

- 1.6** The changes made as a result of the consultation include broadening the scope of the strategy to ensure equality of access within communities, and the inclusion of cycling, with clearer links to the Playing Pitch and Open Spaces Strategy. Overall there was support for the removal of the Tier system and working more proactively with partners through service delivery and strategy development.
- 1.7** This updated Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy (ILS) will cover the period 2020 – 2038 alongside the timescale of the Local Plan however the strategy will be reviewed regularly on an annual basis and refreshed every five years to ensure it is kept up to date. The need for the annual review is to provide clarity taking into account the impact of COVID on the services and how this will impact on Shropshire Council facilities moving forward.
- 1.8** The Strategy Action Plan will be developed as a result of the adoption of the amended strategy and will be monitored on an annual basis as part of the Culture, Leisure and Tourism Business planning process.
- 1.9** This updated strategy will ensure indoor facilities are available to deliver sport and physical activity in support of the Council's Corporate objectives, and will be an ever- evolving document. It will provide the basis on which Shropshire Council will take forward its Indoor Leisure Facilities with partners and stakeholders. The strategy is about the facilities needed to increase engagement in physical activity which also contribute to place-making and the identity of a locality.
- 1.10** The updated strategy removes the Tier system of investment in facilities i.e. the Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 system which could have potentially resulted in the closure of a number of facilities and replaces it with a strategy based on community needs, aspirations, partnership, sustainability and resilience whilst enabling a more commercial, flexible and partnership approach to service delivery. The updated strategy focusses on community need, flexibility of service provision in line with the emerging shared services/hub models and the empowerment of communities to influence and support services in their areas.
- 1.11** This strategy focusses on the facilities operated and supported by Shropshire Council; however, the contribution of all other leisure facilities and providers to local place-making is recognised. The strategy covers the geographical area covered by the new Local Plan.
- 1.12** The updated strategy will ensure that the Council's services provide value for money to the local community tax payers by working to reduce the overall subsidy across the whole of the leisure facilities portfolio through providing a mixed economy of provision and activity.

- 1.13** In some instances, a commercial approach will be appropriate to service delivery; some areas of Shropshire will require a more community, health and wellbeing service based approach focussing on increasing activity and interaction whilst others will require a mixed economy of provision. This approach should secure a more sustainable offer across the whole of Shropshire.
- 1.14** Rather than focussing on reducing specific services or buildings our new approach is to consider the needs of communities in the context of place-making. There are areas of Shropshire where the simple geography of rural life requires that in order to maintain certain provision there will be a need for a more flexible approach to service delivery which is not as prevalent in more urban areas. Our leisure facility offer needs to be flexible to meet local need and not be based on a one size fits all approach.
- 1.15** The updated Strategy forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review (LPR). It provides a strategic framework to ensure that the provision of indoor leisure facilities meets the needs of residents (both existing and future) and visitors to the Shropshire Council area. It will also support those organisations, including the Council, involved in the provision of indoor sports facilities in the county. The strategy reflects Sport England guidance and provides robust and objective justification for future provision throughout Shropshire and will serve as an evidence base for future funding bids.
- 1.16** The overall vision for the strategy remains as:
- Shropshire will be a county where healthier, active lifestyles are encouraged, supported and facilitated for everyone
- 1.17** The three core principles underpinning the delivery of the vision:
- Support for the creation of a high quality and sustainable indoor leisure facility mix, which provides accessible and inclusive activities for all Shropshire residents leading to increased participation and active lifestyles, thereby meeting community need;
 - Recognising the importance of leisure facilities as relevant community spaces, accessible to all and offering opportunities for the delivery of a wide range of activities, services, support and entertainment to local communities and people; and
 - A commitment to work with a wide range of partner organisations and individuals as co-creators and co-deliverers of leisure facilities so that they best reflect the differing needs of local communities.
- 1.18** In taking forward our vision and core principles our strategic priorities are:-

1. To work with partners to support the people of Shropshire to live longer, healthier and quality lives through sport and physical activity
2. To support the resilience of local communities and the development of place by strengthening local communities through sport and physical activity.
3. To support economic growth by developing opportunities for people to reach their full potential by providing employment, volunteering and tourism opportunities.
4. To take a cross county place based approach to the delivery of leisure facilities through targeted investment, partnership opportunities, community empowerment and commercial acumen in order to reduce levels of subsidy.
5. To aim to reduce our carbon footprint in line with the commitment of Shropshire Council to the declaration of climate emergency to become carbon neutral by 2030

1.19 The strategy has been developed in parallel with the Shropshire Council Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS); to provide an evidence base for the Local Plan Review and underpin future priorities for provision. Appendix 2 sets out the detailed analysis of need informing the strategy.

1.20 The strategy will ensure that existing facilities are the most appropriate in terms of quantity, quality and location and consider how best to meet the additional needs generated by the planned housing and economic growth. Infrastructure priorities for the LPR are identified through the Local Plan Implementation Plan and its associated Place Plans. The Place Plans support the Implementation Plan by listing all the priorities, needs and aspirations on a place by place basis for Shropshire's communities.

1.21 The key challenges with the existing facilities are:

- Their age and condition
- The need to secure future investment in the short term to make the operation of the buildings more sustainable, and to improve the user environment.
- To improve existing provision to generate increased income e.g. extend fitness at Oswestry Leisure Centre and Ludlow Leisure Centre, and the development of a new fitness facility at Market Drayton Leisure Centre
- The rurality of the County and the fact that some facilities serve smaller communities. and others larger towns.

- The fact that 'one size will not fit all' across Shropshire, but that there is a need for a common vision and principles for provision.
- Ensuring the right partnerships are in place to ensure physical activity provision is at the heart of place-making.
- Identifying the appropriate governance model for each locality, so that communities have a role in their local physical activity offer.

1.22 How will we deliver the strategy?

- By taking an overarching commercial approach to service delivery and investment whereby larger and more sustainable facilities subsidise smaller and more rural facilities where there is a clear identified need
- By working in partnership with our communities and stakeholders
- By focussing our limited resources to support the delivery of services within our communities, where possible, to support future need
- By putting physical activity at the heart of place-making
- Through co-location of facilities, services and voluntary sector/community delivery as part of a locality offer

1.23 A detailed action plan will be developed for each facility alongside the strategy. These will cross reference the most recent conditions surveys for the facilities to identify the need for essential repairs and maintenance and potential areas of capital investment and income generation.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to;

1. Adopt the Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2020- 2038
2. Note the identified facility needs which will be subject to review within 12 months to further understand the impact of COVID-19.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1** The National Planning Policy Framework requires planning polices to be based on robust and up to date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, what resources are needed, and which plans should then seek to accommodate. The ILFS fulfils this requirement and forms part of the evidence base for the Shropshire Local Plan Review. There is both a reputational risk (through having commissioned an up to date assessment and then not taken its recommendations on board) and a risk of non-compliance with national planning policy, should the Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy not be adopted by the Council.
- 3.2** An initial equality and social inclusion impact assessment was carried out ahead of the consultation work and an updated screening assessment has been undertaken in order to factor in feedback arising with particular relevance to the potential positive or negative equality impacts of the proposals.
- 3.3** The ILS sets out to have a positive impact across the national Protected Characteristic groupings set out in the Equality Act 2010 and with regard to the tenth category utilised in Shropshire, around social inclusion. This is particularly so for the groupings for Age, and Disability, with regard to all ages and with regard to seen and unseen disabilities. This will itself then include older people, given the ageing demographic profile of the county.
- 3.4** A positive impact is also anticipated for groupings including people with caring responsibilities, as well as those at risk of social exclusion, including those living in rural areas. Where efforts have been made during consultation on the draft Strategy to seek views from communities as well as from stakeholders, and feedback has not been obtained, engagement work will continue, building on local place making approaches. This will also enable the strategy to maximise efforts to combat loneliness, which cuts across demographic groupings.
- 3.5** In order to maximise positive equality impacts, there will need to be a recognition that for example public swimming pool provision, however small, needs to be local to where people live, particularly older people. This would be supported by the delivery of local needs through activity programmes delivered in partnership with the NHS e.g. Exercise on Referral schemes, Walking for Health etc.
- 3.6** Building on this point queries could potentially be raised on equality policy grounds in terms of accessibility in urban and rural areas to swimming pools, and issues around making more overt links between the ageing demographic profile and the use we should or could be making of swimming as a way to encourage older people into fitness, as well as those returning to fitness after illness etc, and those with mobility or disability challenges.

- 3.7** The consultation summary references swimming as a life skill for young people, there is also a potential positive impact for older people and the groupings above with regard to swimming if there are improvements, and conversely a negative impact if provision is further away or inadequate in terms of quality of the facilities etc. The Sport England Facility Planning Model is referenced in the consultation summary, and noted as forming one element of the overall assessment that there is currently over supply of water (*"From the FPM, which is only one element of the overall assessment of swimming pools in Shropshire, it is clear that there is an over-supply of swimming pools. The FPM only assess strategic size pools; across Shropshire there are other smaller pools which also have the potential to provide at least some community access [28 pools in Shropshire have not been included in the FPM analysis as these are smaller than 20m"]*). From an equality impact perspective, the other elements of the assessment would need to be factored into financial decision making, such as accessibility, rurality, community engagement and usage.
- 3.8** Swimming pool provision, whether at strategic sites or smaller sites, and whether at public swimming pools or those located within schools, can also provide a positive impact for other protected characteristic groupings provided that changing room facilities and timetables for usage can promote access and, therefore, inclusion for those who for example are undergoing gender reassignment, or are seeking single sex usage times, due to their faith and/or their ethnicity, whilst times that will aid those with family and caring responsibilities will also aid the protected characteristic groupings of pregnancy and maternity, and sex.
- 3.9** To base decisions on commercial considerations or on a national model that may not account for local factors around rurality and demography and geography could lead to negative equality impacts across the majority of the protected characteristic groupings and run counter to corporate policy around social inclusion and place making approaches.
- 3.10** Turning to social inclusion, and one of the central tenets around community involvement in helping to operate and run a range of facilities such as through establishment of user forums, there is an opportunity here to again provide positive equality impacts. The challenge will be to ensure that such forums reflect the local diversity of the local area, and that there are contingency arrangements in place to continue to seek to engage across all groupings if a user forum is not as representative as it could be of the community that the local facility seeks to serve, or indeed has not attracted enough volunteers to be viable. One angle could be to work closely with enablers, providers and users of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities, thereby broadening reach and demonstrating the complementarity of the leisure offer.
- 3.11** From a health and well being angle, the impacts are anticipated to be positive for children and young people and for older people, provided that accessibility considerations are to the fore. Using physical activity to raise

the aspirations and to support health improvements is an important aim of this strategy. Requirements for high quality physical education are embedded within the national curriculum including instruction in swimming and water safety. Access for schools to swimming lessons is an important consideration.

- 3.12** Additionally, we recognise that traditional activities provided within leisure facilities may not always appeal to the recreational and health motivations of older people, and that they need to be considered as part of a range of opportunities that increase physical activity levels. It is recognised that the impact of removing some of the sport and physical activity services in specific areas where other services are also reducing could severely impact on communities and could result in increased spend in the areas of health and social care, and that any such negative equality and health and well being impacts would need to be factored in to decision making processes.
- 3.13** In terms of reviewing the equality impacts of the ILS, as with related strategy for Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports, and for the Community and Rural Strategy, demographical information and such national and local data as may emerge on Covid-19 impacts for vulnerable groupings, will need to be kept up to date, along with any such data as we are able to obtain about Covid-19 impacts for groupings who have been unable to access facilities and services, both indoor and outdoors. The need for engagement with partners will be important, with the recognition that some facilities are not run by the Council and that consistent and systemic collection of equality data will therefore be a challenge.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1** The strategy recommends a proactive approach to investment in the creation of “fit for purpose” leisure facilities that provide accessible and inclusive spaces.
- 4.2** Access to the Council’s capital programme will be pursued where projects will be appraised on an individual basis following the process detailed in the capital strategy. Each initiative in the strategy would need to be evaluated on its own merits prior to inclusion in the capital programme. The Council will continue to work in partnership with other organisations to acquire external funding to ensure the future sustainability of leisure facilities.
- 4.3** There could be opportunities for more commercial development at some Leisure Facilities which will be explored and appraised individually. This could help to support the pressured revenue position and to develop existing facilities.
- 4.4** Current revenue budgets cover the normal recurrent expenditure of the service, for 20/21 the quarter 2 position predicts a £231K adverse variance,

£146K of this is due to the net impact of covid-19, £66K due to additional IT software systems and other one off pressures related to bringing two centres under Council control. The service area is seeking to address these underlying revenue pressures, but it is clear that the revenue budgets will not be able to bear further pressure.

- 4.5 The strategy implies upgrading and refurbishment of facilities in the medium term which if funded fully or partly by the council would further imply either a 'sinking fund' provision or capital financing cost in the future which current budgets do not allow for. Some planned refurbishment and planned maintenance work is already being undertaken as part of the Capital Repairs and Maintenance Planned Programme including the resurfacing of Ludlow Leisure Centre carpark, and further work on the existing Shrewsbury Quarry pool facility but anything over and above this will require a budget to be identified. External investment and funding is most likely to be the way forward in the future.
- 4.6 Investment in support services such as targeted marketing and publicity, improved quality of services, staff training, business development etc. is also being developed with a view to increasing income generation into the service and therefore reducing ongoing subsidy.
- 4.7 It is recognised that the approach described here will need to be reviewed in the light of the Council's financial strategy, emerging forecast financial position (including the impact of Covid-19).
- 4.8 This report is written on the assumption that the Council would wish to continue to support the availability of indoor leisure facilities across the county for the benefit of the community, but that this needs to be done based on a thorough understanding of need and budget constraints.

5. Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 **Energy and fuel consumption:** The Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy will provide an opportunity to work with companies delivering commissioned services to measure and reduce carbon emissions from their services. The Strategy also provides the opportunity to plan investment in energy efficiency measures for both existing buildings and any new provision, as a contribution to the carbon neutral target set in the Council's corporate Climate Strategy. Such investment will also help to significantly reduce revenue costs;
- 5.2 **Renewable energy generation:** The Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy will provide an opportunity invest in the installation of additional generation of renewable energy, as a contribution to the energy self-sufficiency target set in the Council's corporate Climate Strategy;
- 5.3 **Carbon offsetting or mitigation:** The Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy will provide an opportunity to capture and store modest amounts of carbon

as part of the design and maintenance of landscaping for leisure facility sites;

- 5.4 Climate Change adaptation:** The Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy will provide an opportunity to ensure that the design and maintenance of leisure facilities is able address the likely impact of more extremes of weather (e.g. temperature and rainfall) which can be expected from climate change during the lifetime of the building.

6. Background

- 6.1** As consultants commissioned to produce the Indoor Leisure Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies in 2009 when Shropshire became a unitary authority, Strategic Leisure Ltd were subsequently commissioned to support the production of the most recent Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy (2018-23).
- 6.2** The scope of the work for the 2018-2023 strategy can be summarised as follows:
- Review existing strategy using the Sports England ANOG approach (Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guides)
 - Revisit countywide demographics
 - Build on existing information and knowledge base to audit leisure facilities
 - Update existing facility supply countywide for swimming pools, sports halls and fitness facilities
 - Revisit and identify the countywide supply and demand position
 - Make recommendations on facilities needed.
- 6.3** This 2018-2023 strategy was underpinned by an extensive needs assessment that included:
- Sport England Facility Planning Models for Sports Halls and Swimming Pools
 - Demand for Health & Fitness studies for 2016 and 2037
 - Leisure facility quality audits
 - National Context audit
 - National Governing Body (NGB) consultation
 - Extensive stakeholder consultation
 - Public consultation
- 6.4** In 2019 it was felt the existing Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2018 – 2023 was out of date and needed to better reflect the current situation of changing needs linked to the development of the Place Planning process, the emerging Community & Rural Strategy and the Corporate Plan. The updated strategy also takes in to account the considerable housing growth across Shropshire as outlined in the Council's Local Plan 2016 - 2038.
- 6.5** To support the development of this revised strategy a number of previous assessments were updated. These are:-

- Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) Analysis of Swimming Pools (2019) – Appendix 5
- Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) Analysis of Halls (2020) – Appendix 6
- Shropshire Facility Audit – Appendix 7
- Demand for Health and Fitness 2020 – Appendix 8
- Demand for Health and Fitness 2028 – Appendix 9

6.6 Along with revised National and Shropshire Strategic Context audits (Appendices 3 and 4), stakeholder, NGB and public consultation (Appendix 10) and an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (Appendix 11), these inform the Evidence Base for the revised Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy.

6.7 Our delivery model is based on the principle that in Shropshire there is not a 'one size fits all' and so the approach will be based on community need in relation to smaller and more rural based facilities and where appropriate a more commercially based approach to develop income generation streams in the larger market towns. The principle being that the commercial approach will drive up income generation to reduce the overall subsidy to the Council of the leisure services across the County. We will also be exploring the possibility of shared and co located services across Shropshire providing a range of other community services e.g. a library, a community centre etc. The model will be driven by the needs of the locality and be linked to the impending library review, because every community in Shropshire is different.

7. Conclusions

7.1 It is evident that the existing facilities are in the right place but are not all of good quality. Investment is required to bring some of the facilities up to a reasonable standard.

7.2 Refreshed Sport England Facility Planning Models were undertaken for sports halls and swimming pools to support the strategy and identify the following key conclusions:

- The supply of sports halls is more than meeting demand in Shropshire.
- 17 of the 18 sports halls are on education sites and, therefore, community use is influenced by the policy and programmes of use at those sites.
- The average age of sports halls is 25 years and there is an increasing need to modernise the post 2000 sports halls.
- The location and catchment area of the sports halls correlates well with the location for demand in Shropshire.

- Overall there is an extensive provision of swimming pools for public use in Shropshire.
- Based on the catchment area of swimming pools supply exceeds demand.
- The scale of provision means pools can provide for all swimming activities – learn to swim, casual swimming, lane swimming and swimming development.
- The average age of public swimming pools is 27 years (includes Quarry Pool which opened in 1971, not Victorian baths facilities).
- Swimming pools offer more scope than any other indoor sports facility to contribute to an active and healthy lifestyle.

7.3 From an equality impact perspective, other elements of the assessment would need to be factored into financial decision making, such as accessibility, rurality, community engagement and usage.

7.4 By adopting this strategy we can start to engage with a range of stakeholders to consider how best we can deliver services throughout Shropshire. The current impact of COVID may impact on the progression of this work but in the short term the focus will be on moving forward with the Swimming in Shrewsbury project. Further work on energy efficiencies through grants will continue to be pursued to reduce the current levels of subsidy.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Shropshire Council leisure facilities strategy summary for consultation

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Lezley Picton
Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Waste and Communications

Local Member

All members

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2020-2038
- Appendix 2 - Evidence base for Shropshire Council Leisure Facilities Strategy
- Appendix 3 – National Context
- Appendix 4 – Shropshire Strategic Context
- Appendix 5 – Shropshire County Swimming Pools Report

Appendix 6 – Shropshire County Sports Hall Assessment Report

Appendix 7 – Shropshire Facility Audit

Appendix 8 – Demand for Health and Fitness 2020

Appendix 9 – Demand for Health and Fitness 2038

Appendix 10 - Summary consultation document

Appendix 11 – Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

Appendix 12 – Consultation Summary