

London Borough of Enfield

Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 9th March 2023

Subject: Review of leisure provision in the Borough

Cabinet Member: Cllr. Anyanwu

Executive Director: Fay Hammond

Part 1 Report

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline how leisure services are currently structured and delivered within the London Borough of Enfield, and to set out how the Council's leisure offer will be managed in the future.

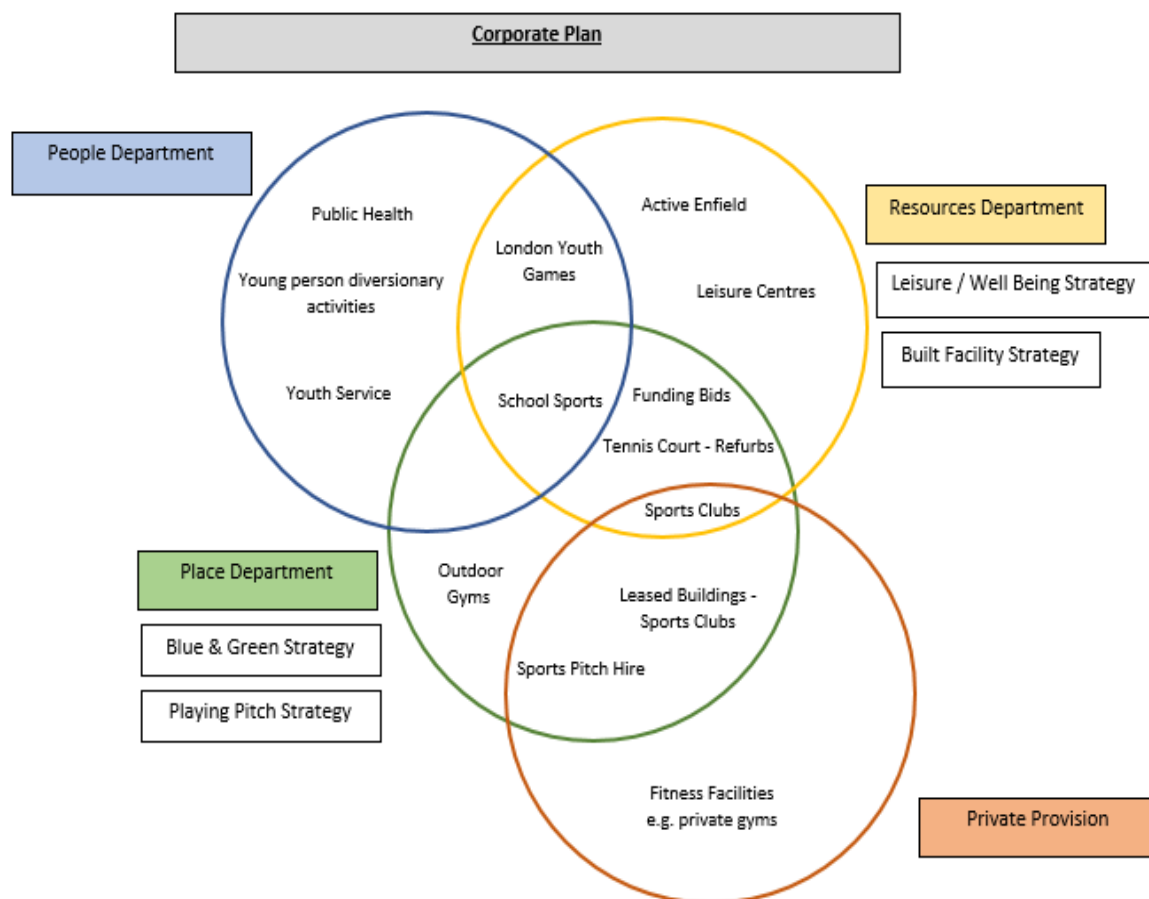
Relevance to the Council Plan

2. Leisure and improved public health is a key part of the Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities strand of the draft Council Plan 2023 – 2026 Investing in Enfield. Specifically, the Council has committed to improving our leisure and sports opportunities to enable more active lifestyles.

Background

Existing leisure Landscape

3. The leisure landscape of the London Borough is complex, both in terms of local authority provision, the number and variety of sports clubs, and the services provided by the private sector. Within Enfield Council, sport and physical activity is delivered by three of the Council's departments, with all three managing venues and two of the three providing programmes of activity. At the last count there were 300+ sports clubs operating in the borough, and a further 20 – 30 private gyms.
4. The complex relationships and delivery of leisure through the Council's departments and private sector is mapped in the diagram below, with the relevant contributing strategies also highlighted.



5. Whilst the Council has adopted the Blue & Green Strategy and the Playing Pitch Strategy for the borough's parks and open spaces, the Council does not have an up-to-date leisure & wellbeing strategy or a built sports facility strategy. To address this gap, the Commercial Team has commenced a strategic review of the borough's sport and physical activity. The review, which will be undertaken using Sport England's *Strategic Outcomes Planning Model*, will inform investment priorities for both facilities and services across the Council area. The review is due to be completed by late May 2023, and officers will be able to update Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting.

Main Considerations for the Panel

Enfield Council's Facilities

6. Within the Council's indoor sports facility portfolio, the Authority has one dedicated swimming pool (Arnos Pool), Bramley Bowls Club, and four mixed facility leisure centres. The four leisure centres are Albany, Edmonton, Southbury and Southgate. The Council also has several mixed-use venues that are used for some sport and leisure provision. These include the Youth Centres and the Community Halls.
7. Arnos Pool, Bramley Bowls and the four leisure centres are managed on behalf of the Council by Fusion Lifestyle Ltd. Fusion is a charitable leisure facility operator with contracts across the country. Given commercial sensitivities relating to Fusion's financial and contract performance, Part 2 of the report deals with leisure centre management.

8. Outdoor provision is mainly centres around the boroughs parks and open spaces where there are approximately 80 football, rugby and cricket pitches, 61 tennis courts, 18 multiuse Games Areas, 3 skate parks, 19 outdoor gyms, and 1 athletics stadium at Enfield Playing Fields. In addition to these formal sports facilities, the borough also has numerous cycle paths and many running or walking routes. The opportunities for formal and informal sport and leisure are significant within the Borough.

Council Leisure Centres

9. In 2010 Enfield Council entered into a 20-year contract with Fusion Lifestyle to operate, manage and maintain Arnos Pool, Bramley Bowls centre, and the Council's four leisure centres (Albany, Edmonton, Southbury & Southgate). The contract agreed with Fusion includes the payment of an annual management fee by Fusion to the Council, plus a share of any profits on a 60%/40% split in Fusion's favour.
10. Fusion's operations have been severely affected by the pandemic, with periods of closure, a sharp reduction in the number of people holding a membership and visiting the facilities, and significant challenges recruiting staff since the pandemic. Whilst there are some signs of recovery with the number of leisure centre visits starting to increase, Fusion's revenues for the current financial year are projected to be just over 65% of what they were pre-pandemic and the staffing of key positions e.g. lifeguards, swim instructors etc. continues to be challenging.
11. In 2019, a significant proportion of the paying visitors were from the over 50's age group, but this cohort has failed to return in the numbers seen from other demographics. Whilst disappointing, it could have been expected given their disproportionate vulnerability to Covid-19, and perceptions of Fusion's management.

Customer Satisfaction

12. The metric 'Net Promoter Score' (NPS) is used by Fusion to measure customer satisfaction across the four leisure centres and at Arnos Pool. NPS is used widely across the private sector because it is a simple measure of customer loyalty and satisfaction. Scores range from 100 to -100, with a higher score reflecting a greater number of 'promoters' and higher levels of customer satisfaction. Companies with good reputations have positive scores, including John Lewis (70), Apple (47) and Amazon (25), whilst companies whose reputations are less positive often have a negative score. These include Ryanair (-5), HSBC (-14) and Facebook (-21)¹.
13. The customer satisfaction scores for the leisure centres, as measured through the Net Promoter Score, are detailed in the Part 2 report.

Service Performance

¹ NPS scores taken from Customer Guru

14. Following initial positive incremental improvements in service standards, when management of the leisure centres was transferred to the Commercial Team, some of the leisure centre facilities have recently suffered significant periods of unavailability due to plant and equipment failures.
15. Since mid-December Albany, Edmonton and Southbury leisure centres have been experiencing a significant number of maintenance faults that have impacted on the availability of the swimming pools at all three sites. Air temperatures have also been below acceptable levels at each centre, as determined by the Corporate Health & Safety Team, due to a range of problems with each centre's air handling unit.
16. Detailed contract and health & safety audits have also been undertaken and additional contract management processes and scrutiny have been applied to the service to help officers understand the management and operational situation and inform decisions regarding future service provision. Condition surveys have also been commissioned from the Council's Construction Maintenance and Facilities Management Team to understand the current condition of buildings and the level of capital investment required.
17. To address the issues identified via the health & safety audits, plus the ongoing availability of some pools and the air temperatures, officers have recently agreed an improvement plan with Fusion's senior managers. The improvement plan, which is already in delivery is being reviewed on a weekly basis and will bring stability back to the service. The main customer facing actions are due to be completed by mid-March.

Active Enfield Programme

18. The Active Enfield Programme is a programme of physical leisure activities that are organised and managed by the Council's Sport & Physical Activity Team known as the Active Enfield Team. Activities delivered through the Active Enfield Programme target gaps in existing provision from either the local clubs or private provision. The aim of the programme is getting people moving who might not otherwise be active. Given this aim, the programme has a range of activities for adults and particularly older people, but with some sessions provided for children out of school and during the school holidays.
19. There are currently about 35 different sessions/activities taking place each week. As sessions continue to recover post covid-19, adult sessions typically operate at approximately 60-70% capacity and young people sessions are at 40-50% capacity. A key objective moving forward is to grow participation at sessions that are less well attended.
20. Although this is not an exhaustive list, popular activities include:
 - Badminton
 - Stretch & Mobilise
 - Swimming
 - Pilates
 - Zumba

- Nordic Walking
- Yoga
- Dance Stretch & Tone
- Dance Fit Adults
- Tai chi
- Ballroom & Latin

21. Our most recent additions to the programme are Dance, Stretch & Tone, Indoor Tai Chi and Chair Yoga. Free of charge taster sessions have been held for some of these classes and have been successful in attracting new attendees.

22. During the first three quarters of 2022/23, there were approximately 11,000 visits to the sessions, with an end of year total of 15,000 attendance expected. The number of attendances in 2021/22 was 12,000, demonstrating programme growth this financial year. In the year preceding Covid pandemic (2019/20), the number of attendances was approximately 18,000.

23. The aim for Active Enfield is to return to comparable levels by the end of 2024/25. This will be achieved through the introduction of a new programme that will include pre and post-pregnancy sessions, disability sessions targeted at children, and pre-school age sessions such as pre-school yoga and pre-school gymnastics. Where there is demand, the Active Enfield Team will also look to expand popular existing activities such as yoga and pilates into new areas of the borough.

24. This financial year, costs for the delivery of the programme (that include venue hire, instructor costs, and management) will be lower than the projected income. This will leave a small surplus revenue, which the Active Enfield Team will use to build the new programme and deliver targeted sessions in areas of the borough where health inequalities are worst. These activities will commence in the new financial year.

25. A key challenge facing the service over the next few years will be the cost of living crises as we recognise that some residents will not be able to prioritise physical activity and leisure. The service is looking to tackle this by keeping the cost of the Active Enfield Sessions as low as possible, and only charge a nominal fee in areas where the crises will be felt most acutely. Free sessions will not be offered as people often fail to value free sessions, failing to attend and preventing others from attending.

Funded Projects

26. The Council currently has two funded programmes that target activity in specific sections of the community. They are a disability swimming project and an initiative to get inactive people in Edmonton more active.

Disability Swimming Project

27. The Council secured £10k of funding from London Sport to increase activity levels for young disabled people through swimming. The funding has been used to upskill swimming instructors to be able to deliver swimming lessons

for those with disabilities, and to enable the families and those with disabilities to utilise the dedicated pool time at Edmonton Leisure Centre. Officers have worked with the Cheviots Disability Service to develop the funding bid and deliver the project.

28. Since the grant was received, training sessions have been undertaken with swimming coaches who have received guidance from Cheviots and the Zebra Autism charity. Training sessions have taken place and focussed on basic child protection for those with a disability, and autism given it is the most prevalent disability in Enfield.
29. Through the project, three 30mins weekly swimming lessons will take place, with each group having an 8-week block of lessons. There will be two sessions taking place at Edmonton Leisure Centre and one at Albany Leisure Centre. Two of the swimming sessions will be for young people with autism and one session will be for people with physical disabilities. The sessions will begin in late January and are free of charge to those taking part. The sessions have been advertised to families with disabilities and we have received circa 100 applications to date.
30. At the end of each swimming lesson block each participant will be offered a free family swim voucher for 4 people at the disability family swim which has recently been started by Fusion on a Sunday morning at Edmonton Leisure Centre. This will enable families with a disabled child/ children to be able to continue to swim each week following the conclusion of the swimming lessons.

Active Through Football

31. Funding of £440,000 was awarded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) via Sport England to deliver a 5-year programme called Active Through Football. The project aims to support those who face some of the greatest barriers to being physically active, enabling increased activity levels and sustained behaviour change.
32. The focus of the project in Enfield is to work with people and community groups from lower socio-economic groups in Edmonton and the south east of the borough, targeting people experiencing mental health difficulties and women aged 16yrs+. Consultation conducted during the development of the funding bid identified that these groups were the most interested in being involved and could benefit the most from the project.
33. Officers are working with community groups to understand and co-produce the physical activity sessions they would like to do, where they would like to do it and when they would like to do. The co-designing of activities makes it far more likely people will continue to attend sessions and continue to remain active. Whilst the project is called Active through Football, a whole range of activities will take place over the life of the project. We continue to work with Enfield Voluntary Action (EVA) to design the sessions and engage the community in and around Edmonton. The project is in its infancy, but Scrutiny Committee can be updated with project outcomes as Active Through Football progresses.

34. In addition to the two funded projects listed above, the Active Enfield Team is currently in the latter stages of its application to the Lawn Tennis Association's Renovation Fund. If successful the funding will enable the refurbishment of tennis courts in thirteen of the borough's parks. Totalling £620,000, the funding will enable improvement or replacement of playing surfaces, new court markings, and improvements to perimeter fencing.

London Youth Games

35. The London Youth Games Open competition is an annual multi-sport event for participants aged between 11yrs and 18yrs across approximately 30 sports, at which competitors are chosen to represent their borough. Age eligibility varies across the various sports. The London Youth Games are contested between the 33 London boroughs through the course of the year, with most competitions taking place at weekends during the summer term. Participation is open to all young people living in or going to school in London subject to any trials taking place. Over 30,000 young Londoners represent their borough in the London Youth Games, making it the largest annual youth sports event in Europe.

36. Approximately 500 young people represent Enfield annually in trials, training and the competitions themselves. The Active Enfield Team organises team managers for each sport, arranges the venues and facilities for trials and training and attends the competitions to assist team managers and resolve any issues that occur.

37. There are also competitions for people with disabilities known as the London Youth Games ParaGames for sports including boccia, athletics, swimming and football. The Active Enfield Team helps to organise teams for these events.

Conclusions

38. As outlined within this report, the provision of sport and leisure within Enfield is complex, with provision provided by a range of public, voluntary and private organisations. Understanding what facilities and leisure services are required in the future will be crucial as consumer interests change and the population grows. The Council will need to use its resources to target activity for maximum health and wellbeing gain. The review the team has started looking at future provision will help to guide the Council's investment in existing or new facilities.

39. The cost of living crises will undoubtedly affect the amount of people that are physically active within the borough, but the Active Enfield Team will continue to provide opportunities for those that are or will become physically inactive.

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Date of report 24/02/23

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None