

**NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**



**North East
Derbyshire**
District Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

**LEISURE PROVISIONS FOR OLDER
RESIDENTS**

APRIL 2023

Contents

	Page
Chair's Foreword	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Recommendations	4
3. Scope of Review	4
4. Method of Review	4
5. Evidence and Research	5
6. Key Findings	5-9
7. Conclusions	9
Appendix A NEDDC Leisure Membership Structure	10
Appendix B Stakeholders Engaged During the Review	11

Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this report describing the work of the Communities Scrutiny Committee. It details the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Committee from its scrutiny review into leisure provisions for older residents.

The Committee felt that a review was timely following the major investments the Council has made into the District's leisure centres, and the post Pandemic recovery of older people having the confidence to engage in physical and social activities again. I, like other Members, were impressed with the facilities and services on offer, not only for older residents which was the scope of this review but for all residents. We certainly have four fantastic leisure centres available in North East Derbyshire. The Review also compliments a similar one this Committee undertook in 2020/21 on childhood obesity and younger residents.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for their input and also the stakeholders who helped inform the review. I would also like to thank the Senior Scrutiny Officer for his support of the Committee's work and democratic services for the help they have provided.

Councillor Kevin Tait
Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee

Review Panel

The review panel comprised the following members:

Councillor K Tait	-	(Conservative) – Review Panel Chair
Councillor H Liggett	-	(Conservative) – Review Panel Vice-Chair
Councillor T Lacey	-	(Labour)
Councillor M Potts	-	(Independent)
Councillor L Deighton	-	(Conservative)
Councillor J Birkin	-	(Labour)
Councillor P Windley	-	(Liberal Democrat)
Councillor J Lilley	-	(Labour)
Councillor P Wheelhouse	-	(Conservative)

1. Recommendations

That the Council:

- 1.1 Explores options in simplifying the membership structure;
- 1.2 Explores ways of better understanding how many older people are using the Council's Leisure Facilities each year by using the new reporting system and updating Members on this as part of the Committee's work programme;
- 1.3 Implements a system in which those who have taken part in the exercise by referral scheme are followed up on during and after the initial 12 week course to encourage continued participation; and
- 1.4 Considers a dedicated area on the website which promotes the activities and services on offer.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 At its meeting on 22 July 2022, the Committee agreed to undertake a review into leisure provisions for older residents.
- 2.2 Members felt as though the review was timely given the recent investments in the Council's leisure facilities, as well as the post pandemic recovery and encouraging residents to resume health and wellbeing activities. The Review also compliments a similar one the Committee undertook in 2020/21 regarding childhood obesity and younger residents.

3. Scope of Review

- 3.1 The review aimed to:
 - Understand and assess what was being done in the District to promote healthy lifestyles and improve wellbeing in older residents;
 - Understand the demand from older residents for leisure provisions provided by the Council;
 - Identify any opportunities to increase participation and new memberships;
 - Evaluate what had been successful; and
 - Identify room for improvement.

4. Method of Review

- 4.1 The review panel met on six occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and key people they wished to interview.
- 4.2 Evidence was gathered in a variety of ways including written sources and interviews with a range of stakeholders.

5. Evidence and Research

5.1 A number of documents and evidence were provided to the review panel for consideration. Details are provided below:

- Scene Setting Presentation by Chris Mills – Assistant Director of Leisure
- Sport England Data (Sport England Active Lives Survey 2021)
- ONS Data
- NEDDC Leisure Services data
- Derbyshire Observatory – Data and statistics for Derbyshire
- Presentations provided by the Healthy Lifestyles Manager, Health and Wellbeing Development Officer and the Swimming Development Officer

6. Key Findings

6.1 Strengths/Observations

6.1.1 The Assistant Director of Leisure explained that the Council was investing over £29 million on its leisure facilities over the next 3 years. This included a new Clay Cross Active leisure facility, and refurbishments to Eckington Pool, Killamarsh Active, and Dronfield Sports Centre. These were being funded through both the Council and a number of partners including funding accessed through the Town Deal Fund. The Review Panel received an overview of the District's four leisure centres. They were impressed with the facilities and agreed that the centres were excellent facilities for residents.

Members heard that the investments had been made for a number of reasons which included improved accessibility for people with disabilities, reducing our carbon footprint and investing in low carbon technology, and looking to meet expected demand with over 1.2 million visits expected to be made each year. It was also stated that the investments would help reduce levels of inactivity, social isolation, and health inequalities.

6.1.2 The Committee noted that the investments would also benefit older residents who may have been less likely to use facilities which could not cater for them. The Council's leisure facilities now had better changing facilities, equipment (including pool pods and IFI gym equipment), parking, lifts, and hearing loops.

The Review Panel was informed that a 2018 public consultation in Clay Cross highlighted a demand for activity for older people. In response, a Shapemaster suite has been developed as part of plans for Clay Cross Active. The suite will contain power assisted exercise equipment designed to increase access to exercise and improve the fitness and wellbeing of a wide range of people who were not catered for with traditional high energy exercise equipment. The equipment was designed for those over 55, the body conscious, those with disabilities, mobility issues and long term issues.

6.1.3 The Assistant Director of Leisure, the Healthy Lifestyles Manager, the Swimming Development Officer, and the Health and Wellbeing Officer informed the Committee about the services and activities offered to older residents in the District. Members heard that leisure services provided over 30 activities which were provided at the Council's leisure centres as well as out in the wider community. It was a mixture of physical and social activities. In the leisure centres these included targeted swimming sessions such 'aquacise' and 'water wellbeing', fitness classes, walking football/netball, and cardio based 'dicky tickers'. Out in the community these activities included family walking and jog groups, chair based exercise classes, bowls clubs, and community cafes to name a few.

There were 334 Supersaver monthly memberships (averaged over the previous 5 months in September 2022), 419 members of the leisure pass and concessionary pass scheme, and the community activities averaged 1600 visits a month. A full breakdown of how the membership structure operates can be found at Appendix A.

The Committee was impressed with the amount of activities on offer, and that these services were well organised and well integrated with each other. Members also agreed that the staff delivering those services were a credit to the Council, showing a positive attitude and genuine care and desire to help others.

6.1.4 It was stated that social interaction was a particularly important element to health and wellbeing and therefore the Council had re-introduced cafes at all of the facilities. Members also heard about a number of initiatives which were primarily based on socialising such as 'book buddies'. The 'swim buddy' initiative aimed to pair up socially isolated residents so that they could enjoy swimming with others. It was stated that social activity was very often combined with physical activity to increase demand. There were also broader projects provided for older residents such as on digital skills, weight management, and smoking cessation.

6.1.5 Members considered area profiles for the areas concerning the locations of the Council's leisure centres. The profiles outlined the demographics for each geographic area. The Committee agreed that the leisure centres were well placed and took advantage of the District's most populous areas.

6.1.6 The Committee heard that the Council was working well with partners to access funding and improve the services on offer. These partners included Public Health England and Swim England. The Swimming Development Officer informed Members about the water wellbeing accreditation which, if approved, would enable the Council to access further funding from Swim England. It aimed to create a sustainable health and wellbeing delivery model that health professionals felt confident in sending their patients to. This would lead to more people who had long term health conditions participating in swimming and wider aquatic activity to improve their health. Extensive

partnership working was also done with the Healthy NED Partnership, DCC Public Health, and Active Derbyshire.

- 6.1.7 The Healthy Lifestyles Manager discussed the 'exercise by referral' programme which was part funded by DCC Public Health. The programme provided supported exercise for people who were sedentary with suitable medical conditions. Members were impressed to hear that the programme offered in North East Derbyshire was one of the most successful in the country, and involves two free sessions a week on selected activities being offered for 12 weeks with reduced rates for the activities thereafter.

Members heard that demand was very high, and that since 01 April 2022 there had been 395 referrals to the 'exercise by referral' programme. From those referrals there had been 9873 visits to all activities associated with the programme, such as visits to the gym, swimming and specified fitness classes which were included within the offer of the programme. It was stated that 68% of those referrals were for residents aged over 55.

The Review Panel heard that Public Health England had set a target of 258 people for completion of the 12 week scheme. The NEDDC figure as of 13 January 2023 was 212 (88% of the target completed) with the programme running April to April.

Areas for Improvement/Observations

- 6.2.1 The Assistant Director – Leisure provided the Committee with data from Sport England (Sport England Active Lives Survey 2021). It was stated that activity levels generally decrease with age and that activity levels had only just recovered amongst older adults following the Pandemic.

Members noted that this was a particular challenge for leisure services as the Pandemic had effected the confidence of some older residents in enjoying the District's leisure centres and other activities without the fear of becoming ill with Covid-19 or other seasonal illnesses. Other barriers to participation include general illness or disease, cognitive decline, isolation, cost of living, travel difficulties, lack of confidence, and lack of time.

The Committee observed that we were an ageing population and that by 2037 31% of residents will be 65+. It was therefore important to keep up with demand. North East Derbyshire currently has 28,200 residents aged 55-74 and 12,000 were 75+. Of those residents, 54% were currently inactive and that inactivity levels have been increasing since 2015/16 according to Active Lives data. It was therefore imperative that the Council's leisure facilities were there to support residents in leading a healthy lifestyle particularly in an aging population.

- 6.2.2 The Review Panel heard that since the Pandemic, the activities that people take part in have shifted. For example the Sport England Active Lives Survey 2021 outlined that between November 2019 and November 2020, 2.5 million people fewer were taking part in fitness activities, 2.2

million people fewer were taking part in swimming, and 0.9 million people fewer taking part in team sports. Those numbers had remained broadly similar in November 2021. Walking for leisure, however, had seen an increase of 3.7 million during the same period. This suggested that the services the Council offered also had to shift accordingly and that the services on offer consisted of more than the just the facilities. The Committee heard about community initiatives such as walking into communities and group walking and jogging which were becoming increasingly popular.

- 6.2.3 Members felt as though the membership structure was complicated and difficult to understand. For example the leisure discount scheme comprised of two different schemes – the concessionary pass and the leisure pass scheme. The schemes had a marginal difference in pay and play price of 90p, yet was the same price for a monthly supersaver membership. Different qualifying criteria applied to the pass schemes, and the Review Panel agreed that simplifying the membership structure should be explored.
- 6.2.4 The Committee noted that the Council was promoting the services and activities it offered through a number of different channels which included targeted marketing through social media, leaflets, magazines, and the Council’s website. Having searched through the website themselves, Members questioned whether the information was regularly reviewed and kept up to date, and felt that the information was difficult to find and was not particularly user friendly especially for older residents. There was a consensus that the information could be centralised more effectively and that this could be done through a dedicated page on the Council’s website as well as through dedicated social media campaigns to spread awareness.
- 6.2.5 Members were concerned that they were not able to compare previous annual membership numbers based on demographics with the current year and were therefore unable to assess whether memberships amongst older residents were increasing or decreasing year on year. The Committee agreed that this information was crucial in assessing the performance of the leisure centres in attracting certain demographics, and that it should be recommended that these figures, broken down into age demographics were recorded and reported back to the relevant Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.
- 6.2.6 Although the Committee was impressed by the exercise by referral scheme, it did feel that improvements could be made in terms of monitoring those who have taken part in the scheme and are followed up on during and after the initial 12 week course to encourage continued participation. Without monitoring, there was the potential for some participants to ‘slip through the net’.
- 6.2.7 Members acknowledged that staff resources were limited and that there wasn’t a great deal of capacity to do more than what was currently on offer, particularly in regards to community projects. The Council could consider growing the community based team in the future once the leisure facilities investment was complete and self-sustaining, depending on the resources

available at the time. Whilst the facilities at the Council's leisure centres had received significant investment to target and benefit the District's older residents, many community based activities were done through volunteers and provided by external funding, and an increase in leisure services staff who operate out in the District could allow for more community based activities which were growing in popularity. Many of the community activities on offer also had no target demographic, and investment in more of those projects that specifically target older people could lead to better participation as we know that activity decreases with age.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The Review Panel heard from a range of stakeholders during the review process. The review identified a number of strengths in regards to the leisure provisions it provides to older residents in the District. Members were impressed with the activities on offer, provided both in the leisure centres and out in the community, and thanked the staff providing those services.
- 7.2 There was, however, some areas for improvement involving exercise by referral, monitoring of memberships and participation, displaying information on the website, and membership pricing and structure.

Appendix A

Direct Debit Memberships Types:

- Flex 1- one activity from gym/swim/classes = £23 a month DD
- Flex 2- two activities from gym/swim/classes= £26.50 a month DD
- Unlimited- All 3 gym/swim/classes and discount on court bookings- £30 a month DD
- Corporate- Same as unlimited. Company is registered with us so get a discount- £25 a month DD (minimum of 5 employees)

Leisure Discount Scheme - Comprises the 2 following schemes:

<u>Leisure Pass Scheme</u>	<u>Concessionary Pass Scheme</u>
<p>One off annual payment of £4.50 which then gives reduced prices for activities in the centre- Pay & Play @ £2.90</p> <p>Qualify for this membership by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, or Universal Credit with the Housing element • Any dependants (under 18 years of age) • Health Referral <p>Are entitled to the <u>Supersaver membership</u> (unlimited gym, swim and some Exercise by Referral classes @ £20/month (cash payment)</p>	<p>One off annual payment of £4.50 which then gives reduced prices for activities in the centre- Pay & Play @ £3.70</p> <p>Qualify for this membership by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving state pension • Health Referral • Student • Armed Forces Concession <p>Are entitled to the <u>Supersaver membership</u> (unlimited gym, swim and some Exercise by Referral classes @ £20/month (cash payment)</p>

Appendix B

Stakeholders Engaged During the Review

- Chris Mills – Assistant Director of Leisure
- Kelly Massey – Health and Wellbeing Development Officer
- Michael Price – Healthy Lifestyles Manager
- Stephen Birds – Swimming Development Officer
- Cllr A Powell – Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Communities and Communications