



PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP AGENDA

Wednesday, 25th November 2020 at 7.15pm

In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, this meeting will be held via Zoom and by the Council's YouTube channel – Braintree District Council Committees.

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to this meeting via YouTube.
To access the meeting please use the link below:

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

Members of the Partnership Development Group are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.

Councillor J Baugh

Councillor G Courtauld

Councillor Mrs M Cunningham (Chairman)

Councillor T McArdle

Councillor Mrs J Pell

Councillor I Pritchard

Councillor Mrs J Sandum

Councillor P Thorogood

Vacancy

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

A WRIGHT
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBER – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS

Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), Other Pecuniary Interests (OPI) or Non-Pecuniary Interests (NPI).

Any Member with a DPI, OPI or NPI must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a DPI or OPI or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the Chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

Public Question Time – Registration and Speaking:

In response to the Coronavirus the Council has implemented procedures for Public Question Time for its virtual meetings which are hosted via Zoom.

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time.

Participation will be via the submission of a written question or statement which will be read out by an Officer or the Registered Speaker during the meeting. All written questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be read **within 3 minutes** allotted for each question/statement.

Members of the public wishing to participate are requested to register by contacting the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by midday on the working day before the day of the Committee meeting. For example, if the Committee meeting is due to be held on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Monday, (where there is a bank holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Friday).

The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register for Public Question Time if they are received after the registration deadline.

Upon registration members of the public may indicate whether they wish to read their question/statement or to request an Officer to read their question/statement on their behalf during the virtual meeting. Members of the public who wish to read their question/statement will be provided with a link to attend the meeting to participate at the appropriate part of the Agenda.

All registered speakers are required to submit their written questions/statements to the Council by no later than 9am on the day of the meeting by emailing them to governance@braintree.gov.uk. In the event that a registered speaker is unable to connect to the virtual meeting their question/statement will be read by an Officer.

Questions/statements received by the Council will be published on the Council’s website. The Council reserves the right to remove any defamatory comment in the submitted questions/statements.

The Chairman of the Committee has discretion to extend the time allocated for public question time and to amend the order in which questions/statements are presented to the Committee.

Documents: Agendas, Reports, Minutes and Public Question Time questions and statements can be accessed via www.braintree.gov.uk

Data Processing: During the meeting the Council will be collecting performance data of participants' connectivity to the meeting. This will be used for reviewing the functionality of Ms Teams/Zoom and YouTube as the Council's platform for virtual meetings and for monitoring compliance with the legal framework for Council meetings. Anonymised performance data may be shared with third parties.

For further information on how the Council processes data, please see the Council's Privacy Policy. https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200136/access_to_information/376/privacy_policy

We welcome comments to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended, you can send these to governance@braintree.gov.uk

PUBLIC SESSION

Pages

- 1 Apologies for Absence**

- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Development Group held on 23rd September 2020 (copy previously circulated).

- 3 Declarations of Interest**
To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.

- 4 Public Question Time**
(See paragraph above)

- 5 Scrutiny Review into Leisure Provision in the Braintree District and Access to Sport - Final Report** **5 - 18**

Scrutiny Review into Leisure Provision and Access to Sport in the District – Final Report		Agenda No: 5
Portfolio	Overall Corporate Strategy and Direction Health and Communities	
Corporate Outcome:	A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play A well connected and growing district with high quality homes and infrastructure Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported	
Report presented by:	Cllr Mary Cunningham, Chairman of the Partnership Development Group	
Report prepared by:	Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
<u>Agendas, Minutes and copies of Power Point presentations delivered during evidence gathering sessions of the Partnership Development Group on 2nd October 2019, 20th November 2019, 5th February 2020 and 23rd September 2020</u>	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>In October 2019, Members of the Partnership Development Group began their first Scrutiny Review into ‘Leisure Provision and Access to Sport across the Braintree District.’ The Membership of the Group consisted of:-</p> <p>Councillor Mrs M Cunningham (Chairman), Councillor R Ramage, Councillor J Baugh, Councillor G Courtauld, Councillor T McArdle, Councillor Mrs J Pell, Councillor I Pritchard, Councillor Mrs J Sandum and Councillor P Thorogood.</p> <p>To help inform the eventual outcomes of the Scrutiny Review, one of the key aims was for Members to identify what the picture of sports provision within the Braintree District looked like; this included available leisure facilities, groups and clubs, as well as the various partnerships that supported those groups (e.g. through funding). It was also important for Members to gain a clear idea of the Council’s involvement with its partners, such as the Active Braintree Foundation. Members could then begin to establish whether there was a need for improvement in respect of the Council’s partnership working in order to support sport and leisure groups further, and thereby engage a wider range of the District’s residents in sports and leisure activities.</p> <p>Throughout the duration of the Scrutiny Review, Members took part in a number of evidence gathering sessions which helped Members to identify future research streams</p>		

and develop conclusions that stemmed from the evidence presented to them. As part of these sessions, Members received a number of presentations from Council Officers on the subject of Leisure Provision, as well as a partnership input from external parties (e.g. Town and Parish Councils).

Once all the available evidence streams had been examined and conclusions drawn, the Partnership Development Group were asked to make their recommendations to Cabinet and then to Council going forward. The recommendations of the Group are set out below:-

1. The Council should review its planning policy with regard to planning permissions in order to address the issues regarding land usage and, in turn, allow more sites to be utilised accordingly for leisure facilities.
2. The Council should review the why only 12 of the District's schools participate in the 'Daily Mile' and to ascertain if there are difficulties around achieving it in each school and to encourage as many as possible to participate.
3. The Council should collect data pertaining to the various walking groups across the District, and that the information be distributed to the Parish and Town Councils for their reference.
4. The Council identifies and collates possible funding streams in the District that could support leisure and sports provision; this information should then be circulated to Parish and Town Councils, as well as local sports clubs and groups.
5. The Community Assets Survey carried out by the Community Services Team, or a similar survey, should become a regular exercise for Members to undertake (suggest annually) and that the results are regularly forwarded to the Parish and Town Councils to be shared with residents and thus help them to identify what sport and leisure provision is available in their local area.
6. The Partnership Development Group recommends that there be some form of partnership working with land owners, pub landlords, café owners, etc, across the District in order to help promote the importance of more informal leisure provision (e.g. off-road cycle and walking paths that connect villages and towns).
7. The Council should gather more information on effective means of communication and inclusion around leisure provision for wider groups of people in the District.

Recommended Decision:

The Partnership Development Group is asked to consider the final Scrutiny Review Report and approve the recommendations for referral to Full Council and Cabinet.

Purpose of Decision:

To enable the Scrutiny Review Report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail.

Financial:	No matters arising out of this report.
Legal:	No matters arising out of this report.
Safeguarding:	No matters arising out of this report.
Equalities/Diversity:	No matters arising out of this report.
Customer Impact:	No matters arising out of this report.
Environment and Climate Change:	No matters arising out of this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	No matters arising out of this report.
Risks:	No matters arising out of this report.
Officer Contact: Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer	
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PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP
SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO 'LEISURE PROVISION AND ACCESS TO SPORT' IN
THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT (SCRUTINY REPORT)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members of the Partnership Development Group were tasked with conducting a Scrutiny Review into 'Leisure Provision and Access to Sport' in the Braintree District.

The Terms of Reference for the Partnership Development Group are as follows:-

- Driving forward existing partnerships;
- Helping to bring partnership working into the Council's mainstream work;
- Bringing together partners within the public sector for the benefit of the community;
- Developing an approach to future partnership working with both the public and the private sector;
- To receive the Annual Report of the Community Safety Partnership.

As part of the Scrutiny Review into Leisure Provision and Access to Sport, the key questions that Members sought to address were:-

- What is the picture of sports availability and groups?
- What partnerships are there to support the sports groups?
- What involvement does the Council have directly/through Fusion?
- What is the accessibility of facilities for groups? E.g. Availability, cost
- What impact can the Council have with partners to support groups and engagement for residents?

2. OVERVIEW OF LEISURE PROVISION IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT

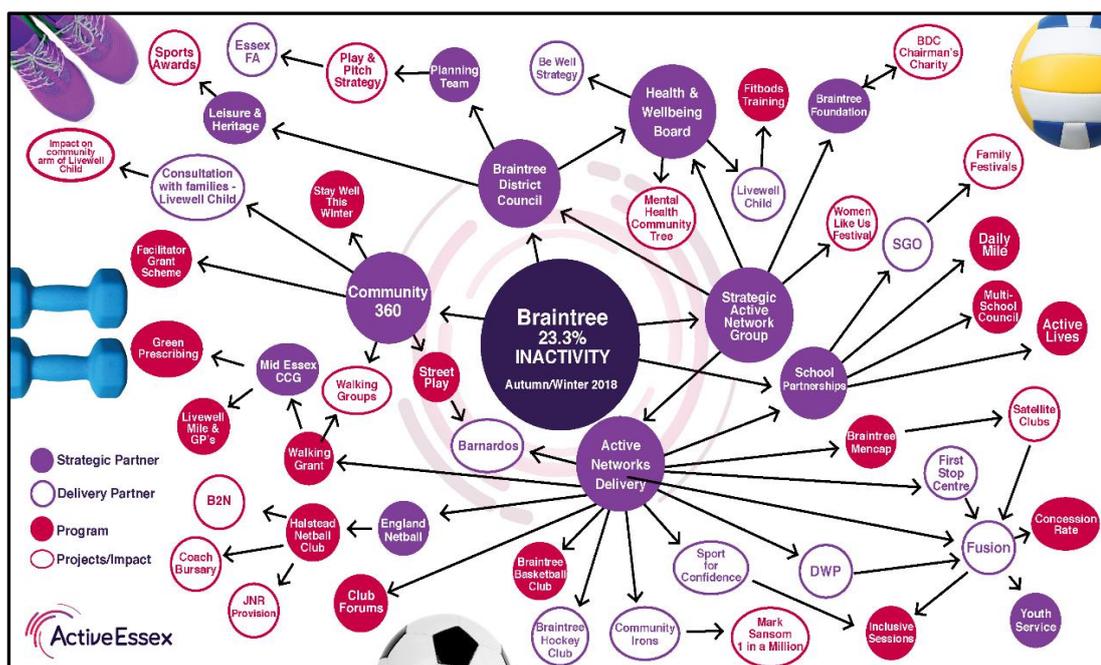
There is a wide range of both indoor and outdoor sports groups and activities available throughout the District that provide opportunities for a number of different groups of residents (i.e. young, elderly, disabled, etc) to become involved in sport and leisure. These groups included independent sports clubs such as a BMX Club, Martial Arts and Athletics. There was generally a large uptake in sports activities by residents; for example, the Braintree and District Athletic Club was reported to have over 400 club members alone. The Council also hired out a number of playing fields and sports pitches directly to clubs, families and schools, which helped to broaden the extent of sport and leisure activities that such clubs could provide (i.e. football, netball, tennis, etc). There

is usually a high demand for facilities like those of outdoor pitches, and the Council monitors this usage closely throughout the year.

The Council is responsible for four leisure centres across the District which are operated by Fusion Lifestyle under the Leisure Contract 2012-22; the centres include Witham Leisure Centre and Sports Ground, Braintree Sport and Health Club, Halstead Leisure Centre and Braintree Swimming and Fitness. Contractual obligations have been in place with Fusion for the provision of activities that cater for groups considered to be “harder to reach” in respect of sport and leisure; this helps to ensure that there is a positive balance of different clubs, membership deals and “pay and play” activities on offer. The centres tend to be well-used by residents throughout the year, with booking taken regularly from a mixture of clubs and organisations for activities, although there can be shortfalls in usage due to impact of the wider picture of available sports activities and facilities across the District. Two of Fusion’s leisure centres are linked to local academies; as such, protected bookings and joint-use agreements exist to enable limited access to some facilities on school days.

As well as Fusion Lifestyle, there are a number of partnerships that work with the Council which help to support sports groups and clubs. One such partnership is the Active Braintree Foundation, together with the Active Network. The Active Braintree Foundation is a trustee organisation that operates externally to the Council in order to allow for other funding streams to be identified. The Foundation’s vision and aims are also similar to that of the [Council’s Livewell and Be-Well Strategies](#), and support for clubs is provided in the form of coaching development, funding applications, safeguarding, social media support, planning applications, Section 106 monies, etc. The Council’s strongest influence in respect of sport and leisure was with the Active Braintree Foundation, as the Foundation helped to promote the Livewell Campaign brand and agenda to a wider audience.

NOTE: The data below was provided by Mr Joby Humm, Leisure and Heritage Manager, on behalf of Active Essex; it provides an indication of the different partnerships, both strategic and delivery, that operate within the District.



During the course of the Scrutiny Review, the Partnership Development Group took part in four evidence gathering sessions. A range of internal and external invitees attended the sessions in order to help support the findings of the Scrutiny Review and identify further lines of enquiry for Members; this enabled them to establish potential future recommendations.

3. INPUT FROM JOBY HUMM, LEISURE, HEALTH AND HERITAGE MANAGER

Mr Joby Humm attended the meeting of the Partnership Development Group on 2nd October 2019 in order to provide Members with an overview of the picture of sports availability and provision across the District, including the different facilities and community groups (e.g. Park Run) and partnerships that supported sports groups (e.g. Livewell, Active Braintree Foundation, Braintree Mencap, etc), as well as an indication of the Council's involvement with this through its contract with Fusion Lifestyle.

Members were informed that across the District, there was a wide range of projects that had been implemented as a means of sustainable sports provision, such as 'Park Run.' Park Run took place every Saturday at the Great Notley Country Park, and was a key example of a self-funding project that was supported primarily by volunteers each week. The level of public engagement with the project was generally positive, with an average of approximately 300 runners and walkers in attendance each week. As well as projects, there was also a variety of available sports facilities in the District, from swimming pools to artificial grass pitches (AGPs), of which four were Council-operated.

The District had also experienced much success recently in terms of its achievements and awards in sport and leisure, as seen with the Braintree BMX Club and Martial Arts Centre, the members of which had gone on to become world champions in their field. It was important to note that the wide variety of activities and facilities in the District meant that there was an opportunity for residents of all backgrounds, ages and capabilities to become involved in a form of sport that was suitable for their needs; this was exemplified by groups such as 'Walking Netball,' and projects such as Sport for Confidence, Chair-based Exercise, Age Well Afternoons and the appointment of a Teen Ambassador by Fusion Lifestyle. Sports and community development in the District also supported the objectives of the Council under its "Livewell" initiatives; for example, through Livewell, schemes such as "Age Well" were promoted through partnership work with local community groups such as Age UK, Age Concern and the Dementia Alliance to help infiltrate older age groups. The brand of "Livewell" embodied a vast partnership network under the umbrella of health and wellbeing, and included Essex County Council, the Fire Service, Greenfields Community Housing and links with Doctor's Surgeries.

4. INPUT FROM ACTIVE BRAINTREE FOUNDATION

At the meeting of the Partnership Development Group on 2nd October 2019, Members agreed that a member of the Active Braintree Foundation (ABF), as one of the Council's key partners in respect of sports and leisure provision in

the District, should be invited to attend a future meeting of the Group. Mr John Wood, Chair of the ABF, was subsequently in attendance at the meeting of the Group on 20th November 2019 and provided Members with an overview of the work of the ABF and its role within the District, its past achievements, future planned work and the strategic partnerships that the Foundation liaised with. Mr Wood informed Members that the ABF would offer support to organisations that sought to liaise with them wherever possible; support could be offered in the form of funding or expertise knowledge required in order to implement new sport and leisure projects or activities; the Sports for Confidence project, based at Witham Leisure Centre, was a prime example of such a project. Developing partnerships with local organisations was fundamental aspect of the ABF; such organisations that the ABF had already worked with included groups such as Braintree District Council, Community Iron, Greenfields Community Housing, Sport for Confidence, First Stop, Barnardos, Community 360, Department of Work and Pensions and Active Essex.

The key objective of the ABF was reported as: "To promote community participation in healthy recreation for the benefit of the inhabitants of Braintree District." Under this objective, the key aims of the ABF were as follows:-

- Partner with local clubs/agencies to increase levels of participation in sport and physical activity;
- Inspire communities to become more active to improve their health and wellbeing, therefore leading happier and more positive lives;
- Raise aspirations, confidence, skills and knowledge to enable individuals to reach their full potential;
- Strengthen community cohesion and break down barriers to participation thereby addressing inequalities; and
- Improve physical and mental health wellbeing.

A key point raised by Mr Wood as part of his presentation included the need for the Council to give further consideration as to how community assets such as sports, leisure and healthcare facilities could be incorporated within new communities during their design stages, and to how those assets could be interlinked to make them as effective as possible in serving the needs of local residents. Another key point raised was the need to increase access to sports activities through improving the promotion of available activities and clubs, such as through the activity finder on the Active Essex website, which both the Council and ABF were known to have subscribed to.

There was reportedly £30k of funding available to the ABF, the majority of which had been supplied by Active Essex and Public Health. Smaller grants were received from local charities, such as those associated with the Courtauld Family. Funding for the different clubs and organisations who were in partnership with the ABF was allocated by means of grant sums of up to £1,000 for the promotion of sports activities.

Although engagement with the ABF could not be imposed on other organisations, it was nonetheless important that the key aims of the ABF of widening access to sport, increasing participation in sports and improving the health and wellbeing of the public be communicated in a more effective manner. The success of the 'Spot It Stop It' campaign launched by the Community Safety Partnership was mentioned as a key example where local businesses and other organisations alike had engaged in partnership work with one another in order to increase awareness of the scheme, of which sought to combat cases of Child Sexual Exploitation.

Although sports development in the Braintree District was priority focus of the Council, officers were restricted as to the amount of time they could invest into the subject, often due to other work commitments. Members as such agreed that a potential recommendation as part of the Scrutiny Review was to support officers in their efforts by identifying the available sports facilities across the District and observing how those facilities could be utilised as efficiently as possible. The Council could work with the ABF in order to achieve this.

5. INPUT FROM PLANNING OFFICERS

Following the end of Mr Humm's presentation to Members at the meeting of Partnership Development Group on 2nd October 2019, Members agreed that it would be useful if Planning Officers were to attend a future meeting of the Group in order to advise Members on the subject of Section 106 regulations and Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL). Planning Officers would also be able to advise Members on how land for sports and leisure provision was allocated under the Local Plan. Mr Neil Jones, Principal Planning Officer and Julie O'Hara, Senior Planning Policy Officer at the Council, were therefore in attendance at the meeting of the Group 20th November 2020 to speak to Members on the subject and address queries that had been raised previously.

Members were advised that Planning Officers were required to determine new planning applications in accordance with the Council's adopted planning policies. For example, under the Local Plan, designated employment areas, such as industrial estates, were to remain protected for industrial and commercial usage in order to ensure that there was available land for which businesses could use as a means of expansion. Planning officers were also required to examine the existing and future supply of employment land and how this would be achieved (e.g. as with Horizon 120), as well as the protection of the existing employment land. New planning applications received by the Council would sometimes conflict with these policies and could not, as such, always be granted.

On the subject of the Local Plan, it was advised that Planning officers followed a standards based approach when calculating what provision of open space was required for new developments. Open space could be provided through Section 106 agreements by either the developer making a provision on the site, or making a financial contribution to the Council that it could use in order to improve existing facilities, or to provide new open space and leisure facilities. However, it was not possible to request that a developer included more space at a site in order to address previous issues that had perhaps arisen as a result of historic planning policy. Negotiation between developers

and the Council was essential, and the end results of any new land proposals would always need to be reasonable and proportionate and in accordance with the Council's standards regarding open space and leisure provision.

Further to the discussions, Members identified a number of potential recommendations including the suggestion that the Council gave further consideration to how leisure and sports facilities across the District could be utilised more effectively, and further examination into informal sports provision across the District. Furthermore, it was highlighted that Members could give consideration as to how they might engage more successfully with Town and Parish Councils during periods of public consultation in order to ensure that more informed responses were provided as a result.

6. INPUT FROM RAYNE PARISH COUNCIL

Councillor Ann Hooks, Chairman at Rayne Parish Council, was invited to attend the meeting of the Partnership Development Group on 5th February 2020 in order to provide Members with an overview of leisure provision within the Rayne area and to clarify who was responsible for the management of the different leisure facilities, what funding streams were available and how successful the level of engagement from the public was.

The responsibility for the management of a number of key leisure facilities in the Rayne Village area were listed, as provided below:-

- Rayne Village Hall and Playing Fields (owned by the Parish Council and run and managed by the dedicated Village Hall Committee)
- Nature Reserve (owned and maintained by the Parish Council)
- Flitch Way (owned and maintained by Essex County Council together with Friends of the Flitch Way volunteers)

Members were advised that Rayne Village Hall was the main provider of leisure provision within the area, including the outdoor gym, fitness trail, BMX track, playing fields, etc. A 'Community and Leisure' survey was distributed to local residents by the Parish Council in 2019, the survey of which asked questions in relation to the uptake by residents of facilities like that of the BMX track, local cafes, play areas and allotments. Other questions that were posed included additional facilities that residents would perhaps like to see implemented in future, a request for the details of any clubs or societies that residents belonged to (e.g. fitness clubs or indoor bowls, etc). The overall response rate was approximately 10% against the 1,300 dwellings in the Rayne area.

The overall usage of the facilities in the Rayne area by local residents, such as sports grounds and playing areas, was generally positive, with many residents external to the Rayne area often visiting to make use of these as well. Facilities like that of the Flitch Way and Booking Hall Café were popular attractions throughout the year. Playing fields in Rayne were maintained entirely by the local cricket and football clubs, whereas areas such as the nature reserve and hedges were maintained by the Parish Council. The Village Hall Committee was responsible for the management of the local

playground, although the Parish Council maintained certain aspects of this, such as weed control of the grounds.

In respect of funding for new sport and leisure schemes, this was often provided through grants, as seen with the installation of a fitness trail in 2016, for which funding was applied for and awarded through the Mi Community Braintree District Council grant. The presence of a sufficient financial resource to support leisure provision was noted as being instrumental in ensuring that new schemes could be implemented. The Rayne Village Hall Committee was self-maintained through fundraising events and its own accounts, although there was also an element of liaison with the Parish Council on some financial precepts, such as the sharing of defibrillator costs and payment of cleaner wages.

7. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL SURVEY – 7th to 24th JANUARY 2020

Throughout the duration of their evidence gathering sessions, Members identified a number of potential areas for further exploration within the scope of the Scrutiny Review; this included formal and informal leisure provision within the District. Members were therefore keen to extend their research to the remit of Parish and Town Councils in the District in order to understand what levels of sport and leisure provision there is in local areas. A scrutiny enquiry was therefore commenced between the Council and Parish and Town Clerks via e-mail on 7th January 2020 and sought to establish what levels of sport and leisure provision there were across the District, what resources were available in those areas and how accessible sport and leisure facilities were for residents in more rural localities.

As of the meeting of the Partnership Development Group on 5th February 2020, a total of 21 responses from the Parish and Town Clerks had been received. During the meeting, Members received further input from Councillor Ann Hooks in respect of sport and leisure provision in the Rayne Parish area and then discussed the scrutiny enquiry responses received.

(The responses of Parish and Town Clerks to the enquiry can be found [here](#).)

In considering the responses, Members determined that, overall, there appeared to be positive engagement and contribution by Parish and Town Councils in the District in respect of leisure provision and management of resources in this area. A number of key features were identified by Members as being especially prevalent in Parish and Town areas where there had been much success in ensuring that leisure and sports provision could be sustained in more rural localities; Rayne Parish Council was noted as a primary example of this, due largely to features such as a sustainable financial resource, a central village hub, effective communicative and media tools, as well as positive engagement and enthusiasm for sport and leisure expressed by local residents.

In discussing the survey results, Members noted that although the results provided a useful insight into the different types of leisure and sports provision that was available across the District, a weakness in the survey was

highlighted as Parish Clerks were not necessarily aware of all of the activities that took place in their localities (e.g. due to the presence of informal clubs and groups, private sessions, etc). Furthermore, responses had not been received from all of the Parish and Town Clerks within the District, which meant that a more accurate reflection of the District's leisure provision could not be provided.

FUSION REPORT TO CABINET

As part of their evidence gathering, Members of the Partnership Development Group were invited to attend a meeting of the Cabinet on 18th December 2020; Fusion Lifestyle were due to be in attendance at the meeting in order to present their annual report to Cabinet for review. The Council reviewed its contract with Fusion regularly in order to ensure that it remained of economic benefit to the organisation, and where issues were identified, whether consideration towards alternative options, such as the return of the management of the District's leisure facilities in-house, was needed. Any such decisions required evidence-based justification. Members of the Partnership Development Group who subsequently attended the meeting of the Cabinet were present in a scrutiny capacity and were permitted to observe the proceedings only, and then report back any areas of note to the Group at its next meeting.

COMMUNITY ASSETS SURVEY – COMMUNITY SERVICES TEAM

At the meeting of the Partnership Development Group on 5th February 2020, the Chairman made reference to comments that had been received from Councillor Mrs Parker in relation to the Scrutiny Enquiry with Parish and Town Clerks on the subject of leisure provision. Councillor Mrs Parker was aware of a 'Community Assets Survey' that had been circulated to all Ward Members and Parish and Town Councils by the Community Services Team in 2019; the survey had requested details of the different activities and facilities that were available in local areas across the District, and formed part of the Council's initiative to combat issues surrounding social isolation and loneliness. Members agreed that the data collected from this survey could help to support the scrutiny review by providing them with a more comprehensive list of what was available in terms of leisure provision across the District (e.g. such as shops, cafes, pubs, surgeries, etc).

Officers in the Governance Team subsequently contacted Ms Moira Groborz, Community Services Officer at the Council on 6th February 2020 to request that the results of the Community Assets Survey be shared with the Members of the Partnership Development Group. Ms Groborz kindly shared the results of the team's survey with Governance Officers, who then circulated this to the Group. At the time that this took place, the results of the survey had not yet been made public; as such, the survey results were shared with Members of the Partnership Development Group only. The results of the survey were then used by the Chairman of Group and Members to help inform their recommendations as part of the Scrutiny Review.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Council should review its planning policy with regard to planning permissions in order to address the issues regarding land usage and, in turn, allow more sites to be utilised accordingly for leisure facilities.

Following recent Planning refusals and comments made by Mr John Wood, Chair of the Active Braintree Foundation, whereby sports, dance and/or fitness groups had applied for Planning permission for change of use of industrial premises to accommodate leisure. This very concern was raised by Sir Simon Stevens, head of the NHS who stated that “Perverse planning rules restricting gyms from opening are undermining efforts to solve the obesity epidemic.”¹

Recommendation 2

The Council should review why only 12 of the District’s schools participate in the ‘Daily Mile’ and to ascertain if there are difficulties around achieving it in each school and to encourage as many as possible to participate.

In his presentation to the Members of the Partnership Development Group, Mr John Wood, Chair of the Active Braintree Foundation, reported that there were only 12 primary schools in the District that participated in ‘The Daily Mile’ scheme. It has been proven as an effective way of keeping children physically and mentally healthy, helping to avoid issues such as obesity.

Recommendation 3

The Council should collect data pertaining to the various walking groups across the District, and that the information be distributed to the Parish and Town Councils for their reference.

Mr John Wood revealed that he was often received inquiries about the available walking groups in the District. The general consensus of Members of the Group with their local knowledge was that there are walking groups in the District which are of great benefit, mainly to older residents. Walking, as well as keeping physically and mentally fit, can also help to overcome social isolation. Furthermore, group walking may have appeal to both men and women who would feel more comfortable walking with company.

Recommendation 4

The Council identifies and collates possible funding streams in the District that could support leisure and sports provision; this information should then be

¹ <https://headtopics.com/uk/nhs-chief-has-warned-that-perverse-planning-rules-restricting-gyms-from-opening-are-undermining-ef-10519757>

circulated to Parish and Town Councils, as well as local sports clubs and groups.

With reference to the presentation given by Councillor Ann Hooks, Chairman of Rayne Parish Council, it was identified that a resident of Rayne was very well informed on how to access funding for all sorts of groups and activities. Councillor Mrs Hooks stated that this was a huge advantage in aiding village projects that otherwise may not go ahead. It was also identified from other presentations that groups were unaware of what funding streams might be available and how they could be accessed.

Recommendation 5

The Community Assets Survey carried out by the Community Services Team, or a similar survey, should become a regular exercise for Members to undertake (suggest annually) and that the results are regularly forwarded to the Parish and Town Councils to be shared with residents and thus help them to identify what sport and leisure provision is available in their local area.

A recurring theme throughout the time of the Partnership Development Group's evidence gathering (with much of this identified from the responses of the Parish and Town Council surveys) was that although there was a huge amount of sports and leisure activities taking place across the District, in some areas there seemed to be a lack of information for residents to know what was available. Furthermore, Parish and Town Councils were not always aware of what clubs, groups etc, were established in their own areas. The issue would hopefully be addressed to a degree by work that the Community Services Team implemented by gathering information from Members last autumn (2019).

Recommendation 6

The Partnership Development Group recommends that there be some form of partnership working with land owners, pub landlords, café owners, etc, across the District in order to help promote the importance of more informal leisure provision (e.g. off-road cycle and walking paths that connect villages and towns).

The importance of informal leisure provision, such as safe walking and cycling, has been highlighted since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many formal activities and facilities such as leisure centres, children's play areas and cafes were closed during the lockdown, or remain so now.

Recommendation 7

The Council should gather more information on effective means of communication and inclusion around leisure provision for wider groups of people in the District.

The Group have determined from the completed questionnaires and presentations provided during evidence gathering sessions that communication is a fundamental aspect of promoting the existence of the

various facilities and initiatives under the umbrella of leisure provision more broadly across the District, particularly in less urban areas. Councillor Ann Hook, Chairman at Rayne Parish Council, stressed the importance of both electronic and paper formats in getting responses to the surveys that were circulated in Rayne; inevitably, many residents who responded were involved in football, BMXing or rambling, for example, and were as such already aware of the leisure facilities available to them. The challenge seemed to be around communicating with 'harder to reach' residents who were not already aware of the facilities available to them; for instance, in more rural Wards with a high proportion of older residents, electronic communication and social media was not necessarily the most effective means of promoting leisure provision across all groups of people. There is perhaps an over-reliance on the internet as a standard means of communication.

9. MINUTES AND AGENDAS OF MEETINGS

[21st August 2020](#)

[2nd October 2020](#)

[20th November 2020](#)

[5th February 2020](#)

[23rd September 2020](#)

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- John Wood, Chair of the Active Braintree Foundation
- Neil Jones, Principal Planning Officer at Braintree District Council
- Julie O'Hara, Senior Planning Policy Officer at Braintree District Council
- Councillor Ann Hooks, Chairman at Rayne Parish Council
- Moira Groborz, Community Services Officer at Braintree District Council