

SD104



BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES
FINAL REPORT
JULY 2009

Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

1-2 Frecheville Court ◀ off Knowsley Street ◀ Bury BL9 0UF
T 0161 764 7040 ◀ **F** 0161 764 7490 ◀ **E** mail@kcp.co.uk ◀ **www.kkp.co.uk**



Quality assurance	Name	Date
Report origination	David McHendry	5 th May 2009
Quality control	John Eady	6 th May 2009
Client comments	L Philips	22 July 2009
Final approval		

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

CONTENTS

Section	Page
Executive summary	
Introduction	1
Review of Life Card Membership	4
Facilities review	7
Key issues	11
Financial performance	14
Conclusions and recommendations	16

Appendix 1 – 3 year comparator trading position

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blaenau Gwent has a population of approximately 69,500, and the majority of residents live in the five key towns of Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo Blaina and Tredegar. It is an area of significant deprivation and has many associated challenges in relation to health and well being, economic development and the fear of crime. As an example:

- ◀ 70% of residents live in the top 30% of deprived communities nationally.
- ◀ 31% of adults over 16 smoke.
- ◀ Only 35% eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- ◀ 58% of adults are overweight or obese.
- ◀ Only 26% meet current physical activity guidelines.

In order to meet the above challenges BGCBC Leisure Services has identified the following strategic aims, including:

- ◀ *Improving accessibility and participation levels in Leisure.*
- ◀ *Increasing levels of achievement in formal and informal learning settings.*
- ◀ *Re-shaping and modernising Leisure Services in order to meet identified community need.*
- ◀ *Demonstrating the impact that Leisure has on health and well-being, lifelong learning and community regeneration.*
- ◀ *Ensuring strong and effective partnership working across Leisure Services.*
- ◀ *Maximising Leisure use of the built and natural environment.*
- ◀ *Delivering key strategic Capital projects e.g. Learning Campus, B.H.A.P., and Bryn Bach Park.*
- ◀ *Promoting a strong and sustainable Leisure business function and generating income.*
- ◀ *Developing a flexible, sustainable and responsive workforce for Leisure Services.*
- ◀ *Encouraging and targeting 'hard to reach' individuals and groups.*

What do we know about sport and physical activity participation?

Analysis of the Council's Life Card data and the results of a recent Years 6 and 9 pupil's survey identifies that:

- ◀ There are 14,700 members of the Council's Life Card scheme.
- ◀ Almost 12% of Blaenau Gwent residents are casual members of the service.
- ◀ The Council's penetration rate for fitness is approximately 2.6%; compared to 12% nationally.
- ◀ 4.0% and 13.6% of Year 6 and 9 pupils respectively, never visit a local sports centre or swimming pool, giving a 'reach' of the service within young people of between 86% and 96%.
- ◀ The take up of the Council's Life Card increases significantly as pupils get older (i.e. 14.5% for Year 6 pupils and 48.3% for Year 9).
- ◀ 90% of both Year 6 and Year 9 pupils consider themselves to be good or strong swimmers, but only 79% of Year 6 pupils can swim 25 metres or more.
- ◀ 69.7% of boys and 51.5% of girls in Year 9, take part in sports activities away from school at a club

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

- ◀ 27.9% of Year 6 pupils and 14.3% of Year 9 take part in sport, games, play or exercise for an hour or more every day

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Conclusions and recommendations

The key conclusions from the review of the service can be identified as follows:

- ◀ There is a need to increase the animation of the service to give residents a reason to use it.
- ◀ There is a need to review the current scope and pricing structure of the Life membership.
- ◀ There is a need to develop a well programmed and animated service which gives local residents a reason to come out of their homes and into the facilities...and become physically active.
- ◀ The advantages of externalising the service are minimal given the dual use nature of the facilities and the lack of critical mass.
- ◀ There is a need to market the benefits of the service and not just the features.
- ◀ There is a need to use management information more effectively.
- ◀ There is a need to maximise the use of facilities, especially throughout the school day.
- ◀ There is no opportunity to rationalise the facilities stock (e.g. Nantyglo SC), as this would impact on the residents most in need of the service.
- ◀ There is a need to deliver a replacement for Ebbw Vale SC.
- ◀ There is a need to decide on the future provision of indoor bowls in Blaenau Gwent.
- ◀ There is a need to challenge the appropriateness of the catering offer at each facility.
- ◀ The Council should be mindful of the need to invest in Nantyglo LC in the next 7 to 10 years.
- ◀ The potential exists to improve the fitness offer at Tredegar SC in order to improve usage and income.
- ◀ The potential exists to re-organise activity areas at Ebbw Vale SC in order to increase income and reduce costs prior to it being replaced.

In line with the above, the key recommendations for the review can be identified as follows:

Value for money

- ◀ To develop a wider range of programmes and initiatives at facilities in order to demonstrate value for money for residents.
- ◀ To re-evaluate the pricing policy for its Life card membership in a format which:
 - ◀ Seeks to generate additional income from the Internal membership package, especially from partners.
 - ◀ Focuses discretionary payments at those most in need.
 - ◀ Provides clearer parameters and benefits for the External Life membership package.
- ◀ To re-align the Life membership package to ensure that individual use of courts is included within the membership as opposed to the hire of a court by the member.
- ◀ To ensure that the service rigorously chases up 'no shows' on classes and court hires by Life card members.
- ◀ Ensure that the Council receives value from its resources, especially where they are used by "commercial" clubs which generate a profit from the cheap hire of facilities.
- ◀ Where the Council investigates its VAT position, and does receive a rebate based on how it should treat specific income sources – this rebate should be ring-fenced in order to action some of the key recommendations within this report; specifically those

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

which are associated with increasing income in order to reduce the subsidy liability (i.e. invest to save).

Increasing participation in sport and physical activity

- ◀ To develop a wider range of programmes and initiatives at facilities in order to attract users to them, as opposed to hiring spaces within facilities.
- ◀ Ensure that pricing is not a barrier to use for the most disadvantaged residents in Blaenau Gwent.
- ◀ Enter negotiations with the Education Department and respective head teachers with the objective of:
 - ◀ Transferring responsibility for the daytime programming of the swimming pools to the Leisure Services team so that an increased range of programmes can be developed.
 - ◀ Identifying opportunities to access specific activity areas (e.g. sports halls) at key times throughout the day when they are not in use.
- ◀ Develop a marketing approach which identifies the benefits of sport and physical activity and the opportunities to participate. This could include using the “Life” brand as follows and ceasing the use of all other brands:
 - ◀ *Active Life: Ebbw Vale*
 - ◀ *Active Life: Tredegar*
 - ◀ *‘Swim 4 Life’ – swimming brand*
 - ◀ *‘Skills 4 Life’ – junior sports development programmes*
 - ◀ *‘Fit 4 Life’ – fitness brand*
 - ◀ *‘Play 4 Life’ – casual use*
 - ◀ *‘Go 4 Life’ – launch and pulsed activities*
- ◀ Marketing activity should be driven by increasing penetration rates of the service (Life membership categories) within the community and incorporate specific targets for the most disadvantaged communities. The Council should consider the potential advantages of buying in specific marketing expertise from the private sector to support the drive and development of its marketing.
- ◀ The Council should also consider what it can learn from other local authority partners through joint working (i.e. WAG Making the Connections Agenda), and identify ways it could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

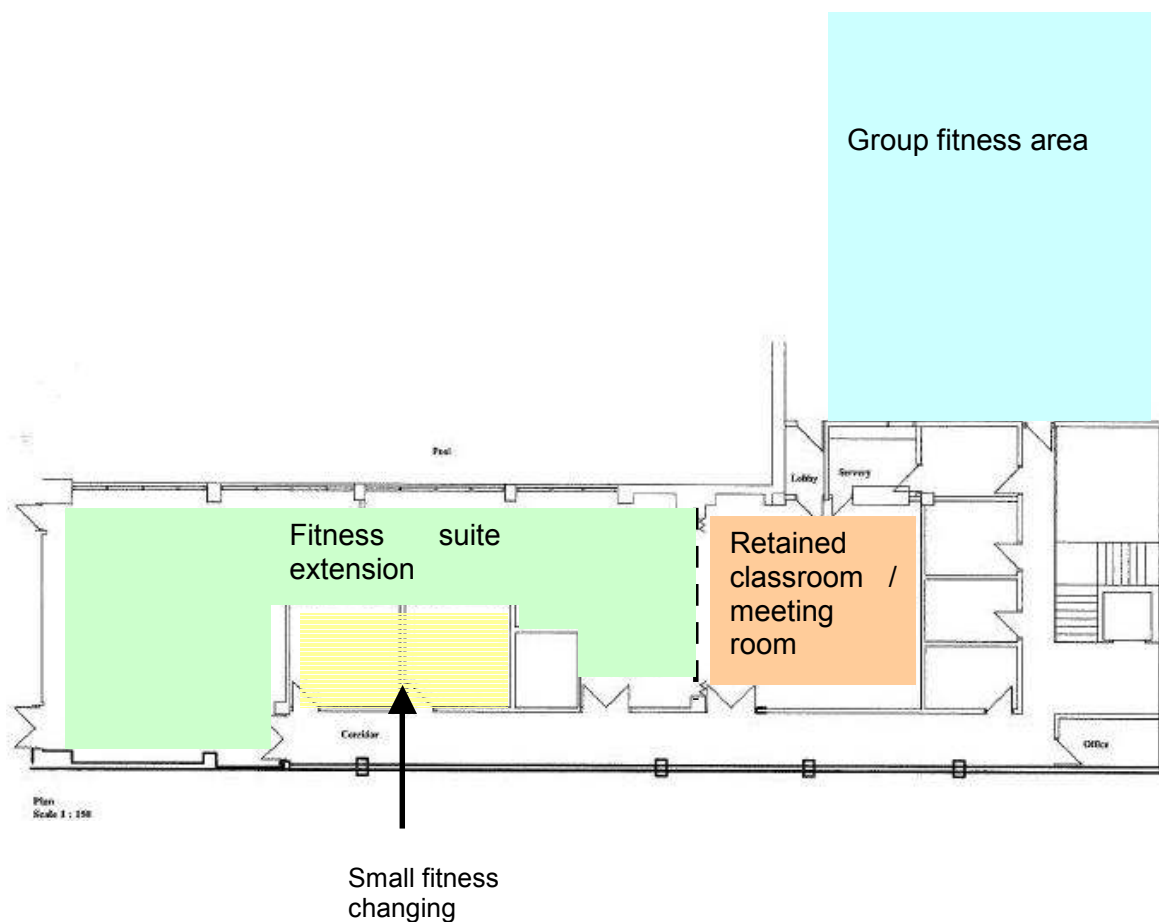
Opportunities for rationalisation, refurbishment, development and investment

- ◀ There does not appear to be the justification for the Council to rationalise any of its core sports facilities and swimming pools at this stage as each of the facilities serves the needs of a specific community.
- ◀ BGCBC should seek to deliver a replacement facility for Ebbw Vale SC and kick start this by pledging to invest circa £5 – 6 million from a mix of its capital programme, prudential borrowing and grant funding to it.
- ◀ BGCBC should identify the impact of the closure of the indoor bowls facility and work with the bowls trust to explore options for an alternative venue.
- ◀ Subject to the redevelopment options for Nantyglo Comprehensive School, BGCBC should seek to redevelop the entrance of the facility in order to provide a presence on the site.
- ◀ The signage (directional and arrival) to all facilities should be improved in order that the facilities are not lost within their respective sites.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

- ◀ BGCBC should undertake a cost benefit analysis of the catering offer at each facility and where appropriate identify opportunities to remove or improve this.
- ◀ Linked to the above, the Council has the opportunity to undertake a small scale “re-shuffle” of the activity areas at Ebbw Vale SC. This should be viewed as an “invest to save” opportunity over the next 3 to 5 years, in line with the development period for the new facility.
- ◀ BGCBC should assess the feasibility of developing an improved fitness offer at Tredegar SC on the first floor area (i.e. fitness suite, group fitness studio, consultation room).

Tredegar SC – development plans



BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

This is the draft report by Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) following the completion of the consultation and research into the review of Sport and Recreation Services at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC). The report presents our initial findings and identifies the future challenges for the service moving forward.

The stated purpose of the study is to undertake a headline investigation into the current stock of facilities controlled the County Borough Council and to generate recommendations that could be implemented to achieve better long term results, specifically in terms of:

- ◀ Future value for money.
- ◀ Increased levels of participation in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ A clear picture of the opportunities for rationalisation, refurbishment, development and investment in suitable provision in order to meet need.

The approach undertaken to meet the requirements of the Council's brief was as follows:

- ◀ Detailed face to face consultation with key officers within the Council.
- ◀ Site visits to all of the Council's leisure facilities.
- ◀ Face to face consultation with a selection of front line staff (e.g. duty managers, receptionists, and leisure attendants).
- ◀ Face to face consultation with a selection of key sports clubs
- ◀ A review of relevant documentation appertaining to the service.
- ◀ A review of the Council's Life membership scheme and analysis of who is and is not using the service.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

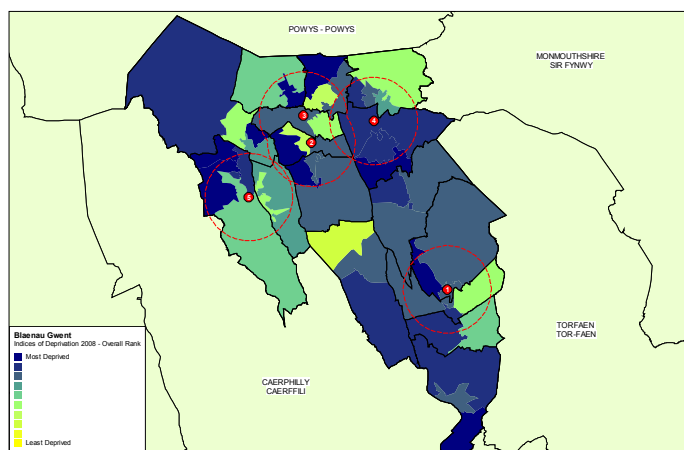
Background

Blaenau Gwent has a population of approximately 69,500 of which 9% is Welsh speaking and 1% of black and ethnic minority origin. Geographically it is the smallest of all the Welsh county borough councils and is spread across three different valleys. The main centres of population are the five key towns of Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo Blaina and Tredegar.

The Borough has 13 designate Communities First wards and is rated as the third most deprived local authority area in Wales. The area also benefits from Objective One and Welsh Assembly Government funding via the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Strategy.

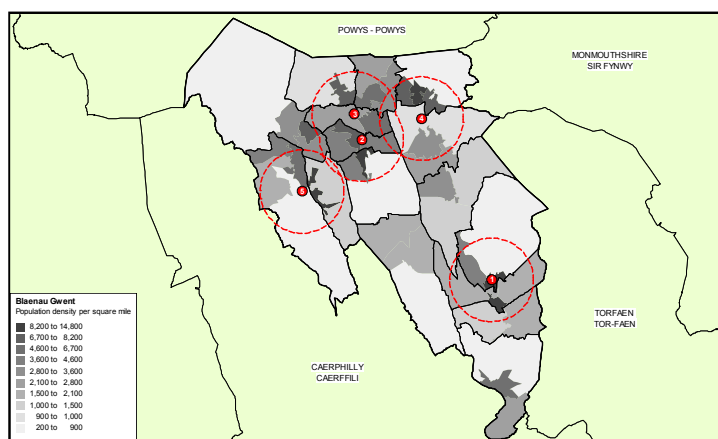
As identified from the maps below, Blaenau Gwent's sports facilities serve the key areas of population density and areas which are a mix of both high levels of deprivation and what could be described as a "reasonable" quality of life. However, it is also worth noting that, unlike many other areas, Blaenau Gwent does not contain any significant areas of general affluence and high socio-economic achievers.

Blaenau Gwent – Indices of Deprivation 2008 – Multiple rank



Blaenau Gwent – Population density mid-2006

Map ID	Site
1	Abertillery Sports Centre
2	Ebbw Vale Sports Centre
3	Glencoed Sports Hall
4	Nantyglo Sports Centre
5	Tredegar Sports Centre



BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Area profile

Two separate profiles of Blaenau Gwent have been undertaken. They are the indices of multiple deprivation ranking and the Mosaic profile. Each of these demonstrates the level of deprivation and challenges facing the Council and its partners. As an example, over two thirds of Blaenau Gwent's residents live in the top 30% most deprived areas in the country and almost 20% of the population are dependent on the state for their income and welfare.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2008		Mosaic profile	
10% bands	% population	Mosaic group description	% population
00 - 10%	20.7%	Symbols of Success	0.0%
10 - 20%	21.4%	Happy Families	4.5%
20 - 30%	27.9%	Suburban Comfort	2.1%
30 - 40%	5.8%	Ties of Community	36.4%
40 - 50%	4.2%	Urban Intelligence	0.0%
50 - 60%	13.6%	Welfare Borderline	1.3%
60 - 70%	4.0%	Municipal Dependency	19.7%
70 - 80%	2.3%	Blue Collar Enterprise	32.6%
80 - 90%	0.0%	Twilight Subsistence	3.0%
90 - 100%	0.0%	Grey Perspectives	0.4%
Total	100%	Rural Isolation	0.0%
		Total	100.0%

To demonstrate the significant challenges for the Council and its partners the key results of the recent Welsh Health Survey identifies that in Blaenau Gwent:

- ◀ 31% of adults over 16 smoke.
- ◀ Only 35% eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- ◀ 58% of adults are overweight or obese.
- ◀ Only 26% meet current physical activity guidelines.

In order to meet the challenges presented as a result of the above profiles, BGCBC Leisure Services has identified a number of strategic aims, aligned to the overall BGCBC Corporate Improvement Plan, which include:

- ◀ *To provide healthy lifestyle pathways to improve and prevent poor health*
- ◀ *To increase participation in and promote pathways to excellence in sport and physical activity; and youth arts and culture.*
- ◀ *To increase the opportunities for 11 – 25 year olds to improve their learning and achieve their full potential.*
- ◀ *Develop a skilled and agile workforce.*
- ◀ *Divert and signpost 11 – 25 year olds at risk of offending to positive activity.*

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

REVIEW OF LIFE CARD MEMBERSHIP

BGCBC has developed its Life membership scheme, which is its membership and pre-payment package for its sports centres and fitness facilities. The scheme has been promoted throughout the community and now has approximately 14,700 members across a range of membership categories.

Membership category	Number of members
Casual	12,385
External (corporate)	202
Full	715
Internal	1,403
Swim	38
Total	14,743

Unfortunately, there is only complete information (i.e. complete postcodes) for 11,765 members, of which 14% (1,688) are non-residents of Blaenau Gwent county borough.

As demonstrated by the above table, the majority of members are casual users (in general they participate on a 'pay and play' basis), while only 715 are community members (i.e. non corporate or council members). Significantly over 1,600 are Internal and External (corporate) members. This is the mechanism which Council staff and local businesses can achieve preferential rates for their employees. In order to demonstrate the nature of these preferential rates the following table compares membership prices across the main full membership types (paying by direct debit):

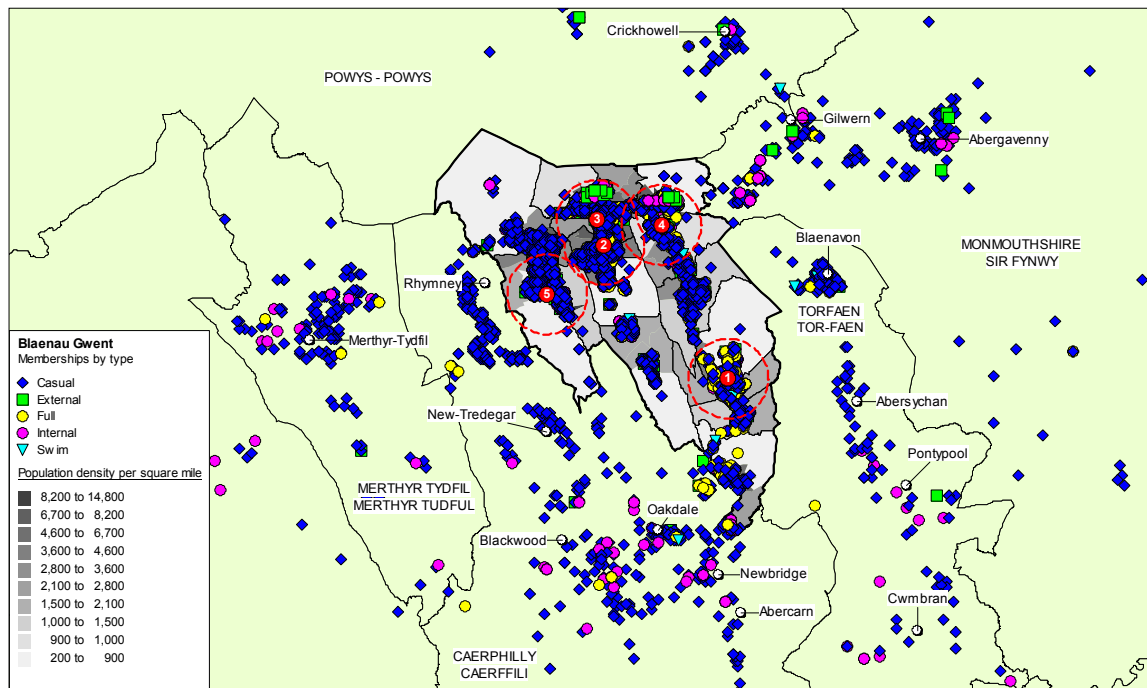
Membership category	Main member	Partner	1 st additional child	2 nd additional child
External (corporate)	£19.75	£19.75	£9.85	FOC
Full	£25	£15	£10	FOC
Internal	£12.10	£6	£6.05	FOC

Analysis of the above pricing for the membership scheme identifies the following:

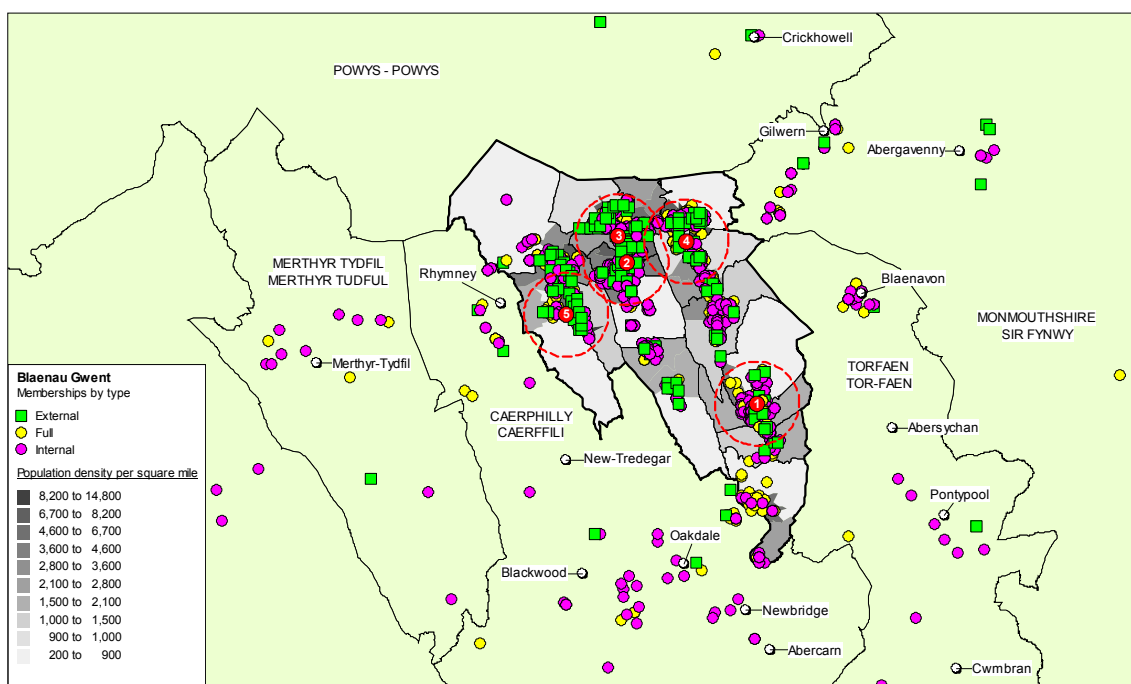
- ◀ The current arrangement is a very good deal for Council employees and in some circumstances could be seen as too favourable (looking after our own!)
- ◀ Other than as a single member, there is no real financial advantage to being an External member.
- ◀ The minimum number of members required to achieve an External membership package is 5; this appears low but potentially reflects the size of the majority of businesses in Blaenau Gwent. However, it has been known for the Council to waive this requirement.
- ◀ Given the above, there is a potential scenario where you would only have to pay full membership price if you (and your partner) lived in the Borough, but worked outside it.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

The following map identifies the residential location of all the members (by type). It identifies the draw of the facilities; especially among casual users.



The spread of the three main membership category types is identified within the following map. What is clear is the distance employees travel to work for the Council and the significant number who choose to be members of the Life scheme.



BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Further analysis of the membership data identifies the following key results:

- ◀ Almost 12% of Blaenau Gwent residents are casual members of the service.
- ◀ The Council's penetration rate for fitness members is approximately 2.6%; while nationally 12% of the UK population are now registered members of a health and fitness club or publicly-owned fitness facility.
- ◀ Comparing membership rates for each facility based on the catchment population within a one mile radius of each venue, the following penetration rates are evident:

	Casual	External	Full	Internal	Swim	Catchment pop
Facility Catchment	%	%	%	%	%	
Abertillery SC	17.7	0.4	1.6	3.2	0.1	5,497
Ebbw Vale SC & Glencoed SH	21.0	0.4	1.3	2.4	0.0	13,322
Nantyglo SC	17.1	0.5	1.5	2.4	0.0	6,787
Tredegar SC	21.4	0.4	1.0	2.2	0.0	5,236
TOTAL	19.6	0.4	1.4	2.5	0.1	30,842

In summary, the service has significant potential to increase market penetration within the local community and improve its overall trading position. However, it must also be recognised that in order to achieve this, the quality of the offer must be improved. Furthermore, by re-aligning its pricing policy for the Life Membership scheme, the Council has the opportunity to increase income; however, such a move would be likely to affect Council staff members more than other residents.

Years 6 and 9 strata survey

The Council recently commissioned a years 6 and 9 survey of all pupils to assess their sport, physical activity and cultural participation trends. The key results for the sports and physical activity element of this study can be identified as follows:

- ◀ 4.0% of Year 6 pupils and 13.6% of Year 9, never visit a local leisure centre, sports centre or swimming pool. Therefore the reach of the service within young people is between 86% and 96%.
- ◀ The take up of the Council's Life Card increases significantly as pupils get older (i.e. 14.5% for Year 6 pupils and 48.3% for Year 9). However, this raises questions about the offer at the facilities for younger children.
- ◀ 90% of both Year 6 and Year 9 pupils consider themselves to be good or strong swimmers, but only 79% of Year 6 pupils can swim 25 metres or more; and only 16.3% of Year 9 pupils regularly attend a local swimming club, team or organised activity away from school.
- ◀ 69.7% of boys and 51.5% of girls in Year 9, take part in sports activities away from school at a club.
- ◀ 27.9% of Year 6 pupils and 14.3% of Year 9 take part in sport, games, play or exercise for an hour or more every day.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

FACILITIES REVIEW

A visit to each of the Council's core leisure facilities was undertaken. Each is located on a school site (or is dual use). The facilities are of varying degrees of quality and accessibility; however the general mix of activity areas seems to be good given that all main venues have pools, sports halls, synthetic pitches and an element of fitness.

The following is a general summary of some of the major challenges the Council faces with its facilities stock:

- ◀ In general, the visibility of sports facilities is limited by their location to the rear of the relevant school site. In all circumstances the quality and visibility of signage needs to be improved.
- ◀ Facilities have been incrementally redeveloped to take account of changing needs. There are, as a result, significant circulation areas within some facilities.
- ◀ The general quality of the fitness offer could be improved across all sites. This is one of the keys to improving the financial position of the Service in the future.
- ◀ There is a need for the Council to articulate its core function with respect to sports facilities and challenge the continued provision of bar/café areas which do not appear to be able to recover their own operating costs and do not enhance the delivery of Council core objectives.
- ◀ Regardless of the decision above, it will be important for the Council to locate secondary spend services (e.g. vending/café/bar) in the right location to maximise customer spend (i.e. at reception thoroughfare).
- ◀ The current investment of £400k in Tredegar SC will see improvements to pool changing rooms, disabled access, the pool tank and boilers.
- ◀ The condition of Abertillery Bowls centre has deteriorated to the point where it is not economically viable to repair and refurbish it. In our view, the Council has no other option but to dispose of the asset.
- ◀ In some cases (e.g. Abertillery SC) facilities have been developed with unwelcoming reception areas.

The realistic development options which should be considered for each facility can be identified as follows:

Abertillery Sports Centre

In general Abertillery SC is a good quality facility and does not need major investment. However, the reception area would benefit from re-design to make it more customer centred and welcoming. Furthermore, the synthetic turf pitch does not appear to have been invested in when the facility was built, and may require a new carpet in the near future.

Ebbw Vale Sports Centre

The facility is in need of major investment and the Council has identified plans to redevelop it on an alternative site.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Abertillery Indoor Bowls Centre

As identified above, the condition of Abertillery Bowls centre has deteriorated to the point where it is not economically viable to repair and refurbish. The Council has no other option but to dispose of the asset.

A range of alternative site options needs to be identified if the Council wishes to continue to offer this facility to residents (in partnership with the Bowls community).

Tredegar Sports Centre

The Council is currently investing £400k in Tredegar SC which will result in improvements to pool changing rooms, disabled access, the pool tank and boilers. In addition to this investment there is the potential to undertake the following:

- ◀ Improve the fitness offer at the facility, by developing a fitness suite, and group fitness studio in the areas currently used for fitness, bar/café and youth room. This will require further investigation into the ability of the floor above the pool to accommodate this type of facility.
- ◀ In line with the above, the current sauna facility should be converted into a small catering outlet (e.g. café and vending). This puts it in the most appropriate location to maximise on secondary spending.
- ◀ Investment is required in the sports hall, especially the floor, to bring it up to an acceptable standard.

It is clear that a cost benefit analysis of the above investment will have to be undertaken. That is, a clear indication that the investment will generate additional usage and income, enabling the service to repay the initial investment. Furthermore, where grant funding can be achieved to facilitate the development this should be maximised.

Nantyglo Sports Centre

The Council has recently extended the facility to improve the fitness offer. In addition to the recent investment the potential exists to undertake the following:

- ◀ Improve the entrance to the facility, in order to give it a degree of “presence”. This will be of particular importance given the possibility that the school may close from September 2010, and an alternative use found for the site.
- ◀ Improvements to the sports hall, especially the floor surface, to bring it up to an acceptable standard.
- ◀ Continued investment in the changing facilities at the site.

The future of Nantyglo SC is potentially subject to future political discussions within the Council given the context of the redevelopment and re-use of the school site. However, it is clear that the facility performs as well as the other Council facilities and it clearly serves the needs of the Nantyglo and Brynmawr communities, which include some of the most deprived communities in the area.

The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) facilities planning model for BGCBC identifies that although there is more capacity for swimming pools than demand, the model still identifies key areas of unmet demand. This is due to the distribution of pools related to

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

the population and that not all demand can be satisfied. Therefore, there is no significant over provision and justification for rationalising facilities.

The Leisure Service's strategic aims are focused around:

- ↳ Improving health
- ↳ Increasing participation in sport and physical activity.
- ↳ Lifelong learning and skill development
- ↳ Using physical activity as a diversionary activity

When applying a 20 minute walk time to the current profile of facilities in Blaenau Gwent the reach of the current sports facility infrastructure can be identified as follows:

IMD 2008 10% bands	Blaenau Gwent		Abertillery SC	Ebbw Vale SC	Glencoed SH	Nantyglo SC	Tredegar SC	Service reach
	Popn	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.
00 - 10%	14,284	20.7%	2.1%	4.0%	6.5%	0.0%	2.1%	14.8%
10 - 20%	14,831	21.4%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%	2.2%	11.2%
20 - 30%	19,316	27.9%	2.5%	6.0%	4.0%	2.0%	0.0%	14.5%
30 - 40%	4,034	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	2.2%	4.1%
40 - 50%	2,896	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
50 - 60%	9,434	13.6%	2.2%	2.5%	2.5%	0.0%	2.8%	9.9%
60 - 70%	2,787	4.0%	0.0%	2.2%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.2%
70 - 80%	1,588	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
80 - 90%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
90 - 100%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	69,170	100%	9.0%	14.6%	17.0%	10.9%	9.3%	60.8%

The above obviously takes into account the current population densities and the location of the current facilities. However, it is clear that 61% of the population of the County Borough has access to the Council's sports facilities within a 20 minute walk of their house.

If the Council was to decide to close Nantyglo SC then the impact this would have on the reach of the service would be as follows:

IMD 2008 10% bands	Blaenau Gwent		Abertillery SC	Ebbw Vale SC	Glencoed SH	Tredegar SC	Service reach
	Popn	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.	% Popn.
00 - 10%	14,284	20.7%	2.1%	4.0%	6.5%	2.1%	14.8%
10 - 20%	14,831	21.4%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	4.3%
20 - 30%	19,316	27.9%	2.5%	6.0%	4.0%	0.0%	12.5%
30 - 40%	4,034	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	2.2%
40 - 50%	2,896	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
50 - 60%	9,434	13.6%	2.2%	2.5%	2.5%	2.8%	9.9%
60 - 70%	2,787	4.0%	0.0%	2.2%	4.0%	0.0%	6.2%
70 - 80%	1,588	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
80 - 90%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
90 - 100%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	69,170	100%	9.0%	14.6%	17.0%	9.3%	49.9%

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Not only would the reach of the service drop to below 50% of the population being able to access the service within a 20 minute walk of their house, but the reduction in the service reach would hit the most deprived communities. That is, the profile BGCBC identifies that 70% of the population are from the top 30% of deprived communities nationally; the current facility infrastructure provides 41% of this community with access to a facility within a 20 minute walk from their house; whereas if the Council decides to close Nantyglo SC then only 32% of this community will be served.

Therefore, if the Council decides to close Nantyglo SC there is a question over its ability to deliver on its corporate objectives in relation to improving health, increasing participation in sport and physical activity, lifelong learning and using physical activity as a diversionary activity within some of the most deprived communities in the area.

Glyncoed Sports Hall

No investment currently required.

In summary, BGCBC is starting from the point where it currently has two facilities which are currently beyond reasonable repair and do not merit further investment - as they stand (i.e. Ebbw Vale and the Indoor Bowls) and it has identified a solution for one of these. Therefore, practical and political consideration will have to be given to the provision of indoor bowls within the area and a suitable solution identified for this.

The Council also has three other core sports facilities all of which require varying degrees of investment. The two facilities which will absorb the majority of this investment are Nantyglo and Tredegar. Some consultees have challenged the potential future of Nantyglo. This is a realistic challenge given the potential closure of the school and redevelopment of the site; however, the facility serves the most deprived catchment of any of the County Borough's facilities, covering the key communities facing the most acute health, well-being, social exclusion and economic challenges.

Therefore, at present there does not appear to be any key rationale for rationalising facilities stock in BGCBC, other than the indoor bowls facility, where there may be a political imperative to replace it. The only other option the Service has is to withdraw from the dual use agreement at Glyncoed Sports Hall once the new Ebbw Vale SC is developed. This would save in the region of £15,000 per annum.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

KEY ISSUES

The following sections highlight some of the key issues that have come to light throughout the research for the study.

Management information

- Management of the service is neither properly informed, nor underpinned by the use of quality management information.
- There is an inconsistent approach to recording information on users. This is highlighted by the number of members for whom incomplete postcodes are available. This has meant that even current membership cannot be accurately mapped.
- By not being particular about the information collected from members, the service is missing a range of marketing and sales opportunities even within its core customer base.
- The current management information system (Torex) is not being used to its maximum effect. That is, it does not appear to drive decision making at facilities and is not being used as a marketing tool (e.g. children's birthday parties, direct marketing).

Dual use arrangements

- Dual use agreements dictate that schools have exclusive access to facilities between 09.00 and 17.00. Community access to facilities during these times is only available at the discretion of the head teacher.
- Schools appear to operate a bi-weekly timetable. Therefore, a key challenge for the service is managing the perceived high level of downtime in key activity areas, especially swimming pools.
- Although swimming is not part of the comprehensive school curriculum, head teachers still have control over who uses the pool and when. Their willingness to work with the relevant cluster of primary schools tends to dictate the access arrangements set up for curriculum swimming.
- Daytime community use of swimming pools is generally squeezed into lunchtime sessions.
- The dual use agreements limit the ability of the service to offer a range of programmes for key client groups (e.g. elderly residents, those out of work, parents and toddlers, etc.)
- It would appear that there is a need to align dual use agreements with wider Council objectives to ensure that facilities occupancy, use and flexibility are maximised for optimum community benefit.
- The Council is set to close Nantyglo Comprehensive School and there is a range of potential uses for the site identified. However, once the school relocates the service will lose its £208k recharge from Education. However, the Council is not developing a new school (for which this fee may potentially be required) therefore, the service should be seeking to make the appropriate representations to ring-fence this funding in order that it can continue to provide the service to the Nantyglo community.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Pricing

- ◀ The current pricing policy adopted by the Council should be challenged in order to improve the financial position of the facilities. The key areas in which this applies are:
 - ◀ The perception that the Council is giving away income.
 - ◀ The inclusion of court areas within the membership – especially the full court cost, even though other players may not be full paying members.
 - ◀ The cost of “internal” membership which is half the price of the public scheme.
 - ◀ The cost of additional members (i.e. couples, families) relative to that of the “internal” membership which are half the cost charged to Council employees (and therefore one quarter of the fee charged for the public scheme). This, at least partially, explains the high take-up of “internal” memberships compared to public memberships.
 - ◀ The lack of sanctions for members who book facilities, but who do not turn up to use them.
 - ◀ The lack of “commercial” pricing, especially for those ‘clubs’ which are operated as businesses and where the ‘owner/coach’ is making clear profit from the cheap use of facilities.

Programming

- ◀ It is clear that a passive approach to the programming of facilities is adopted by the service. There is a focus on hiring space rather than the pro-active development of programmes and initiatives at facilities.
- ◀ Although each facility has a good mix of activity areas (i.e. pools, sports hall, STP and fitness) it is clear that many of the public sports hall hours are taken up with 5-a-side football. This is probably the easiest way to sell the space, but it can marginalise or stifle other sporting opportunities within the relevant communities.
- ◀ There is a need for a cultural shift in the management and operation of the facilities. Duty managers have not, on the whole, been allocated nor do they take on key areas of responsibility for programming and managing the service (e.g. swimming lessons, dryside sports activities, health and fitness, etc). Their current focus is primarily janitorial/operational (on maintenance, cleanliness, vending, staff rotas etc.)
- ◀ The present dual use agreements substantively limit the range of programmes that can be offered throughout the day.
- ◀ The programming and development of fitness across the authority has been led by the physical activity co-ordinators. It would appear that they have previously developed and instructed on specific programmes, both at entry level and exit route programmes. However, they are now at capacity and are limited as to the quality and range they can deliver.
- ◀ There is a need for facility teams to take on the responsibility for developing and delivering their own fitness programmes. There is significant scope to increase the level and range of group fitness activity on offer at each facility.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Marketing and promotion

- ◀ There is currently some confusion as to the Council's brand for its sports facilities (e.g. Valleys Leisure, Life, etc).
- ◀ There is the potential to build on the "life" brand and develop the facilities as 'healthy living centres'.
- ◀ Inconsistent marketing literature is produced across the facilities, some displaying black and white photocopies.
- ◀ Recent marketing and promotion literature has focused on the **features** of being a "Life" member (i.e. all this for £25 per month!). However, there has been no focus on the **benefits** of physical activity (i.e. well-being, improved fitness, weight loss, enhanced quality of life, social interaction, convenience and unlimited use, etc.).

Club consultation

- ◀ In general club consultation highlighted that clubs have a very positive relationship with staff at facilities and the Council's development team.
- ◀ There is an inconsistent approach to the setting up of equipment, depending on the facility and type of activity. That is, some clubs have activity areas set up for them while others must do it themselves.
- ◀ Some clubs indicated that they have waiting lists, but cannot accommodate more participants due to a lack of activity space.
- ◀ In common with many dual use facilities, clubs referenced the fact that schools and community users often use their equipment. A number of requests were made with respect to the need for individual storage facilities.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The financial performance of BGCBC's sports facilities is based on a combination of factors including:

- ◀ The quality and range of activity areas available across each sports centre.
- ◀ The range of programmes on offer at the facilities.
- ◀ Awareness of each facility and what it has to offer the local community.
- ◀ The appropriateness of activity/facility pricing.
- ◀ The local communities' propensity to participate in sport and physical activity.

Based upon our background research, analysis of the Council operation and the views and opinions of a wide range of consultees it is clear that the Council faces a major challenge in reducing the financial burden of the service on its rate payers. A key challenge is the fact that the majority of stock was built in the 1970s and 80s and is now facing major challenges with regard to replacement and ongoing refurbishment. Furthermore, facilities built in this era were designed as such that they would be social as well as sporting environments. Therefore, a key trend was that significant space was given to bar and café areas; these were often located on the first floor, overseeing activity areas.

This trend of continuing to offer a wide range of catering and bar facilities in leisure centres has continued in Blaenau Gwent while many other local authorities have rationalised provision, finding an alternative use for the space or simply streamlining the service to save money. In some circumstances the authority is behind the times in considering this approach, but it should also be noted that customers have expected this level of social provision given that many other sports and social facilities in the area have declined along with local industry (e.g. mining and steel industry welfare clubs). There is a need for GBCBC to take such 'social issues' and options into account in the future.

Given the above, it would appear that the Council has gone through a process of streamlining its operational staff at facilities; many now operate at what are minimum staffing levels. Therefore, a key feature for the service moving forward is not only to improve its financial position through income generation, but to make itself high value in delivering the Council's corporate objectives. However, this can only be done by ensuring that it has the management information and intelligence to report its achievements and assess value for money accurately.

Facility financial analysis

A financial analysis of the five key leisure facilities identifies the following key results:

- ◀ Ebbw Vale SC is the most financially efficient sports facility even though it is the one most in need of investment. It receives over 70% of its total income from customer receipts and memberships compared to the County Borough's other facilities which operate at the following levels:
 - ◀ Nantyglo SC – circa 49%
 - ◀ Abertillery SC – circa 40%
 - ◀ Tredegar SC – circa 53%
 - ◀ Glyncoed Sports Hall – circa – 55%

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

- ◀ In order to contextualise the above, the proportion of the total income that the Education recharge contributes at each facility is as follows:
 - ◀ Ebbw Vale SC – circa 25%
 - ◀ Nantyglo SC – circa 48%
 - ◀ Abertillery SC – circa 54%
 - ◀ Tredegar SC – circa 50%
 - ◀ Glyncoed Sports Hall – circa – 55%
 - ◀ A key factor in Ebbw Vale’s financial performance is the contribution that the Life card membership makes to its overall income (i.e. circa 42%) compared to the other facilities which are operating at between 23% and 29%.
 - ◀ Although the proportion of total income from the bar, café and vending is considerable
 - ◀ Ebbw Vale SC – 26%
 - ◀ Nantyglo SC – 11%
 - ◀ Abertillery SC – 10%
 - ◀ Tredegar SC – 15%
- there is a need to evaluate the cost of generating this income and assess whether a more efficient approach can be undertaken.
- ◀ Analysis of the facility trading accounts and detailed discussions with senior managers has identified that the Council may not be taking full advantage of its VAT position, especially with regards to instructor led sessions and block bookings.

In summary, the Service needs to look at a range of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ measures in order to increase income and improve its effectiveness. It is likely that this will be a combination of streamlining ancillary services and expanding the range of programmes on offer to entice and motivate local residents to become more active.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that BGCBC faces a number of challenges before it can successfully drive the service forward, ensuring that it is relevant to the needs of local residents and enabling the achievement of substantially better long term results, specifically in terms of:

- ◀ Future value for money.
- ◀ Increased levels of participation in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ A clear picture of the opportunities for rationalisation, refurbishment, development and investment in suitable provision in order to meet need.

The key focus of these challenges can be identified as follows:

Value for money

- ◀ To achieve an appropriate level of income for an appropriately animated, presented and delivered service.
- ◀ To challenge the level of income received from the 'internal' Life membership package.
- ◀ To challenge the scope of the offer included within the Life membership card.
- ◀ To challenge the level of income received from what can be described as 'commercial' hires.
- ◀ The Council has already considered the advantages and disadvantages of alternative management options for the service. The key factors in its decision to operate the service in-house include:
 - ◀ The fact that all of the facilities are dual use, which impacts on the ability to maximise NNDR savings.
 - ◀ The lack of critical mass of the service means that savings may not be achieved from support services (i.e. a new management structure will have to buy in support services and the Council may not be able to make savings from what it no longer provides to the service – 15% or similar of a range of post)

Increasing participation in sport and physical activity

- ◀ To develop a well programmed and animated service which gives local residents a reason to come out of their homes and into the facilities...and become physically active.
- ◀ To identify a range of opportunities for the service to offer a wider range of activities, especially throughout the school day (when facilities are available and their use is deemed appropriate).
- ◀ To develop an approach to marketing the service which identifies the benefits of sport and physical activity as well as the features of being a Life card member.
- ◀ By virtue of knowing who is using the service, to focus on targeting the benefits of sport and physical activity to those who are not.

Opportunities for rationalisation, refurbishment, development and investment

- ◀ The SCW facilities planning model for BGCBC identifies that although there is more capacity for swimming pools than demand, the model still identifies key areas of unmet demand. This is due to the distribution of pools related to the population and that not all demand can be satisfied. Therefore, there is no significant over provision and justification for rationalising facilities. Furthermore, if either of the core facilities were to be rationalised it would result in key Communities First wards not having access to a sport and leisure facility. As an example, if BGCBC was to close Nantyglo SC it would result in 50% of the population having access to a sports facility within a 20 minute walk time of their house as opposed to the current 61%. Furthermore, the communities hit worst by this closure would be those within the top 30% of deprived communities – the ones the Council is seeking to engage with to improve the health and well being of residents.
- ◀ The delivery of a replacement for Ebbw Vale SC.
- ◀ The future provision of indoor bowls in Blaenau Gwent.
- ◀ The future use of the Nantyglo Comprehensive School site and the potential impact this has on the use of the sports centre. (In line with this consideration will need to be given to the entrance to the facility, to ensure it does not remain lost in any new development).
- ◀ It is clear that Nantoglo LC will need considerable investment in 7 to 10 years time, therefore there is the need for the Council to be aware of this and to consider longer term options for its development.
- ◀ The potential redevelopment of the fitness, bar/café and youth room at Tredegar SC to accommodate an improved fitness facility and group fitness studio. In line with this relocate the catering and vending provision to the current sauna facility.
- ◀ Challenge the appropriateness of the range of catering services provided at each facility.
- ◀ The potential to re-shuffle the activity areas at Ebbw Vale SC in order to increase income and demonstrate that the facility is not being 'run into the ground'. This should also contribute to the longer term effective launch of the new facility.

Consultation with key staff identified that there is an awareness of the need to address these challenges and a willingness to do so. It should also be noted that BGCBC has many good quality staff that are highly committed to providing excellent services.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Recommendations

In line with the above conclusions the following recommendations are identified for consideration by the Council. Where appropriate we have provided examples of good practice and possible directions of travel to support the implementation of these recommendations.

Value for money

- ◀ To develop a wider range of programmes and initiatives at facilities in order to demonstrate value for money for residents.
The Council should consider the level of animation and types of programmes identified within the Ebbw Vale feasibility study business plan (see Appendix 2). A key feature of many other sports and leisure departments (especially those externalised to trusts) has been to ensure that it is delivering a comprehensive fitness programme aligned to high quality fitness suites in order to underpin the business plan for the operation. As an example North Lanarkshire Leisure has converted a free form ice rink into a 120 station fitness suite in order to underpin its business plan; while Tameside Sports Trust is in the process of finishing off a £6 million investment in three of its facilities in order to increase income and enable it to have a non-index linked grant agreement for the foreseeable future.
- ◀ To re-evaluate the pricing policy for its Life card membership in a format which:
 - ◀ Seeks to generate additional income from the Internal membership package, especially from partners.
Given that the Internal membership income is collected direct from employees salaries, there is the potential for the Council to implement a staged increase for employees and partners/family, based on the employee's salary level. In this way, the lower salaried staff in the Council could still receive a reduction in the cost and retain the value for money of the scheme; while higher salaried employees would pay closer to the general public rate.
 - ◀ Focuses discretionary payments at those most in need.
As an example the membership package promoted by North Lanarkshire Leisure (Access NL) incorporates its passport to leisure scheme where residents who qualify (due to economic circumstances) are entitled to the same level of access, but at 50% of the standard price. A similar scheme operates in Tameside, but with a sliding scale of reduced prices based on the type of benefit received. The key feature of these is that the same card is issued to all customers, and it is the card that recognises the level of discretion, rather than there being any stigma attached to a specific type of card.
 - ◀ Provides clearer parameters and benefits for the External Life membership package.
- ◀ To re-align the Life membership package to ensure that individual use of courts is included within the membership as opposed to the hire of a court by the member.
- ◀ To ensure that the service rigorously chases up 'no shows' on classes and court hires by Life card members.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

- ◀ Ensure that the Council receives value from its resources, especially where those resources are used by “commercial” clubs which are generating a profit from the cheap hire of Council facilities.
A key focus for club bookings is to determine if a constituted club exists or if it is a group of individuals or a coach leading a session who is generating profit from the activity (i.e. a “commercial” hirer). There is a need for the Council to differentiate between these groups and to price the activity accordingly. Consultation also suggests that there is often difficulty in getting clubs to pay for their activity and a culture of ‘it doesn’t matter it’s the Council’ exists. Therefore, there is a need for the Council to ensure that it does not put council tax payers at risk of future bad debts by implementing a pre-payment policy for key clubs.
- ◀ Where the Council investigates its VAT position, and does receive a rebate based on how it should treat specific income sources – this rebate should be ring-fenced in order to action some of the key recommendations within this report; specifically those actions which are associated with increasing income in order to reduce the subsidy liability (i.e. invest to save).

Increasing participation in sport and physical activity

- ◀ To develop a wider range of programmes and initiatives at facilities in order to attract users to them, as opposed to hiring spaces within facilities.
A key feature of this will be the range of fitness classes offered across the facility portfolio. In the longer term each facility should be striving to offer at least three fitness classes per day (with one or two at weekends) in order to give residents a reason to come into the facilities. Another key programming policy that should be implemented is to restrict the number of 5-a-side sessions undertaken within sports halls, especially at those sites with floodlit synthetic pitches. This not only focuses football as an outdoor sport, but enables the facilities to take on a role in developing and promoting the Council’s priority sports as well as activities linked to after school sports programmes and those which contribute to improving the health of local residents.
- ◀ Ensure that pricing is not a barrier to use for the most disadvantaged residents in Blaenau Gwent.
*Research on neighbouring authorities’ pricing suggests that Blaenau Gwent is within a similar pricing structure to its key neighbours of Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Torfaen County Borough Councils. Although some anomalies exist with regards to specific individual prices a general similarity exists.
However, it is true to state that Blaenau Gwent is slightly lower priced than the others with regards to its fitness membership prices (i.e. Life Card). Importantly, it is not suggested that BGCBC increases the price of its Life membership as the other Councils appear to offer greater value for money within their packages. That is, there is a wider range of opportunities to participate in physical activity sessions within these schemes. Therefore, the key focus for BGCBC is to improve its offer prior to considering any significant price increase.*
- ◀ Enter negotiations with the Education Department and respective head teachers with the objective of:
 - ◀ Transferring responsibility for the daytime programming of the swimming pools to the Leisure Services team (i.e. swimming is not part of the core curriculum for

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

comprehensive schools); so that an increased range of programmes can be developed.

There are not many examples of dual use facilities where the responsibility for programming the school swimming lessons sits with the facility management team. This is in part due to Head Teachers wishing to use the pool to top up their core PE requirement and wanting to fit this in at a time to suit their timetabling need; therefore there is a perceived need to control the use of the asset. Even within PFI schools; the programming of primary school use predominantly sits within the gift of the high school.

Therefore, this approach would set BGCBC at the forefront of school and community swimming. It would enable the leisure service to co-ordinate the use of the facility, ensuring that all schools are catered for, and that key community use sessions are programmed around this time. This ensures that the Council's assets are 'sweated' as much as possible and the facilities are contributing to the Council's strategic aims and the LAPA agreements with SCW.

- ◀ Identifying opportunities to access specific activity areas (e.g. sports halls) at key times throughout the day when they are not in use.
- ◀ Develop a marketing approach which identifies the benefits of sport and physical activity and the opportunities to participate, in each of the key communities.

There is an opportunity for BGCBC to build on its 'Life' brand by extending this concept to the rebranding of facilities and activities that it develops and delivers. As an example the following could be applied to the service:

- ◀ *Active Life: Ebbw Vale*
- ◀ *Active Life: Tredegar*
- ◀ *'Swim 4 Life' – swimming brand*
- ◀ *'Skills 4 Life' – junior sports development programmes*
- ◀ *'Fit 4 Life' – fitness brand*
- ◀ *'Play 4 Life' – casual use*
- ◀ *'Go 4 Life' – launch and pulsed activities*

This should replace all other previous brands that have been in place throughout the service and ensure a consistent, high quality message is delivered.

- ◀ The above marketing approach should be driven by increasing penetration rates of the service (Life membership categories) within the community and incorporate specific targets for the most disadvantaged communities. The Council should consider the potential advantages of buying in specific marketing expertise from the private sector to support the drive and development of its marketing.
- ◀ The Council should also consider what it can learn from other local authority partners through joint working (i.e. WAG Making the Connections Agenda), and identify ways it could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

There is an opportunity to work with other Heads of the Valleys authorities to identify best practice in the marketing and development of the service, especially the fitness offer. This could include the sharing of key posts (e.g. marketing and data management through to Heads of service – the latter is currently done by High Peak BC and Staffordshire Moorlands DC) or working more closely to develop a cohesive group fitness and exercise on referral offer.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Opportunities for rationalisation, refurbishment, development and investment

- ◀ There does not appear to be the justification for the Council to rationalise any of its core sports facilities and swimming pools at this stage as each of the facilities serves the needs of a specific community.
- ◀ BGCBC should seek to deliver a replacement facility for Ebbw Vale SC.
It will be important for BGCBC to take the lead and demonstrate its commitment to this development by pledging to invest circa £5 – 6 million from a mix of its capital programme, prudential borrowing and grant funding to it. This in turn will require the Council to maximise external funding options for the development through a range of funding partners including SCW Capital funds, Heads of the Valleys, EU Convergence funding and other appropriate sources of funding.
- ◀ BGCBC should identify the impact of the closure of the indoor bowls facility and work with the bowling trust to explore options for an alternative venue. There is no justification for the Council to take on the direct delivery of indoor bowls, therefore its role should be confined to facilitator with the trust.
- ◀ Subject to the redevelopment options for Nantyglo Comprehensive School, BGCBC should seek to redevelop the entrance of the facility in order to provide a presence on the site.
- ◀ The signage (directional and arrival) to all facilities should be improved in order that the facilities are not lost within their respective sites.
- ◀ BGCBC should undertake a cost benefit analysis of the catering offer at each facility and where appropriate identify opportunities to remove or improve this.
- ◀ Linked to the above, the Council has the opportunity to undertake a small scale “re-shuffle” of the activity areas at Ebbw Vale SC. This should be viewed as an “invest to save” opportunity over the next 3 to 5 years, in line with the development period for the new facility.
The key features of this “re-shuffle” should be:
 - ◀ *To focus all of the catering provision to the downstairs café area to eliminate the duplication of provision and cost. This will require some investment to ‘soften’ the existing café and possibly to relocate some of the vending machines to the reception/circulation area.*
 - ◀ *Convert the existing bar area into an improved fitness facility – located within the heart of the facility.*
 - ◀ *Convert the current fitness facility into an additional group fitness area to accommodate a range of fitness classes*
- ◀ BGCBC should assess the feasibility of developing an improved fitness offer at Tredegar SC on the first floor area (i.e. fitness suite, group fitness studio, consultation room).
The key features of this conversion should be:
 - ◀ *To extend the fitness suite into what was the cafeteria area.*
 - ◀ *Upgrade the toilets on the first floor to create small fitness changing facilities.*
 - ◀ *Retain part of the cafeteria area as a meeting/class room space.*
 - ◀ *Convert the bar area into a group fitness studio*
 - ◀ *Relocate the catering provision to an improved quality vending and circulation area at reception (this will mean converting the current sauna area)*

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REVIEW OF SPORT AND RECREATION SERVICES

Tredegar SC – development plans

