

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 29TH MARCH 2006

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF LEISURE SERVICES

Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Best Value Review of Leisure Services and seek approval for the implementation of the Continuous Improvement Action Plan for the services.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Community Services Committee agreed that the Best Value Review for Leisure Services would take place between April and October 2005 at its meeting on 23rd March 2005 and subsequently agreed to a revised timescale allowing the review to be completed and presented to the Committee's meeting on 29th March 2006.
- 2.2 The Council's guide to carrying out a Best Value Review "Securing Continuous Improvement" was used as the model for this review and the detailed guidance was applied throughout the project. The Best Value Review for Leisure Services has been considered and approved by the Corporate Management Team.
- 2.3 The Best Value Review for Leisure Services is made up of detailed analysis of six operational service areas i.e. Arts and Museums; Community Recreation; Dean Castle Country Park Countryside Services; Leisure Development; Library, Registration and Information Services and Outdoor Amenities. A single report has been compiled for the whole service and individual service reports have also been produced. The complete report is available in the Members Information Point.
- 2.4 The overall review was subdivided for operational reasons, however full consideration was also given to cross-service and cross-departmental service delivery issues within the review process. Because of the diverse nature of the services in the Leisure remit it was appropriate to sub-divide the review to ensure that key issues such as benchmarking and option appraisal could be effectively addressed. Six review teams were established and followed through the review process. The individual reviews were led by the relevant section head and the overall process was co-ordinated and led by the Head of Leisure Services.

The process was applied across all services as the review team wished to ensure that a complete picture of the Council's Leisure Services in December 2005 was established as a reference point for future planning. No failing services were identified prior to the commencement of the review and there are no major outstanding budget issues relating to Leisure Services.

- 2.5 The Leisure Best Value Review was underpinned by EFQM reviews and drew on a wide range of policy and strategy documentation; funding bids; performance monitoring submissions; operational procedures and marketing material to support the process.
- 2.6 In order to verify that the Council's guidance had been robustly applied and to test that the findings and recommendations were appropriate, an industry specialist was brought in to work with the review teams and act as a critical friend. Two different specialists were used, Alan Jones a former Director of Leisure Services and now a respected consultant to the Leisure Industry covered five service areas and John Dillon of Groundserve, a grounds maintenance consultant who worked with the Council to assist with the competitive tending process for grounds maintenance in 1999 / 2000 covered the Outdoor Amenities review. Both consultants provided insight and specialist knowledge that was invaluable during the reviews. Their reports on the process are contained within the individual Best Value Review reports for the six services. In each case the critical friend confirms that the guidance has been effectively applied, the reviews were robust and searching, and the action plan is appropriate.
- 2.7 Leisure Services have been subject to regular reviews in recent years with staff restructures implemented and service reconfigurations introduced to improve service effectiveness within available resource levels. While mainstream budgets have been reduced, significant levels of external revenue funding have been secured to deliver new initiatives and introduce new services such as healthy lifestyle promotion, crafts development, outdoor access programmes, sports development and environmental improvements. In addition Leisure Services' support the delivery of the Community Plan priorities and the services' impact on each of the key themes. Leisure Services tend to be highly visible in communities and people's expectations of service standards are increasing. Leisure Services tend to be highly valued by communities and the reduction or withdrawal of services is often controversial. The services make significant contributions to national policy priorities including health improvement, community safety, tourism promotion etc.

3. CONTEXT AND SCOPE

- 3.1 East Ayrshire Council is determined to work towards improving its services and wants to identify new ways of delivering services that provide better value for money for local people as well as more efficient and effective services.

All Councils in Scotland now have a statutory duty of Best Value under the Local Government Scotland Act 2003 which states that Councils have a responsibility "to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance (while making an appropriate balance between quality and cost) and in making those arrangements and securing the balance, to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, the equal opportunities requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development".

The Council has an established programme of Best Value Service Reviews and each service will be reviewed over a 3 year period.

- 3.2 The Leisure Services Best Value Review is based on a detailed examination of the six operational service units which make up the current management structure. Leisure Services are diverse and are delivered throughout East Ayrshire with most people and communities accessing or benefiting from aspects of the service.
- 3.3 The services covered by this review can be categorised as follows:-

SERVICE SECTION		SERVICE AREAS/ACTIVITIES	
1.	Arts and Museums	(i)	Arts and Media Development
		(ii)	Museum Development
		(iii)	Palace Theatre/Grand Hall Complex
		(iv)	Audience Development
		(v)	Management/Administration
2.	Community Recreation	(i)	Leisure Facilities
		(ii)	Community Resources
3.	Dean Castle Country Park/Countryside Services	(i)	Dean Castle Country Park
		(ii)	Outdoor Access Unit
4.	Leisure Development	(i)	Sports Development
		(ii)	Play Development and Grants
		(iii)	Recreation Partnership Project
		(iv)	Community Health Improvement Partnership
		(v)	Walking Development
		(vi)	Administration
5.	Library, Registration and Information Services	(i)	Libraries
		(ii)	Registration Service
		(iii)	Local Offices
		(iv)	Support Processes
		(v)	Library Specific Support Processes
6.	Outdoor Amenities	(i)	Grounds
		(ii)	Administration
		(iii)	Golf
		(iv)	Bereavement Services
		(v)	Ancillary Services

Full descriptions of the role and responsibilities of each Service Area/Activity along with budget allocations and staff numbers are included in the detailed service review that should be read in conjunction with this report.

4. SUMMARY OF AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

4.1 GENERAL LEISURE SERVICE AND CROSS DEPARTMENTAL ISSUES

Conclusions for each of the individual reviews are summarised in this section. In addition to these services specific conclusions there were significant common issues for Leisure Services and also cross-departmental issues which should be highlighted. Action required to address general service issues and service specific issues is detailed in the Continuous Improvement Plan for Leisure Services which is contained in the main report.

The main General Leisure Services issues are:-

4.1.1 The Leisure Service as a whole has a difficulty with policy and strategy development and whilst individual staff have major strengths in these areas the loss of the service's Policy Officer post two years ago has made policy co-ordination difficult and the potential impact of Leisure Services on national and local policy priorities has been restricted. Urgent consideration must be given to re-establishing a Leisure Policy and Strategy Officer at a grade similar to posts of this type working in other Council services.

4.1.2 Leisure Services have created and delivered several key projects and supported others that directly influence the achievements of Community Plan aims and have significant impact in our communities (CHIP; Recreation Partnership Project; New Sporting Futures; Activity Motivation Initiative; CATCH - Walking Development Project; Outdoor Access Project; Crafts Development; Better Neighbourhood Service Fund etc).

Where these projects have achieved or exceeded their aims and are contributing to the delivery of Community Plan goals, there is a need to consider how the projects are sustained once the external funding contributions come to an end.

4.1.3 In reviewing customer and stakeholder feedback across Leisure Services it became apparent that contact with existing customers is very good in some services and could be improved in others. The main gap in consultation and engagement relates to capturing the views of non customers or people who do not currently use the Council's Leisure Services. The broad range of leisure services does not lend itself to a single project to establish the views of non-users however individual services or groups of services will be embarking on non-user surveys in the future.

There will be opportunities to engage with non-users through the Residents' Survey and the consultation panels to be established by the Council and we need to ensure that these opportunities are open to Leisure Services.

4.1.4 The administration and assessment of grant applications is another area of workload pressure that requires to be addressed. The volume of applications sent to Leisure Services for assessment, the time involved in assessing an application and often the limited timescales available present a challenge and deflect staff from their core service delivery tasks. A dedicated resource to co-ordinate and support grant administration should be considered in any service reconfiguration proposals that follow the consideration of this Best Value Review.

4.1.5 Carrying out effective benchmarking is an issue common to several sections with Leisure Services and benchmarking results are inconsistent. In some cases it is not possible to benchmark service performance as our services are significantly different from others or unique in other cases new initiatives have been undertaken to establish benchmarking partners and progress has been made in developing performance comparisons.

The cross-departmental issues can be summarised as follows:-

4.1.6 Leisure Services are responsible for the management and promotion of the Council's visitor attractions (Dean Castle Country Park, Dick Institute, River Ayr Way etc) but not for the promotion of tourism. East Ayrshire's tourism potential would benefit from integration of its major facility management with responsibility for tourism promotion and working with Visitscotland and this should be managed by Leisure Services. Discussions have taken place with officers in the Development and Property Services Department and proposals relating to tourism promotion will be brought forward in early course.

4.1.7 Sports and Leisure facilities provided at school facilities are managed differently to similar facilities provided in the community. Some of these differences are historical. There would be benefit in exploring how greater community access to school sports and leisure facilities can be developed through a change in management approach. The management approach to the new PPP facilities, when confirmed, will allow preparation work to take place and resource requirements to be confirmed. There has been significant work in this area and the Doon Valley Swimming Pool should transfer to Leisure Services in April 2006. Discussions are ongoing regarding other aspects of facility management. Proposals relating to this aspect will be brought forward in due course.

4.1.8 Leisure Services are delivered from a wide range of service points in many Council buildings. Ensuring that buildings are maintained to an appropriate standard and presented in a condition acceptable to customers and visitors remains a constant challenge. Several key buildings have been refurbished using external capital funding and now need to be maintained to a high standard as do the new build facilities that have been, or will be provided by the Council. We need to ensure that high standards are maintained and preventative maintenance programmes are implemented in the future. These issues have been raised as part of the Council's Asset Management Strategy and should be addressed as the strategy is fully implemented.

4.2 **ARTS AND MUSEUMS**

The Arts and Museums Service was the subject of an extensive review and service restructure in 2005 and the new staffing structure was only fully in place in October 2005. The Best Value Review coincided with the implementation of the new structure and the delivery of several capital projects.

The Best Value Review revisited the plans and proposals associated with the restructure and assisted in identifying new post restructure priorities for the staff team.

Having been successful in securing funds for capital improvements at Dean Castle; The Doon Valley Museum; The Burns House; Dick Institute and Palace Theatre the Arts and Museums Service has now to deliver the service improvements associated with the capital investment while also securing funds for further improvements to the Palace Theatre/Grand Hall and the Baird Institute, Cumnock.

Delivery of service improvements in the future will depend on the continued availability of resources, both internal and external, however much work in the re-modelling and re-orientation of these services has already successfully taken place and the benefits of the restructure proposals are now being seen throughout the service.

The five individual service areas making up Arts and Museums were subject to vigorous option appraisal and all available options were considered for each of the service areas. The overall recommendations from the service was Improved In House Management/Delivery of Service combined with the Hybrid approach currently adopted by the service.

The specific conclusions with regard to priority issues in Arts and Museums are as follows:-

4.2.1 **The Programme**

- ❖ The service needs to ensure that the programme is of sufficient quality to challenge, entertain and educate people, this will require continued financial investment.
- ❖ The programme needs to continually develop to attract new audiences whilst keeping core visitors/audiences.
- ❖ All Arts and Museums venues should implement a two year rolling event/activity programme working closely with internal and external partners.

4.2.2 **Investment in Arts and Media Development**

- ❖ A two year Business Plan for this service activity is required to underpin future service development and priorities.
- ❖ Detailed research is needed to test the proposals for the Investment in Drama and Develop Craft Ayrshire projects is required to support future funding bids for both areas of work.
- ❖ Sustainable proposals for the future use of the Baird Institute, Cumnock should be developed to ensure that the facility is able to meet the needs of the local community.

4.2.3 **Audience Development**

- ❖ The established Marketing Plan should be reviewed and updated annually and should take into account feedback from existing audiences on addition to the results for non-user consultation programmes.

4.2.4 **The Palace Theatre and Grand Hall Complex**

- ❖ The joint programme team should be established to improve the efficiency effectiveness of the programme and improve marketing.
- ❖ A two year Business Plan for the single complex should be provided to guide developments in the short term future; this should include further implementation of the phased capital improvements programme.
- ❖ A Youth Consultation Group should be established in conjunction with the Arts and Media Development Team.

4.2.5 **Museums**

- ❖ A two year business plan for the Museum Service should be produced to underpin service developments and priorities.
- ❖ The Museum Service should achieve full accreditation under the new MLA Scheme by June 2007 and maintain this industry quality stand in the future.
- ❖ The Future Museum Project should be implemented and the partnership network that support this project effectively lead and developed to secure the benefits of this innovative project.
- ❖ Option Appraisal was applied to the five different elements of the Arts and Museum Services and the recommendation for the future of the service is Improved In-House Management/Delivery of Services combined with a Hybrid approach in each service area.

4.3 **COMMUNITY RECREATION**

4.3.1 The Best Value Review for Community Recreation examined all areas of the service and the action plan identified key areas to be addressed as the service continues to improve in the future.

The service has moved forward, particularly in terms of investment in facilities, customer numbers and marketing in the past two years and it has been management improvements that has brought about these positive changes in the Council's Sports Halls and are now being rolled out in the Town and Community Halls in the Community Recreation remit.

4.3.2 The Community Recreation Service's Best Value Review identified the need to improve benchmarking activities and benchmarking initiatives have already been introduced. The small scale of the individual facilities managed by Community Recreation dictated that new partners had to be found to allow like for like comparisons to be developed. In addition the service will be undertaking the Quest Quality programme for leisure facilities to provide a focus for the continuous improvement of the service in the future.

4.3.3 There is also an identified need to generate external funding both in terms of revenue funding to support activities and programming and capital funding to improve and upgrade facilities.

4.3.4 While not strictly part of the review of the existing service, it should be noted that deficits in sports facility provision have been identified through the use of Sportscotland's Facility Planning Model and priorities have been agreed by the Community Services Committee. The main deficits in facility provision are in Stewarton on where the growing population does not have access to sufficient indoor or outdoor leisure facilities.

Should the Council be able to construct new facilities the Community Recreation Service would need to expand to cope with this new demand and appropriate operational budgets would need to be established.

4.3.5 Ongoing challenges with maintenance of properties and securing a suitable response to requests for repairs was identified in the Best Value Review and needs to be addressed to ensure that buildings remain open to the public, income levels are retained, and public expectations in terms of quality are met.

4.3.7 The future development of the service will depend heavily on the resources available to support service delivery and the current pace of change and improvement cannot continue indefinitely.

The Community Recreation Service was considered as a single unit for the Option Appraisal process and the recommendation, following analysis of all the available options, was Improved In-House Management/Delivery of Service.

4.4 **DEAN CASTLE COUNTRY PARK/COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES**

4.4.1 The Dean Castle Country Park/Countryside Services has expanded in the last two years using external funding to lead the Council's response to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Core budgets for the Country Park have been reduced in recent years, however the Country Park has retained its Visit Scotland 4 star award level and shows high levels of public satisfaction.

4.4.2 Delivery of the service's Improvement Plan will depend on the availability of resources. Further budget reductions will erode the quality of service at the Country Park and if mainstream funding is not available for the Outdoor Access Project beyond March 2007, many of the potential benefits of the River Ayr Way, Local Path Networks and the Core Path Plan may not be realised in East Ayrshire.

4.4.3 The Dean Castle Country Park operates with limited marketing and promotional resources and the effectiveness of any marketing initiatives is critical to future growth in visitor numbers. While there is no direct admission fee for the Country Park visitors can use the Visitor Centre Tea Room and a small souvenir outlet. Improving visitor numbers will increase expenditure in these areas.

- 4.4.4 At the Country Park benchmarking activities should be developed and improved to overcome the current difficulties with establishing 'like for like' benchmarking partners. In addition, and in common with other Leisure Sections, there is a need to develop non-user information future marketing activities and programme development.
- 4.4.5 The opening of the River Ayr Way will create a new attraction in East Ayrshire and bring economic benefits across several sectors if marketing activities, which will be carried out in conjunction with Visitscotland, are effective. Proposals on eliminating duplication will be brought forward in early course.
- 4.4.6 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 imposes a range of statutory duties on Councils and the Outdoor Access Team was established to meet these requirements as well as create and implement new projects such as the River Ayr Way and other new path networks. Funding for the current Outdoor Access Team expires in March 2007 and it is essential that resources are identified to continue the essential areas of this team's work. A service reconfiguration is therefore required to take the Dean Castle Country Park/Countryside Services Section into 2007/08 and beyond.
- 4.4.7 The Option Appraisal process for Dean Castle Country Park/Countryside Services was carried out for the service divided into two service areas/activities; the Country Park and the Outdoor Access Unit. For the Country Park it is recommended that the current Hybrid Approach to service provision is continued and for the Outdoor Access Unit Improved In-House Management with service reconfiguration is recommended for the future.

4.5 **LEISURE DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.5.1 The Leisure Development Section has a relatively small core staff and budget, however this is substantially supplemented by externally funded projects which have been conceived and implemented by the team in response to priorities such as health improvement and youth diversion.

The work of the Leisure Development Section closely relates to the aims of the Community Plan and the single biggest challenge that the service faces is to secure funding to sustain successful projects. The theme runs through the Best Value Review for Leisure Development and is critical to the future of a section which is having significant impact on the health issues and wellbeing of many people in East Ayrshire.

- 4.5.2 The external funders require regular monitoring and evaluation and the Leisure Development Services is therefore subject to significant ongoing scrutiny with regard to its effectiveness. In addition the section has been subject to external evaluation in some areas through HMle and academic institutions.
- 4.5.3 The Continuous Improvement Plan identifies the costs of mainstreaming the Leisure Development projects, however the figures shown are the maximum values and efforts are already being made to identify further external funding and streamline services where appropriate. It is essential that core funding opportunities are made available through the Council and it's Community Planning Partners in order to ensure the sustainability of evidenced based projects and initiatives which are having a major positive impact upon the health and wellbeing of East Ayrshire's residents.

- 4.5.4 The review also identifies issues with duplication between Leisure Development and other Council services and projects. Whilst these are minimal, they merit further consideration and investigation to ensure that services are being delivered effectively and efficiently, and to avoid any duplication.
- 4.5.5 As several of the Leisure Development projects are unique, benchmarking proved very difficult and it may be that effective benchmarking cannot be introduced. In some cases the section are setting the national benchmark through attainment of national awards and the extensive delivery of best practice presentations across Scotland. This is balanced by the clear targets and extensive monitoring that takes place to ensure that projects are making the impact they were set up to make.
- 4.5.6 The Option Appraisal process for Leisure Development identified Improved In-House Management for most areas with service reconfiguration for those areas of overlap and duplication.

4.6 LIBRARY, REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION SERVICES

- 4.6.1 The Library, Registration and Information Service was the subject of a detailed review by a Member/Officer Working Group in 2005 and the findings of this group, which were approved by the Community Services Committee, were used to restructure the service into its current form.
- 4.6.2 The service has been regularly reviewed since it was brought together into a single unit in 1999 and during this Best Value Review responsibility for the Council's main 'Collecting Hall' in Kilmarnock was transferred to EALRIS from the Finance Division. Budget reductions have led to a rationalisation of services in some areas with the closure of some community libraries and local offices.

At the same time there has been a major shift in the range of services provided at public libraries mainly due to the People's Network Project which have seen libraries established as venues for publicly accessible computers, basic computer training and access to the internet.

- 4.6.3 The Best Value Review concludes that EALRIS is performing well but improvements in future performance will be heavily dependant on the availability of resources.
- 4.6.4 There is a need to expand the customer base of the services through retaining existing customers and attracting new ones. The service has an effective Marketing Plan and has made significant progress in developing new services, responding to customer needs and actively reviewing current approaches to service delivery.
- 4.6.5 There is a significant level of benchmarking activity already undertaken in the service, however this should be developed into all appropriate service areas and enhanced to provide a greater level of detail. The Library Service Statutory Performance Indicators tend to be used as the most visible form of benchmarking and this league-table approach is not always helpful to the service or a time reflection of local impact or priorities.

- 4.6.6 Staff development issues were also identified as a priority for the future building on the EAGER programme and ensuring that staff are equipped to deal with delivering a changing service, aware of new service developments and able to respond to customer expectations.
- 4.6.7 The service has a strong track record of innovation, development and achievement and this must be continued into the future if the service is to ensure that it is positioned to deliver the Community Plan objectives.
- 4.6.8 A detailed Option Appraisal was carried out for the Library, Registration and Information Service and it was concluded that Improved In-House Management/Delivery of Service with some service reconfiguration was the appropriate recommendation for the service.

4.7 **OUTDOOR AMENITIES**

- 4.7.1 The Outdoor Amenities Section was the subject of a management structure review in 2004/05 which led to the implementation of a new structure in April 2005 following the removal of CCT legislation. The Best Value Review coincided with the implementation of the new structure.

During the period of the review a new Tree Safety project was introduced which required further changes to operational arrangements. The history of the Outdoor Amenity Service since its formation in 1998/99 is one of regular review and change to adapt to new requirements and challenges.

- 4.7.2 The five 'business units' within Outdoor Amenities were each subject to detailed review and a wide range of actions/solutions are proposed in the Continuous Improvement Plan. Whilst the service has shown major improvements since its inception the review highlights areas that can be improved further, however the main limiting factor on future service improvements is resource limitations and reducing budgets.
- 4.7.3 There has been customer criticism of the standards of the major parks in East Ayrshire, particularly those in Kilmarnock in recent years, and while some of this criticism has been unjustified in many cases there are areas that could be improved with investment including the reintroduction of park wardens and restoration of horticultural features.
- 4.7.4 The Outdoor Amenity Service has been able to access additional funding to supplement core budgets and provide additional services and facilities particularly through the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund and Quality of Life monies.

These funds are time limited and additional services will be withdrawn when funding ends as there is no scope for their replacement within the existing Outdoor Amenities budgets, and the sustainability of these additional services cannot be assured without increases in the core budget.

- 4.7.5 The review highlights the need to exploit external funding opportunities for the parks and open spaces sector and this will require access to specialist skills that are not currently available with the Outdoor Amenities Management Team.

4.7.6 With the reduced management structure, the removal of CCT, the move to mainstream budgeting for Outdoor Amenities, and the operational improvements made in the last few years, there is a need to develop a new Service Level Agreement that specifies the Council's required grounds maintenance standard along with revised costs for maintenance tasks. This will also allow an enhanced level of performance benchmarking to take place in the future to address issues raised in the review.

4.7.7 Option Appraisal was applied across Outdoor Amenities as a single service unit. The recommendation is that Improved In-House Management/Service Delivery is implemented in Outdoor Amenities as this will be the most efficient and effective method of delivering the service's Continuous Improvement Plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The full Leisure Services Best Value Review report contains a Continuous Improvement Plan which shows cost implications and priority levels for actions proposed across the service. Many of the improvement initiatives will be achieved using existing budgets, however some have budget implications. The estimated cost of implementing the full range of service improvement actions would be £1,018,000, not including any capital projects or one-off events. Capital funding requirements will be addressed through the Council's prioritisation process. Where possible external funding will be sought to support improvement activities however opportunities to access core funding are necessary in some areas to ensure the long-term sustainability of successful projects and initiatives. Detailed reports which address major service developments will be brought forward for consideration in due course.

6. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Best Value Review for Leisure Services was carried out in accordance with the Council's approved timescales and guidance on Best Value and meets all the criteria for a robust, thorough and effective review.

7.2 The Best Value Review highlights the critical role of Leisure Services in meeting the goals of a wide range of local and national policies and strategies. The services are essential to the delivery of the Community Plan for East Ayrshire and work across all six of the plan themes both individually and through a wide network of partnership arrangements.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The Best Value Review for Leisure Services was carried out in a robust, thorough and effective manner, as evidenced by the reports of the external critical friends who supported and monitored the process.

- 8.2 While the effective application of the Council's guidance was resource intensive and a challenge to staff who are also responsible for the delivery of a wide range of services across East Ayrshire, the results both in terms of the development of the Continuous Improvement Plan and the detailed understanding of the Council's services that have been achieved through the process have ensured that the review was worthwhile.
- 8.3 Resources remain the critical issue for the future of the Council's Leisure Services, and while there has been major success in attracting project based capital and revenue funding, the core budget for these services needs to be maintained or increased if the full benefits of high quality Leisure Services are to be delivered across East Ayrshire. Leisure Services have a significant role on delivering the impacts and outcomes of the Community Plan and this role should be developed.
- 8.4 The findings of the report are consistent with the Council's Strategic Self Assessment of Performance and the areas identified for improvement are similar. The findings are also broadly similar to those of the Leisure Services Service Unit Self Assessment of Performance and it can be concluded that there is a good understanding of the priorities for improvement in these services.
- 8.5 There is a high level of partnership working and involvement throughout Leisure Services and the service is not a traditional sport and arts service. Successful initiatives have pushed out the boundaries for Leisure Services particularly in the area of health improvement but also across other key policy areas. As these new and non-traditional elements of the service have been particularly successful their move to core funding status and away from temporary project funding will be a particular challenge into the future.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee are recommended to:-
- (i) approve the findings of the Best Value Review of Leisure Services;
 - (ii) remit to Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, in conjunction with other appropriate Executive Directors, to bring forward further reports on major service changes resulting from the review; and
 - (iii) otherwise note the content of this report.

William Stafford
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services
WS/JAG/KH 13th March 2006

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Best Value Review for Leisure Services
2. Securing Continuous Improvement – The Council's Guide to Best Value Reviews

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01563 578179 and ask for John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services.

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