

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills, and
Community, Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 8th February 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Enterprise, Community and
Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community and Sport

SUBJECT: Sport and Recreation Team

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide members with a report for 2020 on the Council's Sport and Recreation Service. Reporting on the Leisure Centre Service for the Financial Year 19/20 and March 2020 to December 2020, 'COVID Year'.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) The report be noted**
- ii) Members comment on the service delivery**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The report provides information on the months leading up to the Covid-19 pandemic and how and what the service have delivered during the last 12 months. It has been an extremely difficult time for the service, for staff, regular customers and engagement with residents. Activities are an essential component in supporting and developing the infrastructure of the community, to improve the quality of life both physically and mentally.

3.2 The service actively works with partner organisations, such as, Halton Sports Partnership, in order to facilitate development through a better understanding of the issues and a sharing of resources to achieve success. Without the contribution from our staff and partners, much of the work highlighted within this report would not have been possible.

4.0 SPORT AND RECREATION TEAM

4.1 The team has two distinct areas:

- Sports Development Team – development of programmes and activities to support the local infrastructure and encourage residents to start and

stay active. Including day-to-day operations at Frank Myler Pavilion and facilitating Grass Sport hire booking/s.

- Management of the Councils 3 Leisure Centres. Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool.

The Sports Development Team, is a small team and day to day duties include:

- finding and training staff, coaches and volunteers for projects
- promoting and running projects and activities
- monitoring and evaluating projects
- finding funding, managing resources and budgets
- putting local and national policies into practice
- attending meetings, seminars and conferences
- coaching or supervising sport

The team has undergone a number of changes in 2020 with 4 colleagues moving on. There was a reduction in the support provided during 2020, whilst posts remained vacant; and staff redeployed for some of their time to support the corporate service COVID-19 response. There are currently 2 full time Officers. The following is a snap shot of local projects delivered.

5.0 **SPORTS DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY 2019/20**

5.1 **Theme 1: Increase Participation and Widen Access**

5.1.1 **Active Halton overview**

The year started by providing support to **100+ weekly activities on the Active Me Timetables** keeping timetables up to date on various platforms, liaising with community groups and coaches. Promote classes and disseminate information, from very gentle movement classes, through to energising high impact classes. Estimated 75,000+ attendances a year in community classes. Signpost general enquiries and support individuals so they attend sessions that best meet their needs. During the pandemic face to face contact and meetings ceased and thus the support moved to telephone, online and digital platforms, examples as follows:

- Staying Active at home during COVID-19 web page created end March, advice and exercises to do at home, daily posts, tweets, YouTube page
- Staying Active at home guidance published in Inside Halton, circulated to 35,800 households
- £41,473 Sport England Emergency funding awarded between 12 clubs.
- Mental Health awareness training to clubs, link to Merseyside Sports Partnership
- Updates given to clubs in Halton Sports Partnership network, funding opportunities, advice on virtual sessions and how to come back from lockdown

- Different intensity activity levels so something for the whole community, (yoga, gentle circuits, HIIT, LBT, abs& stretch, box fit, activities to keep children active)
- Engaged in A Better Health and other campaigns to support good health
- Mindfulness delivered to staff feeling stressed, staff Health support page set-up including exercise videos
- Case study published in Liverpool Echo - partnership with MSP, Sport England

5.1.2 **Frank Myler Pavilion and Sports Ground**

Pre pandemic 34 community bookings in indoor facility and 5 bookings for the MUGA, 10 football teams on site using 10 pitches. Unfortunately, the Pavilion closed to the public during March 2020. The Pavilion expected to open, one day a week, mid-January 2021. A staggered reopening will take place, due to a number of reasons including:

- social distancing restrictions, (the activity room can accommodate 10 participants, thus some classes have moved to larger halls)
- high number of participants 65 years+ (risk too high to recommence)
- significant number of different instructors deliver at site (need to limit)
- instructors who are no longer delivering (change of career)
- Centre Assistant vacant posts (recruitment now in progress).

Grass pitches at the site have been open/closed since September 2020, with access given to the external toilet. (No changing room provision or wider building access).

5.1.3 Due to the suspension of football and rugby league matches Grass Sports Hire facilitated a 75% refund of fees to all teams. It is likely that a refund of fees will be required for 2020/21 season.

5.1.4 **Halton Sports Coach Scheme**

Sports coaching and School support SLA.

In 2019/20, 18 primary and special schools signed up for the SLA programme, which provided high quality professional service during curriculum and extra curriculum time. The programme reached 6,000+ pupil contacts and 500 teacher observations and training. Due to COVID-19, the service suspended the programme in March 2020. The Community Sports Coach (CSC) has recently retired. The CSC developed and delivered the programme since its inception in 2013 and made a significant impact, linking young people into community sport clubs/activity.

Community Sports Coaching

Online coaching sessions, support and ideas provided to sports club coaches and casual workers including:

- Two virtual Couch to 2k programmes delivered

- Two family activity sheets produced and sent out through a variety of settings to the community
- May half term activity leaflet put out on social media for children to complete throughout the week
- Family Games posted

All CSC programmes now on hold until the service has capacity to complete a review with schools, community groups and coaches.

6.0 Leisure Centre Activity 2019/20

6.1 The leisure centre service had a productive year and were on their way to achieving their key target of improving participation (more residents, more active, more often) versus previous year (18/19) by a minimum of 1.5% (8k improvement). Unfortunately, in March 20, when the Nation was struck by a Pandemic (COVID-19), leisure centres were ordered to close to the public. This resulted in the service not meeting their key participation target, although they were very close:

6.2 Participation Numbers 18/19 Vs 19/20:

	FY 18/19 Actual	FY19/20 Actual	
Kingsway (KLC)	278,256	281,431	+3,175
Brookvale (BRC)	221,568	210,463	-11,105
Runcorn Pool (RSP)*	44,806	24,108	-20,698
TOTAL	544,630	516,002	-28,628

(*RSP- Swimming Lessons and all School Swimming removed from this site due to staffing resources and changing facilities. Sessions transferred to BRC and KLC)

Health and Fitness Membership across the sites – 2,800

- Junior-Gym (11-15 year olds) – 550 Live Memberships

Health and Fitness Membership visits (Gym & Class Users) – 95,000

Learn to Swim Programme – 1,200 Memberships

Learn to Swim Programme visits (children learning to swim) – 53,000

Total 227,000 swim visits

- School Swimming – 36 schools accessing lessons
- School Swimming – 900 children learn to swim each week
- Aqua-Babes – 3,000 visits
- Swim Clubs (Halton) – 6,500 visits
- Swim Clubs (Runcorn Reps) - 2,500 visits

6.2.1 Other activity visits during 19/20:

- Children in Care (CIC) free swim/gym memberships – 16
- Indoor/Outdoor Football – 25,000
- Squash – 6,000
- Badminton – 6,000
- Basketball - 125
- Table Tennis - 400

- Parties – 8,500
- Walking Netball - 350
- Cheshire Junior Netball Leagues – 3,400
- Walking Football for over 50's – 1,728
- Bowls – 2,820
- Kops N Kids – 1,000
- Trampolining - 400
- Athletics – 1,000

6.3 The Council's leisure centres provide access to affordable leisure activities, which support the health and wellbeing agenda across the borough. People, who are physically active, reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases, such as, coronary heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes by up to 50% and the risk of premature death by about 20 - 30%. Inactive people spend 38% more days in hospital.

6.4 **Key highlights from 19/20:**

6.4.1 **Swimming**

Sport Works – 'learn to swim' programme

- Sport Works (Manchester & Cheshire) is an award-winning provider of Sport, Exercise and Educational programmes throughout the UK. Sport Works delivers a range of community services targeted at children and young adults with a disability or additional need.
- Active Halton Leisure Centres established a partnership with Sport Works to deliver swimming lessons for children, aged 4-11 years, with disabilities/special educational needs at Kingsway Leisure Centre. The team designed and developed. Sessions led by Level 2 Swimming Instructor with 1:1 support in the water and inclusive swim awards/badges available to participants. 12-week trial programme commenced in Feb, 2 x 30 minute lessons (six spaces per lesson). Active Halton delivered Swim England 'Aquatic Helper' training to Sport Works volunteers on site to facilitate the delivery of the programme.

Sportworks
ENGAGE • INSPIRE • ACHIEVE

Swimming Lessons for children with additional needs

Teach your child the key skills of swimming and water safety

- For ages 4 - 11
- 1:1 in pool support
- 12 week programme
- All disabilities welcome
- 30 minute lessons
- Inclusive Swim Awards available

Fridays 6-7pm at Kingsway Leisure Centre, Kingsway, Widnes WA8 7QH £7.50

Delivered in partnership with:

HALTON Borough Council active halton

Contact now to avoid disappointment!
Lauren Sanders
lauren@sportworksuk.co.uk
07800 525 092

6.4.2 **Learn to Swim (LTS) programme development – rebranding, pool layout, programme framework (teaching outcomes), staff training & development plans**

- Revised pool layout and use of pool platforms
- Rebranding – new logo/promotional images
- Introduced Active Halton LTS Framework (aligned with Swim England)
- Introduce the ‘12 week’ Active Halton teaching plan
- Working partnership with Swim England – LTS programme development. Bespoke online training (with resources and teaching videos) to be delivered in Jan 20 to support/facilitate programme changes/developments



6.4.3 **School Swimming programme development**

- Pool layout review beginners/non-swimmers in small pool (KLC)
- Review of class numbers, timetabling, bookings/operations
- School Swimming Charter to be implemented across all sites
- National Curriculum Training Programme (NCTP) to be offered to teaching staff across Halton – school staff to support swimming lessons to ensure more children meet the national curriculum outcomes.

6.5 **Partnership and Collaboration**

6.5.1 **Kops N Kids Summer Programme**

- Kops N Kids 2019 summer holiday programme, over 4 weeks 287 children registered for the programme with an attendance of 2459 (average of 246 children per day).
- Brookvale Recreation Centre worked in partnership with Cheshire Police, Onward Housing, Riverside Housing, Commissioners Office, Residents and Young People Volunteers, Local Parish Councils, Everton in the Community, Sports Development and St Helens Rugby; Asda and Arriva provided food and free travel to Brookvale Recreation Centre for the programme.
- The Kops N Kids programme designed to support and meet Halton Borough Councils aims and objectives, as well as supporting other local partner's aims and objectives.
- All young volunteers gained AQA qualifications through the programme and these were funded by Onward Housing.



6.5.2 Following the success of the summer programme, activity delivered at Brookvale Recreation Centre to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour over the October half term, in particular on the 30th October.

Kops N Kids October programme:

- 180 attended the half term programme
- Involved families and children from 1-16 years.
- Relationships improved with local partners and Cheshire Police.



6.5.3 **Riverside College**

- Worked in partnership with Riverside College to provide additional sports and Physical Education Facilities for their students at Kingsway Leisure Centre.

6.5.4 **Widnes Walking Football Club**

- Throughout 2019/20 worked with Widnes Walking Football Club and helped them to expand the club. They now play 3 days per week for 2 hours. Interest in walking football amongst the over 50's continues to grow. The club also delivered coaching courses at Kingsway Leisure Centre.

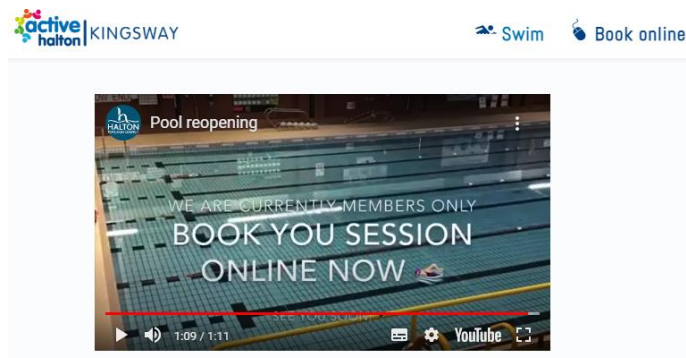
7.0 **2020 March to December (COVID Year)**

7.1 **What follows is an insight into some of the key things that Leisure Centres have engaged in since March 2020:**

- 7.1.2 Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool closed to the public on 19th March. All staff asked to stay at home from 23rd March until early July. During this time, the service redeployed many staff to assist in other service areas, such as, Open Spaces, Corporate Service and Care Homes, the staff did a tremendous job, some learning new skills and all assisting the Council with its response to the unexpected pandemic.
- All direct debits (DD) frozen during national lockdowns. Regular communication and live classes (over 200 live classes) delivered throughout the first closure.
 - Fitness team delivered live workouts on Facebook, 3 per weekday, 150 posted, videos available on website for those without social media
 - Delivered 25 home workout videos on Instagram
 - Breathing and water confidence ideas for in the bath for learn to swim children
- 7.1.3 The Government gave permission for Leisure Centres to reopen from 25th July, albeit with restrictions in place. Prior to reopening the service managers reviewed all the Government guidance and industry guidance from Ukactive, Swim England, Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) and Swimming Teacher Association (STA). Risk assessment and building control documents were populated and produced to ensure that once open building were COVID secure.
- 7.1.4 The extent to what activities the sites offered and the opening hours were determined following staff discussions (occupation and environmental risk assessments, extensive training and availability). Discussions with other colleagues, regarding reception screens, hand sanitisers, cleaning, barriers, signage, PPE, also contributed towards opening and operational plans. All staff received extensive training and induction at Brookvale, prior to returning to work on the front line.
- 7.1.5 Permission given to deliver a 4 week Summer Holiday Activity Programme, for under 18s at Brookvale, all participants took part in an activity session and received a packed lunch; the team also facilitated activity at the Stadium.
- 7.1.6 Phased approach to opening the facilities to the public. Dry side activities of gym and fitness classes started at Brookvale on 3rd August, with the swimming pool opening a week later. Operations reviewed daily and amendments made using feedback from staff and customers. Difficult trying to facilitate customers from three sites wanting to use Brookvale, due to restricted capacity and opening hours. Meetings between Brookvale and Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy staff to ensure safety and to agree on Covid19 secure operations once school open and using joint use areas.
- 7.1.7 A few maintenance and repair issues completed, at Kingsway, before it opened to the public. Kingsway opened for dry sided activities on 14th September, followed by the swimming pool on 21st. Kingsway opening welcomed; in particular, the swimming pool participation numbers, hourly

slots can accommodate 16 customers. Bigger spaces allow for increased numbers at activities. Programmes have been adapted to suit the users, such as, junior lane swimming to accommodate the Swimming Clubs etc.

- 7.1.8 Bookings system introduced for all customer. Thus, customer numbers adhere to national guidance and cleaning breaks, access and exits managed appropriately. Customer numbers and the range of activities on offer have been severely restricted. Although there have been some recent exemptions, i.e. supervised activities for under 18s, the footfall allowed in the building is significantly lower, as such, 'pay as you go' visits have only recently been introduced.
- 7.1.9 Walk through visual video tours produced for Brookvale and Kingsway so customer know what to expect when they turn up at site. Information regarding the reopening, clear, and concise DD information sent to customer and posted on the Councils website.
- 7.1.10 Face Coverings worn by staff and customers in all public areas.
- 7.1.11 Customer feedback excellent, no safety concern, weekly visit circa 600 at Brookvale; 1000 at Kingsway.



<https://youtu.be/Y4HuMdwkvaw>

8.6 Sports Facilities

- 8.6.1 Leisure centres have invested in new online technology to enable them to offer Online Bookings and Joining to the residents of Halton. Online booking available and online joining to be rolled out asap (Jan 2021).
- 8.6.2 Planning application submitted for the New Leisure Centre, Moor Lane, Widnes and approval granted, subject to conditions. Two-year construction programme anticipate completion during 2023.
- 8.6.3 Refurbishment of Brookvale All Weather Pitch project progressing with the Football Foundation. Subject to a successful grant application, anticipate installation date of September 2021.

9.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Production of the Active Halton strategy on hold until Sport England launch new strategy, thus local outcomes to link to the National Strategy, this process delayed. Sport England's strategy launch date scheduled for 26.1.21.
- 9.2 The Active Halton steering group have continued to meet throughout the year to work on local delivery plans and projects.
- 9.3 The benefit gained from being Active or involved in sport contributes towards achieving wider council priorities. Benefits that sport can bring to people and to society: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. The Sport and Recreation service and the voluntary sector sporting community make a significant contribution to the Public Health agenda.

10.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The service recognises the importance of the right offer for communities to support health inequalities and economic recovery; however, the financial viability is creating the need for strategic exploration.
- 10.2 Short, medium and long-term impact of the pandemic on the service is unknown. Staff are working hard on recovery and reinvention plans, but will need the opportunity for further customer engagement as and when guidance changes. The medium and long-term positions look very challenging with our facilities predicting a worse financial picture for 2021-22 than pre-lockdown.
- 10.3 There is a need to find the right strategic approach to secure the balance between community needs and affordability for local authorities. This is nothing new, but the pace of this journey has accelerated significantly.
- 10.4 The Leisure Centres require specialist staff to open the buildings to the public, specifically the swimming pool. The service has experienced service delays, due to vacant posts and sickness.

11.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

11.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The service engages with thousands of young people through a variety of coached activities, learn to swim programme, signposting to community sports clubs and activity to support and increase participation. The pandemic has significantly affected service delivery.

11.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Sports Development provides volunteer opportunities and skill development in coaching, administration, fundraising and access to resources for those

learning new skills. Support adult and lifelong learning, through fitness referral programmes. Learning has continued online and with course adaptations. External opportunities have been limited, especially, where practical assessments/demonstration involve contact. Lifeguard training has continued to take place in small bubbles.

11.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Sport and Physical Activity links directly with priorities in Halton's Health and Wellbeing strategy, prevention being the key. Physical activity links with prevention of certain cancers, mental health problems and falls. We need to put the customer first, focus on those least active and transform how activity is provided, this has never been so important. Keeping active has been a focus throughout the pandemic it will continue to be a priority as the Nation moves forward.

11.4 **A Safer Halton**

The connection between sport and reducing anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime supported by key research. Sports activities and competitions, sports volunteering, sports leadership, sports training help develop individuals and communities, encourage healthier and more productive lifestyles and create inclusive communities and neighbourhoods that provide a shared identity and sense of place.

11.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The service supports groups looking to improve the areas where they live/work.

12.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

12.1 Delivery and income affected significantly by participation restrictions.

12.2 Some Council Leisure Centre stock is old and of poor quality.

13.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

13.1 The Sport and Recreation service is open and accessible. The service supports groups and individuals to be and stay active.

14.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

14.1 None