



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Liverpool Study Visit Group
<b>Subject:</b>	Learning and implications for Belfast from the Liverpool study visit
<b>Date:</b>	11 November 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Head of Service Caroline Wilson, Policy and Business Development Unit

**Purpose of paper**

This paper outlines the learning from the recent study visit, hosted by Liverpool City Council. The paper proposes a series of actions to be considered as part of the development of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy.

**Relevant Background Information**

As part of the process of developing the new Active Belfast and Open Spaces (ABOS) strategy, Members requested continued engagement in considering key issues such as targeted provision, partnerships, the business model for leisure and models of delivery.

For this purpose, a short study visit organised to Liverpool, to:

- view alternative models of leisure provision at city and neighbourhood levels;
- engage with practitioners and policy-makers experienced in a parks and leisure modernisation programme;
- to consider the challenges and opportunities for future provision in Belfast.

The 3 day study visit included inputs from Liverpool City Council (LCC) elected members, their parks and leisure teams, key external partners and regeneration site visits. The final programme and participant list is attached at appendix 1.

The Belfast City councillors and officers who travelled to Liverpool are very appreciative for the information and insights that their Liverpool hosts shared with them during the 3 days.

## Key issues

There are 4 areas for the new Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy:

- promoting participation
- building partnerships
- resources and facilities for delivery
- planning and performance management.

The key ideas, issues and challenges raised over the course of the study visit have been grouped under these 4 headings, to examine their potential application in Belfast.

### 1. Promoting participation

1.1. **More people, more active, more often** – Liverpool’s Active City Partnership seeks to encourage non-active people into one session of exercise a week through small, sustainable lifestyle changes. This means finding those who are inactive and going to where people are at – shopping centres, older people’s homes, libraries, etc. There is a balance between driving business into leisure centres and achieving the city’s desired health and well-being outcomes. For example, installing exercise equipment at Redholme Memory Care, a Dementia Care Facility resulted in a 20% reduction in falls, increased patient wellbeing and increased staff wellbeing.

1.2. **Five ways to health and well-being** – as part of the 2010 Year of Health and Wellbeing in the Liverpool City Region, their key campaign focuses on five colour-coded ways to wellbeing:

- Be active
- Give
- Connect
- Keep learning
- Take notice.

All partners promote small actions into people’s daily life and use this social marketing tool to describe all of their work in health and well-being terms. For example, park ranger schools engagement is branded under the ‘Take notice’ heading, encouraging young people to be aware of the bio-diversity and built heritage within the park, as well as the obvious activity of physically walking around the park. Children are also then encouraged to get connected with grandparents by showing them around the park at a later date.

1.3. **Lifestyles Membership** – Lifestyles is the LCC brand equivalent of the BCC Boost membership scheme. All leisure centres are called Lifestyles Centres. The simple scale of charges is modelled on the private sector in terms of

pricing (e.g. get 12 months for price of 10) and offers couples/family discounted membership. One marketing tool used to incentivise and retain membership is discounted rates at various outlets, including restaurants, across the city. Also, leisure staff manage proactively the customer relationship and maximise retention.

- 1.4. **Future Lifestyles** – LCC offers free Lifestyles membership to all young people. Within this, there is a dedicated programme of activities for young people which are designed to promote healthy habits but most importantly are fun – through sessions for 0-4 year olds, Saturday clubs for 5-7 year olds and dedicated coaching sessions for 8-17 age range. This links to broader cost benefit in terms of obesity prevention.
- 1.5. **Senior Lifestyles** - this is a similar free access programme for retired people in Liverpool. This programme employs older instructors for its taster sessions to encourage older people to participate. This includes walking clubs and introduction sessions in the outdoor gyms and the trim trails in local parks.
- 1.6. **Liverpool's Challenge** – the city set itself the challenge of losing a million pounds in weight. This was facilitated through signing up in leisure centres, surgeries, libraries and shopping centres. Using customer relationship management (CRM) techniques as well as engagement with the private sector, people were encouraged to participate in physical activity as well as make improvements to their diet. There was a Challenge tower in the city centre, a tanker on the Mersey River and a website which all recorded the progress of the city. The collective nature of the challenge meant that the target was exceeded.
- 1.7. **Linking to local delivery** – the city employs 6 Active City Coordinators, one for each Neighbourhood Management Area, 2 in an area identified as in greatest need and work closely with NHS and City Council Area Management Teams. They develop and co-ordinate programmes that result in an increase in the participation of adults & families in sport and physical activity. They also enable voluntary & community groups to build their capacity through advising and assisting with funding applications for grant aid, sponsorship and Active City support.
- 1.8. **International events and local legacy** – the sports development section works with events providers to ensure local legacy. For example, in the build-up to the Tall Ships event in Liverpool 2009, a series of events were hosted in local neighbourhoods encouraging young people to become involved in water sports. There is a deliberate strategy to achieve community connections around city events, thus building the legacy of sustained physical activity beyond the lifespan of the large-scale event.

## **2. Building partnerships**

- 2.1. **Active City Partnership** - Liverpool Active City, is a joint City Council and PCT initiative and was launched in 2005. Its strategic plan is to increase the levels of physical activity within the city and improve the health and wellbeing

of its population. For example, the 'Walk for Health' initiative is led by the Primary Care Trust; however, participants are rewarded with free passes for LCC Lifestyle gyms. Also, Fire Service gives fitness classes to local schools as part of their outreach programme. Cycle Liverpool lends bicycles in identified flagship parks.

- 2.2. **European Capital of Culture** – It is recognised in Liverpool that the high profile cultural year was an enormous catalyst to bring disparate strands of work together and focussed on local legacy. To this end, they are using the 2010 Year of Health and Well-being to do further galvanise the 'coalition of the willing'. The social marketing tool – 5 ways to well-being – consolidating health and well-being outcomes across a range of sectors, including public transport, Highways Agency and the business sector. Given the success of the Year of Health and Well-being, it is likely to become the decade of H+W.
- 2.3. **Recognising health benefits of green spaces** – alongside leisure centre-based programmes similar to the BCC Cardiac programme, Liverpool NHS also actively uses parks as venues for well-being such as giving health checks to people using the park on Saturday afternoon. There is also a partnership to refurbish the Council-owned park adjacent to the Alder Hey Children's Hospital as an extension of their grounds, allowing patients and visitors to boost their sense of well-being in a connected green space.
- 2.4. **Health is wealth** – the health and well-being agenda of LCC is embedded in the competitive city agenda with strong links to private sector. Through the Active City Partnership, the business sector is encouraged to sign up to a workplace well-being charter, promote Lifestyles membership for staff, facilitate walking meetings and contribute to the 'Health, Wealthy and Wise' newsletter.
- 2.5. **Liverpool Sports Forum** – this is a sports forum which includes the private sector and education sector to promote physical activity in the city. It also allocates, on behalf of the Council, the sports development funding in the city.

### **3. Resources and facilities for delivery**

- 3.1. **Flexible working practices** – leisure centre staff have generic job profiles which are flexible to enable their deployment to meet the needs of the customer. In addition they work 5 days out of 7 at times when the centre is open. They are paid NJC rates with no shift enhancement or weekend working rates. Very limited overtime is paid and usually only to cover special events. Centre managers are also responsible for multiple locations.
- 3.2. **Mapping the city's sports provision** – LCC recognise that they are not the sole provider of sports provision in city. They have strong links with sports colleges in city as well as secured community access to education sector facilities. Investment decisions are made on the basis of proximity to other sports facilities, whether Council-owned or not. LCC completed a Waterspace review in late 1980's which directed their investment decisions in terms of rationalisation, development and closures.

- 3.3. **Private sector capital investment** – LCC has recognised that in the current economic climate different investment vehicles will be required for the delivery of capital schemes in the future. This will include a different relationship with the private sector to ensure investment in facilities and programmes. For example, a group of pitches has been financed under a public/private partnership whereby the private company receive the revenue from the pitches for 10 years and then return ownership to the Council.
- 3.4. **Maximising benefit and minimising costs** – LCC have always used their leisure centres to disseminate information and are now moving to utilise them as a location to access a wider range of services, as a shared services hub, bringing in additional Council services as well as other agencies such as the police.
- Also, LCC close some provision on the basis of demand/usage patterns e.g. their tennis centre is closed during day.
- 3.5. **Community ownership** – LCC operated a sports centre in Alt Valley and despite allocating considerable regeneration resources into the area, it was failing to make any impact in terms of addressing the health inequalities and arresting decline in participation rates. It was agreed to hand it over to Alt Valley Community Trust to operate. In short turnaround, vandalism has significantly and participation has increased. Community Trust is able to access funding not available to Council. It offers a breadth of well-being activities such as drama, arts and healthy eating schemes. Continues to co-ordinate their work with local Active City Co-ordinator.
- 3.6. **Private sector principles with public sector values** – Glendale is a joint venture partnership which is part-owned by LCC (20%) and part-owned by a private sector company (80%). All grounds maintenance is provided through this joint venture partnership, following the transfer of staff and assets from LCC. This model works on the basis of 'private sector principles with public sector values'. Since the transfer, costs have gone down and performance has gone up. The 12-year contract is outcome-focussed (largely around Green Flag) and performance management drives payments from LCC. It is a not-for-profit organisation and surpluses are put back into services. They also must not deliver a deficit. Glendale runs the apprentice programme for LCC. Their tagline is 'Pride, passion and performance' instilling a sense of working for local communities.
- 3.7. **Standards of provision** – LCC has taken a decision to reduce the number of local playgrounds but has increased the quality of the remainder. While this means that there is a greater travel distance to the local playground, it does mean that the provision is of a higher standard and is subject to much less vandalism/ASB. Likewise, the Council provide fewer pitches (135) but these are maintained to a high quality.
- 3.8. **Maximising tourism** - parks are considered as an integral part of tourism offer in Liverpool. Locations and events are proactively marketed with tourist and visitor industry in the city. Parks venues, such as the Isla Gladstone

conservatory are also marketed to the lucrative business tourism market as locations for conferences and gala receptions.

- 3.9. **City Watch** – is an in-house ASB/security resource which has across all LCC locations. It has an enforcement role and can also respond to incidents identified on live-monitored CCTV. They provide sophisticated monitoring, cost of crime analysis and engagement and cross-cutting approach through all enforcement agencies. City Watch is contracted by parks to reduce annual revenue losses to vandalism by 20%.
- 3.10. **Asset regeneration** – there is a political mandate to use asset regeneration to lift aspirations of an area, with a shift of focus to North Liverpool. The refurbishment of Isla Gladstone conservatory and Stanley Park sought to restoring the spirit of the park, matching the Victorian vision with today's needs. It has successfully provided employment and an icon for the area, boosting community morale as well as the perception of the area across Liverpool.
- 3.11. **Palm House Preservation Trust** – this is a small trust which operates a Heritage Lottery funded restoration project. The Trust is able to attract large-scale private foundation funding and corporate sponsorship for the ongoing maintenance of the Palm House. The Council's contract with the Trust outlines expectations regarding public access and the standards of maintenance.
- 3.12. **City Friends' Forum** – this is a cross-city forum which meets every 6 months to share ideas on events, ways of tackling anti-social behaviour and promoting parks. The Active City Partnership also offers funding to the group. The establishment of friends groups is a KPI for the Council.
- 3.13. **Sports excellence benefits tourism** – LCC understands value of sports tourism to the city and that this requires investment in sports excellence as well as mass participation. Analysis has been completed on the economic impact of sports participants and spectators coming to the city for national/international sporting events, in terms of secondary spend as well as media coverage. This enables to LCC to lever funding for investment in sports excellence centres, demonstrating the long term benefits of capital investment.
- 3.14. **Liverpool Loop Line** – is a city wide cycle path managed by Sustrans and maintained by Glendale as part of their Council contract. Sustrans provide a series of programmes for the cycle way to promote its use.

#### **4. Planning and performance management**

- 4.1. **Measuring progress against the 5 ways to well-being** – LCC has contracted with Liverpool John Moore's University to develop and implement an evaluation framework to measure the social outcomes of the health and well-being approach adopted. KPIs have been developed across the 5 ways to well-being and services/programmes are measured against the appropriate KPI. This facilitates a broader picture of the combined impact of the approach.

- 4.2. **Virtual teams** – Cross-service working is fundamental to improving quality of life and embedded in the culture of Liverpool City Council. In each of the 5 Neighbourhood Management areas (bringing together 6 wards in each area across the city), it is an organisation expectation that teams will plan collaboratively so as to maximise the value of the revenue and asset investments of the Council in each locality.
- 4.3. **Neighbourhood Management Framework** – this is the delivery link between local area planning and the various parks and leisure strategies. Each strategy is ‘translated’ by district committees and neighbourhood management teams into a meaningful action plan for an area. This includes identifying additional partners and resources as well as measuring key performance indicators at a local level.
- 4.4. **Participatory budgeting** – as part of the broader local area planning framework, local districts were given control over £30,000 budget in 2009/10. In a deliberative voting workshop, over 100 local people determined the allocation. This year, it will be expanded to control over £150k for the highways budget.
- 4.5. **Annual parks improvement plan** – each park has an improvement plan which is linked to either retaining or achieving the Green Flag award. The departmental improvement plan is presented to Members and is used by parks managers as a management tool throughout the year, against which their performance is measured. The KPI attached to this is that 50% of Liverpool citizens will live within 1000m of a Green Flag rated park.
- 4.6. **Customer Relationship Management** – leisure centre reception staff regularly collect key outcomes information and proactively monitor attendance and participation rates in a range of programmes and events. Also, LCC use IT (SIM city-type) to engage with communities and share information across agencies.

#### Questions for Liverpool delegation

In order to identify the key learning that Members might wish to take forward in the development of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy, the following questions are presented:

- What is the political vision for an Active Belfast Partnership?
- What is the political vision for a modern, efficient and effective parks and leisure services?
- How will we work with local people to design and deliver services and programmes for improved health and well-being?
- What are the key modernisation challenges in Belfast?
- How do we agree common outcomes for an Active Belfast Partnership?
- How can we link our services at a local level?
- Are there easy opportunities to use leisure centres as neighbourhood hubs?
- Where can we integrate our services? With whom? What partnerships do we need to develop to make a Grove II happen?

- How do we begin planning for the replacement of existing facilities and/or rationalisation of provision?
- How can we use our investments at a local level to drive neighbourhood transformation?

The discussion from this can be integrated into the final paper that is presented at the next Members' workshop at the end of November.

## Next steps

Over the last 4 months, since the previous Members' workshop, a number of staff task groups have been established, to draft a series of options for Members' consideration. This includes a participation plan for an Active Belfast. It is timely that ideas from the Liverpool study visit might be fed into this process.

A draft departmental vision and values has also been drafted collaboratively as part of the departmental planning process. This will be presented to Members as part of the Departmental plan in the New Year. This is in line with the vision for the Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy and its focus on the health and well-being agenda, which Members endorsed at the workshop in May. It is proposed that:

Our departmental purpose is:

**To work with people across Belfast and its neighbourhoods to create an active, healthy and vibrant city.**

Our vision is:

The **people** in Belfast will be active and healthy and everyone will use leisure, parks and open space facilities across the city. They will participate in local events and play an active part in community life.

We will have pride in our work and be passionate about our purpose. The city and its neighbourhoods will be attractive and vibrant **places** to live in, work in and visit. We will continue to engage with local people and partners to make sure that people are offered the best possible facilities and services in a safe environment.

We will protect the natural environment of Belfast and educate people on the importance of a green city. With our partners, we will work hard to connect the city and integrate our services. The range and quality of our facilities and services will be accessible and valued by citizens and visitors alike. Those who use our services and participate in programmes and events will be very satisfied with their experience.

We will be flexible and efficient. We will prioritise community involvement, customer focus and value for money. We will strive to understand the city and identify innovative **possibilities** and creative solutions to deliver excellent services.



**We are about people, places and possibilities.**

Our values:

We fully subscribe to the council's values and in particular we will embed the values outlined below. These values are part of everything we do:

**We are proud, passionate and professional:**

<b>Values</b>	<b>What we mean</b>
<b>Proud</b>	Having pride in our work, the city and our environment. Being open and transparent and developing trust by doing what we promise. Having a 'can do' attitude and being empowered to deliver.
<b>Passionate</b>	Being positive, active and helpful in working things out. Celebrating success and promoting our achievements. Treating each other with respect and dignity.
<b>Professional</b>	Learning and developing as employees. Being willing to accept responsibility for our work and performance. Communicating openly about expectations and decisions taken.

**Discussion**

Members are therefore asked to consider:

- Are Members satisfied with the content of this report as an accurate and useful reflection of the study visit to Liverpool?
- Are there additional observations they would like to make?
- On the basis of the questions outlined above, are there specific learning points which Members would like to further explore, in terms of their application in Belfast?

**Proposed next steps**

Members might wish to propose a workshop for Members of the Parks and Leisure Committee, to be organised at which an expanded version of this paper will be presented.

The proposed objectives of the workshop would be:

- To consider the learning from the Liverpool study visit, for integration into the

ongoing development of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy, including:

- Initiatives to maximise participation
  - Business models to maximise income
  - Facilities for delivery
- 
- To consider improvements from staff task groups which will begin to transform the rate of recovery for BCC leisure centres
  
  - To consider the departmental customer charter and customer improvements.

The discussions would be fed into the final drafting stages of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy.