

Minutes

Partnership Development Group

2nd October 2019



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Baugh	Yes	I Pritchard	Yes
G Courtauld	Yes	R Ramage (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
Mrs M Cunningham (Chairman)	Yes	Mrs J Sandum	Apologies
T McArdle	Apologies	P Thorogood	No
Mrs J Pell	Yes		

5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

6 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

7 **MINUTES**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Development Group held on 21st August 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

8 **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO LEISURE PROVISION ACROSS THE DISTRICT – ACCESS TO SPORT – FIRST EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION**

INFORMATION: Members received a presentation from Joby Humm, Leisure, Health and Heritage Manager at Braintree District Council, on the provision of leisure across the District. Members were invited to ask questions as they felt appropriate throughout the presentation.

There were three key topic areas explored during the presentation; these revolved around the picture of sports availability and provision across the District and included the different facilities, community groups and clubs (e.g. Park Run, Athletics, etc), the available partnerships that supported the sports groups (e.g. Livewell, Active Braintree Foundation, Braintree Mencap, etc), and the Council's direct involvement through Fusion Lifestyle (e.g. Witham Leisure Centre, Braintree Swimming and Fitness, etc).

The presentation slides can be viewed at:-

https://www.braintree.gov.uk/membershub/downloads/download/36/overview_and_scrutiny_committee_agenda_and_reports

In response to questions raised by Members during the presentation, the following information was provided:-

- With regard to participation in sports groups and activities, Members were advised that projects such as Park Run were fully inclusive of different groups of people from diverse age groups. Park Run allowed participants the opportunity to choose to walk or run a distance of 5k. The Park Run project was also looking to encompass other groups and sports platforms, such as Dementia Walks.
- Members were advised that Park Run was free of charge for those attending and that it was organised largely by volunteers each week.
- Other facilities at the Great Notley Country Park, such as the artificial grass pitches (AGPs), had a fee attached for their usage. The fee was incorporated within the pricing structure offered by Fusion.
- A new AGP was due to be installed in Halstead, for which planning permission had been recently granted. Negotiations were currently underway with the Football Foundation who would provide a significant funding contribution towards the new pitch (approximately £500,000).
- On the subject of access to different sources of funding, Members were informed that part of Joby Humm's role was to collaborate with Community 360, who provided support to the Council in terms of available funding streams for local sport clubs and affiliated activities. Funding for larger scale projects was generally supported by Sport England. The Council also had a number of smaller scale funding sources available that helped to support the provision of local clubs and activities (e.g. Councillor Community Grants, Active Braintree funding and Health and Wellbeing funding supplied by Public Health England).
- The site of the old Bramston Sports Centre in Bridge Street, Witham, was now located in Spinks Lane, Witham. The implementation of the new Sports Centre site represented a community partnership led approach, and this was of particular importance in regard to meeting local demand needs, such as inclusivity (e.g. through the provision of wheelchair accessibility, movable swimming pool, etc).
- Under the "Livewell" project, Age Well was promoted through partnership work with local community groups such as Age UK, Age Concern and the Dementia Alliance to help infiltrate older age groups. Social media campaigns were also targeted towards younger children who could then inform their families of the participation opportunities available.
- Members were advised that the brand of "Livewell" embodied a vast partnership network under the umbrella of health and wellbeing, which included; Greenfields Community Housing, the Fire Service, Essex County Council (ECC), links with Doctors Surgeries under the Mid-Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), neighbouring Local Authorities, etc.
- Further to a query raised about how the Council helped to encourage "harder to reach" groups to become more active (e.g. younger people or those without jobs). Members were advised that as well through their work with Fusion, the Council liaised with the network under the Active Braintree Foundation, which included the Job Centre (DWP),

First Stop, Barnardo's and family health centres to help promote the principles of the Livewell campaign to wider groups of people.

- Members were informed that the Council received an income stream from its contract with Fusion for the management of the District's leisure facilities. Despite the successes experienced with Fusion, the Council continued to review the contract regularly in order to ensure that it remained of economic benefit for the organisation, and to give, if necessary, consideration towards alternative options such as bringing the management of leisure facilities back in-house. It was stressed that all decisions in this respect required evidence based justification.
- The projects under Sports and Community Development (SCD) helped to support the Council's contract with Fusion and its objectives under Livewell. Such projects included Friday Night Live, Sport for Confidence, Age Well Afternoons, etc, and were seeing increases in the number of participants across the District. Due to the varied nature of the different projects, the Council was required to adapt its public engagement techniques and promotional campaigns accordingly to attract different groups of people or those who were "harder to reach" (e.g. health referral pathways through GP Surgeries).
- It was acknowledged that there was sometimes difficulty encountered with encouraging GP Surgeries to participate in health referrals for patients to undertake sports activities or attend clubs. Strategies were in place to help support a culture change in the field of health referrals by GPs – for example, the Mid-Essex CCG had adopted branding under the Livewell campaign, and were currently undertaking work with GP Practices to help spread the campaign's message and highlight the myriad of activities, groups and clubs available for different groups of residents. In addition to this, local teams that stemmed from ConnectWell and social prescribers worked outside of GP Surgeries to help link residents in with community groups. It was added that any feedback received by the Council regarding GP Surgeries would then be forwarded to the CCG who could then refer back to surgeries when needed.
- The Council encouraged the use of grass pitches by Football Clubs as well as the AGPs. The latest Football Association (FA) Football Facilities Strategy indicated that there was a shortfall of grass pitches across the District. Some examples of grass pitches in the District that were highlighted included the King George Playing Field, Deanery Hill, the Braintree Leisure Centre at Tabor High School and the grass pitches at Alec Hunter and Notley High Schools.
- Members were informed that the grass pitch behind the Lidl Store in Witham did not have any changing facilities available for use, although there were some football teams now being allowed to train on the site. It was explained that football pitches needed to meet certain standards before the Council would accept responsibility for the management and maintenance of such sites. In respect of the Maltings Lane Community Facility, Members were advised that a Steering Group was due to commence in the near future to look at the potential opportunities in this area.
- It was relayed that there was much activity taking place across the District in respect of cycling activities and groups (e.g. "Tour De Witham," Braintree Easy Riders) and that the Council was often involved from the perspective of funding and promotional support.

- Members were informed that there was often liaison by the Council with private sector sports clubs, facilities and activities, such as with the Courtaulds Sports Ground and Parish Councils such as Rayne. This liaison was necessary in the more rural areas of the District, where sports facilities, clubs and activities were less widely available.
- The possibility of installing concrete table tennis facilities throughout the District had been considered previously by the Council; however, the lack of equipment available that was needed by residents (i.e. rackets) to use such facilities was highlighted as a likely obstruction to their uptake.
- In response to a concern raised about AGPs and the Council's campaign to reduce plastic usage, Members were advised that the third generation pitches installed throughout the District were made up of "crumb rubber" material, which was composed of recycled tyres.
- On the subject of outdoor gyms, Members were advised that these were best utilised when resources could be allocated towards funding for instructors based at the sites who would be able to demonstrate to members of the public how to best they could utilise the available equipment. Without this approach, it was unlikely that outdoor gyms would experience as much usage as other forms of gym in the District.
- On the subject of cycle ways, Members were informed that rural footpaths were not generally encouraged to be upgraded for such use as this could spoil the surrounding landscape and create a potential burden for the landowner. It was added that the Essex County Council (ECC) database held a large number of documents in relation to footpaths for walking and cycling.
- For clarification purposes, Members were advised that ECC as the Highway Authority were responsible for the management of footpaths.

Following the presentation, Members identified the following potential areas of interest to explore at future evidence gathering sessions:-

- It was acknowledged that conflicts of interest in relation to Councillor Community Grants were a frustration of those Members who sought to support sports provision within their own Wards. It was advised that such issues related to Code of Conduct matters and were not for exploration within the scope of the scrutiny review. Feedback regarding this issue would be provided to Members at a later date.
- Fusion were due to present their annual report to the Cabinet at the meeting in December 2019; as the appropriate Committee, Members of the Community Development Group were welcome to attend the meeting in order to scrutinize the Fusion Contract. Officers would provide further details to Members closer to the date of the meeting.
- Officers would signpost Members to appropriate colleagues at ECC regarding Public Rights of Way (PROW) queries.

Following the end of the presentation and discussion, Members expressed their thanks to Joby Humm for his very helpful contribution to the meeting. Joby was happy to be approached in future about any other lines of enquiry Members might identify on the subject of leisure provision.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

INFORMATION: Members gave consideration towards the future Work Programme of the Partnership Development Group. Members were asked if there were any specific subject areas or lines of enquiry that they wished to focus on from the report. On the subject of Leisure Provision Across the District, the Chairman suggested a number of potential areas for further examination by the Group, such as Section 106 opportunities and Public Open Spaces. Members were also reminded that in respect of the Terms of Reference for the Group, the main purpose of the scrutiny review into leisure provision was to examine the role of the Council and its partnership arrangements towards supporting sports provision and access. To help steer the Group's evidence enquiries, Members were also advised that the duration of their scrutiny review was not bound to the end of the Civic Year, which enable the Group to conduct a more thorough review.

Following the discussion, Members identified the following potential areas of interest to explore at future evidence gathering sessions:-

- It was suggested that Planning Officers be invited to attend a future meeting of the Partnership Development Group in order to advise Members on the subject of Section 106 regulations and Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL). It was added that Planning Officers could also advise Members on how land for sports and leisure provision was allocated under the Local Plan.
- For the purposes of evidence gathering, officers agreed to provide, where possible, data held by the Council that concerned leisure provision in the District. Suggested data streams included the number of participants in sports and leisure activities (through the Council and the Active Braintree Network), the distance people were willing to travel to make use of the available facilities, health profile data, the outcome of the Active Live survey and performance data with Fusion. Such information would be provided to Members at upcoming meetings of the Committee and via e-mails to the Group.
- Members were reminded that representatives from Fusion were due to attend the Cabinet meeting in December on the subject of their contract delivery with the Council. Members of the Partnership Development Group would be sent an invite to attend the meeting of the Cabinet once the details had been confirmed.
- Representatives from Rayne Parish Council were identified as potential contacts to invite to future meetings of the Group to speak to Members on the subject of local level leisure provision in the Rayne Village area.
- As a Teen Ambassador for Fusion Lifestyle, Members also expressed interest in inviting Miss Paige Frost to a future meeting of the Group to speak about her success and influence in the field of sports and leisure provision. It was added that a short statement could be requested from Miss Frost to be forwarded to Members as alternative to attendance at formal meeting if this was not possible.
- Another potential line of enquiry was to invite a representative from the Active Braintree Foundation who could advise Members further in its role regarding leisure provision and access within the District. The Chairman, Mr John Wood, was mentioned as key point of contact from this group and potential invitee to an upcoming meeting.

DECISION: Members noted the above and provided any additional feedback in respect of the future Work Programme.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure Members are aware of the future Work Programme.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9:25pm.

Councillor Mrs M Cunningham
(Chairman)