

**Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education Scrutiny Committee– 2**  
**November 2011**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**Update on the Recreational Dimension of the Healthy Towns Initiative**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Scrutiny Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education of progress made with the implementation of the Borough's Healthy Town programme, with specific reference to the Recreational element.

**Background**

2. The Healthy Towns Programme was funded from the Community Challenge Fund, which is jointly funded by the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department for Children and Family Services (DCFS). The total fund was £30 million.
3. The funding for the Dudley programme is £4.5 million over 3 years which will come into the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and be transferred to the Local Authority (LA) via a series of Section 256 Agreements.
4. Dudley's programme focuses on three main areas:
  - The development of family healthy hubs, based in parks and open spaces.
  - The development of active green corridors.
  - Service reform
5. The programme items to be funded from these external sources are but one part of Dudley's strategic approach to tackling the high levels of obesity in the borough. The bid was commended for its 'strategic fit'.
6. There is a hub in each of the five Area Committee areas, providing physical facilities such as toilets, buildings, outdoor gym equipment, as well as activity programmes, staff and community events.
7. The active corridors will provide improved access and increased walking and cycling opportunities. This will be delivered via the development and implementation of cycle paths, footpaths, signage and cycle storage.

8. In the context of service reform the aspiration is that the influence of the Healthy Towns Programme will impact and register with all public sector agencies not just those with a health remit. Examples could be anything from support from managers for workplace health initiatives, performance indicators and targets within policies and strategies promoting physical activity and healthy eating, through to impact on policing methods and how schools deliver physical education.
9. There will be an extensive promotion of health messages to assist people in taking action to improve their own health (in line with the forthcoming national change 4 Life programme). Dudley's programme is designed to have an impact on child and family health, reduce inequalities, reduce air pollution, impact on anti-social behaviour, and increase social and community cohesion.

### **Hub Site Developments**

10. Hub buildings were all completed and handed over for occupation from September 2010.
11. The Active Travel Corridors have recently been completed which, in all, have led to just under 30km of infrastructure being enhanced, including cycle and footpath developments, traffic calming measures and signage provision.

### **Programme Developments – Recreational Activities**

12. As detailed in the report to the Select Committee on 3 November 2010 a wide ranging programme of recreational activities has been established at the hub sites, through structured delivery of weekly activity programmes, holiday activities and expanded usage through Community groups.
13. The park Rangers introduced activities to the hub sites in October 2010. It has been a process of development which has involved building links with partners, other agencies, the local community and schools in order to develop a regular health and fitness activity programme.

### **Summer Programme**

14. Details of the Summer Holiday programmes provided at each site are available to view in the Members Room. In the previous report to the Select Committee details were provided on the October 2010 half term programme that was planned and recorded nearly 7,000 attendances across the 5 hub sites.
15. The table below shows total attendances at the Healthy Towns sites, with "n/a" indicating where no delivery took place on a site for that year.

This also reflects how the focus for the delivery of activity has moved from the Steps to Health parks to the Healthy Towns Sites.

Year	Silver Jubilee	Netherton	The Dell	Mary Stevens	Huntingtree	Total at Hub Sites
2011	1038	366	429	1233	899	3965
2010	312	246	366	236	291	1451
2009	90	238	496	270	180	1274
2008	94	149	n/a	26	96	365
2007	n/a	202	n/a	121	n/a	323
2006	n/a	80	n/a	n/a	n/a	80

16. At these site, there has been a year on year increase in the total number of attendances across all five sites. The largest increases (2009 and 2011) could be attributed to;
  - From 2009 onwards the figures also include attendances from the Play week events.
  - In 2011 the service was delivered by the Park Rangers who had already been engaging with local young people before the summer began.
17. This year was the first where the programme was delivered by the Park Ranger Team. The programme was focused on the 5 hub sites, but in terms of the number of sessions delivered was the biggest programme delivered. Other than the Dell, each hub had at least 2 sessions delivered on a daily basis. Also, in addition to the Play week events, this year saw the 'Wacky Wednesdays' events across the five weeks of the summer break, being moved around the hub sites.
18. As the earlier comparison with summer programmes has shown, the 2011 programme was a huge success, gaining the highest overall attendances and also the highest average attendance per session.

<u>Hub</u>	<u>Silver Jubilee</u>	<u>Netherton</u>	<u>The Dell</u>	<u>MSP</u>	<u>Huntingtree</u>
Play week Event	454	205	267	661	335
Ongoing Programme	334	101	107	393	448
Wacky Wednesdays	250	60	55	179	116
Total Summer Attendance					
For Hub	1038	366	429	1233	899

19. As the table above shows, Silver Jubilee, MSP and Huntingtree have been very successful, with the Dell and Netherton being less well attended. Some targeted marketing activity has been focussed on Netherton in the intervening period and significant increases are being recorded in weekly activity programme attendances.
20. The Rangers were tasked with getting feedback from participants from their hubs using a standard set of questions and approach. The key findings from the feedback given were:
  - The participants were universally happy with the activities and the Park Rangers.
  - The majority of the participants had been attending sessions at the park regularly over the summer, but had not attended the activities delivered in 2010.
  - Most of the participants come to the park with friends or family, and usually arrive by foot or bike, rather than by car.
  - There were high levels of awareness of the Change4Life campaign.
  - Other than their local hub, the only other hub site that participants seem to visit was MSP

### **Regular Programme**

21. The hubs have been successful with many of the links that they have established and in September 2011 each hub produced its own autumn to spring programme. This is a programme of free activities for the community to participate in. Each Activity Centre offers:-
  - Health walks
  - Nordic walking
  - Green fit/toning time
  - Beginners running classes
  - Gym classes/introduction to exercise
  - After school clubs
  - Family sports sessions
  - Buggy walks/toddler sessions
22. The Rangers work on a daily basis with the service from the PCT, who use the Activity centres to deliver sessions including:
  - Slimmers kitchen
  - Get Cooking
  - Stop smoking clinics
  - Childrens weight management classes
  - The Expert Patients programme.
23. In order to develop relationships with local children and to encourage them to use our parks facilities the hubs have offered curriculum based activities at the Activity Centres. The Rangers have undertaken

training called 'Jump on Board' which is a curriculum based activity that incorporates healthy eating, fitness and activities. This is offered to all primary schools in the Dudley Borough free of charge and is delivered across all five hubs during term time. In addition the Rangers are undertaking specialist training in pre-school activities to enable them to work with that age group.

### **Outdoor Gym and Evaluation**

24. Clearly a key element of 'on-site' activities is the outdoor gym equipment and the evaluation of their success or otherwise is central to our project. The use of the equipment has been monitored in two ways from 1 April 2010. This has been done on site observationally and recorded in diaries via the Parks Activity Ranger Service and formally through an external evaluation delivered by Worcester University. The Worcester evaluation has taken the form of site visits and gym user surveys at specific days and times through the year, over the last two years the healthy towns website also carried on-line surveys that were marketed in the local press, libraries, schools etc., A baseline of activity levels on the sites was set in 2010, and then a post gym implementation survey was conducted. The gym use survey was repeated in summer 2010 and summer 2011.
25. The summer evaluation of the programme concluded on the 31 August 2011 with a final report due at the end of September 2011. It is hoped that this information will be available in time to present to Members at the meeting. The interim report produced Autumn 2010, showed the following, from which improvements in health would be indicative:
  - A total of 65% of respondents reported they use the gym more than once per week, just over a quarter (26%) of respondents use the gym between 1 and 2 days a week and a further 24% use the gym between 6 and 7 days a week. A total of 35% of respondents reported they use the gym either "less than once per week" (20%) or "have only used it once" (15%).
26. Female respondents tend to use the gym on a more regular basis than male respondents with 19% of females using the gym 7 days per week, followed by 6 days per week (11%). Male respondents tend to use the gym for 20 – 60 minutes per session, 5% of respondents use the gym for 20 – 60 minutes per session, 5% of respondents use the gym for an hour or more. Female respondents tend to use the gym for a period of 10 – 20 minutes. Male respondents tend to use the gym for more than 20 minutes.
27. Respondents reported they use the outdoor gyms to "maintain physical fitness", followed by "improving physical health" and "improving fitness". Female respondents use the gym to "improve fitness", whereas male respondents tend to use the gym to "maintain fitness". The majority of respondents reported that the most important factor

influencing their decision to use the outdoor gym was because it “is free”, which was rated as ‘very important’. Other popular reasons included “the equipment is safe to use” and feeling “safe in the location”.

28. As a result of using the outdoor gym equipment 61% male and 71% of female respondents reported they were “more physically active than they would otherwise have been”, 62% of male and 70% of female respondents reported they “think about visiting the park more frequently” and 54% of males and 68% of female respondents reported that they “think about other ways to be more physically active” as a result of using the outdoor gyms.
29. In addition each site has a diary and comments book receiving feedback from hub users.

### **Finance**

30. The funding for the Dudley programme is £4.5 million from the Department of Health over 3 years which will come into the PCT and be transferred to the Local Authority via a series of Section 256 Agreements. In addition £200,000 has also been allocated from the Council’s Local Transport Plan funding received from the Department for Transport to part fund the costs of delivering the active travel corridors.

### **Law**

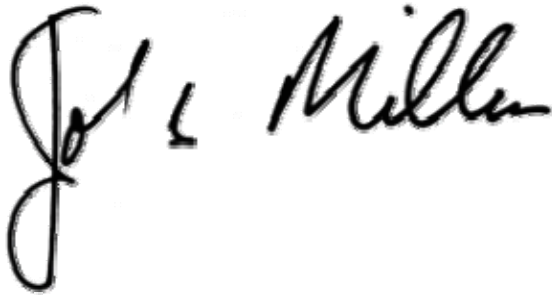
31. Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers the Council to take action to implement measures it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Borough.

### **Equality Impact**

32. The programme is borough wide, inclusive and accessible to all in line with the principles of Dudley’s inequalities strategy.

### **Recommendations**

33. The Scrutiny Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education notes the progress with the implementation of the Healthy Towns programme and comments accordingly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.B. Millar'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'J.B.' and the last name 'Millar' clearly distinguishable.

**J.B. MILLAR**  
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List of Background Papers

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