

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Active Communities

At 10.00 am on Friday 2nd August, 2024 in the Council Chamber, The Cube, George St, Corby NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Helen Howell (Co-Chair)
Councillor Gill Mercer (Co-Chair)
Councillor Ken Harrington

Councillor Paul Marks
Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Geoff Shacklock

Officers

Jane Bethea – Director of Public Health
Kerry Purnell - Assistant Director, Housing and Communities
Shirley Plenderleith - Assistant Director, Public Health
Julie Cardwell – Strategic Lead - Leisure
Pippa Williams - Acting Consultant in Public Health

62 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John McGhee and his appointed substitute, Cllr Ross Armour.

63 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

64 Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2024

RESOLVED that:-

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

65 Active Communities Strategic Framework update and Leisure Social Value

The panel received a presentation that detailed the projected societal value generated by the leisure facilities offered in North Northamptonshire.

It was noted that the Leisure Team had undertaken a piece of research in partnership with Max Associates and 4GLOBAL to explore the projected social value generated by leisure facilities that incorporated a combination of participation data. Details of the 12 leisure facilities that formed part of the research were detailed to the meeting.

It was heard that Social Return on Investment was a framework for measuring the non-market economic, social and environmental value created by an activity, organisation and intervention. A user generated social value when participating in an activity with the amount of value dependent on demographic factors and how long they were active for. The value generated was detailed at the per-person level and divided into four key indicators: physical and mental health; subjective wellbeing; individual development; and social and community development

It was reported that the societal value generated by North Northamptonshire leisure facilities during 2023 was estimated at £16.6m, the largest percentage of this being subjective wellbeing. Physical and mental health indicators were broken down into specific long-term conditions and outlined to the meeting.

The panel noted that the Council's in-house leisure facilities featured in the top quartile against benchmarked leisure sites from other providers. The exercise would be undertaken again in the next two or three years to ascertain whether there had been any change.

It was reported that in 2023, Max Associates had been commissioned to assist in producing an Active Communities Strategic Framework, that included an Active Communities Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy, Leisure Facilities Strategy and a Future Options Report for management of North Northamptonshire Leisure.

It was noted that this was a significant and lengthy piece of work, with final drafts for the three strategies close to being finalised for publication. Prior to that, actions arising from those strategies required preparation. It was further noted that the Leisure Facilities Strategy would be used to bring forward an investment plan for the Council's leisure estate and sensible decisions were required in light of current need and projected population demand. This work was well underway with a view to bringing this subject back to the EAP prior to Executive decision before the end of 2024.

Co-Chair, Cllr Helen Howell spoke to welcome the informative presentation noting that active leisure added value to residents lives and reduced the burden on health services. In regard to the Active Communities Strategic Framework, areas for improvement had been identified and a plan for the improvements created.

Cllr Paul Marks reported negative feedback from local residents regarding Freedom Leisure in Kettering, noting that the Cornmarket Hall facilities were difficult to book and the Kettering swimming pool had a lack of staff. In response it was noted that there had been staffing issues and a significant turnover of site managers, however a new area manager had been appointed and regular monitoring and meetings would be held going forward to ensure better performance.

Cllr Russell Roberts noted the importance of wellbeing for residents and welcomed the Council's stance of adopting best practices for its facilities whilst noting that Local Strategic Partnerships had a beneficial role to play in this regard.

Cllr Ken Harrington queried how the Council would prioritise leisure services given limited funding availability. It was heard that collected data would be utilised to ensure sufficient service provision to meet population needs while ensuring the Council played its part in delivering programmes that helped people recovering from illness or injury.

Co-Chair, Cllr Howell concluded debate by noting the scale of work involved in producing the Active Communities Strategic Framework, with a need for planning to invest in leisure facilities while understanding what constituted the optimal service provision throughout the whole of North Northamptonshire.

66 North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategy

The Assistant Director Communities and Leisure, Kerry Purnell presented an updated version of the North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategic Masterplan and summary report prior to its presentation for adoption at Executive at its August meeting.

It was noted that the panel had considered the draft strategy and initial report in September 2023, with a public consultation process held between 21st September and 1st November 2023, with the final draft of the strategy before the panel now incorporating feedback received as result of this process.

It was heard that the strategy was a significant piece of work with an aim of enabling walking, cycling and wheelchair accessibility for a range of trips and purposes including commuting, school and leisure across an active travel network and green travel infrastructure. It was anticipated that tourism would benefit alongside the vitality of towns by improving connectivity as well as contributing to sustainable transport and the climate change agenda.

The meeting heard that the strategy was evidence based, with a huge amount of work undertaken in relation to data analysis and the different modes of travel people chose to adopt. Whilst there were no direct funding implication, future external funding opportunities would be actively explored to enable implementation of the Greenway. It was heard that the Greenway was linked to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and offered significant strategic value.

It was heard that the consultation had been well received, with approximately 300 public responses received, 288 supporting the creation of the Greenway with most public comments specifically in relation to ensuring routes were safe, well lit, well maintained, accessible and inclusive and delivered connectivity.

The panel heard that in March 2024 the consultation responses had been reviewed, with the following amendments made to the strategy as a result:

- Vision slightly amended to make specific reference to equestrian users
- The Environment Agency requested that routes close to rivers had flood risk assessments undertaken and sought provision for adequate measures for the disposal of waste along routes
- Planning Policy weighting of the strategic document had been considered, defining the Greenway as a rural LCWIP, whilst noting that while there would be prioritisation of routes involved, all routes were important
- Consideration as to how adopted Neighbourhood Plans could support the strategy
- Maintenance agreements needed to be in place before work started on the ground to understand how routes would be maintained

The panel noted that there remained additional work to be undertaken regarding developer contribution formulas to comply with relevant regulations around Section 106 monies. A change had been made to emphasise that while developer contributions were important, there was need to look at all potential funding opportunities. Specific reference to the Community Infrastructure Levy would be removed from the document.

The meeting heard that a website had been developed to promote and recruit Greenway champions and to promote existing routes. Meetings would be held to assist with local buy-in for the strategy and its delivery. Ongoing engagement with landowners, stakeholders and members would continue, with member leads in each of the four former sovereign council areas. It was reported that since the consultation positive interest had been seen from particular local groups and £100,000 had been secured to fund the Market Harborough to Braybrooke section of the Greenway.

Co-Chair, Cllr Helen Howell stated that the strategy aimed to make the whole of the beautiful North Northamptonshire countryside accessible for all and commended the four member leads for their work with local landowners, an important factor in obtaining access to land required to connect routes. Cllr Howell noted that the Greenway would allow landowners to manage access to their land and noted the key factor of route maintenance. In addition, every potential funding opportunity for routes would be explored, with promotion of the Greenway key to its success.

Cllr Geoff Shacklock, one of the four member leads noted that landowners had been accepting of the strategy, noting that they could control where people crossed their land and welcomed the inclusion of equestrian access for routes.

Co-Chair, Cllr Gill Mercer welcomed the final draft of the strategy noting how far the Greenway had come since its inception at the former East Northamptonshire Council.

The Director of Public Health, Jane Bethea noted the wide range of benefits the scheme offered. It was heard that isolation, particularly in rural areas was a notable issue and there was strong evidence to indicate that being outdoors was positive for health and wellbeing, therefore offering accessible connectivity to outdoor spaces was both an excellent asset and positive from a Public Health perspective.

The panel agreed a minor amendment to the Greenway logo to include a wheelchair user to highlight inclusivity and accessibility.

67 Health and Wellbeing Strategy Update

Cllr Mercer invited the Director of Public Health, Jane Bethea to provide a brief introduction to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Update.

The Director of Public Health noted that the strategy before members was a fundamental part of Public Health activities. The purpose of the strategy was noted as being to:

- Provide a context, vision, and overall focus for improving the health and wellbeing of local people and reducing health inequalities.
- Set out a list of shared priorities and outcomes for improving local health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities.

- Support effective partnership working that delivers improved health outcomes.
- Provide a framework to support innovative approaches which facilitate necessary change given the evolving needs of local communities

Work had been undertaken to establish what else the service could do in regard to factors that caused ill health and health inequality, with areas for initial focus identified as smoking/vaping and keeping active. Other areas for consideration were children and young people, mental health and wellbeing and financial resilience.

Acting Consultant in Public Health, Pippa Williams then provided additional information to the panel, with it being noted that a prioritisation process had been undertaken in conjunction with key partners including elected members, the Integrated Care Board partnership, Local Area Partnerships and voluntary and health and wellbeing providers to get establish five key priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. A decision had been made by the Health and Wellbeing Board in adopting a phased approach for each of those priorities, with three key stages to each; preparation, key aims and objectives followed by an implementation phase.

It was heard that the smoking/vaping priority had now reached the implementation phase, whilst keeping active had come forward for initial discussion at the recent Health and Wellbeing Board meeting to return at the next meeting with a delivery plan. The children and young people priority was currently in preparation ahead of the next board meeting.

Details of the governance and reporting structure for progression of the strategy was provided to the meeting. It was heard that a strong structure would assist in reviewing progress and overcoming any challenges to implementation with the programme and sponsor leads attending the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was noted that monthly meetings were held to review progress and discuss challenges raised by programme and could act as an escalation platform to the Place Delivery Board.

It was reported that place-based partnerships were key in terms of implementation, and an example of the smoking/vaping strategy programme was provided to the meeting as an indicative example.

Four workstreams aimed at reducing the prevalence and inequalities of smoking in the North Northamptonshire population were detailed as follows:

1. To increase the number of residents supported to stop smoking through the Local Authority and NHS services
2. To provide targeted support to population groups with higher prevalence of smoking
3. To implement prevention activities focussed on smoking and vaping in children and young people
4. To disrupt the sale of illegal tobacco and vaping (e-cigarettes) products and reduce underage sale

Examples were provided of work with Tresham College and local secondary schools, while re-establishing a working group with the Fire Service and Community Safety team was also a priority. Specific Trading Standards issues included illegal and underage sales of tobacco and vape products.

The Director of Public Health noted that Corby had previously had the highest rate of smoking in the country, however a significant level of work to reduce prevalence had been undertaken with some success, although the impact had not been equal, with areas of deprivation seeing significantly smaller reductions in smoking. It was heard that should a successful programme be developed for Corby it could be robustly evaluated before being rolled out to other areas of North Northamptonshire.

Co-Chair, Cllr Gill Mercer referred to the partnership approach of the strategy and the need for measurable outcomes, noting success in reducing rates of smoking in pregnancy.

Cllr Ken Harrington questioned preventative measures in place to prevent young people from smoking and vaping in the first place. It was noted that there were social norms regarding smoking and vaping with price and accessibility being a driver, combined with vapes being actively marketed at young people. It was therefore vital to have the right support and education measures in place to reduce take-up.

Members also asked questions in relation to the smoking cessation services offered by the Council and illegal use of nitrous oxide.

68 Executive Forward Plan - August 2024 to November 2024

The Executive Forward Plan for August 2024 to November 2024 was noted.

69 Forward List of Items for the EAP

The forward list of items for the EAP was considered.

70 Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 11:34am