

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

EXECUTIVE

12TH JULY 2004

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

FOR INFORMATION / ACTION

NAME OF WARD ALL

REPORT TITLE : FINDINGS OF THE BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE SPORTS SERVICE

FP REF: ES-03/04-231

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides members with an overview of the main findings of the Best Value Review of the Sports Service and the key recommendations and the action plan arising from the review.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Note the findings of the self assessment report and challenge panel report.
- 2.2 Agree the review recommendations and associated action plan.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Sports Service will be able to implement the majority of the recommendations within the action plan from within existing budgets, particularly by working with partners and, where appropriate, by securing external funding to support the delivery of priorities. £18k has been awarded from the Improving Brent Fund to provide a comprehensive team building programme for the Sports Team.
- 3.2 One of the recommendations arising from the review is to retender the Leisure management contract for Charteris and Vale Farm Sports Centres. The current contract is due to end on the 30th April 2006. The new service specification will accord more closely with the objectives of the corporate strategy and the Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity in Brent. It may be possible to achieve improved value for money through this process, possibly via a trust management structure, which would allow 80% mandatory relief savings on NNDR costs for the centres (approx £100,000 per annum). However, members should be aware that when the service was last tendered in 1999 none of the conforming bids received were then affordable to the Council, and this may happen again if a high standard of service is desired.

3.3 The Willesden Sports Centre PFI scheme is due to reach financial close in September '04 and the new centre is to re-open May 2006. The contract and payment mechanism for the project is extremely complex, with arrangements for contract deductions if service levels are not constantly maintained. The centre will be the first the Council has opened in many years, and is seen as a high profile project. It is therefore vital that the quality of service and facility management is maintained at a high level from day one. The monitoring required to ensure this, together with the calculation of any contract deductions, will be extremely difficult to carry out properly with existing staffing resources. Therefore it is recommended that an additional monitoring officer post be added to the recreation commissioning team to ensure proper monitoring of the contract to ensure a quality service. This will require growth of £35,000 per annum.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 A major restructure of the Sports Service took place in 2003. The review recommends a slight restructuring of the Sports Team to create better management of the Sports Development Service. This will affect two posts one of which is currently vacant.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The review recommendations and action plan include improving sports facilities which will contribute to the overall improvement of the built environment.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council has power pursuant to section 19 of the Local Government (miscellaneous provisions) Act 1976 to provide such recreational facilities as it thinks fit. This power includes the power to provide buildings, equipment, supplies and assistance of any kind.

6.2 The existing leisure management service contracts for Vale Farm and Charteris are with the same Contractor and have a term of 7 years from 1 May 1999 (i.e. to 30 April 2006). The Terms and Conditions of Contract provide that the Council may extend the period for up to an additional 3 years by giving written notice to the Contractor. If it wishes to do so, notice to this effect must be served on the Contractor by 30 October 2005 at the latest

7.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 In line with the recently produced Strategy for Sports and Physical Activity, the Best Value Review recognises the need to focus development work on a number of target groups that are currently under-represented in terms of participation in sport. These groups are: young people, people from black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, older people and women and girls. The action plan identifies mechanisms to increase and encourage participation amongst these groups (see section 5 of the self assessment report for a summary of the equalities issues).

7.2 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with employment and the provisions of goods, facilities and services. The duty to make reasonable adjustments to improve access to services is already in force and the duty to make adjustments to physical features of premises comes into force in October 2004. The action plan includes specific action to address these issues.

8.0 DETAIL

8.1 The Best Value Review of the Sports Service was undertaken concurrently with the production of the strategy for sport and physical activity in Brent. Consequently the self-assessment report arising from the best value review and the strategy document are closely aligned and need to be read in conjunction with each other. The self-assessment report, Challenge Panel findings report and Action Plan are all attached as appendix 1 to this report.

8.2 The work on the best value review 'officially' started in November 2003 when the scope was agreed by Members (see report in appendix 1 for the agreed scope). However, in reality the review really started following an Audit Commission Inspection of the service in 2002. This inspection report found the service to be 'poor' and as a consequence the Council took a number of immediate actions to address the situation. The past 18 months has seen the Council continue to take actions to address the issues raised by the Inspection report. Consequently, this best value review has been used to confirm whether or not these actions have been the right ones, whether the service is now focusing on the right priorities and produced an action plan to move the service forward over the next five years.

8.3 Details of how the review was undertaken are provided in section 4 of the self-assessment report. In summary, the work included:

- Conducting research into satisfaction levels at the leisure's centres and into general levels of sports participation.
- An analysis of existing research information.
- An audit of sports facilities and services in the borough, including those on school facilities.
- An Audit of sports clubs in the Borough.
- An analysis of the current Leisure management contracts and the value for money provided.
- Initial review of pricing policy.
- An analysis of the policy context in which sports services operates including external influences.
- A review of the sports service structure and whether it's the correct one for delivering the action plan.
- An analysis of current performance of the service.
- An analysis of financial performance and sources of external funding.
- Visits to other local authorities identified by the Audit Commission as demonstrating 'good practice'.

8.4 The findings from this work were analysed under the headings of Leadership, Policy and Strategy, People, Performance Management, Customers, Partnership and Resources and Society and Wider Priorities. A discussion of the findings under each heading can be found in section 6 of the self assessment report.

8.5 As explained above, the strategy for sport and physical activity was produced concurrently with the best value review report. The strategy, which was agreed by Members in June 2004, prioritises six main areas ('themes') for development in order to increase sports participation in the borough. These main areas have been used to create an action plan within the strategy and this has been mirrored to form the 5 year improvement plan arising from the best value review, and so in essence the two plans are almost identical. The improvement plan includes a number of key actions under each of the main themes.

These will be used to inform the Sports Service annual SOP (service operational plan) and will be translated into a detailed annual work programme for the service. The current (2004/ 05) SOP work programme reflects this approach. Such approach will allow the service to focus on the main priorities but to be flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances. (Details of the main issues under each theme can be found in paragraph 7.4 to 7.12 of the self assessment report and within the action plan).

8.6 The main difference between the two action plans is that the best value review action plan includes an additional 'theme' of managing the work of the sport service.

The findings from the review and self assessment identify the following key recommendations:

- That the leisure management contracts should be retendered to provide better value for money to the Council and ensure the specification accords with priorities within the corporate strategy.
- That, given the recent history of the Sports Service, the Sports Development Service and management of Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre are not included within the new contract.
- A remodelling of the current team structure to create a sports development manager and a stronger 'client' team.
- The creation of an additional recreation commissioning officer post from 2005/06 to specifically support the monitoring and management of the Willesden Sports Centre PFI contract.
- The delivery of a comprehensive training programme to ensure all staff have the skills to undertake their new roles

9.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

9.1 Details of Documents:

A strategy for sport and physical activity in Brent 2004 – 2009, Exec. 4th June 2004 .

- 9.2 Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Sue Harper, Assistant Director (Sport and Leisure), Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 6BZ,
Telephone: 0208 937 5192

Richard Saunders
Director of Environment

Sue Harper
Assistant Director
(Sport and Leisure)