
Halesowen Area Committee – 12th September, 2006

Report of the Director of Urban Environment

Leisure Provision in Halesowen

Purpose of Report

1. To report the results of the Sport England National Benchmarking Service research undertaken at Halesowen Leisure Centre in May 2006 and to inform the Area Committee the broader range of sporting and cultural provision in the geographic area falling within the remit of Halesowen Area Committee.

Background

2. In May 2006 Halesowen Leisure Centre, along with other major facilities in the Borough, participated in the Sport England National Benchmarking Service for Sports and Leisure Centre (NBS). Independent research was undertaken and the information used to calculate current performance indicators, to compare against national benchmarks. 'Like for like' comparisons of performance indicator scores between facilities are achieved by allocating facilities to one of four family types to provide logical and consistent results.

Performance indicators are arranged in a hierarchy that reflects firstly the key indicators identified for reporting through the culture block of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and secondly other important indicators which are useful in terms of facility management and planning.

3. The catchment area for Halesowen Leisure Centre is defined as the area within which this facility is the dominant supplier, attracting more visitors than any other facility. This is a mixture of both a 20 minute walk and a 20 minute drive from the facility to reflect both the urban nature of the setting, but also the proximity of semi rural areas in north Worcestershire.
4. In terms of the seven key performance indicators that it is intended are reported through the CPA process Halesowen Leisure Centre performance is mixed. Two of the indicators are above the upper thresholds, three indicator scores are between the thresholds, while two are below the lower CPA thresholds. Figure 1 provides an indication of the performance of Halesowen Leisure Centre against the CPA key performance indicators:

Figure 1

NATIONAL BENCHMARKING SERVICE (NBS)

INDICATOR	CPA Upper	CPA Lower	Halesowen Leisure Centre
% visits 11-19 years / % catchment popln 11-19 Years	1	0.55	0.22
% visits from social classes 6&7 / catchment popln in social classes 6&7	0.5	0.2	0.72
% visits by BME groups / % catchment popln in same BME groups	1	0.75	1.53
% visits 60+ years / % catchment popln 60+ years	0.85	0.35	0.8
% visits disabled <60 years	10	5	0.87
Subsidy per visit	-0.1	2.4	0.35
Annual visits per sq.m	150	60	88

Key:		Below lower CPA threshold
		Between CPA thresholds
		Above upper CPA threshold

Immediate action needs to be taken to address the low uptake of the service by 11 to 19 year olds, and also by disabled people under the age of sixty years. Both indicators are below the lower CPA threshold and are among the poorer performing facilities in the family type.

5. A further twenty indicators form a second element of the NBS process. These reflect access, financial performance, utilisation, plus satisfaction compared to importance.

The access indicators suggest a mixed performance. In addition to the low uptake of the service by some groups already reported above it is clear that a low proportion of users eligible for an Options leisure card, offering discounts on admission, had actually taken advantage of the scheme.

The financial performance of Halesowen Leisure Centre is reasonable with relatively low costs compensating for a relatively weak income performance. Energy costs per square metre are below the 25% benchmark reflecting recent inflations in energy costs and the age and energy efficiency of the building.

Visits per square metre and the weekly number of visitors to the Centre perform at a reasonably high level suggesting a reasonable market penetration in the local catchment area. The percentage of casual visits is low by industry standards.

The five most important attributes identified by customers were pool water quality and temperature, cleanliness of activity areas and changing areas and the standard of coaching and instruction

Customers indicated that the five attributes that they were most satisfied with were standard of coaching and instruction, helpfulness of reception and other employees, pool water quality, activity availability at convenient times.

It is noticeable that of the more important attributes only two appear in the satisfaction rankings. The two areas with the greatest gap between importance and satisfaction both relate to cleanliness which is not unusual for a sports facility. Again these issues need to be addressed through the production of an improvement plan.

Customers surveyed indicated that the strengths of Halesowen Leisure Centre involve staff, the quality of facilities and accessibility. Overall satisfaction with the visit to the Centre achieved one of the highest satisfaction scores 4.33 out of a possible 5.

6. Facility developments at Halesowen Leisure Centre

In 2004 it was recognised that there was an opening in the market for improved health and fitness facilities and a project to upgrade the provision at Halesowen Leisure Centre was initiated. A private sector partner was engaged to jointly develop the project and the improved facilities were opened in June 2005. In the subsequent twelve months the performance of the health and fitness facilities has increased significantly with customer numbers increasing by a ratio of 2:1 when present performance is compared to the period prior to development.

7. Whilst Halesowen Leisure Centre is a major facility in the Halesowen Area Committee area providing facilities for local people to be physically active, there are other public, private and voluntary sector facilities that offer similar opportunities and the attendant health benefits that arise from being active. These are listed in Appendix 1 with a brief description of the facilities provided at each location.

8. The voluntary sports sector in Halesowen

There is a strong voluntary sports sector in Halesowen which is well established with a number of sports clubs and organisations that have been in existence for many years.

The following are examples and not an exhaustive list. Halesowen Athletic and Cycling Club in Manor Way have occupied their premises since 1947, and in 2005 were recognised by the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) as being among the top clubs in England. The Cycling Club holds the British Cycling 'Go Ride' club accreditation and volunteers have staged international track meetings for the past two years.

Halesowen Swimming Club holds the nationally recognised Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) 'Swim 21' club accreditation and are among the leading clubs in Dudley and in Worcestershire County.

Halesowen Town FC, who compete in the Southern League Premier Division, are the leading football club in the Borough, whilst Halesowen Cricket Club compete in Division 1 of the Birmingham and District Premier Cricket League. The Old Halesonians Association, based in Wassell Grove is an umbrella organisation providing opportunities for rugby, cricket and hockey through the constituent clubs. It should be noted that Old Halesonians Hockey Club is another accredited club holding the 'Clubmark' award from England Hockey.

Junior football in Halesowen further demonstrates the strength of the voluntary sports sector. For example Halas Hawkes FC has upwards of 12 teams, Halesowen Colts FC has 9 teams, and Hasbury Rangers 11 teams. Halas Hawkes and Hasbury Rangers are both Football Association Charter Standard clubs, a further form of accreditation in football.

Many of these voluntary sports clubs have well established links with Windsor High School Specialist Sports College. This, more recent development, has lead to club coaches working with school students and also to increases in membership at many clubs.

9. In the broader sphere of leisure and cultural provision there are a number of complimentary facilities providing opportunities for local people to participate in activities in their leisure time. Among these are the Cornbow Hall, The Shenstone Theatre which is in Halesowen Library, and the theatre at Leasowes Community College.

10. Parks and public open spaces in Halesowen

There are ten parks and recreation grounds across the south-east of the Borough. These are listed at Appendix 2, where there is also an indication of those with established friends groups.

11. Parks and public open space issues in Halesowen

Anti-social behaviour problems affect several parks and open spaces but the three that are currently experiencing most problems are:

- Stevens Park Wollescote
- Huntingtree Park
- Highfields Park

West Midlands Police are working in Huntingtree Park on Friday evenings to engage the local youths and to discourage the consumption of alcohol. Work is also taking place with off licenses in an endeavour to prevent underage sales.

There is now a need for the intervention of detached youth workers to further engage the young people at Huntingtree Park.

The state of the paths at Huntingtree Park is being assessed and efforts will be made to identify funding to enable the necessary works to be undertaken. In addition security measures relating to the bowling green are currently under consideration as is the potential development of a multi-use games area (MUGA) on the tennis court facility. Clearly both of the above will have capital funding requirements which will need to be sourced in due course.

12. Playing Pitches in Halesowen

There are 38 sports pitches located within the boundaries of the Halesowen Area Committee area. These are comprised of 14 senior football pitches, 13 junior football pitches, 4 mini-soccer pitches, 3 cricket pitches, 1 rugby pitch and 3 synthetic turf pitches. A further seven pitches (4 rugby and 3 cricket) are in close proximity to the Halesowen area and cater for local people. These are to be found at Old Halesonians Association in Wassell Grove and at Old Hill Cricket Club and Romsley and Hunnington Cricket Club. A detailed list is included in Appendix 3.

In the majority of cases public football pitches are not supported by changing or toilet accommodation. This has either never existed, or has been vandalised to such an extent that it has had to be removed. Sustained vandalism and ultimate removal was the case at Hurst Green Park.

Adjacent to Homer Hill Recreation Ground is Cradley Leisure Centre, a community leisure centre managed by Cradley High School. Opened in 1989 this Centre offers a sports hall, gymnasium and modest fitness room. The changing rooms in the Leisure Centre support the playing pitch on the Recreation Ground.

Finance

13. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

Law

14. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972, enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its statutory functions.

Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976, empowers the Council to provide recreational facilities in its area.

There is a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to account for the implications of the impact on community safety of actions and decisions relating to service areas.

Equality Impact

15. The NBS report for Halesowen Leisure Centre indicates that the provision of this facility has a positive impact upon the participation of people from black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds, and from social groups 6 and 7. It is noted that there is under representation among users of people aged under 60 years with disabilities.
16. It is recognized that the NBS report indicates that the use of Halesowen Leisure Centre by 11 to 19 year olds is low. As part of the improvement plan based upon the report young people will be engaged to ascertain the reasons for this and to identify what could be provided to meet their needs.

In particular the improvement plan will recognize that young people with disabilities are likely to be particularly under-represented and work has begun to achieve the 'me2' standard for inclusive leisure provision. This will involve an assessment of the facilities and programmes of activity by young people prior to any accreditation being awarded.

Recommendation

17. It is recommended that:-

- The Area Committee consider the content of the report and comment as appropriate.



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List of Background Papers:-

National Benchmarking Service for Sports and Leisure Centres – General Guidance for the Individual Facility Report: Sport England / Sport Industry Research Centre - Sheffield Hallam University / PMP

National Benchmarking Service for Sports and Leisure Centres – Facility Report for Halesowen Leisure Centre: Sport Industry Research Centre - Sheffield Hallam University (July 2006)

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council - Halesowen Area Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy 2003-2008: Strategic Leisure (October 2003)

Appendix 1

Sport and Recreation Facility Provision in Halesowen Area

Public

Cradley High School – 4 court sports hall; gymnasium; health & fitness

Earls High School – Floodlit synthetic turf pitch (STP); specialist gymnastics centre; gymnasium; playing pitches

Halesowen College – 4 court sports hall

Halesowen Leisure Centre – Swimming pool; squash courts; health & fitness; dance studio

Leasowes Community College – Floodlit STP; 6 court sports hall; gymnasium

Windsor High School – Floodlit STP; gymnasium; playing pitches

Private

Powerleague Soccer – Floodlit small STPs

Invesys Sports Ground – Football pitch

Voluntary

Bartley Green Football Club – Football ground

Coombes Wood Sports Ground – Cricket ground; bowling green

Cradley Football Club* – Football ground

Halesowen Athletic and Cycling Club – Cycling track; athletics training track; weight lifting; tennis courts

Halesowen Cricket Club – Cricket ground

Halesowen Town Football Club – Football ground with spectator facilities

Halesowen Golf Club* – 18 hole golf course

Somers Sports and Social Club – Bowling green; floodlit hardcourt area; playing pitches

* indicates that ground belongs to Dudley MBC and is leased to the occupant club.

Appendix 2

Parks and Recreation Grounds in Halesowen Area

Bernard Oakley Memorial Gardens, Colley Gate **(F)**
St Paul's Drive / Church Road Playing Fields, Blackheath
Homer Hill Recreation Ground, Cradley
Huntingtree Park, Halesowen **(F)**
Highfields Park, Halesowen **(F)**
Hawne Recreation Ground, Halesowen
Hurst Green Recreation Ground, Hurst Green, Halesowen **(F)**
Quinton Recreation Ground, Quinton, Halesowen
Stevens Park, Wollescote (half) **(F)**
The Leasowes, Halesowen **(F)**

(F) denotes friends group

Appendix 3

Supply of Playing Pitches in Halesowen Area

Bartley Green FC – 1 senior football
Caslon Primary – 1 junior football
Colley Lane Primary – 1 junior football
Coombes Wood Sports & Social – 1 cricket
Cradley Town FC – 1 senior football
Earls High School – 1 senior football, 1 junior football, 1 cricket, 1 rugby, 1 STP
Halesbury Special School – 1 junior football
Halesowen College – 1 senior football
Halesowen Cricket Club – 1 cricket
Halesowen Town FC – 1 senior football
Hawne Recreation Ground – 1 senior football
Homer Hill Park – 1 senior football, 2 mini-soccer
Huntingtree Park – 1 senior football
Huntingtree Primary – 1 junior football
Hurst Green Park – 2 senior football, 2 junior football
Invesys Sports Ground – 1 senior football
Lapal Primary School – 1 junior football
Leasowes Community College – 1 STP
Lutley Primary School – 1 junior football
Newfield Park Primary – 2 junior football, 1 mini-soccer
Olive Hill Primary – 1 junior football
Our Lady & St Kenelm Primary – 1 junior football
Somers Sports Club – 1 senior football
St Paul's Drive – 1 senior football
Windsor High School – 2 junior football 1 STP

STP - synthetic turf pitch