

CWG, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee

7 December 2022

Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care - Priorities 2022-23

1. Introduction

As the majority of members are new to this committee, and I was new to this Cabinet post in May 2022, I thought it would be helpful to set out some background for context of which aspects of my portfolio sit within this Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Health & Social Care Cabinet portfolio covers Adult Social Care, Public Health and sport and community leisure provision and the wellbeing service. However, due to my role representing BCC on the Legacy and Benefits Committee for the Organising Committee for the B2022 Commonwealth Games, I also played a key role in shaping the route of the Queen's Baton Relay in the city, and the community engagement that was a key factor in that journey. I continue to have a keen interest in the immediate legacy of the Games in the city, such as promoting opportunities for local organisations to benefit from donations of surplus sports equipment and sundries such as bike racks and clothing.

2. Sport, Events, Community and Wellbeing Service

By way of background, the wellbeing and sports services come under the Neighbourhoods Division of the City Operations Directorate, along with the Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit (NDSU), Advice Service, Events, City Centre Operations, Culture and Tourism.

A structure chart for this service area can be found in Appendix 2.

2.1 Sports Service

Birmingham City Council's Sports Service is responsible for strategically positioning and leading Birmingham in all aspects of sport, driving partnerships to ensure residents benefit from the services on offer, delivering a wide range of leisure functions, and creating an environment to reposition Birmingham at the forefront of sporting excellence for the United Kingdom.

Key Service Priorities include:

- Improving the health and wellbeing of local communities through continued and increasing levels of participation.

- Exploring and developing partnerships with other organisations where these will benefit the community and/or provide affordable and sustainable local sporting services.

Service Delivery is achieved via 3 core business areas:

- **Strategy** – The Sports Service Strategy Team are responsible for citywide strategy and sports development, overseeing the recovery of one of the country's most historic swimming pools in Moseley, and delivering an elite swimming and gymnastics programme where swimmers currently represent the England team at the World School Games as well as Great Britain at this year's Youth Olympics.
- **Operational** – The Sports Service Operational Team are responsible for the direct management and delivery of 3 sports specific centres and support more than 10 facilities that have been asset transferred to local community organisations. The team oversee the Alexander Stadium, which has just undergone a £72 million renovation over almost three years to ensure it was Commonwealth Games ready.
- **Contracts** – The Sports Service Contracts Team are responsible for the contract management, including performance monitoring and partnership working arrangements with Birmingham City Council's externally operated sports and leisure services. This covers the operation of 11 leisure centres, 7 golf courses, and the delivery of wellbeing services for residents across the city. Through partnership work, a total of 5 brand new leisure centres have been opened in the last 5 years, 2 of which have won national recognition.

Key Partners

Regular work takes place with key stakeholders including:

- **Sport England**, who are an arms-length body of government responsible for growing and developing grassroots sport and getting more people active across England;
- **Sport Birmingham** who provide leadership and support through insight, knowledge and expertise to anyone in Birmingham working towards a more active city, and multiple National Sports Governing Bodies from a range of different sports;
- **Birmingham Community Leisure Trust** and its managing agent **Serco Leisure, Places Leisure**, and **Mytime Active** are all award-winning national operators who deliver quality leisure services on behalf of the service;
- **The Active Wellbeing Society** is a community benefit society that delivers outdoor physical activity and active citizenship initiatives which complement the separately managed **Wellbeing Service (see 2.2 below)**.

Our key service priorities are to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities through continued and increasing levels of participation, and to explore and develop partnerships with other organisations where these will benefit the community and/or provide affordable and sustainable local sporting services.

- Service delivery includes building the modern, Games-ready, Alexander Stadium, overseeing the recovery of one of the country's most historic swimming pools in Moseley, managing contracts with external operators for the management of 11 leisure centres and 7 golf courses, supporting more

than 10 facilities that have been asset transferred to local community organisations, and delivering an elite swimming and gymnastics programme where athletes regularly represent Great Britain.

- In addition to the redevelopment of Alexander Stadium to support the Commonwealth Games, the Sports Service was embedded within the Games process in terms of capital delivery and legacy development.
- Through our partnership work we have opened 5 brand new leisure centres in last 5 years, 2 of which have won national recognition. The most recent was Ladywood Leisure Centre who won the UKActive New Concept, Build and Design of the year award at the UKActive awards in August 2022.
- During the 2020/21 financial year, central government announced on several occasions the temporary closure and/or associated operational restrictions of all gyms and leisure centres as part of its COVID-19 response to stop the spread of infection. The impact on the business has been significant with recovery of the service expected to reach well into 2022/23.
- Over 15,000 health and fitness members are back in our centres enjoying the benefits of exercising, and more than 10,000 children are re back in our pools on learn to swim programmes.
- A member of the City of Birmingham's Elite Swimming Squad, Aimee Hood, recently represented Great Britain for the Marathon/Open Water event at the European Junior Championships held in Paris having won the British selection trials.
- The Sports Service has successfully rolled out first aid and mental health training programmes for council employees and continues to champion the need for greater understanding and support on key aspects of health and wellbeing.

2.2 The Wellbeing Service

The Wellbeing Service consists of 6 Wellbeing Centres and 3 Wellbeing Hubs that remained in the direct management of the Council when others were outsourced, transferred or disposed of as part of the wider "leisure transformation" programme.

Wellbeing facilities are located in the most deprived areas of the city where residents suffer the poorest health outcomes and the focus of the service remains on providing residents with local access to sports facilities, and support to engage in and increase their physical activity and maintain healthy lifestyles in localities where the market is unlikely to be viable.

The Wellbeing Centres offer the usual "pay and play" activities but in addition, supported by significant funding from Public Health (currently £2.9m per year), residents can locally access gym, swim, group fitness classes, badminton and other activities free of charge every day (Be Active scheme). The Be Active offer varies from site to site depending on the facilities available, other timetabled programmes etc but adds up to around 35,000 hours of free access every year. Further, as part

of the contract arrangements our partners offer one hour a day of free gym and swim. In addition, all children under 16 can swim for free at Council and partners' pools.

The Be Active "Plus" scheme provides dedicated staff support to clients with chronic long-term conditions such as diabetes, depression, or obesity, referred directly through their GPs. Other specialist activities include cancer and stroke rehabilitation, COPD classes, and (developing) specialist support for clients suffering from Long Covid. The service also runs wider wellbeing support initiatives such as community lunches and stay and play sessions, for example.

The service has to deliver against specific targets set out in a Service Level Agreement with Public Health, for example, achieve a target of 2,000 GP referrals a year for Be Active Plus. Attendances were badly hit by Covid-19 lockdowns and operating restrictions (which also adversely impacted on income generation) and there is evidence of long-term behaviour changes, but numbers are beginning to recover since "business as usual" operating arrangements resumed in early 2022.

The service has no capital resources but has recently secured £0.5m from the Corporate Capital Contingency budget to repair the roof at Handsworth Wellbeing Centre to allow the main swimming pool to re-open (work is currently in progress and expected to complete by May 2023).

Following an earlier Cabinet decision, the lease of Nechells Wellbeing Centre was offered on the market in 2018 but no viable bids were received at the time. Following receipt of a more recent expression of interest the process was reactivated and an advertisement was released earlier this year seeking bids for a Community Asset Transfer of the facility. Shortlisted bidders are now developing business plans for us to assess.

Small Heath Wellbeing Centre has been the focus of a recent campaign to reopen the pool for local access to swimming. I can confirm that extensive investigations have been underway with officers, local members and the Leader to explore our options for providing swimming in this area, and we are committed to getting water space back into the area as soon as possible, but it is not a straightforward situation as the building needs a lot of work and investment just to make it safe, and the facility is co-located with a large secondary school, Council Library and the Youth Service. I would be happy to provide a further update to CWG, Culture & Physical Activity O&S when it is available.

3. Priorities for 2022/23 that relate to this Committee:

- A priority for the service is to develop and deliver a new Sport & Physical Activity Strategy in conjunction with Public Health, Sport England and other strategic partners.
- A new Playing Pitch Strategy is being developed and will conclude in the summer of 2023 following all pitch assessments.
- Following the announcement at the Commonwealth Games for a basketball court refurbishment and grassroots legacy programme, partners have

identified 20 priority courts to redevelop based on IMD, crime data, and the proximity of identified clubs / community groups.

A scoping exercise is now taking place whereby Basketball England will assess the refurbishment requirements for each site to get an estimate of the cost of works, in order to support the procurement process to bring a contractor on board to do the redevelopments. Timescale is for the court assessments to be completed before the end of the year.

- The Sports Service is continuing to work closely in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to enhance tennis opportunities across the city. The LTA, through government funds, are looking to invest in the redevelopment of 11 public tennis sites, up to 38 courts in total, across Birmingham.
- To provide a local opportunity for swimming to residents in the vicinity of the Small Heath Leisure Centre.

Although this element of my portfolio is smaller in scale than both Adult Social Care and Public Health, it is just as significant in terms of people's wellbeing, and I look forward to coming back to this Committee in the future to report back on progress achieved against the priorities set out in this report.

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Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care