

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FROM: Head of Community Development**

**REPORT NUMBER: J100**

**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
(COMMUNITY SERVICES)  
COMMITTEE**

**DATE OF MEETING: 6 October 2009**

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL AND SOUTH SUFFOLK LEISURE - PARTNERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To report on the performance and development of a key strategic and operational partnership between the District Council and South Suffolk Leisure (SSL), an independent leisure trust with responsibility for operating the Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury and the Hadleigh swimming pool.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the content of the report be noted.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications associated with the content of this report.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 The nature of this report is such that a risk assessment is not required as the Committee is not being asked to make a decision or agree any recommendations.

**5. KEY INFORMATION**

**5.1 End of Year Accounts 2008/09**

Overall SSL made a slight surplus on the year of just over £10,000, this was at variance with the budget that predicated a surplus of around £30,000. The principal reason for this variance being a drop in income from Gym membership, this is consistent with other leisure providers and it is likely that the current economic climate is the principal cause of this. There have also been increased repair and maintenance charges.

- 5.2 The budget for 2009/10 predicts a slight loss of just under £6,000 and this prediction is largely based on assumptions around a loss in Gym usage/membership income. There has also been a scheduled drop in the management fee paid to SSL by the Council of 20%. SSL are working to control expenditure and maximise potential income sources, working towards an end of year zero balance.

5.3 However 6 months in to the financial year there have been significant additional costs associated with free swimming. Participation levels have exceeded all expectations and, at the time of writing this report, agreement on how these costs are to be met is currently being negotiated.

#### 5.4 **Strategic Partnership**

Last year's report made significant reference to improvements that had been made and ones that were to be implemented following an evaluation of the strategic strength of the partnership between the Council and SSL by the Audit commission. All of those plans are fully implemented and have been in place for some time now. The significant elements are:

- Fully implemented new set of PIs closely aligned with corporate priorities. Key elements include the monitoring of those attending on welfare benefits (health inequalities); monitoring of usage by age bands (to identify any groups that need to be targeted for greater activity) and monitoring of onward progress from swimming lessons into swimming clubs.
- Ensured that One year service delivery plans are consulted upon and that key corporate priorities are reflected in those plans.
- Commissioned and implemented joint non-user survey to identify potential barriers to activity both in terms of attendance at Leisure centres and more generally.
- Continue to meet on a quarterly basis to review performance and financial issues.
- SSL are looking to maximise potential income in the future through a joint investigation with the Council's CAM Division, looking at the possibility of installing a soft play area/play frame, this would have the potential of reducing the management fee needed to ensure the financial viability of the trust.

#### 5.5 **Operational Achievements**

SSL have made significant progress with the annual service delivery plan along with a number of other key objectives. Last year's report to this Committee detailed a range of operations issue that would be focused upon and the list below details progress against those aims and others that have been developed through the year:

- Review branding with aim of widening appeal to all age groups - SSL's brand image now reflect the users that are participating at the centre rather than being focused on the young and fit market.
- Free swimming for those over 60 - participation levels have reached an all time high, with 12,344 over 60 swims having taken place across both sites so far this year.
- Everyday Swim Campaign - welcomed week and non-swimmers at both sites to participate in lessons at a significantly reduced cost.

- In addition to the anticipated focus last year, free swimming lessons have now been introduced for non-swimmers, weak and nervous swimmers aged 11 and above as part of the free swimming programme in association with The ASA.
- Review programming to increase variety of people and groups using services - with the introduction of BTS the group fitness programme has seen increased participation levels of around 50% on all classes.
- Development of structured members' journey in fitness facilities in order to increase retention - this is due to be implemented from October 2009.
- Development of new GP Referral programme – SSL are working closely with BDC sports development team to deliver a standardised GP referral programme.
- HIP (health inclusion project) participation – this programme is delivered in conjunction with Optua and includes other leisure providers. Participation has not been as high as anticipated so follow on projects are now being created by individual sites to encourage the sustainability of those participants currently on the programme.

#### 5.6 **Young people:**

- Establishing links to become part of the Fit for the Future project, aimed at increasing activity levels of 16-25 year olds - the fit for future project saw 99 young people register at the Kingfisher Leisure Centre. Participation levels have been varied which leads us to believe that while young people state that cost is the main barrier for participation this may not be the case.
- Establishing links with the every day swim campaign to offer targeted swimming lessons for 12, 60+ year olds that have not learned to swim - the first 6 courses have now been delivered with additional lessons being planned for the future.

#### 5.7 **Obesity in school children:**

- Balanceability programme – teaching children aged 3-6 years to ride a bike. Learning through balance and play - this project was not deemed to be financially viable so an alternative activity has been introduced; Kangoo Jump is a fun class for those aged 10 and above and is a great cardiovascular workout.
- Shokk programme of activity for juniors encouraging fun every day activity - this programme is currently cost prohibitive and was replaced this summer with street dance which was well received.
- Free swimming for under 16s - has seen participation levels reach an all time high, with 34,254 junior swims having taken place so far this year.
- Possible installation of a Play Frame - development is currently being discussed with BDC and if the development is possible could generate substantial additional income which would have a positive impact on the continued financial viability of SSL and the level of management fee needed.

## 5.8 Free Swimming Programme

Babergh decided to opt into the free swimming programme for both the over 60s and the under 17s. The scheme was instigated by central government in the summer of 2008, when a surprise announcement was made that funding would be made available to local authorities to implement a free swimming programme for the afore mentioned age groups. When the details were given to local authorities it was clear that the costs of implementing such a scheme would only partially be met by central government funding. Babergh agreed to make budgetary provision for this until 2011 (the period for which central government funding is guaranteed) and then review the issue once central governments views were made clear on funding beyond this period.

- 5.9 Aligned to the Council's decision to opt into the scheme has been the award of £185,000 of capital funding, which is currently earmarked for improvement works at the Hadleigh pool. There is also the potential of more funding, however this is subject to a competitive bidding process, with only those authorities that have fully opted into the free swimming scheme eligible to apply.
- 5.10 The take up of free swimming in Babergh has been huge, with increases in participation of up to 150% on over 60 participation and 118% on junior participation being recorded. Those registering for free swimming are now in excess of 13,637.
- 5.11 The full details of increased participation for Qrt 1 of 2009/10 are detailed below:

### KLC

Performance Indicator	Baseline Actual for year ended 2008/2009	Baseline quarterly averages 2008/2009	Apr - June Outcome Quarter 1	% variance on quarter
17 and under	29,170	7,293	12524	72%
Adult	28,291	7,073	9743	38%
60 and over	9,061	2,265	5309	134%

### Hadleigh

Performance Indicator	Baseline Actual for year ended 2008/2009	Baseline quarterly averages 2008/2009	Apr - June Outcome Quarter 1	% variance on quarter
17 and under	3,158	790	1848	134%
Adult	4,703	1,176	1371	17%
60 and over	2,604	651	1450	123%

(a) The large additional volume is causing the costs of implementation to rise beyond those originally envisaged and the Council and SSL are working together to resolve these issues to ensure that costs are controlled.

## 5.12 Looking to the future

In the coming year the Council will be working with SSL on a number of key issues linked to our corporate objectives. Specific areas of focus will include:

- Using information gained from the non-user survey to target marketing and publicity campaigns to get more people, more active. The focus will be on those groups that are known to be affected by health inequalities, but there will also be more generalised messages for the wider population.
- The renegotiation of the management fee from April 2011 – March 2016, with a focus on ensuring value for money is achieved.
- Jointly reviewing one year delivery plans to ensure that SSL's operational imperatives balance the need for ongoing financial stability with the needs of the Council to achieve key corporate objectives.
- An ongoing review of the capital investment in the Hadleigh pool – building on external funding already achieved.
- To add two new streams of income generation to the SSL portfolio to ensure business viability for the future.
- To engage Hadleigh High School and East Bergholt High school in dual use agreements with SSL.

6. **APPENDICES**

None.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO**

None.

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