselves with the leisure activities available within their Wards via the information provided by the Sports Development Team and visit activities as appropriate.

**Recommendation 3**

- (a) A noticeboard be installed in a prominent position in the Town Centre to promote activities; and
- (b) Whilst it was acknowledged that there were often problems with noticeboards being maintained and information displayed kept up to date, to minimise this it is recommended that these be maintained by the local ward councillor.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Statutory Duty**

Members were informed that local authorities had a central role to play when it comes to the provision of community sport and recreation facilities. From local parks to leisure centres, they allow a huge range of leisure activities to be performed locally. Authorities also now had a duty of care for the health and wellbeing of residents within its area. However, despite their duty to promote healthy lifestyles, there is no statutory provision for sport – meaning there is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide facilities.

Bromsgrove District Council is no different to any other Council, whilst providing an array of opportunities to participate in various leisure activities; it is not under any statutory duty to provide those facilities/activities.

The Council does however have a statutory duty in respect of allotments. There is a requirement, under the Allotments Act 1950 that if land owned by the Council was used as allotments then it became a statutory duty for it to remain as such.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Dolphin Centre Business Case**

Whilst not within the terms of reference of the Task Group, it was asked by the Board to “pre scrutinise” the Dolphin Centre Business Plan and bring forward any suggested recommendations for the Board to refer on to Cabinet for its consideration. Therefore at the Task Group meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, together with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure presented the Business Plan and responded to numerous questions from Members.

The Report contained an overview of the current position with the Dolphin Centre including background history of the building, the site selection process for the new centre and the findings from the Bromsgrove Leisure Consultation Analysis Report which took place during summer 2010. This covered participating in physical leisure activities, swimming pools, fitness suites/gyms, café/restaurants, team and racquet sports which were perceived as providing good value for money. From the public’s responses to the survey it suggested that there was a demand for a small to medium sized Leisure Centre located in the Town Centre and which should consist of – Main Swimming Pool, Teaching Pool, Gymnasium, Sports Hall, Dance Studio, Cycle (Spinning) Room, Changing rooms, Café, Reception and Back Offices. It was highlighted that the data had recently been refreshed to ensure that the requirements remained the same. However, it was highlighted that the Sport England’s facility planning model had identified that there was currently an adequate supply of Sports Halls in the area.

The Task Group received further information from the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, at a later meeting, in respect of the inclusion of a sports hall and the alternative arrangements that were at the early stages of negotiation. It was anticipated that there would be an annual rental figure and the overall situation had been discussed with Sports England who were happy with it. Further discussions took place around whether there would be an opportunity to add a sports hall at a later date. The very latest this could happen was at the detailed design stage, which was anticipated to be autumn 2015.

Members were keen to ensure that facilities were available for those with a disability and the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services informed the Task Group that the Council worked with many organisations and galvanised partnerships with key local providers in order to provide positive activities for disabled people. These groups would welcome increased access to the centre and the flexibility a new site would offer. The Task Group asked that the Board be regularly updated on the more detailed plans for the new Centre in order to ensure that consideration was given to the needs of this section of the community.

The main concerns raised by the Task Group were the financial implications to the Council and the increased membership that was required to support the

new Centre, no sports hall being included and the apparent lack of facilities for young people. As the Chairman of the Task Group was unable to attend the meeting of the Board on 16<sup>th</sup> June, when the Task Group's views would be considered, she provided a detailed written update.

Following discussion the Board put forward a number of recommendations for Cabinet to consider – these are detailed below, together with Cabinet's response. The Task Group were also keen for the Board to be involved in scrutinising the more detailed plans for the new Centre in some way in order to ensure that they included the disabilities issues that it had discussed during consideration of the Business Case.

#### Recommendation 1

*Financial concerns around the increased membership that will be needed to ensure good annual revenue should be addressed through an Audit Board investigation of the figures*

Cabinet were aware of the importance of increasing the membership of the new centre, but it was felt that the membership figures included in the report were reasonably conservative. Officers had advised after investigation that they were achievable given that the facilities would be of a high quality.

It was therefore felt not to be necessary to refer the figures to the Audit Board but Cabinet recognised that the Board could call for further investigation if it felt this was required.

#### Recommendation 2

*The Overview and Scrutiny Board should be involved in scrutinising more detailed plans to ensure that they address the needs of customers with disabilities.*

Cabinet recognised that a great deal of work had been undertaken to date to ensure that the new facilities would be fully accessible to customers with disabilities. Cabinet were aware however that members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board had an interest in this area and were welcome to call for the opportunity to scrutinise more detailed plans.

#### Recommendation 3

*Cabinet note the Board's disappointment that the Sports hall has not been included within the plan for the new Dolphin Centre.*

Cabinet took note of the Board's comment but drew attention to the Sports England report on the provision of Sports Halls in Bromsgrove which had demonstrated a more than sufficient supply of Sports Hall facilities. It was intended that public access to existing or new Sports Hall facilities would be increased through hire or dual use agreements. It was part of the role of the



Council to promote the use of alternative facilities and to make the best use of public funds.

Recommendation 4

*Cabinet note the Board's concern that insufficient facilities have been planned for the Centre, especially for young people (i.e. No climbing wall as has been installed in other leisure centres).*

Cabinet took note of the Board's concern but did not agree that insufficient facilities had been planned. The mix of facilities had been carefully considered with a view to providing the best opportunities for all age groups. The installation of a climbing wall had been looked at but after investigating the experience of other providers was not felt to be the best use of public money.

Following discussion of the responses at the next Board meeting, it was agreed that Recommendation 1 would be amended as follows:

***“Recommended** to the Audit Board that financial concerns around the increased membership that will be needed to ensure good annual revenue should be addressed through an Audit Board investigation of the figures.”*

This was considered at the Audit Board meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

The Task Group continued to be concerned, throughout the investigation, about the lack of a sports hall facility being included in the business case and that the negotiations, in respect of the use of the sports hall outside of school hours, with BAM, the contractor responsible for North Bromsgrove High School, had not been completed and therefore it was not a given that this facility would be available.

The Task Group therefore wish to make the following recommendation:

<b>Recommendation 5</b>
<u>Sports Hall Facility at the new Dolphin Centre</u>
(a) Officers to continue negotiations with BAM and look for alternative funding sources to fund a Sports Hall moving forward; and (b) If the negotiations with BAM are unsuccessful, then Cabinet reconsider and make recommendations to full Council for the facility to include a Sports Hall.

## Appendix 1



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### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

<p><b>Name of Proposer:</b> Cllr Rita Dent  <b>Tel No:</b> 01527 835635  <b>Email:</b> bromcon@yahoo.com  <b>Date:</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014</p>	
<b>Title of Proposed Topic:</b>	Leisure Activities throughout the Bromsgrove District
<b>Specific subject areas to be investigated:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that are provided throughout the district by the Council (including such areas as the Dolphin Centre, Street Theatre and the role of Sports Development)</li> <li>• Do the Council have a statutory duty to provide any of these activities?</li> <li>• Including accessibility and availability to all parts of the District.</li> <li>• The cost to the Council of providing any activities and to establish whether these are value for money</li> </ul>
<b>Reasons why this subject should be considered:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To find out what is provided and whether the activities are what the residents want and to ensure we are meeting their needs.</li> <li>• To identify any possible duplication of activities</li> <li>• To identify any possible savings which could be made</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence to support the need for this particular investigation:</b>	Leisure and Cultural Services have a considerable budget and in these times of economic difficulty it is important to ensure that the Council is receiving value for money and the activities provided are meeting the needs of residents and are evenly distributed throughout the District.
<b>Council priorities it links to:</b>	Provide good things for me to see and do in my locality & help me live life independently.
<b>Possible key outcomes: (i.e. what do you anticipate could be achieved?)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the Council receives value for money from the service</li> <li>• Ensure the activities provided are meeting the needs of residents</li> </ul>

Please indicate if any of the following apply to the proposed subject area:

CRITERIA	NO	YES	Why?
Is it a priority issue for the Council or the Local Strategic Partnership?		Y	Health and wellbeing
Is it an important issue for local residents?			This will be established through the investigation.
Is it a topic where Overview and Scrutiny could feasibly and constructively make recommendations?		Y	In order to ensure that the right services are being provided and the Council receives value for money.
Is it a topic where external review would be helpful?			A comparison of what is provided in other authorities may be useful.
Is it a topic where a review could be made in time to make recommendations for the executive decision making process?			N/A
Is it a poorly performing service?			This will be established from the investigations.
Is it a review that could render significant savings or value for money?		Y	This will be established through the investigation, with a potential for savings to be made.
Is the topic strategic in scope?	N		

**Declarations of Interest**

It was agreed by Members at the initial meeting of the Task Group that a general declaration would be included within the report advising that all Members had some sort of involvement/connection with leisure provision throughout the District.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Task Group wishes to thank the Democratic Services Officer, Amanda Scarce for her support throughout the Task Group's investigations, together with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services and his team who attended numerous meetings.

**WITNESSES**

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

**Internal Witnesses:**

John Godwin – Head of Leisure and Cultural Services

Laura Kerrigan – Sport and Physical Activity Development Manager

**Councillors:**

Councillor Mike Webb – Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services (at the time of the investigation)

**KEY DOCUMENTS**

Artrix Outreach Provision Task Group Report (March 2014)

Youth Provision Task Group Report (June 2013)

Older Peoples Task Group Report (December 2009)

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**Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services**  
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