

APPENDIX C - SUMMARY OF CHALLENGE, CONSULT AND COMPARE PHASES

Challenge – *Background*

Until recently, it was taken (universally) as axiomatic that providing services as we currently do was a good thing in itself with little need for evidence of benefits or attempts to identify or meet different needs. However, a number of issues have emerged, predominately through Government policy, but also through local agendas, that require our attention when considering whether or not the service being provided should meet different or other needs. The increasing pressure to make sport/leisure activities more accessible to excluded young people and high priority groups like refugees and asylum seekers, may create a certain conflict of interest between their needs and the needs of 'traditional' Leisure Centre users. This conflict manifests itself in the following ways:

- Traditional leisure centre users come from social groups that, generally, have many choices and opportunities to improve their quality of life.
- Traditional leisure centre users need and expect high quality services, and access to staff with customer care skills and expertise in sport and fitness.
- Excluded groups, by their nature are typically very hard to reach and conventional strategies for making leisure centres more accessible, such as pricing concessions are not proven incentives.
- Excluded groups need low/no cost, informal, flexibly structured services, and access to staff with, primarily 'people skills' (i.e. skills perhaps more closely associated with youth and community workers).

This conflict raises the following questions that needed to be explored through the review process:

- Should this service continue to subsidise the leisure needs of those who traditionally use Leisure Centres? Or;
- Should the subsidy provided be re-directed to focus on meeting the needs of more disadvantaged/excluded groups? Furthermore:
- What, if anything, would be more effective and what would be the implications financially for the service?

Challenge – *Summary of Findings*

Throughout the Challenge phase we have found out some new things and confirmed other things we already knew – as follows:

- The services being provided are governed in or guided by a limited amount of strategic documents. However, current signals from the Government and Sport England are showing that they views sport as something which should be managed and delivered by the community (Sports Clubs, Schools, Community groups) not so much by local authorities. The Best Value process will need to identify how the Council will support, enable and empower communities to provide these services for themselves.
- Sports and fitness services in Southwark are currently adequately meeting the needs of the general community, the levels of participation have been increasing in Leisure Centres, and the demand for sport development services is high. However, there are improvements that need to be made to further increase use and the satisfaction levels of current customers.
- The Council's ability to accurately record numbers is limited by current management systems. Improvement in the collection of accurate information on the current profiles of users critical. This information will also enable the service to project how it will account for future changes in the Boroughs demographics.

- Even though participation levels are on the increase, the services are not managing to reach those groups identified as a priority for the Council. Demand needs to be created and adequate access provided to these groups. This is in line with government agendas and corporate objectives for social inclusion and community development.
- There are also areas of unmet demand, this is particularly the case for sport development. This unmet demand needs to be further quantified and decisions made as to what services should be provided – in what location and to whom.
- A key barrier to participation, particularly of socially excluded groups is affordability – within limited resources there will always have to be some level of cross subsidy in operation if the Council is to meet objectives particularly for social inclusion.
- The quality and range of facilities for sport in Southwark are generally below modern standards. Apart from the Peckham Pulse most leisure centres are old and in need of substantial refurbishment. Significant improvements in the quality of facilities will however require a considerable level of investment. Fusion has to date generated £1million investment in improving Leisure Centres. Refurbishment has been completed at Dulwich, Seven Islands, Southwark Park Gym, Southwark Park Athletics track.
- In terms of location and accessibility some areas of the Borough are provided better for than others. Opportunities exist for the dual use of facilities. Dual use is the key to localising services, particularly for young people were travelling around the Borough to access services is a barrier to accessing services.
- Compared to other neighbouring boroughs the cost of providing the service has traditionally been high. By transferring the management of the service to Fusion the cost of the service has been significantly reduced. Decreasing the grant to Fusion from £2.6million (including NNDR) in 1999 to £1.9million in 2002 (zero NNDR) has made further savings.
- Opportunities for increased performance and investment in facilities are in Fusions' view limited by the short-term nature of the current lease agreement with the Council. In Fusions view, this certainty would be confirmed by:
 - Having access to long term funding, 5-year funding agreement and 3-5year targets
 - Having longer leases, i.e. a 25 year lease.
- There are opportunities for generating income through charging for services. Currently the council is subsidising those who can most afford to pay through Leisure Centres. In sports development services are provided free of charge – particularly to schools, and there are opportunities for schools to apply for external funding to pay to meet their curriculum needs.
- Competing demands need to be rationalised. Some of these demands might be met by jointly working with other sections of the Council more efficiently – as there are departments within Leisure and Council-wide that share or potentially share the same customers. Opportunities for joint working and sharing of existing facilities exist and are not explored to their potential.
- Opportunities for closer collaboration and partnership working with other Council departments or private sports providers exist. These partnerships are important for developing and improving opportunities for sport in the heart of where people live.
- Developing partnerships with the community is emerging as a realistic way forward, the Council needs to consider where it will continue to support and develop the capacity of some groups/sports and let other parts of the community get on with delivering their own services.

The Sports and Fitness Service held a Community Challenge Conference in January 2002. This conference was well attended with a good mix of professionals and service users. At that conference it was indicated that:

- Projects need to be linked to long-term strategic objectives and not merely on political whim.
- Young people's involvement should be a priority for the Council, it is important for young people to start their involvement in sport and fitness at an early age. Also recognise that sport is a good way of engaging young people in positive activities. The perceived lack of facilities in the north of the Borough affects the level of access available to young people.
- Maintenance and cleanliness of existing facilities was a priority for user groups.
- The Council needs to demonstrate long term planned facility maintenance and investment.
- The Council needs to find ways of making facilities affordable without sacrificing quality.
- The Council needs to investigate how to make use of other facilities available within the Borough to provide sports and fitness services relevant to local need.
- Greater efforts should be made by the Council to attract inward investment.
- The development of sport and fitness in the borough is dependent upon time and good facilities in addition to good quality coaches, administrators and facilitators.
- The Council needs to develop a more partnership approach to sports planning and delivery. Sports partnerships are to be the future of sport in Southwark, such initiatives would assist in the reducing the duplication of resources.
- The Council should be more proactive in marketing and providing information about sport and fitness opportunities and facilities available to local people.

Best Practice¹ principles suggest that the Council/Service needs to:

- Demonstrate specific service aims and objectives are linked to and contribute to corporate aims and objectives.
- Demonstrate service aims and objectives that are focused and targeted.
- Ensure that the value of leisure and cultural services is recognised at Member and corporate level.
- Ensure that policies (e.g. pricing) that are developed address identified corporate priorities.
- Ensure that service delivery reflects locally identified needs and priorities.
- Ensure service improvement is directly linked to user and non-user feedback/consultation.
- Demonstrate that cultural and leisure services provided in partnership at a local level can provide significant benefits.
- Commit the appropriate level of resources internally to deliver and develop the service.
- Seek and secure external funding to optimise internal capital and revenue resources for the Council.
- Seek and secure external funding to develop the service for the benefit of local people.

¹ Note: As determined by what constitutes a high scoring authority from an Audit Commission Perspective.

Compare Phase - *Background*

We compared ourselves with other London Boroughs, particularly those who are seen to be 'best performers'. We achieved this through surveying for quantitative information, and by speaking with others to get a more qualitative picture. We also sought information from other non-council providers in the business of sports and fitness; these included a not-for-profit trust, the private sector and community based sports club.

Compare Phase - *Summary of Findings*

For Leisure Centres

- ⇒ Boroughs were asked which of the **strategic objectives** leisure services contribute to; 90% of respondents saw social inclusion as a high priority, and 100% healthy lifestyles. Lifelong learning, community safety and environmental improvement were also seen as high or medium priority, with economic regeneration seen as a lesser priority.
- ⇒ In the main, Southwark has similar **service priorities** as the other boroughs. Top priorities for leisure centres are improving the fitness and health of individuals, access to sport and fitness for all, access to sport and fitness for excluded groups and supporting clubs and community groups. Enabling relaxation and recreation, enabling people to learn new skills, competitive sport opportunities and providing a base for sports development opportunities and rehabilitation from illness and injury were seen as medium priorities by most respondents. Southwark places less priority on identifying and nurturing talent than other authorities. Only Southwark saw cost effectiveness, customer care and healthy and safe environment as high priorities.
- ⇒ Comparative analysis of these Audit Commission Performance Indicators show –
 - ⇒ that the Southwark's net cost per visit is high and actual usage is low. For 2000-01, visits per 1000 population is 3985, well below the 25% quartile of 4371, but above the London 25% quartile of 3317. London average in 2000-01 is 4905.
 - ⇒ Net cost per visit is £3.31, higher than the bottom quartile of £2.37 and above the London average of £1.55.
 - ⇒ Southwark has a lower pricing scheme than neighbouring boroughs, but utilisation remains low. It may be that Southwark is offering too many facilities in an already congested market. Under utilisation may be a result of the mix of facilities – Southwark has some specialist facilities that do not attract a large number of users, such as the Herne Hill Velodrome. There are also several other private facilities in Southwark offering similar services.
- ⇒ When compared with data supplied from the comparator authorities, it is clear that Southwark:
 - ⇒ Has a high net current expenditure.
 - ⇒ Has low utilisation at a number of facilities, across the total provision and per 1,000 population.
 - ⇒ Has a comparatively high number of facilities, a number of which are of considerable age and in need of refurbishment.
 - ⇒ Highly subsidises each visit.

Performance measure	Southwark	Average for comparator
Number of centres	8	4.75
Population per centre	29,250	55,773
Total visits	708,181	1,092,026
Swim/visits per 1,000 popn	3,023	4,946
Average visits per centre	88,523	246,512
Net cost per visit	£3.31	£2.26

- ⇒ It appears that there are a number of **reasons** why the net cost of service provision is high in Southwark;
 - ⇒ There are a large number of centres.

- ⇒ Each centre provides for a relatively small catchment population.
- ⇒ The aggregate number of opportunities provided is low.
- ⇒ The number of visits per head of population within catchments is low.
- ⇒ The average visits per centre is low.
- ⇒ The average age of facilities in Southwark is high.
- ⇒ The number of specialist and 'wet' centres is high.

For Sports Development

- ⇒ With regard to the main aims and **objectives** of the Sports Development Service there is similarity across the authorities:
 - ⇒ All authorities aim to increase participation within target groups.
 - ⇒ All authorities aims to contribute to wider corporate objectives.
 - ⇒ It is not clear from the information supplied whether all authorities aim to increase participation with targeted Focus Sports.
- ⇒ Performance Indicator information supplied was not comprehensive. From the evidence we did receive authorities use a range of different performance measures to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of their services.
 - ⇒ The only similarity appears to be in the measurement of target group participants in organised activities.
 - ⇒ Only Southwark measures subsidy per visit to sports development organised sessions.
 - ⇒ Newham stated that they now use the performance indicators for sports development as developed by Sport England.
- ⇒ Net **current expenditure** varies greatly between the authorities. Based on the information supplied, LB of Southwark has similar expenditure in Sports Development compared with other authorities.

Authority	Net current expenditure
LB Southwark	£247,000
LB Bromley	£684,000
LB Hounslow*	£241,000
LB Newham	£353,000

- ⇒ The study showed that authorities operate sports development services with some integration or links with facility management. 42% of the study sample felt that the two service areas were managed in a fully integrated way, with a further 50% indicating substantial links between the service areas. All the authorities identified as best practice stated that the services were managed in a full or partially integrated manner. Southwark currently manages its sports development separately from leisure centres, which does not compare favourably with the best practice organisations.
- ⇒ Four of the authorities operate a pricing policy for sports development (Westminster, Haringey, Bromley and Cambridge). Most of the others do not have a specific pricing policy for sports development. Where they do it is generally linked to a wider leisure card scheme. The majority of respondents offer concessions for certain groups; the most popular being borough residents, children under 8, young people 8-19, the elderly, people with disabilities and the unwaged and low waged. In the majority of cases these concessions were linked to a wider sports/leisure card scheme.

For Parks

Despite our strenuous efforts, we could not obtain comparable performance data from other local authorities for the provision of sports pitches in parks in time for this report. It may be necessary to create a benchmarking group with other interested Local Authorities in order to try and identify best practice in the provision of sports pitches in parks and create a set of comparable performance indicators. We will explore the opportunities for doing this as part of implementing the review.

For Sports Pitches

As above.

Consultation Phase - *Background*

Consultation was held with a wide range of stakeholders about the services and facilities offered in Southwark. We spoke to staff (Southwark and Fusion) and Members. External consultation was also gathered from Partners, Young people, Head Teachers/PE Co-ordinators, Community Groups and Southwark Residents – representing users and non-users.

Consultation Phase – *Summary of Findings*

Clearer Strategic Direction for the Service Is Needed

- ⇒ The Council is sending mixed messages about its commitment to sport and fitness to external audiences.
- ⇒ The service would benefit from having a dedicated sports and fitness strategy – providing clear guidance on what objectives the service is working towards how other Council departments and the community itself can work achieving those objectives.

Sport and Fitness Activities can Be Used As A Tool To Meet Wider Council Objectives.

- ⇒ The benefits of health improvement through sport are well documented. The service would benefit from demonstrating more convincingly how sports and fitness can contribute the Council wider goals for community health and well-being.
- ⇒ Sport can be used as a tool to engage young people and to give them values, open up opportunities for travel, socialising, different life experiences. Sporting role models are acceptable to young people and can be used to deliver positive messages.
- ⇒ There are real opportunities for the Council to empower the community to plan for and deliver their own sports and fitness services, this works towards Council objectives for community development and involvement.
- ⇒ Opportunities exist for Southwark to use sport to meet the Council's regeneration objectives. The Council has an opportunity to be a market leader but it needs to use its assets (location and demographic profile) to creatively profile/promote sports and leisure.

A More Co-ordinated Approach To Delivering Sports And Fitness Services Is Needed:

- ⇒ Provision of sports and fitness activities/facilities **across Leisure** need to be improved. Services often share the same 'customer base' yet often do not work to the same objective/goal.
- ⇒ Some initiatives for delivering services within different departments in Leisure are working well, others such as level of joint working with the Youth Service need improvement.
- ⇒ Current relationships between Southwark staff and Fusion need to be strengthened.
- ⇒ The Service needs to actively work with other departments **across the Council** (Early Years, Housing, Education). Currently there is a limited understanding about each others' roles, opportunities exist for working jointly – particularly where there are opportunities to share facilities that are managed by other departments, such as playgrounds on housing estates, or existing facilities in schools.

More Partnership Work with External Agencies Is Needed And Expected:

- ⇒ There are some established partnerships that are working well – particularly in sport development with sports clubs and schools.
- ⇒ Partnerships with other service providers such as Primary Care Groups, Health Authority (i.e. Health Action Zones) need attention. The view from external partners is that a partnership strategy should be developed to outline areas, protocols and opportunities for joint service delivery. Also opportunities to share information on common customer database and potentially reach those who have not previously used Southwark Leisure Centres and sport development services.
- ⇒ Across Borough partnership is lacking. Current perception (from external agencies) is that there is a limited willingness to recognise commonalities between neighbouring boroughs and work in partnership to meet sports objectives.

People are motivated to do Sports and Fitness for a wide variety of reasons²

- Improving health and fitness is the main motivation for Residents undertaking sports and fitness activities. Relaxing and having fun is also a key motivating factor for Residents (MORI).
- Young people (8-10 and 11- 19 year) thought that it was important to keep fit and healthy and agreed that sport helps them to have fun and relax.
- Young people (8-10 and 11- 19) noted that they enjoyed doing sports and exercise in their leisure time over other activities.
- Leisure Centre users rated the following as their key reasons for undertaking in sports and fitness activities: to maintain/improve my health and well-being, followed closely by to increase my level of fitness and to have fun and relax.

Customers need and expect a wide range of services

- Southwark staff say that customers expect quality services (quality facilities and competent staff), an opportunity to participate and flexibility within the services offered to meet (general or specialist) needs.
- Community groups showed that their needs are many and varied depending on the group. Respondents indicated that support with capacity building to meet their group/clubs sports and fitness needs was desirable.
- Primary School Teachers said that they need increased skill base for teaching sport and support with delivering sport. Secondary school teachers need support with delivering extra curricular sports. Head Teachers indicated that the needs for young people were primarily based around; improving physical fitness, developing interpersonal skills, relaxing and having fun.
- Young people said that they liked to try a wide variety of sports and consistently noted that would like to see more sports competitions between schools, better sports equipment at their school, more chances to play sport at school and more information about how to get involved in sporting activities.

There Is A Good Level Of Satisfaction With Some Aspects Of The Service, Yet Improvements Can Still Be Made.

General:

- Members noted that that they tended to receive positive feedback from their constituents about the helpfulness of Southwark Park Rangers, Value for money offered at leisure centres and the standard of sports coaching offered by the sport development team.
- Members noted that that they tended to receive negative feedback from their constituents about the level of cleanliness in leisure centres, the standard of sports pitches and changing rooms in Southwark parks. Also frequently mentioned were the availability of community grants for the voluntary sports clubs and the criteria for grants used by Southwark Leisure.

Leisure Centres:

- The general view from Southwark staff and Fusion staff is that services currently provided in Leisure Centres service are not meeting needs as well as they could. Although staff think that the standard of gym equipment is satisfactory and that they are safe places to visit, they say that the standard of sports equipment needs improvement, as does the standard of the buildings and the changing areas.
- Schools indicated that the standard of gym equipment in leisure centres is satisfactory and found them to be safe places to visit. Respondents were satisfied with the competencies of coaching and teaching staff and found the staff in general to be helpful and friendly. They were not too dissatisfied with the space and times that activities were offered.
- Community Groups found that the times that leisure centres were open were convenient, and also found the coaching and teaching staff to be competent and generally safe places to visit. These groups indicated a lesser level of satisfaction with the standard of the sports equipment and gym facilities and with the standard and cleanliness within leisure centres they used. These groups did not agree that the leisure centres offered value for money.

² Note OPM and SEBS reports will also provide some information on peoples motivation for sports activities.

- Residents (MORI) stated that they would like to see a wider range of activities offered at a lower cost. Better provision for children and cleaner changing areas were also important.
- Results from the 11 to 19 year olds surveyed indicated that there was a low level of use of leisure centres within school and outside of school time. However, those that used leisure centres generally rated them as excellent or very good.

Sports Development:

- The general view from sport development team is that needs of their users are being met.
- An area where the Service is particularly doing well in is in providing services to children with disabilities. There has been a significant amount of joint working done in this area, particularly with placements in the after-school clubs.
- There was positive feedback from a wide range of respondents regarding the quality of coaching and the support provided by sport development team. It was noted that the team is very good at building and maintaining partnerships with various groups, both within the Council and outside of it.
- Community groups that use the service indicated that they found the teaching and coaching abilities of sport development staff to be satisfactory and found them to be friendly and helpful.
- Sports clubs indicated that they found the team to be understanding and supportive of their needs.
- General feeling that the loss of the service would be a major blow to schools, particularly primary schools. Other partners considered that the loss of the service would be a set-back for young people in the borough.

Sports Pitches

- The general view from Southwark staff is that sports facilities in parks - sports pitches and changing rooms - are not meeting the needs of users.
- There was agreement from a wide range of respondents that sports pitches and changing rooms in Southwark Parks are of a poor standard. As a consequence users are often forced to go out of the Borough to access facilities of a better standard. This is an area where significant improvement is needed in the delivery of services.
- The Parks service and SCD need to work more closely and agree on a strategy for sports provision in parks.

12 priority Sports

- The current focus of the 12 priority sports was generally found to be acceptable. Of those community groups who were part of the groups indicated that they thought participation had increased as a result – generally and specifically for young people and those of an ethnic minority.

There Are Varying Levels Of Standard And Levels of Access To Sports Facilities:

- Staff consider that the current standard of sports and fitness facilities in the Borough is the biggest impediment in the delivery of sports and fitness services to the people of Southwark.
- There are inconsistencies within the delivery of services and the provision of services geographically.
- Current 'tensions' exist between the sport development function and the commercial function in Leisure Centres – particularly where this impacts on access to Leisure Centres by sport development users at peak times.
- The current standard and capacity of facilities (particularly some Leisure Centres and sports pitches in parks) impacts on peoples' willingness and ability to access services locally and as a consequence this limits level of participation.
- Staff (sports coaches and managers) often have to go outside of the Borough to access sports and fitness facilities. It was noted that other Boroughs offer discounts to encourage use.
- Schools also have stated that they have gone outside of the Borough to access services to meet their curriculum requirements.

Barriers to use do exist:

- There are a number of reasons why people do not frequent Southwark Leisure Centres (MORI). The most common reason cited was that they are not interested, convenience of location to home was stated as the next highest reason, followed by a perception of a lack of suitable provision and a feeling from past experience that they are unclean or of poor standard.
- Community groups who indicated that they were non-users stated that this was because of a limited awareness of what Leisure Centres can offer and a feeling that the activities provided were not relevant to their specific group. Also indicated were barriers relating to cost and accessibility.
- Schools stated that non-use or limited use of Leisure Centres was primarily related to transport problems (cost and convenience), a lack of awareness about what was on offer and the fact that other facilities (on site or neighbouring) were used.
- Schools stated that non-use or limited use of sports pitches in parks was related to transport problems (cost and convenience) and the quality and level of safety offered.
- Price is an obvious barrier to use. Although for sport development services there was some indication of people's willingness to pay – with respondents in the MORI survey indicating that they would pay up to and over £5 for a 2 hour coaching session (varied response depending on area of the Borough).
- Staff considered that charging for sport development services would not improve the level of service and agreed that it would serve to reduce participation.
- There are still groups that are consistently not using/accessing services, particularly Leisure Centres services. These groups can be reached through outreach work however it must also be acknowledged that these groups might not be comfortable in a Leisure Centre and alternative ways of encouraging participation and involvement in sports and fitness must be found/promoted.

The Service Needs Re-look at its Target Audience.

- There was a difference of opinion within staff about whether it was best to target specific groups or to integrate different groups in service delivery.
- As noted above, there are groups within the community that are consistently missing out on the services provided by Council (young people, the elderly, women and certain ethnic groups). Priority groups need to be confirmed and strategies for providing for those groups developed.
- The Audit Commission is recommending that Councils move away from borough-wide provision and focus on service provision that is ward specific. This approach requires groundwork at the local level to find out what specific local/ward needs are.

Customer Feedback

- The service (including Fusion) needs to be more consistent in the way it gathers and responds to customer feedback. Progress has been made, but there are opportunities for the service to be more creative about how customer feedback is gathered and how it is responded to.

Marketing And Communication Efforts Needs To Be Increased/Targeted.

- Internal communication within and between services would enhance working relationships and have a positive impact on service delivery.
- People are starting to identify with the logo and idea behind Fusion, although there would be benefits in more work in this area.
- There are still significant parts of the population that do not know what services are on offer. Young people in particular.
- All parts of the service would benefit from proactive awareness raising and more effort into publicity through more than one media.

Future Priorities Have Been Identified For Services

➤ Members, Southwark and Fusion staff were asked to respond to priority questions³.

<i>Leisure Centres</i>		<i>Sport Development</i>	
<i>Service Delivery</i>	<i>Customers</i>	<i>Service Delivery</i>	<i>Customers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting access to Leisure Centres for all sections of the community. - Providing services that improve physical fitness and health. - Providing an environment that is welcoming to all sections of the community. - Providing an environment that enables people to have fun and relax. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary and secondary aged school children. - Children and young people at risk of anti social behaviour. - The elderly aged 60 and over. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing opportunities for people to develop and improve existing sporting skills and to learn new skills. - Improve the quantity and quality of coaching in the Borough. - Maximise external funding opportunities for sport development from external sources. - Enable sports clubs to develop greater capacity to deliver sport development outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary school children, aged 5 – 11 - Secondary school aged children, aged 12 to 16 - Children and young people at risk of anti social behaviour.

³ Note that due to the low numbers of responses by some groups, these results should be taken as indicative only.