

Draft Summary for Consultation:

Harborough District Council Physical Activity Strategy 2019 to 2029

Purpose

The purpose of our Physical Activity Strategy is to help more people, become more active, more of the time. Being active at every age increases quality of life and everyone's chances of remaining healthy and independent.

We believe that the Council has a key role in promoting healthy lifestyles and we should therefore have a coherent strategy that engages the public, private and voluntary sector so that we can guide important decisions around:

- Communicating the benefits of physical activity in reducing obesity, preventing disease, improving mental health, and rehabilitating many long-term health conditions.
- Support to independent instructors and clubs who provide affordable sport, physical activity and wellbeing sessions throughout the District.
- Future provision of leisure centres and the facilities that will be offered.
- Improving and extending community buildings and schools and encouraging greater use of these facilities.
- The Council's specialist services such as exercise referral, cardiac rehabilitation, and fall prevention classes.
- The design and maintenance of parks and open spaces including outdoor gyms, multi-use games areas, and play areas.
- Responsible development that ensures footpaths, cycling infrastructure, and other design issues are considered throughout the planning process.

The Council recognises that it no longer has the financial resources to deliver the full range of needs and ambitions of local groups and residents. We have therefore positioned ourselves as an 'Enabling Council' who will guide the design and development of future facilities in partnership with residents and prospective service providers. We will also take a direct approach to tackling physical inactivity.

Importantly, being physically active does not just mean going to the gym or taking up competitive sport. It encompasses numerous activities ranging from 'active travel' (by walking, cycling or running to work) through to enjoying leisure activities such as gardening, swimming or bowling. Physical activity can be enjoyed in different ways and at different levels, individually or as part of a group, for fun or for competition.

This strategy provides a framework for bringing a number of related local agendas together under one coherent strategy for the District. It allows the Council to plan for the future to ensure that opportunities for physical activity keep pace with change in the District and reflect the needs of a growing and ageing population.

There are a number of key considerations towards our aim for which we welcome your comments. We are particularly keen to find out if you feel that all relevant areas are being considered, and whether you think there are any specific impacts or alternative opportunities that the Council and its partners should take account of. We have identified a number of factors that will significantly influence the content and direction of our Physical Activity Strategy. They are discussed throughout the remainder of this draft consultation document.

National Policy Context

Physical activity is now firmly in the national spotlight and there is an increasing drive to improve public health and tackle health inequalities. Our Government has signalled its intentions to direct investment toward preventative measures by focusing on avoiding the causes of poor health rather than addressing the symptoms - targeting inactivity is now a key objective.

Research indicates that certain demographic groups have physical activity participation levels far below the national average (namely women and girls, people with disabilities, those in lower socio-economic groups, and the older population). Engaging with these groups has become a particular focus for national funding¹.

This national emphasis on tackling inactivity and a specific focus on the demographic groups listed above, means that we will align our Physical Activity Strategy for the District with these national priorities where possible in order to maximise potential funding opportunities.

The Government has also established a number of new principles and 'ways of working' that will guide the development of our strategy. One such example is the new emphasis upon better utilising our current sport infrastructure. If we can make our existing facilities more accessible to new users, and available for a wider range of uses, we can ensure that they become a greater resource toward the improvement of public health in the District. This will become a central theme of our strategy and will require a collaborative approach.

¹ HM Government. 2016: Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation.

Local Context

Age and Population Characteristics

The Harborough District has a population of 85,382². Most residents live in towns or large villages such as Market Harborough, Lutterworth, Broughton Astley, Great Glen, Kibworth or Fleckney, although a significant part (25%) of the population resides in small rural settlements. Over 80 villages in the District have a population of less than 500 people³.

In regard to Harborough's age profile compared to the rest of England:

- A much higher proportion of the population is aged 45 and over (particularly aged 45 to 64).
- Substantially lower percentages of the population are 20 to 34 years old⁴.
- Residents aged 20 to 34 tend to reside in the larger settlements in the District such as Market Harborough or Lutterworth.
- Those aged 45 and over are more likely to live in rural settlements⁵.

Limited public transport means that those living in rural locations wishing to travel have few, if any, alternatives than the use of a private car and this is especially true for evening travel.

Population projections suggest that the population of Harborough will rise to upward of 100,000 by 2036⁶, throughout this time a large shift in the demographic structure of the District will become apparent and this presents a number of important considerations for our Physical Activity Strategy.

From 2011 to 2036 there will be 11,700 new houses in the District; currently, approximately 6,000 have been committed to or are completed with Harborough itself accommodating up to 4,100 new dwellings⁷. Market Harborough, Lutterworth and Broughton Astley are to sustain the vast majority of new housing developments.

The population will also age considerably in the next two decades up to 2036:

² Office for National Statistics. 2011: Census Data

³ Office for National Statistics. 2011: Census Data.

⁴ Office for National Statistics. 2011: Census Data.

⁵ Harborough District Council. 2016: Open Spaces Strategy 2016 to 2021.

⁶ Office for National Statistics. 2014: 2012-based Subnational Population Projections.

⁷ Leicester County Council Strategic Growth Plan. 2017: Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment.

Table 1: Population change 2011 – 2036 by fifteen-year age bands (10-year migration trends) in the Harborough District

Age group	Population 2011 ⁸	Population 2036 ⁹	Change in population	% change from 2011
Under 15	15,207	17,207	2,000	13.2
15-29	12,557	14,143	1,586	12.6
30-44	16,827	16,985	158	0.9
45-59	19,139	19,755	616	3.2
60-74	14,531	20,903	6,372	43.9
75+	7,121	16,738	9,617	135.1
Total	85,382	105,731	20,349	23.8

This information suggests that we need to focus our limited resources on catering for inactive residents that are likely to be part of the older population. Statistics show that individuals within this grouping (aged 65 and above) are more likely to be inactive, geographically isolated, and face personal transportation problems - and are therefore much more likely to require additional support if they are to live a physically active life.

However, our strategy must not overlook younger people. Currently, there are low levels of physical activity and high levels of impaired physical development and sedentary behaviour among young people in the District. This strategy provides us with an opportunity to address this. We want to better promote physically active lifestyles throughout the early stages (such as by enabling ‘purposeful physical play’) to ensure adequate physical literacy and development among younger ages at a crucial phase in their development.

Health and Physical Activity in the District

The Harborough District generally has above average rates of adult participation in physical activity and this is reflected in the average life expectancy for men and women in the District, which is slightly higher than national averages¹⁰. Yet despite this:

- Over half of adults in the District are overweight and 15% of children are obese.
- 20% of adults are considered to be physically inactive in the District (according to Public Health England’s definition of undertaking less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week¹¹).
- The burden of inactivity on the NHS by Harborough residents is £1.7m.

⁸ Office for National Statistics. 2011: Census Data

⁹ Leicester County Council Strategic Growth Plan. 2017: Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment.

¹⁰ Sport England. 2016: Harborough Local Sports Profile: Health.

¹¹ Public Health England. 2015: Everybody Active, Every Day: An Evidence Based Approach to Physical Activity.

- 37 deaths could be prevented per year if 75% of Harborough residents aged over 40 undertook the recommended levels of physical activity¹² (Public Health England recommends 150 mins of moderate physical activity per week¹³).

Persuading inactive people to become more active could prevent one in ten cases of stroke and heart disease¹⁴, and can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 30 to 40%¹⁵. Being active is also very important for our mental health; inactive people have three times the rate of moderate to severe depression compared to active people¹⁶.

Encouragingly, half of inactive individuals in our District want to become active and begin to take part in sport. This equates to approximately 8,000 people and shows that there is clearly an opportunity for the Council to better engage with these aspirational, yet currently inactive residents¹⁷.

Sports Clubs, Local Instructors and the Private Sector

Health and participation figures suggest that there is much to be positive about in the District and this is further reflected in the large number of independent clubs and private instructors that operate in the area. The number of small private facilities in the District is also increasing (such as private gyms).

There is a huge array of activities available to residents in the District, which the Council helps support through the Local Sports Alliance: Active Harborough District. Geographically, these opportunities span the majority of the district and include a wide variety of sports and activities that range from Archery right through to Zumba.

We have numerous independent coaches and instructors in the District who the Council support to deliver specific projects by providing a venue or helping with training or equipment costs. This service is closely linked to our Outreach programme 'Active Together', which is considered in later sections.

The Council has also been involved in setting up and supporting a number of free popular participation events. Most notable would be the successful weekly Parkrun held at Welland

¹² Sport England. 2016: Harborough Local Sports Profile: Health.

¹³ Public Health England. 2016: Health Matters: Getting Every Adult Active Every Day.

¹⁴ The Lancet. 2012: Effect of Physical Inactivity on Major Non-communicable Diseases Worldwide: An Analysis of Burden of Disease and Life Expectancy (380): 218-29.

¹⁵ Department for Health. 2011: Start Active, Stay Active: A Report on Physical Activity from the Four Home Countries' Chief Medical Officers.

¹⁶ Public Health England. 2014: UK Health Forum: Blackfriars Consensus on Promoting Brain Health

¹⁷ Sport England. 2016: Harborough Local Sports Profile: Sports Participation.

Park. We continue to look for effective ways to support and promote the use of our parks and open spaces for organised informal sport and active recreation.

Currently, there is no large private leisure facility in the District that is available for use by all members of the wider community and the vast majority of local clubs rely on public facilities leased from the Council or those provided by Market Harborough Leisure Centre and Lutterworth Sports Centre. This means there is an opportunity for the Council to lead the provision of affordable physical activity opportunities in the District - particularly by our involvement in the procurement of a new leisure centre contract in 2019.

Leisure Centres

The leisure needs of residents of Harborough District are mostly catered for by Lutterworth Sports Centre and Harborough Leisure Centre. The facilities available include sports halls, swimming pools, and fitness centres – with indoor tennis and bowls also provided at Market Harborough.

Lutterworth Sport Centre was built in 2004 and is the newer of the two centres. It has an overall rating of ‘good’ for all of its sports facilities yet we still believe there is room for improvement. One example would be that the café is currently unoccupied with the Centre being served only by vending machines, which makes for a less inviting social atmosphere¹⁸.

Harborough Leisure Centre was built in 1991 and the vast majority of its facilities have not been refurbished since this date – It has been noted that minor improvements were made to the fitness centre and swimming pool early in 2017 yet the need for significant renewal by 2019 remains. Recent facility reviews suggest that the swimming pool, sports hall and indoor tennis airhall are in the greatest need of attention¹⁹.

Developing a vision of future provision at Harborough Leisure Centre is therefore a key objective of this strategy – we also hope to make improvements to Lutterworth Sports Centre.

Nationally, local authority owned leisure centres remain popular, they continue to attract new membership due to their perceived focus on affordability and public health²⁰ – this is especially the case in our District due to the absence of a large commercial provider. We feel strongly that there is a role for local authority leisure provision in the future, which has a

¹⁸ Leicestershire and Rutland Sport. 2016: Harborough District Indoor and Built Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment 2016 – 2020.

¹⁹ Leicestershire and Rutland Sport. 2016: Harborough District Indoor and Built Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment 2016 – 2020.

²⁰ Mintel. 2016: Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools – UK – September 2016.

large array of facilities and gym equipment offered at affordable prices to local residents, and are very interested in hearing your views.

Community Spaces and Schools

Community spaces and schools provide many opportunities for residents to lead healthy, active lifestyles. Community halls are located throughout the District and present opportunities for rural communities to be active without requiring any travel and they can be configured to host a variety of activities²¹. Community halls tend to be underutilized²² and we hope to develop ways to increase their usage in partnership with residents, local committees and Parish Councils.

Similarly, there are a number of sports halls, artificial grass pitches and fitness stations located in the District's many schools. All schools are operating under the maximum community hours available and there is considerable spare capacity²³. Increasing usage of school sites alleviates overcapacity elsewhere (such as at leisure centres) and we look forward to discussing ways to overcome the current availability issues with school facilities.

Outreach Services: Active Together

Outreach services, predominately funded by Public Health and provided by the Active Together team within the Council, aim to deliver opportunities for physical activity to all people across the District. They help individuals and groups to fulfil their maximum potential in sport and physical activities at all levels.

There is a specific focus on the vulnerable, the inactive and the elderly – meaning the activities of Active Together are very closely aligned with the Government's current national policy objectives. Yet due to budget reductions to Public Health Leicestershire, the amount of funding available to distribute to Active Together has been reduced by 40%.

Public Health England is increasingly focusing on more widespread use of physical activity as part of rehabilitation from numerous long-term conditions (cardiac, respiratory, cancer, pain management, falls, amongst others). Active Together will continue to play a key role, along with its partners, in offering flexible local services with specialised providers to meet these needs. This will contribute to managing and reducing welfare costs, maintaining independence among the older population, and ultimately reducing the burden on the NHS.

²¹ Sport England. 2016: Village and Community Halls Design Guidance.

²² Harborough District Council. 2016: Harborough District Community Infrastructure Assessment.

²³ Leicestershire and Rutland Sport. 2016: Harborough District Indoor and Built Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment 2016 – 2020.

Some services provided by Active Together may not be commercially viable for sports clubs or other private sector providers. Whilst the services provided to those that live in rural, isolated areas are vital for the individuals that attend, the total numbers of attendees are relatively small and this presents issues with sustainability.

Active Together plays an important role in helping reduce health vulnerability in the District and helps instil a sense of self-determination and confidence in individuals. The campaigns ran by Active Together can have a large impact on changing behaviour at relatively low cost, and should form a key part of our strategy. Therefore, the continuation and development of these activities, and the nature of their future delivery, will be a central concern going forward.

Planning for Physical Activity

Planning is a major function of the Council and this strategy signals our intent to encourage and promote physical activity and sport through the design and layout of our built environment. Our surroundings should make physical activity the easiest and most practical option in everyday life for people and communities.

The creation of healthy places, which promote and enable participation in physical activity and sport, requires the collaborative input of many partners and disciplines such as planning, design, transport and health, along with developers working with local communities.

Our ambition is to ensure that we help to unify health, design, and planning by promoting the right conditions and environments for individuals and communities to lead active and healthy lifestyles. Sport England prescribes the following principles for 'active design':

- Walkable communities with key facilities within easy reach of each other.
- 'Active Travel' (walking, cycling, and running) to be prioritised over other modes of transport. Destinations to be connected by direct, integrated network or pathways that are safe and well-maintained.
- Promotion of co-located community facilities to encourage linked trips and avoid uniform 'zoning' of large areas into single uses.
- Creation of connected networks of multifunctional open space to support a range of activities including sport, recreation and play.

- 'Local champions' will be supported to inspire participation in physical activity and sport across the District²⁴.

A number of new housing developments in the District present opportunities for us to implement 'active design'. The direction of housing growth in the District will favour larger sites generally concentrated in one location, rather than small, dispersed sites as previously experienced within the District. This presents us with an excellent opportunity to embed physical activity within the design of these new developments.

This consultation document sets the Council's key priorities and other important considerations that we feel are central to our vision to make Harborough an active District.

Your views are important to us and it is critical that your comments and suggestions are heard in order for our Physical Activity Strategy is one that benefits everyone.

²⁴ Sport England. 2015: Active Design, Planning for Health and Wellbeing through Sport and Physical Activity.