

## Agenda item No. 5

Title: **Update on Issues and Challenges - Leisure**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Richard Wiltshire**

Reporting Officer: **Lucy Murray-Brown – Leisure Manager**

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### **General Update**

Leisure has delivered some key projects in the last few months and there have been various improvements in the service. This work includes:

- Securing £240,000 lottery funding which has been used to improve play provision. Three of the five projects have been installed, and the remaining two are due to complete within the next six weeks
- Securing £126,000 over the next two years towards delivering the Community Sport Network. This will be spent on various initiatives to encourage physical activity, including an alternative sports day, specific sessions for various age-groups, and additional support to improve the skills of the voluntary sport sector
- Supporting various community groups in securing funds to improve local recreation provision
- Working with DC Leisure to improve accessibility to leisure and sport for disabled people. This includes the development of the Inclusive Fitness Initiative which provides more specific sessions and clubs
- Usage at the leisure centres continues to increase year on year

### **Key issues and challenges**

1. The Leisure team has sourced significant external funding in the past eighteen months which has brought additional work for officers and has therefore created challenges in ensuring good-quality delivery.
  - In order to address this, workplans have been reviewed and where necessary additional support will be made available through the secured funding.
  - There will be a need to continue to monitor officer workplans to ensure priority work is completed.
2. In light of recent regulatory changes around the registering of land as Village Greens, there has been an increase in applications. This

presents issues for the Leisure team if the land in question currently offers formal pitch provision, as this type of use is not permitted on registered Village Green land. This is particularly pertinent in areas where there are currently deficiencies in formal playing pitch provision.

- The Council will be writing to the town and parish councils and other interested parties to raise awareness of the impact of registering land on formal sports provision
  - The Council will need to be aware of all future applications relating to both Council and non-Council owned land, where the existing use includes formal playing pitches
3. The transition to a Unitary authority has meant that some planned work has been put on hold, including the development of a pitch and open spaces strategy, and the leisure facilities review. Both projects were key parts of the Leisure & Recreation Needs Assessment Action Plan.
- The Leisure Facilities Review has been extended to cover the county area and Council officers are maintaining an active role to ensure the issues in the West Wiltshire district are considered
  - The pitch strategy will be considered by the new authority, and until one is developed existing district Supplementary Planning Documents will be used to manage the development of new facilities

### **The Transition to One Council**

Council leisure officers are fully engaged with the transition process and we can report the following:

- The Implementation Executive has agreed the proposed organisational structure of the new authority, and Leisure sits within the Transport, Environment & Leisure Directorate
- The Frontline Services workstream considers eight service area groups, one being 'Cultural Services', which is where Leisure sits. Each of the five authorities is represented on the group
- The Cultural Services group is in the process of identifying any short, medium and long-term service risks associated with the amalgamation of the authorities
- A key issue is to ensure that the positive relationship between the Council and DC Leisure is maintained through the transition to One Council. The group has agreed this is a high priority
- There is a need to ensure that the good practice this Council displays in the Leisure area, is not lost through the transition.

**Recommendation**

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- Note the report.