

LEISURE/BEST VALUE**1 SUMMARY**

This report outlines the concept of Best Value to Leisure Services and seeks Member input into the process at this early stage.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 With the Council having agreed to look at Leisure Services as a Year 1 Best Value Service Review, and with the consultants, PMP, now appointed to advise the Council on its future leisure strategy, the opportunity exists for Members to examine the Council's role relating to leisure in considerable detail over the forthcoming year. On the basis of those deliberations, the Council can then reach a decision as to the way forward of leisure. The consultants, whose presentation follows on the agenda, will be undertaking a review of the Council's Leisure Services through:-

- Undertaking a market audit
- Assessing existing facilities
- Undertaking public consultation
- Preparing a Vision Statement with consideration of the potential options available

2.2 The principles of Best Value will be an integral part of their review process. PMP will be examining the Council's leisure services from the outside, bringing with them the knowledge and expertise of operation in the wider context.

2.3 From within the Council a small officer group has also now been established to examine leisure services using Best Value principles. This group will examine service provision from an internal perspective. Linkages have been established between the consultants and the officer group to avoid duplication and ensure good information flow. Given the importance of leisure to this Council in both operational and budgetary terms, it is anticipated that this arrangement will ensure that Members receive the fullest possible information to aid the decision making process.

3. THE PROCESS OF BEST VALUE

As Councils review their services using Best Value principles, each service review is expected to incorporate the four 'C's, namely:-

- To challenge why and how a service is being provided
- To compare the services with the performance that others are achieving
- To consult with local tax payers, service users and the wider community on how the service can be improved
- To demonstrate competitiveness of the service's performance.

3.1 The consultant's presentation which follows covers, amongst other things, how they would like to undertake the consultation process associated with their work. In addition, in line with the legislation and Government guidance, the Council will need to undertake a District-wide opinion survey later this year covering a range of its activities, for which budgetary provision has been made and on which there will be a report in due course. Further consultation may also be required later in the process, depending upon the options considered.

3.2 Tonight provides the opportunity for Members to have an early input into the Best Value work with regard to leisure, and if there are any issues that Members would like to feed into either the consultants or internal officer working group at this stage, comments would be appreciated. For example, Members might like to consider what they feel are the strengths of the current leisure service provision, its weaknesses and what opportunities and threats to the service that they feel exist either at present or are likely in the future.

4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Provision of leisure services can have an impact in relation to Crime and Disorder issues

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The provision of leisure facilities, depending on their nature, can do much to add to the attractiveness of the District's environment. In addition, the location and design of facilities can have environmental implications in terms of accessibility, journey time, and energy consumed.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no financial implications arising directly out of this report. However, the Best Value process will examine the resource issues associated with leisure services.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** Leisure is primarily a discretionary service, although in many instances it complements the Council's statutory obligations. In addition, the Local Government Bill currently going through Parliament recognises the wider social, economic and environmental responsibilities of Councils.

8 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** Leisure services are provided on a District-wide basis. Parish Councils will be consulted under the Best Value process.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1** It is proposed that the Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That Members note the implications of Best Value in respect of leisure services and comment accordingly on those aspects that should be taken into account at this early stage in the Best Value Review Process. (CEX)

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