

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

11 JANUARY 2005

**COMMUNITY SAFETY and LEISURE
FINAL REPORT –
INVESTIGATION INTO the ACTIVE MIDDLESBROUGH
STRATEGY**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this Draft Final Report is to present the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel's assessment and proposals on the Active Middlesbrough Strategy in relation to the Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Investigation.

OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 2 The overall aim of the Scrutiny Investigation was to assess the Active Middlesbrough Strategy in relation to its direction and to ascertain the level of partnership commitment and achievement of identified actions to date.
- 3 To present the findings of the Scrutiny Investigation to the Executive for their consideration.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 4 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Investigation were established on the 27 July 2004 and are as follows: -
- (a) Assessing the focus and purpose of the 'Active Middlesbrough Strategy';
 - (b) Investigating the level of involvement with other agencies in driving the strategy forward (With particular reference to the PCT); and
 - (c) The performance to date (Have the actions identified been Achieved?).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5 The Overview and Scrutiny Board approved the initial Work Programme for the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel in June 2004.
- 6 The first subject to be addressed was the 'Active Middlesbrough Strategy'. However the Panel considered at their meeting of 29 June 2004 that they would address the issues around the Clairville Stadium, to ensure their proposals were submitted to the Executive for consideration, as this subject was considered a priority.
- 6 Consequently the Panel met at the end of July 2004 to consider the Terms of Reference for the Panel's assessment of the Active Middlesbrough Strategy.
- 7 The 'Active Middlesbrough Strategy' is a five-year strategy (2003-2008) which had been operating for fifteen months at the commencement of this assessment.
- 8 Its overriding aim is to make more people more active. The physical and mental benefits associated with being active are well known, and the Strategy endeavours to drive greater engagement in activity.
- 8 The Strategy document is structured to illustrate the initial analysis of Middlesbrough and the level of activity amongst its community. It also presents the rationale behind developing a pro-active Strategy and the aims and actions it intends to deliver.

RECEIVING INFORMATION

- 9 The Panel considered the prime source of information regarding the purpose, direction and identifying the current achievement of actions, would in the first instance, be the Leisure Service, within the Authority's Environment Department.
- 10 The Panel also recognised that the Executive Member was a key driver in giving Political direction for such a Strategy and ensuring the achievement of all actions agreed by partner organisations.
- 11 The Panel then intended to obtain information from some of the Key Partners identified within the Strategy to assess their commitment and performance in delivering actions identified within the Strategy for delivery within the first year of its life.

Leisure Service

- 12 The Leisure Service attended a number of meetings and provided information, which assisted the Panel in their enquiries. Copies of the Strategy, the Service Plan, Position Statements, were provided promptly and presented at the meeting providing clarity and explanation as required.

Executive Member

- 13 The Executive Member outlined how this Strategy reflects issues within the Community Strategy. Also the intention and objective behind establishing the Active Middlesbrough Strategy and the need to maintain this Strategy until 2008. The Panel were appraised that this and the Cultural Service had recently been inspected by the Audit Commission and the outcome should be available soon. It was also outlined that there is a commitment from partner agencies to achieve the objectives contained therein.
- 14 In response to the Panel's intention to request attendance from partner organisations, the Panel were requested not to engage with partners until he had had the opportunity to convene a meeting of the Active Middlesbrough Forum. The Panel acquiesced to this request.
- 15 Once a meeting of the Active Middlesbrough Forum had been convened the Executive Member presented to the Panel the results of that meeting.

PANEL FINDINGS

- 16 It is important in analysing the Scrutiny Investigation that the findings address the core purpose identified in the initial Terms of Reference. The following represents a summary of the Panel's findings in this respect:-

Direction of the Active Middlesbrough Strategy

- 17 The first area of examination to reflect the Terms of Reference was to assess the focus and direction of the Strategy.
- 18 To do this, the Panel examined the core document and derived that that it contained a clear Mission, which were supported by seven prime aims.
- 19 Presenting a Mission which is clearly targeted towards increasing physical activity carries significantly more weight when placed into context the contribution this makes towards supporting a healthy lifestyle and tackling some of the problems associated with obesity.
- 20 The Panel considered the Strategy presented well and was very clear in the way it conveys its Vision, through its Mission, Primary Aims and its Actions.
- 21 The Panel considered the balance and the clarity the document presented was good and that securing the actions contained within would be beneficial to the people of Middlesbrough.
- 22 It is clear that the Strategy sought to support the Councils corporate aims and promote the economic vitality of Middlesbrough. One strand to achieve this was through training and coaching to improve health within communities by use of councils sporting facilities. Another aspect was to provide activities for young people which was hoped would steer them away from crime.
- 23 However, although the document conveys well, the marketing outside of the partnership is limited. As a working document, its value is in its outcomes and the Panel was eager to determine how active the Active Middlesbrough Strategy is.

Partnership Engagement

- 24 The Panel directed their attention to the second area of their Terms of Reference which focused on the involvement of other agencies.
- 25 The organisations who form the Partnership are easily identified within the Strategy and the Panel considered this to be open and transparent in the way the document openly conveys the action points, the organisation responsible for its delivery and the target date. The Panel

had requested an update on delivery against these actions, which is referenced later in this report, and had been disappointed in the level of delivery.

- 26 To assess the commitment and activity of the Partnership the Panel considered they would meet some of the key agencies to determine their involvement. Especially as a number of identified partners represent significant organisations such as the Primary Care Trust, Tees Valley Sports, University of Teesside, Volunteer Bureau, and educational establishments. The Panels first line of enquiry was to engage with the Executive Member who has a responsibility for Community Safety and Leisure and to discuss the process for engaging with partners. This meeting with the Exec member was held on the 17 August 2004.
- 27 The Strategy addresses the period 2003-08 and had been in operation for sixteen months when the Panel made their enquiries. The Panel was disappointed to find that the Partnership forum had never met during these sixteen months to collectively discuss progress, commitment, problem areas etc. The Panel considered that co-ordination of the partners was essential in delivering the actions identified to fulfil the Strategy. The Panel were requested not to engage with any of the partners before a forum meeting could take place, after which the Executive Member would report back to the Panel on the outcome of that meeting and requested that his report be received in three months time.
- 28 The Panel received the report on 9 November 2004 from the Executive Member regarding the inaugural meeting of the Partnership, which was held on 19 October 2004. The Executive member conveyed his disappointment to the Panel that both political and managerial representation for Education were not at the meeting, especially when so many key partners were there at the forum meeting of the partnership and believed that Education must engage in the co-ordinated approach to healthy living.
- 29 The Panel considered the feedback report to be lightweight. However it did present that of the 66 actions identified for delivery within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy, 20% of the actions to be undertaken in the first year had not in fact been achieved and that no assessment could be made on a further 21%. The Panel was concerned at the very low level of achievement.
- 30 Apparently the Forum meeting has considered inviting the Evening Gazette to sit on their group. The Panel are a little concerned regarding publicly marketing that they have failed to deliver a significant proportion of the Actions and that the lack of monitoring and managing the process would be better resolved prior to the expansion of the Partnership.

- 31 The Panel concluded that whilst the Strategy was focused and the Key Aims supported, as the Partnership had never met during the last 18 months it was difficult to accept the level of Partnership commitment and derive confidence that the actions would be delivered.
- 32 The Panel considers that the Partnership should meet quarterly and that on each occasion all actions identified be pursued and a progress report presented and circulated to all partners.
- 33 The Panel also believes that Education should lead by example and that a representative of the Education Service should attend each quarterly Partnership meeting of the forum to ensure it is represented appropriately.
- 34 The Panel was informed that strong feeling was expressed at the partnership meeting that volunteers are not represented sufficiently within the partnership. The Panel have not pursued this area but do suggest that this claim be explored further and reported to both the forum and the Volunteer Bureau.

First Year's Performance

- 35 The third area the Panel addressed within their Terms of Reference was to assess the commitment and delivery of the actions identified within the Strategy by the relevant Partners.
- 36 The Panel requested information in the form of a position statement, which would, illustrated the first year's performance. The Panel was appraised on the progress of all action points within the Strategy where the Council Leisure Service is identified as the lead Agency. The Panel were advised that all actions are all cascaded into the department Service Plan to ensure they are operationally and managerially integrated into the core service for delivery. This was considered to be good and instilled some confidence that the framework for delivering the action points was monitored and driven by the Service Department.
- 37 The Strategy contains 75 actions spread over 7 main aims. The position statement, supplied by the service department, identified the status of each action point against the lead agency and the time scale.
- 38 Following the meeting of the Forum the Panel were informed that 13 of the actions targeted for 2003 and 2004 had not been completed where Leisure were the lead agency. However, they have now been identified for completion during the current year. There were also 14 actions where no position update during the first 18 months has been provided by the lead partner. The lead partners in these cases were:-
 - (a) Middlesbrough Sports Schools Association;

(b) Local Education Authority; and

(c) Tees Valley Regeneration

- 39 The Panel were concerned that over 40% of the Actions identified for completion in 2003-04 were either not complete or no information was available regarding their state of progress.
- 40 The Panel was also appraised that even at the inaugural meeting of the Partnership there was an absence of representation from both the Education service and the individual schools.
- 41 The Panel was informed that some issues presented as actions within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy are now being pursued by other organisations. Consequently the Leisure Service has determined not to commence work in these areas to avoid duplication and avoid wasting money and resources.

ADDITIONAL AREAS CONSIDERED DURING THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 42 The Panel became aware during their examination into the Active Middlesbrough Strategy that two additional areas provoked Members' interest as they directly impacted on the areas the Strategy was being targeted towards.
- 43 The following briefly outlines these areas and the Panel's observations on these areas:-

'Get Active on Prescription'

- 44 The Panel became aware during their examination into the Active Middlesbrough Strategy that the links with doctors on promoting physical activity as a method of assisting patient's recovery was well founded. This scheme termed GAP (Get Active on Prescription) is promoted by the PCT.
- 45 It was found that over 600 referrals had been made during 2003 (61% from GPs', 23% from Hospitals and 16% referred from surgery / community based professionals) which was a 10% increase over 2002, and that the referrals would use equipment in the Rainbow Centre, Neptune Centre, Southlands, Clairville and Ormesby.
- 46 However, whilst there were over 600 referrals less than 70% turned up for their first session. Reasons for non-attendance ranged from deterioration in personal health, problems with session times and general changes in circumstances. However half of the attendees

completed the 12 week course and were then encouraged to continue with the activity programme.

- 47 The Panel were again encouraged with the Service approach to this area of physical recovery, however, the Panel did have some areas of concern and would wish to encourage some areas for further development:-
- (a) The Council did not appear to receive any feed back on the outcome of referrals, to either monitor the benefits derived and asses the value of their contribution; and
 - (b) While the PCT have funded the Lifestyle Co-ordinator post they appear to fund the Referral Scheme in other authorities while Middlesbrough Council has to fund the cost independently. The GAP Scheme is presently directed towards Adults only and the Panel would want the Service to explore the issues of a PCT Funded referral scheme, which is targeted towards Children and aimed at tackling obesity problems.

Leisure Link

- 48 In examining the Active Middlesbrough Strategy, the Panel became aware of the Council's Leisure Link Card Scheme.
- 49 This Scheme was introduced in 2002 following a report to the Authority's Corporate Management Team, which addressed the District Audit Pricing report.
- 50 The purpose was basically to review pricing as part of social inclusion, which would assist individuals with their ability to fund the use of facilities. This would directly improve the opportunity for more people to become active and bring with it the associated health benefits. This pricing scheme has basically introduced a pricing structure in the form of a membership scheme.
- 51 While the scheme has generated some income into the Council in the order of £25-30K through attracting between 10,000-11,000 cardholders. The charges are considered attractive ranging from £2.00 for a senior citizen, adult concession (ie adult in receipt of listed benefits) student, young person to £10.00 for an adult and £20.00 for a family ticket.
- 52 The Panel was also informed that other service groups purchase cards for their clients such as Sure Start, Asylum Seekers Support Team, and Foster Carers etc.
- 53 The Panel is aware that there were now more Leisure Link cardholders which provide a reduced admission charge, priority booking and activity

updates, than recorded none member fee paying customers, It is believed that this had generated an overall increase in usage of the facilities.

- 54 The Panel considers this attributed increase is due to relaxation of payments via the scheme has made a positive contribution to increasing the physical activity of people in Middlesbrough.
- 55 The Panel also appreciated that the Card Scheme also provided a sense of belonging for customers, who once embarked on a course of exercise, may continue, bringing with it the long-term health benefits. The Leisure Service has also approached the PCT encouraging them to introduce a Link Card Scheme for children transferring from year 6 to year 7 as it had funded free swimming for children during summer holidays.
- 56 The Panel deduced that there had been some major changes in the charging policy and that the Leisure Link Card scheme is becoming increasingly popular. Consequently the Panel concluded that the Service is responding to meet the needs of the community and should be encouraged in their actions and that they are supported in approaching the PCT to financially support the physical activity of those residents of Middlesbrough.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 57 The Panel were aware that the Leisure Service directly funded a number of activities which were identified in both their Service Plan and the Active Middlesbrough Strategy.
- 58 It is also apparent that the need to secure income to sustain the service can be a factor which is restricting usage by some sectors of the community.
- 59 Whilst the Sport Development budget of £241,00 is for community based delivery of activity, including work in schools and an element of out reach work. The Panel was not totally clear as to what proportion of the budget provision was directed to delivering services to the community, which is not directed through Leisure Centres.
- 60 The Panel also considered that the income target of £3,045,000 against a gross expenditure budget of £3,940,00 as rather ambitious. Whilst financially the Panel consider the level of income to be very good and the income target may be achieved the Panel question, at what cost this may have in limiting some sectors of the community from using the facilities. Especially if a core objective of the Strategy is to encourage both Adults and Children to use these facilities for health reasons and to impact on the problems associated with obesity and physical inactivity.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVEMENT

- 61 In addressing the area of performance, the Panel became aware that a number of actions contained within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy had not been achieved.
- 62 Not only were these areas of non achievement of concern to the Panel, but the reduced impact the actions were having on the target audience was of prime concern.
- 63 During enquiries into the reasons why some actions were not achieved it became apparent that there were a number of barriers, which had restricted the delivery of some actions.
- 64 The Panel presents below the areas which have been identified as barriers to achieving some of the actions contained within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy.
- (a) A delay in launching the Strategy has resulted in a much reduced time period to complete the targets identified for 2003/04 and consequently some of the actions programmed for completion in that year have now been carried over to 2004/05. However, this carrying forward of actions brings with it additional demands for achieving this year expectations;
 - (b) The Council's restructure has resulted in the loss of Head of Service and this together with other staff resignations have impacted on the resources available to deliver leisure services and therefore the actions presented within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy;
 - (c) The recent Audit Inspection had placed further demands on the resources available and this has impacted on the ability to apply attention to the targeted actions;
 - (d) The service has recently been involved with Job Evaluation and this has also been time consuming;
 - (e) Whilst the above are directed towards resource, a number of the Actions require some level of funding. This has brought some difficulties for the service who has to balance the conflict between Commercial and Social demands. The desire to provide a service, which meets the prime, Aim of the Strategy is challenged by the need to secure a level of income identified within the Service Plan;
 - (f) The unacceptability within the service to provide free usage at certain times as this could both increase the level of activity of

people and may provoke subsequent usage. Cost was identified as a barrier to participation and that this is evidenced by the improvement in children participating in swimming, with a 700% increase in young swimmers when access was funded by the PCT.

ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 65 The Panel was informed that there were a number of School premises and resources, which are underused. It is appreciated that schools are reluctant to open their premises for security reasons, cost of care, damage, vandalism etc. As part of achieving the actions contained within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy, the release of facilities, which are close to communities could be an important factor in people becoming more active. Whilst Sport England North East support the use of schools for local communities, the Panel would encourage the Development Officer or other officer within Education to pursue this and convey the position to the Executive Member with responsibility for Leisure.
- 66 The Panel concentrated on the issues contained within the Terms of Reference for this Scrutiny Investigation. However, a range of additional issues emerged which contribute to increasing the physical activity of people in Middlesbrough. These include:-
- (a) Breakfast Clubs where people (pupils) can visit early and undertake various forms of physical exercise;
 - (b) The Older Persons Strategic Plan which is targeted towards activities suitable for older people;
 - (c) Joint parent/child recreational facilities which endeavour to overcome the difficulties parents have in undertaking exercise due to the commitments of looking after young children; and
 - (d) The use of parks and open spaces in relation to outside facilities.
- 67 Whilst referenced elsewhere within this report, the free swimming opportunity for children during school holidays which is funded by the PCT should be further pursued to ensure it continues. This provides physical activity and also contributes towards personal safety and consideration should be given to continuing with this irrespective of the PCT's commitment.
- 68 The issue of funding was raised with the Panel on more than one occasion. As external funding is outside the Terms of Reference of this Scrutiny Investigation, the Panel did not pursue this area. However, the Panel are aware that the funding of such facilities is paramount in

the Council's ability to provide such facilities. Therefore the Panel would encourage engagement of the various sections to assist with identifying the funding regimes which could assist in achieving the aim of increasing Physical activity of the communities of Middlesbrough.

CONCLUSION

- 69 The Panel considers that the lack of physical activity has probably more to do with being a cultural problem than due to any lack of facilities. There are clear physical and psychological benefits in undertaking exercise and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The Active Middlesbrough Strategy is clearly driving forward, to both educate and encourage an increase in physical activity to improve health and tackle such issues as the national trend towards obesity.
- 70 The analysis revealed that, of the people who do not partake in any exercise, there are three main reasons identified. These are:-
- (a) simply not interested;
 - (b) no time; and
 - (c) the cost involved.
- 71 Education and encouragement can tackle the first two issues while cost is already a factor being addressed by the Service. The Panel believes the cost issue may require further consideration, as while such aims of promoting physical activity, especially in children are married to a service with high income targets then the service has directly conflicting objectives.
- 72 The Panel concluded that the service demonstrated a proactive approach to driving the service forward however, it appears the delivery of the actions contained within strategy itself are let down by some partner organisations.
- 73 This Scrutiny Investigation has already directly provoked some positive action simply by bringing the enquiries to the fore. Concerned that there had not been a single meeting of the partnership during the first 18 months, the Panel provoked a meeting to identify the partner's contribution and initiate some accountability of Partners who have given commitment but have not evidenced the delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 74 The Panel's key recommendations to the Executive are as outlined below, however, it should be noted that the Panel appreciate these recommendations will impact on external organisations who have formed a partnership and given a commitment to delivering the actions contained within the Strategy:-

- (a) The Executive member and Leisure Service Manager urge the Partners to meet every three months to (i) monitor progress of the Strategy and (ii) obtain renewed commitment to areas not being achieved, revising timetables where appropriate to ensure achievement, at the latest, by 2008;
- (b) The Partnership Forum be requested that their minutes clearly identify the actions achieved and those which require revised action and timescale. Also that the Minutes are circulated to all Key Partners and reported by the Councils Executive Member to the Executive Board to ensure awareness of progress;
- (c) The Executive member ensures an Annual Report is produced on the achievements of the Partnership. The achievements should be clear and expressions such as 'on going' should be avoided;
- (d) Ensure all future Sport and Leisure Service Plans are structured to incorporate the actions identified within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy, which are targeted for delivery during the life of that Service Plan;
- (e) Council's Education Service to clearly express its position on delivery of actions for which it is responsible. The service should ensure a representative attends each quarterly meeting of the Partnership;
- (f) The Primary Care trust are urged to consider funding the "Get Active on Prescription" scheme (GAP) in Middlesbrough as they apparently do in other Local Authorities;
- (g) The Primary Care Trust are urged to promote GAP referrals for children, particularly children with obesity since the present system only targets adults;
- (h) The Primary Care Trust are requested to feedback on the health benefits achieved by people who complete a GAP referred course of activity sessions;
- (i) The Primary Care trust are urged to encourage many more GPs' to use the GAP Referrals Scheme by increasing their awareness of the benefits that can be achieved;
- (j) The Executive member to explore ways of introducing a Bus Pass Scheme for people who are attending the facilities for health improvement as access and transport may be a barrier to attendance;
- (k) The Leisure Service to market the facilities in Middlesbrough to present the Council as aiming to improve the health of its

community. This should include the promotion of the Active Middlesbrough Strategy and the actions and opportunities being offered, Other key partners should also be urged to market their facilities similarly;

- (l) The Primary Care Trust are urged to repeat the funding of free swimming for children during school summer holidays as part of their contribution to healthier children, or other means are found to continue this free facility;
- (m) The Councils Education Service, through its development function, increases awareness of schools regarding the benefits physical activity has in contributing towards a good health;
- (n) The Councils Education Service encourages schools with special expertise in aspects of physical activity to liaise with other schools so that opportunities are accessible to more pupils who wish further development;
- (o) The Education Service urge schools and Teesside University to reconsider the barriers that have previously prevented the use of school and university facilities by the community which would improve the health of users of those facilities;
- (p) The Leisure Service review the high income targets identified within the Sport and Leisure Service Plan as the current high levels can inhibit the options available to increase participation in structured physical activity when undertaken for health reasons;
- (q) The Volunteer Bureau are requested to consider how they would consider appropriate representation of the voluntary sector could be achieved to address the concerns raised at the inaugural Partnership meeting;
- (r) The leisure Service continue to monitor the operation of the Leisure Link Card Scheme at regular intervals to maximise the usage of facilities offered by the scheme.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

75 The Panel is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular the co-operation we have received from the below-named:-

Councillor Barry Coppinger - Executive Member for Community Safety and Leisure

Diane Simon - Service Manager, Middlesbrough Sports and Leisure Service.

Louise Morris - Sports Development Manager

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS ROBSON
CHAIR OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL**

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- (a) The Active Middlesbrough Strategy 2003-08.
- (b) The Sport and Leisure Service Plan 2004-05.
- (c) The Minutes of the Formal Meetings of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on 27 July 2004, 17 August 2004, 7 September 2004, 28 September 2004, 9 November 2004 and 21 December 2004.
- (d) Sport and Leisure Report to Authority's Corporate Management Team dated March 2002.