

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL LEISURE STRATEGY

'Delivering for the Future'

2006 - 2012

By

**Strategic Leisure Limited
&
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

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Section I: Introduction and Background

Introduction

- 1.1 This strategy is Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's response to the challenges set out in the Tunbridge Wells Community Plan and in particular to Chapter Three, the chapter which addresses the important role of leisure for the future of the Borough.
- 1.2 The Council plans and delivers services following a model of consultation and research (the community expresses their wants, the Council assesses the need) and a draft project plan is drawn up applying professional knowledge and expertise. The draft project plan is consulted on and a more detailed project plan is developed. Once this is agreed the plan is implemented and the outputs are evaluated. The process is cyclical. This strategy was developed using this model.
- 1.3 The strategy is the result of collaboration between the community, specialist advisers and the Council. It reflects the views expressed during consultation and the information gleaned from a range of research. It was drafted by Strategic Leisure, an independent leisure consultancy and has therefore benefited from the impartial input of leisure specialists, and was completed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The Council is now responsible for delivering the improvement plan.
- 1.4 Leisure in its widest sense is about quality of life and choice; we all have different hobbies and activities in which we choose to participate when we have free time. Leisure is therefore a personal choice and means different things to each individual. Leisure activities include playing sport; participating in the arts; attending an event, researching family and local history, visiting a museum or art gallery or taking part in informal outdoor activities such as walking or cycling. Participation in leisure activities has many benefits.
- 1.5 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council invests in Leisure because it is widely acknowledged as an effective tool in tackling a broad range of local government priorities such as improving health, creating safer and stronger communities and addressing the needs of particular target groups such as children and young people and older people.
- 1.6 Furthermore the services provided by the Leisure departments address the priorities of the Borough's residents: when asked to choose their three general priority areas for the Community Plan respondents to the February 2005 Residents' Survey answered as follows: 53% chose the **environment**, 52% chose **community safety** and 55% chose **health**. (16% of respondents chose **Leisure** opportunities.)
- 1.7 Leisure Services has a key role to play in maintaining the **environment** of the Borough, it has responsibility for the care of many council-owned spaces: the Royal Tunbridge Wells parks, sports grounds, allotments, woodlands and play areas. The service also works with planning and housing services, parish and

town councils to develop and improve the living and working environment of the Borough.

- 1.8 The Service helps to foster **community safety** by working closely with the Community Safety Partnership in order to focus resources where they are most needed. It supports voluntary organisations in the Borough and provides a range of diversionary activities, often in partnership with other agencies, which encourage people to make a positive contribution to their communities. The Service also supports community-led events which encourage stronger community relationships to develop. The Council believes that its Leisure Services has done a great deal to foster safer and stronger communities and it will continue to prioritise this work.
- 1.9 The Council also believes that the service has a significant role to play in improving the **health** and well-being of the community. There have been some initiatives in this area but this work needs to be given a higher priority during the life of this strategy.
- 1.10 This strategy sets out the context in which Leisure Services is delivered, describes the service priorities, sets out an improvement plan (**Appendix One**) and explains how the work that is planned will be resourced.

A Vision for Leisure in the Borough

Key facts and statistics:

16% of respondents to The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents Survey 2005 identified leisure as one of their top three priorities for the community plan. This 16% were then asked to identify their top three leisure priorities and the results were: 78% providing accessible and high quality leisure facilities, 53% - encouraging healthy lifestyles, 51% encouraging participation in sport and the arts, 35% maintaining and retaining parks and open spaces, 32% encouraging older people to participate in physical activities and 19% maximising the benefit of the Olympics and Paralympics.

The Vision

'To facilitate provision of a diverse range of high quality and accessible facilities, activities and opportunities, which demonstrably meet local needs, enhance the quality of life, and contribute to the achievement of safer and stronger communities and improved health and well-being'

- 1.11 The Council's Leisure Services will work towards this vision guided by four priorities. The Leisure Strategy Priorities reflect analysis of consultation, research, national and regional government advice and guidance, the identified aims and objectives of national and regional leisure agencies, and existing and emerging Tunbridge Wells Borough Council strategies and policies.

1.12 The Vision will be achieved by working to the following priorities:

- **Improve the health and well-being of the community by increasing opportunities for participation**
- **Encourage safer and stronger communities by providing appropriate, quality facilities, services and activities**
- **Facilitate appropriate provision to meet the needs of children and young people**
- **Facilitate appropriate provision to meet the needs of older people**

1.13 Integral to our vision is the Council's sense of place. The Council is aware that the Borough has a wealth of natural leisure assets: the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the East and the Common lands in the West of the Borough for example. The Borough's population has a high educational attainment, employment levels are high, crime rates are low and house prices are above national average. There are also small pockets of significant deprivation. The majority of the population has high expectations of its surroundings and the quality of life that can be expected in the borough. The Council's leisure provision must live up to these high expectations whilst addressing the needs of those in areas of deprivation if it is to be relevant to its communities.

The National, Regional and Local Agenda

1.14 At national and regional level, Government agencies are acknowledging the benefits of participation. It is recognised that being involved in leisure pursuits leads to the development of safer and stronger communities and improved physical and mental health. Other benefits established include improved environments and economic regeneration.

1.15 In addition to physical participation, the government is also championing the value of a "knowledge society". It is recognised that the production, critical appraisal, use and dissemination of knowledge and skills are critical for personal well-being and the well-being of society. Learning is no longer confined to formal educational establishments and is no longer regarded as simply a preparation for a career. The pursuit of knowledge is now regarded as a leisure opportunity with interest in the research of local and family history one of the fastest growing leisure pursuits in the country.

1.16 This recognition of the importance of involvement in leisure pursuits and the various benefits of participation in its broadest sense has been reflected by the investment seen in school sports and arts facilities, availability of funding for parks and green spaces development and availability of funding for e-learning initiatives. In responding to the national, regional and local agendas the Borough Council believes that through its Leisure Services it has many opportunities to seize in the next five years.

The Benefits of Leisure Provision

"...Leisure Services can be a powerful tool to engage all sections of the community and break down barriers between them. People take part in leisure activities through choice. Marginalised groups are often more willing to engage with such activities than other government-funded activities. Physical activity and sport can be used as a means of bringing people together from different communities to share positive experiences and gain greater understanding of each other's ways of life." (Community Cohesion – an action guide, Local Government Association 2004)

- 1.17 Participation in leisure activities enhances quality of life. It provides the potential for individuals to meet new people and develop a sense of belonging and respect for the communities in which they live, work and play. Participation fosters new skills and interests, increases physical and mental agility and enhances self confidence and awareness. The impact of these benefits is felt by both individuals and the wider community.
- 1.18 There is an increasing recognition and understanding of the benefits of leisure provision nationally with a broad range of studies that establish the link between cause and effect.

"...Theatre activity outside London has an economic impact of £1.1bn annually.... Audience members spend an average of £7.77 on food, transport and childcare when they visit a UK theatre outside the West End." Economic impact study of UK theatre, Dominic Shellard, University of Sheffield, April 2004

Leisure Provision in the Borough

"Public appreciation of the arts is at an all-time high, with 79% agreeing that arts and cultural projects should receive public funding." (Values and Vision: The Contribution of Culture; ACE, MLAC)

- 1.19 Leisure activities take place in people's homes, outdoors, in community halls and in purpose built facilities such as sports centres, museums and art galleries and theatres.
- 1.20 In the Borough, beyond the Council's services, leisure activities and facilities are provided through a network of agencies and organisations. A vast number of sports and arts opportunities are delivered through voluntary sector organisations and through key agencies grant-aided by the Borough Council (notably: Tunbridge Wells High School Sports Centre, Cranbrook Schools' Queens Hall Theatre, Cranbrook Museum, Trinity Theatre and Applause, West Kent Rural Touring Scheme).

- 1.21 The Parish and Town Councils provide a range of facilities and services throughout the wider Borough, predominantly recreation grounds, children's play, sports pitches and village halls.
- 1.22 Kent County Council, commercial organisations, local authority consortia (for example the West Kent Arts Partnership) and other organisations such as Friends of parks groups, Allotment Societies and the Sports Club Forum also provide leisure opportunities in the Borough.
- 1.23 In order to understand the outdoor play, park and sporting facility needs and the requirements for allotment facilities for the borough, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of current provision as part of the strategic planning process. Current provision has been assessed in terms of quantity and quality and standards for future provision have been set. Future needs have been predicted, taking into account the changes in future population profiles (age and gender for example).
- 1.24 The Council is mindful that the targets for housing development will have an impact on the population profile and consequently on its leisure needs. As the profile changes it is important to ensure that appropriate leisure facilities are available to meet the needs of those growth areas. This will partly be done through negotiation with developers to secure financial contributions to some leisure provision.

"82% of British people want to have a museum or art gallery in their local town or city." (Values and Vision: The Contribution of Culture; ACE, MLAC)

The Scope of this Strategy

- 1.25 Whilst keeping in mind that this provision is part of a much wider and more comprehensive picture as described above, this Strategy encompasses all the services provided directly and contractually by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. This includes:
- Allotments
 - Arts Development
 - Assembly Hall Theatre
 - Cranbrook Museum
 - Events
 - Grants
 - Holiday Activities for young people
 - Outdoor sports facilities
 - Parks and play areas
 - Sports Centres
 - Sports Development
 - Strategy and Development
 - Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery
 - Woodlands

A more detailed description of the service can be found at **Appendix Two**.

Resources

- 1.26 Whilst the possibilities for providing leisure opportunities and for achieving positive outcomes for individuals and communities are limitless, the resources available for services are not. The impact of this strategy must seek to maximise the impact of modest resources by prioritising effort and striving for increased efficiency. The Improvement Plan at **Appendix One** identifies opportunities for savings, reallocation of budgets, bidding for funding from external sources and ways of achieving better value for money within existing resources.

Partnerships

- 1.27 The Council maximises the impact of its limited resources by working in partnership with others wherever possible. Leisure Services works in partnership with voluntary, statutory and commercial organisations as well as relevant government agencies to maximise the effectiveness of its work.
- 1.28 Different mechanisms are used to underpin partnerships. In some cases Service Level Agreements or the terms and conditions of grant funding define the working relationship. In some cases the relationship is structured around regular meetings. Many partnerships are secured through joint commitments to deliver actions in the Community Plan or the Community Safety Strategy.

Non Priorities

- 1.29 There will always be more opportunities and possibilities for providing leisure services than there are resources available. The Council is therefore clear about what it will not be prioritising. The non priorities are identified in part by taking into account existing provision in the Borough which is offered by other commercial, voluntary and statutory organisations. Currently these non priorities include festivals, facilities for golf, night clubs, facilities for indoor play, facilities for indoor bowls, facilities for netball and leisure pools. The Council does not deny the value of these activities and facilities but does not plan to be in the business of delivering them directly.

Sustainability

- 1.30 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is committed to conserving and enhancing the environment of Tunbridge Wells borough both for ourselves and for the benefit of future generations. Sustainability means different things to different people but in the broadest of terms it involves ensuring well-being and quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come, by meeting social and environmental as well as economic needs. There are therefore some general principles that must be adhered to when considering the direction for Leisure Services and actions for the future.
- 1.31 Environment: Where the service is involved in encouraging new development or redevelopment, there should be a requirement for the use of sustainable design and construction practices. Similarly, reference to the principle of developments

being “Secure by Design” will also be included and biodiversity must be taken into account. Design that creates an attractive, high quality environment should be specified when referring to new developments. In delivering services either directly or through contractors the Council must seek to address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. There could be a conflict between protecting the natural environment and providing access to the countryside for leisure activities. This conflict will be taken into consideration when planning for the future. Walking and cycling are promoted in the strategy as forms of healthy exercise, but can also be promoted as alternative transport options.

- 1.32 Economy: those wards with the highest deprivation indices will be targeted when developing leisure initiatives. Projects will be designed to tackle some of the causes of poverty and social exclusion. Sustainable development will be encouraged. For example, the location of new enterprises will seek to make use of sustainable travel options. Where we encourage leisure businesses to develop we should encourage the use of the skills of the local workforce and development of those skills.

Status and Lifespan of the Leisure Strategy

- 1.33 The Leisure Strategy sets out a five year plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Leisure Services (2006 – 2012). It will form a key element in the Corporate Performance Assessment conducted by the Audit Commission in 2007. The delivery of this strategy will be monitored by the Policy and Development Sub-Committee and a full review of the Strategy's implementation will commence in 2010.

Leisure Services – Some Achievements to Date

- 1.34 The Council's provision of Leisure Services has recorded a significant number of successes over the last few years in terms of investment, contribution to Council priorities and development of Best Practice.
- In the first Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Borough Council Leisure Services was praised: “The council does have strengths and some services are delivered to a high standard, most notably leisure facilities....”
 - The Service attracted £2.5million lottery funding to build the Weald Sports Centre in Cranbrook
 - The Service has attracted external funding from various sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund (£2.1 million for Dunorlan Park) and Sport England (£88,000 for upgrading diving facilities at Tunbridge Wells Sports and Indoor Tennis Centre to create a Regional Centre of Excellence)
 - The Weald Sports Centre has achieved Quest accreditation - Sport England's quality mark, with a Highly Commended score of 75%

- The Service has awarded a new Leisure Management contract for its three sports centres with effect from 1 October 2006 which will save the Council over £7million during the 10.5-year contract
- Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery has increased visitor figures by 34% in the last 6 years and set up education and outreach services, through which they have shared the collections with 84% of the primary schools in the Borough and over 17,000 local schoolchildren in the last three years
- The Assembly Hall Theatre has increased its gross annual income by 39% between 2002 and 2006 with an overall increase in attendance of 33% between 2003 and 2006
- The Council has been awarded two national awards for Dunorlan Park - Green Flag and Green Heritage. The Green Flag award is a recognised measure of quality and good practice whilst the prestigious Green Heritage award can only be achieved at parks with important heritage value.

A summary of Leisure Services Key achievements are included in **Appendix Three**.

Section II: Leisure Services and the Local Strategic Context

Introduction

2.1 The Leisure Strategy Improvement Plan at **Appendix One** indicates how each specific improvement planned over the next five years directly relates to the Tunbridge Wells Community Plan and the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Corporate Priorities and Objectives. After its legislative obligations, the Community Plan and the Corporate Priorities and Objectives are the Council's most significant drivers for improvement and this section of the strategy seeks to describe in broad terms how Leisure Services helps to deliver the priorities of these two key strategic directives. It is not an exhaustive description.

Leisure Services

- 2.2 Having a Leisure Services department brings a range of benefits to the borough. Apart from directly delivering services, it provides the overview, expertise and impartial advice that will ensure that maximum benefits are obtained from the activities available. The Council can assist in accessing national and regional funding opportunities and inform networks about emerging opportunities, new legislation and best practice and provides a single point of contact for partners and participants at local level. This approach is also critical to ensure consistent delivery against the nationally recognised quality model for Leisure Services: Towards an Excellent Service (TaES).
- 2.3 This joined up approach also gives added value to the individual strands of leisure services and allows for an efficient use of resources. The departments are able to work together to share knowledge and expertise, pool effort on corporate tasks and plan and market services in a complementary way.
- 2.4 Leisure Services ensures that the specific operational objectives for Leisure Services compliment and help to deliver the identified corporate priorities.
- 2.5 On a very practical basis, strategy and operational functions are best delivered in an environment of common understanding and shared aims; this produces a co-ordinated and consistent approach to corporate priorities, and the ability to capitalise on opportunities for partnership working, profile raising, cross fertilization of ideas and best practice, use of skills and fund raising.

The Role of Leisure Services in delivering the Tunbridge Wells Community Plan Priorities

2.6 Leisure Services addresses the Community Plan priorities in the following ways:

- **Safeguarding our environment**
 - Working with planners and developers to ensure adequate provision of space for leisure, play and recreation in new developments
 - Management of parks, recreation grounds, woodlands and open spaces
 - Increasing opportunities to understand, value and protect the environment through leisure pursuits such as the Museum's Mini Beast Safaris
 - Promotion of walking and cycling
 - Encouraging pride and a greater understanding of the local area through promoting the heritage and special character of the borough

- **Maintaining a thriving economy**
 - an environment where people are able to pursue a wide range of leisure opportunities contributes to the likelihood of retaining staff for local businesses and contributes to increasing the value of land and property
 - specific events are designed to maintain the viability of the Pantiles – by contributing to increasing footfall in the area the Pantiles remains a viable commercial site for traders and thus the heart of the Borough's tourism offer is kept alive
 - promoting the night time economy by providing evening leisure opportunities in the towns and villages which encourage increased footfall to the benefit of restaurants, pubs and bars
 - A varied Leisure offering, is important in attracting visitors to come and stay in the borough, thus benefiting local businesses and the local economy.

- **Enabling people to take part in and enjoy leisure activities**
 - Direct provision of appropriate facilities, activities and opportunities to enable people to take part in and enjoy leisure activities
 - Working in partnership with other providers: voluntary, statutory and commercial, to advise, encourage and co-ordinate good quality provision and a reasonable geographical spread of opportunities

- **Maintaining Community Safety and reducing fear of crime**
 - Leisure activities encourage people to meet, providing safe places to build relationships and create community cohesion which leads to cooperation and a sense of safety born of belonging
 - Some leisure opportunities are specifically designed to address community safety and fear of crime such as targeting arts and sports activities at young people at risk of offending or organising the Mela to encourage understanding between different cultural communities

- **Transport – getting around the Borough**
 - Increased local opportunities (eg Applause, museum outreach activities) reduce the need for people to travel to leisure activities
 - Promotion of walking and cycling
- **Meeting the need for housing**
 - The management of open spaces adjacent to homes directly affects the quality of life of the people living there and the consequent desirability of their homes. The service works with both statutory and voluntary organisations to improve the public open space environment in and around both new and existing housing developments.
 - In particular, the service works with planners and developers to implement Local Plan policies and retain and provide an appropriate level and distribution of recreational open space, sports and play facilities for local residents.
- **Promoting health and improving well-being**
 - By increasing opportunities for both physical participation and stimulating mental activity the Service encourages increased levels of participation. An active lifestyle is widely recognised to promote good health and foster a sense of well-being
- **Encouraging social inclusion by supporting independence**
 - Empowering volunteers to run their own activities as a route to supporting independence
- **Learning for all**
 - Increased engagement in leisure activity to increase academic attainment (there is a proven link)
 - Specifically encouraging learning activities through the Museum, made more accessible by the introduction of e-learning tools

The Role of Leisure Services in delivering the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Corporate Priorities and Objectives

2.7 Leisure Services address the Corporate Priorities and Corporate Objectives (CO) in the following ways:

A1 : Promoting and maintaining a thriving and diverse local economy

CO1 *Encouraging a widening of the economic base, balancing the continued growth of the retail sector by the development of new activities, predominantly of the services and financial sector in the urban areas, with wider diversification in the rural areas*

- promoting the night time economy by providing evening leisure opportunities in the towns and villages which encourage increased footfall to the benefit of restaurants, pubs and bars
- an environment where people are able to pursue a wide range of leisure opportunities contributes to the likelihood of retaining staff for

local businesses and contributes to increasing the value of land and property

- specific events and the presence of the Museum are designed to maintain the viability of Royal Tunbridge Wells' town centre
- A varied Leisure offering, is important in attracting visitors to come and stay in the borough, thus benefiting local businesses and the local economy.

A2 : Caring for our environment

CO8 *Enhance conservation areas, listed buildings and the countryside. We need to ensure that our buildings are well maintained to encourage a thriving tourist industry*

- the Museum works with Parks, the Kent High Weald Project and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society on a variety of environmental interpretation activities. The Museum also provides ongoing education on the both the natural and built environment to encourage a sense of ownership and responsible behaviour
- the Parks department manages a range of parks, open spaces, woodlands and nature reserves in the Borough
- the service manages the grant to Trinity which cares for the only Grade 1 listed building in Royal Tunbridge Wells

A3: Having housing suitable for local people

CO10 *Increase the provision of affordable housing and smaller homes in our towns and villages by developing and implementing a Supplementary Planning Document on Affordable Housing. This will assist in delivering new affordable homes (including social rented homes, low cost home ownership and housing for key workers) through the planning system*

- The management of open spaces adjacent to homes directly affects the quality of life of the people living there and the consequent desirability of their homes. The service works with planners to ensure that the public open space environment in and around new housing developments is appropriately designed.
- In particular, the service works with planners and developers to implement Local Plan policies and retain and provide an appropriate level and distribution of recreational open space, sports and play facilities for local residents.

A4 : Developing safer and stronger communities

CO13 *Reducing crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour, through the management and delivery of Community Safety Partnership activity in accordance with the Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2008*

- Leisure Services works with the Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership to plan and provide appropriate leisure opportunities which

can be diversionary or build community capacity in priority neighbourhoods

- It works with members of the Community Safety partnership to integrate safety measures into the design of parks, play areas and open spaces

A4 : Developing safer and stronger communities

CO14 *Through partnership and collaboration, instigating and managing projects and initiatives to address inequalities in health, education, and employment-engaging with the statutory voluntary and community organisations*

- By increasing opportunities for physical and mental participation the Service encourages increased levels of participation. An active lifestyle is widely recognised to reduce health problems and foster a sense of well-being
- Leisure Services designs and delivers projects that encourage participation in ways that address inequalities in health (eg: outreach play sessions), education (eg Museum outreach) and employment (eg: Making It West Kent Arts Partnership project)

A4 : Developing safer and stronger communities

CO15 *Building community participation and capacity by providing financial and other support for voluntary and community organisations and by promoting and developing volunteering as a means of delivering services and improving individual skills*

- Leisure Services provides financial support to voluntary and community organizations through the Voluntary Organisations Grant Fund
- The service also provides specialist advice and training to voluntary organisations which increases the community's capacity to deliver leisure opportunities safely and effectively

A4 : Developing safer and stronger communities

CO16 *We would like to encourage participation by children and young people in youth cultural and community activities (LAA Outcome 7)*

The Service:

- carries out direct consultation with young people on provision of services to meet their needs
- provides sports and arts activities for young people during the holidays
- runs Blingin' Youth Arts programme (West Kent Arts Partnership) and Art in Car Parks project
- runs the Kwik Cricket Festival, Junior Sports Achievement Awards, co-ordinates the Borough's teams for the Kent Youth Games, assists in the Special Schools Sports and Athletics competition and works with partners on the Charlton Athletic outreach programme
- programmes shows for children and young people, raises sponsorship to offer free tickets to schools in priority neighbourhoods, provides free

workshops to those schools and hosts school events through the Assembly Hall Theatre

- sets up education and outreach services
- runs a programme of regular events for users of all ages, including sessions for pre-school children, holiday activities and art workshops for young people in the Museum
- designs, improves and maintains parks, play areas and wheeled sports areas across Royal Tunbridge Wells
- provides a range of activities for children and young people in the Sports Centres

Section III: The Priorities for Future Leisure Provision

Priority 1 – Improve the health and well-being of the community by increasing opportunities for participation

'There are few public health initiatives that have greater potential for improving health and well-being than increasing the activity levels of the population....' Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health 2004

Key Facts/Statistics

- *Increasing activity levels by 10% could save 6,000 lives and £500million per year (The Framework for Sport in England, Sport England 2004)*
- *Tunbridge Wells borough's participation rate is 20.7% which compares with a national average of 20.1%. This is the percentage of adults participating in at least 30 minutes moderate intensity sport and active recreation on 3 or more days a week. (Sport England participation rates for local authorities October 2005 to April 2006)*
- *If 20% of the public could be persuaded to become more active, there would be a significant impact on health benefits and costs. (Health Development Agency, Sport and Health Working Together, Sport England, 2000)*
- *55% of respondents identified health as one of their top three priorities for the Community Plan. 48% of these respondents believed that promoting healthy lifestyles should be a priority, 39% believed that promoting good health among children and young people was a priority and 35% that meeting the health needs of older people was a priority (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *The majority of respondents who do not use council run leisure facilities state their reason as either 'lack of time' or 'not interested' (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *Leisure Services has a database of 184 local Sports Clubs and 168 arts organisations; these provide opportunities for participation in a wide range of Leisure activities*
- *The top three priorities for leisure included sports facilities, organised sports activities and coaching (Residents' Workshops linked to the Community Plan)*
- *8% of respondents highlighted community development as one of the most important community priorities, of these 26% felt that championing the aspirations of those with disabilities was a priority, 18% that meeting the diverse needs of Black and Minority Ethnic groups and gypsies and travellers was a priority and 6% that increasing volunteering activity was a priority (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey)*

Understanding the Priority

- 3.1 It is widely recognised that increasing levels of participation in leisure activities has a range of benefits for the community. There is now extensive evidence of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and the links between achieving this and participation in sport, physical activity, learning and stimulating activity.
- 3.2 The challenge to the Council's Leisure Services and to its partners is to change cultural habits: to foster a community where people choose to spend leisure time being active in all senses rather than opting for sedentary pastimes and aspire to a healthier lifestyle in general. To effect this culture change opportunities for participation must be accessible, affordable, and relevant to communities.
- 3.3 The borough is overall a generally affluent community, but with small and severe pockets of deprivation. Less than 50% of the local population currently take part in leisure activities available in the borough. Increasing participation amongst those groups who do not currently take part in any activities or who under participate is a priority.
- 3.4 This does not necessarily mean increasing the level of provision available. The greater task is to make people more aware of the benefits of participation and the opportunities for participation. Providing high quality services will also encourage more people to participate. Whilst there will always be a proportion of residents who will remain uninterested in becoming active in their leisure time, the Council seeks to ensure that it has done all that it can to encourage people to lead active lives.
- 3.5 Physical access to leisure provision is a significant barrier to using facilities for participation, particularly for those in the rural areas, people with disabilities and those dependent on public transport such as young people and older people. Improving transport around the Borough is important in the longer term.
- 3.6 In the medium term the service seeks to maximise the use of e-tools and outreach services to bring some leisure opportunities to people who are limited in their access to the facilities. This is unlikely to lead to increased physical activity but can generate participation in life-long learning opportunities.
- 3.7 Marketing initiatives will be used to increase awareness, to break down psychological barriers and encourage people to try something new. Marketing and planning will take into account and be influenced by the specific needs of under-participating groups.
- 3.8 The Council seeks to work effectively with voluntary and commercial partners to increase the opportunities for good quality, safe, participatory leisure opportunities and increase the awareness of those opportunities.

2012 Olympics and Paralympics

The 2012 Olympics and Paralympics have the potential to generate many opportunities in the Borough.

Direct benefits will include the opportunity for local residents to join the huge number of volunteers that will be required to make this great international event a success. The training they receive will mean that they will become a valuable local resource after the event as well. The Borough Council will be working in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to bid for hosting training facilities.

Indirect benefits include the generating of economic activity. Tourism and Marketing services will work hard to attract visitors to the Olympics to come and visit the Borough. It is expected that visitor numbers will increase during this period and restaurants, retail, hotels and bed and breakfast establishments will all benefit from the increased trade.

It is a unique opportunity to raise the profile of sport and leisure in general, and to increase local participation levels. In the run up to the Games, the Council will support individuals who may be competing in the Games, and work with partners, for example local schools to organise sporting events which also offer opportunities for longer term participation.

The Olympics is not only a sporting event but traditionally generates an opportunity for the host country to celebrate its culture through music, dance and visual spectacles. The event will generate an interest in a range of cultural activities in the borough.

It is essential that these benefits are capitalised on to ensure that the impact of the Olympics leaves a lasting positive legacy.

Tour de France 2007

In 2007 the Borough will be hosting a stage of the Tour de France. This is an excellent opportunity to promote the Borough as a Tourism destination and to promote local businesses. The event will also be used to promote the benefits of cycling as a sport, leisure activity and a means of transport.

Priority One: Objectives

- 1.1 Encourage the adoption of a healthier lifestyle by the whole local community
- 1.2 Promote existing opportunities for participation
- 1.3 Target under participating hard to reach groups
- 1.4 Work with local partners to provide specific health-related initiatives

Priority 2 – Encourage safer and stronger communities by providing appropriate, quality facilities, services and activities

Key Facts/Statistics

- *52% of respondents highlighted Community Safety as one of the most important community priorities, of these 48% felt that reducing the fear of crime was a priority, 34% that reducing antisocial behaviour was a priority and 32% that increasing a sense of security (eg CCTV, lighting) (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *42% of respondents have visited the Assembly Hall Theatre in the past twelve months, this compares to 23% in the 2004 survey (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *25% of respondents have visited the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery in the past twelve months, this compares to 22% in 2004 (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *A high number of "likes" raised under the "Leisure" heading included sport and leisure facilities, parks and common areas, theatre facilities and others. Dislikes also included sports facilities as well as affordability of sports centres, the town centre cinema site and the number of restaurants and bars in the town at the expense of shops. Under housing, concern was raised that "too many houses are being built without infrastructure" (Community Plan Residents' Workshops)*
- The National Literacy Trust report that mental exercise can give the elderly an 'extra 14 years of alertness'
- The Lancet Neurology say that 'a stimulated brain is a healthy sharp brain'.

My Tunbridge Wells

In the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery community-curated exhibition “My Tunbridge Wells” (organised to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of Royal Tunbridge Wells) the community were asked to contribute objects that they associated with the town. Many chose leisure related activities and Council leisure facilities and initiatives: the Tunbridge ware collection, their membership of voluntary organisations, parks, boating on Dunorlan lake, Cricket week, the Millennium Clock, the Museum, swimming, shopping, the Assembly Hall Theatre and the Dipper

Understanding the priority

- 3.9 Leisure activities can help to build safer and stronger communities by raising aspirations, diverting those at risk of offending, encouraging volunteering, increasing participation levels, fostering confidence and increasing the number of people who see their communities as places that are safe, welcoming and somewhere to be proud of. Evidence of the link between these outcomes and participation is captured in a growing body of research being undertaken nationally.
- 3.10 The Council recognises that working with partners is critical to developing local opportunities for participation in leisure activities. Supporting the active voluntary sector in the Borough is important for the long term sustainability of provision; this support will target capacity building through increasing numbers of coaches, workshop leaders and board members, and facilitating organisational development, as well as providing appropriate advice and information. There will also be more strategic co-ordination with Town and Parish Councils and other appropriate forums on the development and maintenance of leisure facilities and opportunities.
- 3.11 Clean, well maintained and well run facilities with helpful, well trained staff promote a sense of security, being welcomed and an atmosphere of mutual respect. The Council is committed to providing a high standard of well equipped facilities with staff training in customer care and specialist skills to provide an excellent service to all customers.
- 3.12 Increased footfall in town centres, town centre car parks and parks makes these spaces feel safe to be in, perpetuating an active, sociable and confident community; therefore the Council will provide well maintained parks and a visible staff presence in key town parks, maintain the existing parks' cafés in Dunorlan and Calverley Grounds and provide and facilitate evening activities and entertainment such as the theatres in Royal Tunbridge Wells to contribute to the sense of a safe and welcoming borough.
- 3.13 Achieving better value for money in delivering Council services will increase the capacity for delivering more. Redistributing resources and reviewing the future management of leisure facilities and services will open up opportunities for

achieving this as well as ongoing consultation with users and non-users to ensure that services are customer-focussed and appropriate.

- 3.14 There are school-based facilities in the borough which provide only limited, or no access for community use; making these facilities more available to the public would help to address current issues about lack of available built facilities (particularly in rural areas). The Council will seek to work with schools to improve their accessibility to the public.
- 3.15 Leisure Services and Planning Services will work closely together guided by Policy Planning Guidance to make best use of opportunities presented by the use and application of Section 106 Agreements – where developers agree to invest in local infrastructure as part of their planning consent.
- 3.16 The Service aims to foster a "knowledge society", encouraging learning for pleasure beyond formal education, encouraging the community to learn about itself, leading to a greater sense of belonging. This agenda lends itself to e-learning that allows the Service to move away from physical resources and concentrate on knowledge resources. Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery is well placed to develop e-learning tools to provide access to heritage information and to the collections. This electronic approach achieves wider outreach to the community – an approach that is less reliant on buildings and staff and is therefore cost effective.
- 3.17 The Museum Library and Archive Council - South East (MLA-SE) has been developing the terms of reference for a developer tariff which would ensure that new developments contribute to the cultural infrastructure, particularly for new communities. The service has been involved in the research and development of the tariffs and will continue to participate in and monitor this research.

Priority Two: Objectives

- 2.1 Maximise the effectiveness of all existing Tunbridge Wells Borough Council services
- 2.2 Ensure Leisure provision reflects locally identified needs
- 2.3 Support key partners in developing and delivering local opportunities for participation

Priority 3 – Facilitate appropriate provision to meet the needs of children and young people

Key Facts/Statistics

- *26% of the population of the borough of Tunbridge Wells is aged between 0 and 16 years old*
- *81% have used sports centres in the past twelve months. Of those who have not, a lack of interest (40%) is the main barrier to usage. To increase the use of*

sports facilities, 21 % of young respondents would like to see cheaper entrance fees, 11% better/improved facilities (Respondents aged 14 to 17: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)

- *64% have visited theatres in the past twelve months. Of those who have not, a lack of interest (64%) is the main barrier to usage. To increase the use of theatres 21% of young respondents would like to see more interesting offerings, 12% cheaper entrance fees. (Respondents aged 14 to 17: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *43% have visited museums in the past twelve months. Of those who have not, a lack of interest (69%) is the main barrier to usage. To increase the use of museums, 18% of young respondents would like to see more interesting exhibits. (Respondents aged 14 to 17: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *88% have visited parks in the past twelve months. Of those who have not, a lack of interest (42%) is the main barrier to usage. To increase the use of parks, 19% of young respondents would like to see a cleaner environment, and 15% better security (Respondents aged 14 to 17: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey 2005)*
- *59% felt that promoting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of young children was a priority (Tunbridge Wells Community Plan Residents' Workshops)*
- *The top three priorities for leisure included more sports facilities especially for young people and the Paddock Wood workshop identified more organised sport in and after school (Tunbridge Wells Community Plan Residents' Workshops)*
- *10,858 young people participated in the 2005 summer schemes and over 1,730 hours of holiday leisure activities were provided for young people at various venues and facilities in the borough*

Understanding the priority

- 3.18 At national level the publication of the Government's "Every Child Matters" framework, and the closely aligned "Youth Matters", highlights every authority's responsibility to meet the development needs of children and young people. Addressing this section of the population is an investment for the future.
- 3.19 At local level young people in particular and local communities in general feel there is a lack of things for young people to do in the local area. Equally, there is also a lack of awareness of what is actually available. Lack of transport links is particularly pertinent here as young people are largely reliant on public transport. Sports and arts development and Museum outreach initiatives can help to address this gap in provision along with working with other key partners (Parish and Town Councils, voluntary organisations, commercial providers, the Youth

Service). The role of the schools, particularly in rural areas is key as there is under exploited potential to provide local access to sports and arts facilities.

- 3.20 Once again the role of the voluntary sector is critical to meeting this priority. Given the vulnerability of children and young people the Council has a responsibility and is uniquely placed to facilitate training for voluntary organisations in safe practices for working with children.
- 3.21 Facilities need to reflect the needs of young people when deciding content of activities, timing, the environment for participation, pricing and the nature of marketing.
- 3.22 The quality audit undertaken for the 2005/06 Policy Planning Guidance 17 study identifies that play areas in the rural parishes are of a poorer quality than those provided in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Addressing the poor quality of some existing provision and its lack of appeal is critical to ensure that children and young people are encouraged to participate in leisure activities. It is essential that the Council accesses its allocated funding ring fenced by the Big Lottery by developing the Play Strategy which is the essential criteria for obtaining this funding.

Priority Three: Objectives

- 3.1 Seek to provide relevant, safe and good quality facilities, services and activities for children and young people
- 3.2 Increase children and young people's awareness of the range of leisure opportunities available to them in their local area

Priority 4 – Facilitate appropriate provision to meet the needs of older people

Key Facts/Statistics

“The proportion of people engaging in physical activity declines with age and particularly after age 35” (Choosing Health? Choosing Activity Department of Health 2004”

- *The percentage of the population in the borough of Tunbridge Wells who are over the age of 65 will grow by 9% in the next five years and by 23% in the next ten years (this compares with a -1% and -5% drop in the number of people aged between 20 and 65*
- *8% highlighted community development as one of the most important community priorities, 28% said that supporting older people was a priority (In the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Residents' Survey)*
- *60% of women and 74% of men in the South East between the ages of 55 and 64 are overweight (Health Survey for England 2000/02*

- *An active life can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease by 50% (The Framework for Sport in England, Sport England 2004)*
- *Being physically active can reduce the risk of hip fracture by up to 50% (The Framework for Sport in England, Sport England 2004)*

Understanding the priority

- 3.23 The Borough has an ageing population. Older people are an invaluable resource for the community. They have a wealth of expertise that can be invested in voluntary organisations and a wealth of memories that are a valuable cultural resource.
- 3.24 Unfortunately it is also true that as people become older the likelihood of experiencing ill health increases and ill health leads to people becoming less active. Retirement from employment can also lead to a reduction in people's activity levels. This drop in activity levels can perpetuate or trigger a decline in health. By designing services and opportunities that are suitable for older people the Council can encourage older people to remain active and increase their chances of maintaining good health.
- 3.25 Older people are often reliant on public transport and therefore struggle to access facilities just as young people do. They are also more likely to be reluctant to go out after dark than young people. Programming of facility-based activities needs to reflect the times that older people are able to participate.
- 3.26 Participation levels do not have to drop with age. The Council needs to learn about the needs of older people so that it can provide appropriate services.

Priority Four: Objectives

- 4.1 Seek to provide relevant, safe and good quality facilities, services and activities for older people
- 4.2 Increase older people's awareness of the range of Leisure opportunities available to them in the local area

Section IV: The Improvement Plan

- 4.1 The Improvement Plan at **Appendix One** describes how the Council's Leisure Services will deliver its commitments in the Community Plan and how it will deliver on its own priorities set out in this strategy. It describes the improvements, the timetable for these improvements and the outcomes it believes it will achieve as a result of these improvements. It also identifies where else these improvements are committed – in other plans and strategies.
- 4.2 Finally the improvement plan indicates the consultation that has identified these improvements as the appropriate way forward. Apart from consultation and strategic direction the remaining driver for improvements is that of resources. Some of the improvements described are designed to achieve savings that can

then be either redirected to other, more relevant provision, or contribute towards the Council's overall need to reduce its expenditure. Where improvements are led by a need to refocus resources the research column states this.