

DELIVERING ACTIVE COMMUNITIES:
LIFE LEISURE: ANNUAL REPORT 2023/4

Report of the Director of Regeneration & Development

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines Life Leisure's performance during its second year of operation as a Community Interest Company (CIC) wholly owned by the Council.
- 1.2 The report also details how Life Leisure continues to take great strides to deliver against the strategic aims of the ONE Stockport Active Communities Strategy by using physical activity to profoundly affect not just the physical, but also the mental and social wellbeing of Stockport residents.
- 1.3 The report also describes the challenges and successes it has experienced within its second year of trading.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There is compelling evidence that active well-being can foster improved population health and address health inequality. Developing active communities is an important pillar of the Council's Neighbourhoods and Prevention programme.
- 2.2 The latest Sport England Active Lives data, published on 24th April 2024, shows that Stockport continues to perform better than other GM authorities, the NW average and the England average. Despite this, it is estimated that 25,000 children and 60,000 adults still fail to meet the recommended minimum physical activity levels and the estimated financial burden of inactivity to the health economy in the Borough is in excess of £6.5 million annually.
- 2.3 Through the programmes that they deliver and the operation of Council-owned leisure centres, Life Leisure are the key physical activity delivery partner of the Council and play a pivotal role in supporting residents across Stockport to be more active more often.
- 2.4 Life Leisure work collaboratively with other services at a neighbourhood level to deliver essential active well-being services as part of a preventative health system. This includes successful partnerships with Age UK Stockport, NHS Stockport and four facilities now playing a role in Family Hub provision.
- 2.5 Life Leisure's organizational purpose is 'to improve the lives of others' with a mission to 'develop a healthier and more active community, enshrined in the strap-line 'Live Well, Life Life'. The organization has developed three pillars to achieve its purpose: to **promote** daily activity; to **connect** across the system with health, social care, education and other partners; to **provide** facilities and activity programmes that enable communities to take charge of their own health.

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES 2023/4

- 3.1 Overall membership has grown by 15% on 2022/3 in response to Life Leisure's repositioned and more inclusive brand and the concept of 'whole-person well-being' and supported by targeted investments at Life Leisure Hazel Grove and Life Leisure Romiley. Membership now stands at 94% of pre-pandemic levels, which is around 10% better than the UK average.
- 3.2 The development of a Borough-wide aquatics strategy has shaped revised pool programming to enable balanced opportunity and meet the community demands for skill development, recreational swimming and performance aquatics. Despite the closure of the swimming pool at Hazel Grove for six months of the year, participation in swimming was sustained at the same level as the previous year.
- 3.3 Modest investment at Life Leisure Houldsworth Village has seen the introduction of the first indoor Padel Court in the North West and the community have responded exceptionally to this easy-access racket sport. Four Life Leisure facilities now play a role as part of the Family Hubs service across the Borough.
- 3.4 A partnership with Age UK Stockport has yielded a highly acclaimed concept of Confidence Walks which have added to the comprehensive walks programme that Life Leisure provides across the Borough.
- 3.5 The Specialist Physical Activity Service provides a service for 2500 people with long-term health conditions, and in some of our most deprived communities. An evaluative study has shown that such an intervention on those referred to the scheme, provided economic value 8 times more effective than for a healthy person, and 12 times more effective than an intervention within the health service.
- 3.6 Life Leisure has grown income by 14% despite a period a pool closure at Hazel Grove and has decreased energy costs by 17% as the energy market has begun to stabilise. Life Leisure has consequently managed to reduce the annual deficit by 8%. Detailed figures are provided in full report.
- 3.7 Over the course of 2023/4, the Social Value Calculator, developed in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University and Experian, has shown that Life Leisure have contributed over £6.5m in social value, making a substantial impact upon the health, happiness and productivity of the people of Stockport.
- 3.8 A number of targeted marketing campaigns, including 'What's Your Choice', 'Better Together', and 'Take 5' have meant that record breaking sales have been achieved for eight out of twelve months. The linked digital transformation strategy has helped to increase digital interaction with members by 39% on 2022/23 levels.
- 3.9 The Active Communities team continue to deliver a wide range of interventions to promote physical activity across communities with almost 4.000 sessions delivered, almost £200k of additional funding secured and being at the heart of wider Stockport initiatives such as Holiday Activity and Food Programme, Stockport Town

of Culture and the opening and programming of Viaduct Park.

4. FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

- 4.1 An ageing leisure estate continues to place significant pressure on the ability of Life Leisure to provide a contemporary and attractive customer experience. Notwithstanding this, the organization continues to make use of the loan facility agreed with the Council with Hazel Grove, Romiley and Stockport Sports Village benefitting from recent investment and participation increasing as a result.
- 4.2 The move towards the National Living Wage has seen staffing costs increase by 13% however this has been off-set by a 17% reduction in utility costs as the energy market has begun to stabilise.
- 4.3 High demand for the Physical Activity Referral in Stockport (PARiS) service has meant that waiting lists have now formed and people are having to wait around 12 weeks to access the specialist provision.

5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The annual report is consistent with Life Leisure's obligations under the Services Contract and Members Agreement which exist between the Council and Life Leisure.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 6.1 There is no human resources impact on the Council in relation to the annual report..

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 Addressing health inequalities is a key strategic ambition of Life Leisure and runs through the key priorities and objectives of the annual report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 Contribution to Stockport's Climate Action Now strategy and limiting Life Leisure's impact upon the environment has been an important priority during 2023/24. Life Leisure worked with the Council to secure Sport England funding to install more climate efficient infrastructure across a number of pool sites.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Scrutiny Committee are requested to comment on Life Leisure's annual report for 2023/4.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Peter Ashworth on 0161 474 2392 or by email on peter.ashworth@stockport.gov.uk