

Active Communities Malvern Hills District: A Vision for the Future

Malvern Hills District Sport and Leisure Strategy 2014 - 2024

Chapter 10:
Current Good Practice & Case Studies
Across the District



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10. CURENT GOOD PRACTICE & CASE STUDIES

10.1 Local ownership of sport and leisure facilities

Table 36: Sling Lane Playing Fields

Sling Lane Playing Fields – Case Study
<p>Background</p> <p>Sling Lane Playing Fields, sited in a residential area in Malvern town, comprised of several football pitches in poor condition that were not fit for purpose and did not meet FA standards. The associated changing facility had burnt down some years before and had never been replaced. Owned, maintained and managed by Malvern Hills District Council, there was no effective mechanism in place to manage the hiring process for the pitches or facility with any degree of success or forward planning.</p> <p>An independent Playing Pitch Survey carried out by the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) in 2007 found that the infrastructure of Sling Lane Playing Fields did not support its usage.</p> <p>Corporately, the council has the role of improving and maintaining the quality of existing open space.</p>
<p>Intervention</p> <p>The council was therefore keen to identify an appropriate partner that could lever in investment to improve the open space and also take on its long term maintenance for the benefit of the local community.</p> <p>A number of local community and resident groups including Malvern Town Council expressed an interest in the land, however, it soon became apparent that they were ultimately looking for an ‘upkeep only’ contract. This did not meet the aspirations and forward plans that the council had for Sling Lane and neither did they address the desired development and growth of sport and recreational activity for the local community and surrounding area.</p> <p>Newtown Sports Junior Football Club, who had been using the facility for a number of years, expressed an interest in the long term management of the facility following investment and development. It was clear that leveraging additional funding was essential to the success of this project and it was felt that the experience, resources and capacities within the council would offer greater opportunities in being able to achieve this. This included an added benefit of a 20% VAT savings on the project costs.</p> <p>This partnership provided the opportunity to lever in external funding. An initial council investment of £55,000, Newtown Sports’ contribution of £25,000 and a section 106 contribution of £65,000 enabled a £325,000 investment to be secured from Sport England and the Football Foundation, providing a total investment of £470,000.</p>
<p>Results</p> <p>Construction began in January 2013 and Sling Lane Playing Fields now boast a new high quality changing facility with sufficient equipment storage space and kitchen facilities that is sensitive to its surroundings, meeting the needs of the local community and the wider area.</p>

The facility will enable Newtown Sports Junior Football Club, who hold the FA’s highest recognition award for well-run clubs, the Development Club Charter Standard Award, to grow the game of football as well as protecting and providing public open space for a raft of other recreational opportunities. A 36-space car park is now available to remove congestion from the nearby residential streets with a one way system in operation to further avoid continued disruption to residents. Pitch provision includes 1 senior and 1 junior pitch, in addition to 2 new mini soccer pitches that will have a network of pipe drainage to minimise loss of play during periods of wet weather.

Sling Lane Playing Fields is now a facility that is fit for purpose and will protect the area from potential housing development. It is the intention for Newtown Sports Junior Football Club to commence a 25 year lease from 1st April 2014. As part of the lease, the football club will take on responsibility for the maintenance of the playing fields and open space.

Lessons Learnt

It was critical to draw on the professional expertise of parties involved. In the early scoping stages of the project it was considered that development could be handed over entirely to Newtown Sports. However, it was recognised that it was the council who had the greatest capacity for successful delivery and were best placed to manage such a significant capital build programme. Newtown Sports’ area of expertise lay in the management and operation of the development once complete. An agreed schedule of role and responsibilities of partners and an assessment of strengths would have been beneficial at the outset.

The project did meet active and vocal community opposition throughout, which was challenging to manage and time consuming to resolve. This could have been minimised with more focused and earlier engagement. Early and continued communication with the local community is essential in order to give accurate and thorough accounts of proposals. This would have reduced the speculation and hearsay that was, on occasions, quite damaging and which took time and energy to rebuild relationships.

Table 37: Malvern Cube

Malvern Cube – Case Study

Background

Malvern Youth Centre, the only County Council owned youth support premises in the district, provided positive activities for young people as well as being used as a hub for a number of support services. It also had extensive community use including voluntary youth groups such as a well-established youth theatre. There is a tradition of wider community use of the building for community arts events through lettings.

The County Council decided to reduce the funding available to youth support services and investigate new ways of delivering positive activities. This included closing the youth centre, which was in need of major refurbishment to address on-going maintenance and Disability Discrimination Act issues.

Intervention

Malvern Community Collective was formed in late 2010 in response to the proposed closure of the youth centre and reports that the County Council had a proposal that had been developed

with South Worcestershire College, which involved selling the majority of the site for development.

The Collective’s primary objective was to maintain the youth centre and outside space for the delivery of the fullest possible range of youth provision and activity and, to this end, provide a mechanism through which the local community can refurbish, maintain and run the youth centre.

The Collective developed a business case proposal to the County Council for the transfer of the centre. Upon approval, it established a charitable Community Benefit Society, known as Malvern Youth and Community Trust, to be the accountable body for the managing the centre. This enabled it to fundraise and receive grants from the district and town councils respectively.

Results

On the 1 May 2012, Malvern Youth & Community Trust took over the running of the centre, now known as Malvern Cube. The County Council leased the building and a portion of the land to Malvern Youth & Community Trust for 30 years at a peppercorn rent.

In its first year of operation, investment in building improvements has resulted in the centre’s usage increasing threefold. There are a consistent number of hire groups who not only contribute financially but also share the same sense of community as the Trust. This has enabled the Trust to generate a £30,000 net surplus in its first year of operation. A 5 year business plan has been developed for its continued delivery.

The case studies above set out some examples of good practice for the council to draw on in managing its future role and seeking to achieve best value and maximum impact for district residents.

10.2 Working with Private Schools to support strategic development and community access

The council has worked with private schools within the district in supporting complimentary developments and securing community use at these independently funded facilities. Two recent examples include Malvern St James (Table 38) and Malvern College (Table 39).

Table 38: Malvern St James

Malvern St James – Case Study

Malvern St James independently funded the construction of the MSJ Sports Centre, a multi-million pound facility incorporating a 6-court sports hall with indoor rock climbing provision, a multi-purpose studio, fitness studio, juice bar and sports shop.

Through the council’s role as the local planning authority, Malvern Hills District Council applied conditions to the college’s planning approval. This included the establishment of a community use agreement between the college and the council and the requirement for the college to create and sustain a sports development plan.

Through the community use agreement, the college must open its facilities to the wider community outside of school use. Furthermore, as part of the sports development plan, the

college has a role to play in developing high quality sporting opportunities. For instance, by working in partnership with the council and the Sports Partnership - Herefordshire & Worcestershire, they provide information to clubs about the clubmark accreditation, coach education courses and funding opportunities.

The council has a monitoring role over the community use agreement and sports development plan and receives both quarterly usage data and an annual performance reports.

Table 39: Malvern College

Malvern College – Case Study

Malvern College independently funded the construction of Malvern Active, a multi-million pound state of the art facility that incorporates an 8-court sports hall, 6-lane 25 metre swimming pool, indoor rock climbing wall, squash courts, rifle range, multi-purpose studio, fitness suite, café area and conference hall.

Following the good practice developed through the Malvern St James development the council once again utilised its role as the local planning authority to apply conditions to the college’s planning approval. This included the establishment of a community use agreement between the college and the council and the requirement for the college to sustain a sports development plan.

Through the community use agreement and sports development plan the college must open its facilities to the wider community outside of school use and through support from the council and Sports Partnership - Herefordshire & Worcestershire, support the development of high quality sporting opportunities.

The council has a monitoring role over the community use agreement and sports development plan and receives both quarterly usage data and an annual performance reports.

10.3 Community Use of School facilities

The council has worked with a number of state schools to support the availability of dual use facilities that serve the wider community. Examples of this include The Chase School (Table 40), Hanley Castle High School (Table 41), Tenbury High School (Table 41), The Chantry School (Table 43) and Dyson Perrins C of E Academy (Table 44).

Table 40: The Chase School

The Chase School, Astro Turf Pitch – Case Study

Working in partnership with The Chase School and Worcestershire County Council, Malvern Hills District Council supported the development of the sand based artificial turf pitch on the school site, with a contribution of £200,000.

To maximise the benefits to the community, the school agreed to a 10 year community use agreement with the council, as a result of the council’s contribution. The agreement stipulated that the council would be allocated 10 hours per week of free access, to support the council with the delivery of sports development initiatives.

The council used its allocation on a range of projects including the establishment of a junior

hockey club and the delivery of holiday sports camps. The council also established a Community Development Hours scheme, which provided junior sports clubs with access to the facility at a reduced hire charge, which in turn also provided a source of income to the council for reinvestment into other community sports provision.

Lessons Learnt

It is important to ensure that finances are allocated by landowners for the provision of a sinking fund for replacement from the outset.

Stipulation by the council requiring the school to produce a sports development plan would contribute to the facility maximising its impact on the community.

Table 41: Hanley Castle High School

Hanley Castle High School, Sports Hall – Case Study

Working in partnership with Hanley Castle High School and Worcestershire County Council, Malvern Hills District Council supported the development of a sports hall on the school site with a contribution of £150,000.

In line with The Chase Council artificial turf pitch, the school agreed to a community use agreement with the council, to ensure the facility was available to the wider community outside of school time. The agreement provides the council with 4 hours of access per week. This agreement has no expiry date.

Lessons Learnt

Stipulation by the council requiring the school to produce a sports development plan would contribute to the facility maximising its impact on the community.

Table 42: Tenbury High School

Tenbury High School, Sports Hall – Case Study

Tenbury High School had limited indoor sports provision at the school and so worked closely with Worcestershire County Council to secure the requisite funds to build a traditional 4-court sports hall.

Malvern Hills District Council supported the school with the completion of local consultation and the development of a business plan and needs assessment. Following the opening of the facility, the council further supported the school with the provision of a Community Sports Coach. The coach was funded for 3 years through funding secured by the council, including £6,000 from Sport England, £28,000 from Youth Sports Trust, £3,000 from the School Sport Partnership and £3,000 from Malvern Hills District Council. Following completion of the scheme, the school utilised additional funding to retain the coach for the delivery of holiday and community based programmes.

Table 43: The Chantry School

The Chantry School, Sport Martley – Case Study

Working in partnership with The Chantry School and Worcestershire County Council, Malvern Hill District Council supported the development of the dry-side, dual-use facility on the school site in 1998, with a contribution of c.£525,000 of a total project cost of c.£1.398m, £873,000 of which was provided by the National Lottery funding. The site was provided by Worcestershire County Council. The facility incorporates a 4-court sports hall, dance studio, fitness suite and indoor climbing wall.

Through this initial capital investment, and an on-going financial commitment including a subsequent capital investment of £150,000 in 2005 towards a refurbishment, the council ensured the community use of this facility outside of the normal school day for an initial period of 21 years until 2019, but with an option to extend by a further 38 years. The council is responsible for the community use periods and has contracted the management to Wychavon Leisure Community Association.

Table 44: Dyson Perrins C of E Academy

Dyson Perrins C of E Academy, Sport Dyson Perrins – Case Study

Working in partnership with the Dyson Perrins C of E Academy and Worcestershire County Council, Malvern Hills District Council supported refurbishment and remodelling of the school's 1950's sports facilities in 2007 with a contribution of £434,000 towards the total facility cost of £1,300,000 and section 106 funding of £44,864 to resurface the outdoor courts. The facility incorporates a 4-court sports hall, 1-court gymnasium, fitness suite, floodlit outdoor courts.

Through this initial capital investment, and on-going annual revenue contributions, the council ensure the community use of the facility outside of the normal school day. The community use agreement runs for an initial period of 21 years to 2028, with an option to extend by a further 30 years. The council is responsible for the community use periods and has contracted the management to Wychavon Leisure Community Association.

10.4 Community Sports Clubs - a sustainable model

Examples of club mergers to promote sustainability are contained below:

Table 45: Welland Junior Football Club

Welland Junior Football Club – Case Study	
Background	<p>Welland Football Club is a large FA accredited Community Standard Football Club, and provides a wide range of football for under 5's, through to under 18's and girls football currently to under 14-16's.</p> <p>Based in the village of Welland, the club provides the district's only junior football provision to the south of Malvern and plays across multiple sites. As with the majority of local football provision, matches are played on local authority or education owned pitches. Consequently, matches were regularly being postponed due to poor pitch conditions.</p>
Intervention	<p>Due to the club's standing as a Community Standard Football Club, the identified lack of pitch / quality pitches and an identified latent demand within the south of the district, Welland Junior Football Club was seen as a priority club to receive FA support and Football Foundation funding.</p> <p>Working in partnership with the Welland Parish Council, plans were developed to build a new pavilion and sports pitch on a piece of unused land in the centre of Welland. To ensure viability and maximum usage of the facility, the club and parish council worked in partnership with the local pre-school, who were also seeking new premises.</p> <p>£60,000 funding was provided by Worcestershire County Council's children's services, £40,000 was contributed by the pre-school, £80,000 came from grant funding and this was supplemented by contributions from the Football Foundation and the club. The new facility cost in excess of £390,000 and incorporates home, away and officials changing rooms, club storage, dedicated pre-school rooms, an outdoor play area and a senior drained football pitch.</p>
Results	<p>Although the club still needs to utilise other pitches across the area, the availability of their own facility provides a degree of flexibility and control for the club. Furthermore, as a result of the partnership with the pre-school, the facility is used 7 days a week and running costs are shared by both parties.</p> <p>Looking ahead</p> <p>The club is keen to secure additional section 106 funding from local housing developments to try to establish an additional 1-2 new football pitches on the adjacent site.</p>

Table 46: Malvern Gymnastics Club

Malvern Gymnastics Club – Case Study	
Background	
<p>Malvern Hills Gymnastics Club operated as a voluntary community sports club that was principally run by a husband and wife team as the head coaches. The club also had a range of qualified assistant coaches and benefited from a great deal of parental support on the committee.</p> <p>The club was a very successful Gym Mark accredited club that provided gymnastics opportunities to over 300 young people, 5 days a week at multiple sites across Malvern.</p> <p>As a result of the club’s success, the club was growing rapidly and had an aspiration to move to its own dedicated facility. It was felt this would give greater flexibility and be cheaper than the combined cost of renting multiple facilities.</p> <p>Not long after relocating to new premises, the club took a downturn which led to a rapid decrease in the levels of participation and consequently a reduction in the levels of income generated and difficulties covering the facility rental.</p>	
Intervention	
<p>In an attempt to stem the decline, the council, England Gymnastics and the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Sports Partnership provided direct club development support to try to save the club and gymnastics coaching opportunities within Malvern.</p> <p>Following the completion of an options appraisal with the club, the only realistic option available to the remaining club committee members was to approve a formal rescue deal with the City of Worcester Gymnastics Club in the form of a takeover.</p> <p>The City of Worcester Gymnastics Club was also a well-established Gym Mark accredited club with a large coaching pool and, most importantly, had experience of managing their own facility. A number of the club committee members had also previously been at Malvern Hills Gymnastics Club and so had a desire to support and maintain gymnastics opportunities within Malvern.</p>	
Results	
<p>Through the new City of Worcester Gymnastics Club satellite centre in Malvern, there are now reliable weekly coaching opportunities for both recreational and gifted / talented gymnasts and participants have the flexibility to attend sessions at either the Malvern or Worcester centres.</p>	

10.5 Sport as a diversionary activity

An example of a successful initiative to promote sport as a diversionary activity is contained below:

Table 47: Fun in the Sun

Fun in the Sun – Case Study	
Background	<p>The Malvern Hills Community Safety Partnership identified that there was a local need in Malvern to tackle and reduce the levels of anti-social behaviour as well as addressing issues around poor public perception of community safety. It was felt that following the decommissioning of the Youth Service by Worcestershire County Council, there were temporarily gaps in local provision that needed addressing.</p>
Intervention	<p>The Malvern Hills Community Safety Partnership considered a variety of interventions and recognised that the needs of the community would be best met by working together. The challenge was to identify appropriate methods to tackle this, locate the young people most at risk and the locations that would best be targeted.</p> <p>A total of three wards within Malvern town were identified as hot spot areas with delivery locations identified in two of the wards. Appropriate service providers were then identified to provide purposeful, structured and professionally delivered multi-sport leisure for young people on a weekly basis throughout July-October.</p> <p>The programme was multi-agency led. Additional funds of £2,000 was sourced from an area of highest need project (The Big Pickersleigh Project) along with additional support from the council in officer time for management and coordination of the project.</p>
Results	<p>Two sessions per week were delivered across these areas throughout July-October. This resulted in a reduction in recorded anti-social behaviour. The most significant change however, was that services involved reported that perception amongst residents around community safety and anti-social behaviour was much improved.</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys revealed that, following the scheme, 80% of participants felt better engaged and involved in their community and 71% felt that they had a greater understanding of the Big Pickersleigh Project as a result.</p> <p>323 young people took part in activities over the period.</p>
Lessons Learnt	<p>Identification of appropriate locations for delivery is paramount to the success of the programme, in terms of having the biggest impact by engaging with the most people.</p> <p>Led by intelligence based decisions through the Community Safety Partnership early intervention by MHDC following the loss of the Youth Service proved cost effective, gaps were filled and potential anti social behaviour issues were addressed before they became more problematic.</p> <p>Within a three tier local authority area, care should be taken in the planning stages to recognise each authority's restrictions and areas of responsibility in order to minimise logistical complication throughout the project.</p>

10.6 Developing Community Capacity

An example of the council working to develop community capacity is contained below:

Table 48: Sport2Inspire / Zig Zag

Sport2Inspire / Zig Zag – Case Study	
Background	<p>Sport Unlimited was a 3 year national activity programme funded by Sport England and delivered at a local level through Herefordshire & Worcestershire Sports Partnership and local authorities. Aimed at young people aged 5-19 years the programme was successfully delivered by Malvern Hills District Council right across the district.</p> <p>The council independently took the decision to charge for activities, in order to give the activities a value, and were consequently able to generate income which was ring fenced to support future sport development programmes.</p> <p>When Sport Unlimited was superseded with a new Sport England programme (Sportivate) that targeted the upper age group of 14-25 years the council was left with a funding gap on a highly valued community programme.</p>
Intervention	<p>The challenge was to think creatively and innovatively to determine how the council, without Sport England funding, could continue to provide the high quality, valued service that met the needs of the community.</p> <p>Scoping and consultation exercises paved the way for a new model, and the council appointed a coordinator to develop a self-financing programme to specifically meet these needs. Sport2Inspire was created and developed to provide 5-16 year olds with diverse and affordable sport and physical activity opportunities.</p>
Results	<p>In April 2011, the Sport2Inspire programme began school and club based delivery across the Malvern Hills district. Since then, there have been over 210 x five week programmes available for the community to access each year, annually reaching over 2,500 children and young people in more than 20 different sports. In addition to this, Sport2Inspire offered holiday sport and activity provision. The programme was developed to be inclusive offering low income families a 50% discount through the introduction of the 'Assisted Spaces Bursary Scheme.' Over 15 volunteers were actively involved in supporting the programme with a number of them accessing training opportunities through the 'Training Bursary Scheme' which was established to support and develop the skills of the volunteering workforce.</p> <p>Sport2Inspire ran, successfully growing each year, from 2011 to 2013. It has been nationally recognised as a product of good practice. The sport development income generated from the Sport Unlimited Programme has been set aside to enable the scheme to continue successful delivery.</p>
Moving Forward	<p>In July 2013, the Sport2Inspire Coordinator left the post and a decision had to be made about the future of the Sport2Inspire programme. A comprehensive options appraisal was completed to assess possibilities for delivery. Still a highly valued, popular and continually demanded programme, the council wanted to continue to deliver and continue to invest in</p>

Sport2Inspire.

The council looked to external providers scoping whether the programme could be outsourced, allowing capacity for not only continuation, but a growth and enhancement of the scheme.

From July 2013, local operators Zig Zag Coaching were appointed to manage the Sport2Inspire programme. An existing and established local provider to holiday activity schemes, Zig Zag were able to comfortably make the transition into school and club based delivery. Zig Zag also had established links with the Worcestershire FA, allowing them to deliver Junior Leader Programmes in addition to continuing the work of improving the skills of local young people.

The Sport2Inspire programme continues to operate, meeting the needs of schools and communities throughout the Malvern Hills district. There is nil cost to the council for the outsourcing of the programme and allocation of officer time necessary to monitor and measure performance in minimal.

Lessons Learnt

This partnership was successful for several reasons:

- High quality, valued services
- Determination to address community needs and expectations
- Recognition of the most appropriate delivery mechanism that provides long term sustainability
- Reduction of risks / costs to council

10.7 Maximising Planning Gain

An example of the council maximising planning gain to ensure quality local provision is delivered where it is needed is contained below:

Table 49: Malvern Vale Community Centre

Malvern Vale Community Centre – Case Study

The Malvern Vale Community Centre is a community facility located in the heart of the new Malvern Vale community in the Dyson Perrins ward of Malvern. The development of the facility completed in 2012, costing £800k and was funded through Section 106 funding from Persimmon Homes as part of the new 450 home housing development. Consisting of a community centre and 2 football pitches, the facility is owned by MHDC and has £420k allocated over the life of the building to repairs and maintenance. Planning contributions also funded a £40k Community Development Worker post over 3 years.

The centre is running at nil cost to the council and is projected to generate an income receipt from year 3. The centre has experienced high levels of community engagement and cohesion with the residents association running community events and working in partnership with the centre operator, the YMCA.

10.8 Introduction to best practice from outside of the District

- 10.1.1 There are also a number of examples of best practice from outside the district which can inform the council's future strategic approach to sport and leisure.
- 10.1.2 These examples of cross boundary working and public private partnership can serve as useful case studies for Malvern Hills district both at the local authority and at parish and town council level.
- 10.1.3 The first demonstrates that cooperation and partnership can produce benefits for all parties and communities involved where there are sufficient synergies in terms of timing and identified community need.
- 10.1.4 The second demonstrates what benefits can be accrued from using Private Public Partnerships to deliver much needed leisure schemes.

Table 50: Three Rivers and Watford Councils

Three Rivers and Watford Councils – Planning across boundaries

Challenges

Neighbouring councils Watford and Three Rivers discovered a mutual need for improved leisure facilities in the same area.

Watford's Leisure and Cultural Strategy 2003 highlighted the demand for two modern leisure facilities and the following year, Watford committed to investing £23m in two sites - one in the town centre and one in the north of the borough – that had been identified as suitable after public consultation.

At the same time, Three Rivers' 2003 PPG17 study – which assessed the local need for open space, sport and recreation – identified the need for a swimming pool in the north of their district, on the border with Watford.

The two councils recognised that the needs of both organisations could be met by working together, bringing various benefits to each.

The approach

Watford led the project to develop the new state of the art facilities at Watford Central and Watford Woodside. Prior to the project commencing initial discussions between members and officers of the two councils highlighted the potential to work in partnership on the facility proposal at Woodside, Watford near Abbot’s Langley in Three Rivers.

It solved a historical problem for Three Rivers which had previously been unable to find a suitable site for a new pool near Abbots Langley. Catchment area analysis showed that one third of prospective users at a pool at Woodside in Watford would come from the Three Rivers area.

In early 2005, once the concept had been agreed politically, Three Rivers approved a £2m capital investment into Woodside

The results

The partnership gave Three Rivers a 25 year access agreement for its residents, without any further capital or revenue expenditure commitment or operational responsibility required from the council. According to a value-for-money study it carried out, the cost of the upfront investment has been balanced by the long-term reduction in risk.

At the Woodside Leisure Centre, Three Rivers residents have the same rights of access, at the same prices as their neighbours in Watford, and discounts are applicable if proof of residency is provided. Watford has also benefitted from the collaboration as it has reduced the size of its own capital investment.

Two years on, the cost-savings have continued to accrue. Before redevelopment, Watford’s two sites cost the council £1.66m per annum to run. In 2010, the costs were just £0.725m (of which £500k is depreciation) – saving the council £1.435 million in running costs.

Central Leisure Centre – formerly just a pool but now a multi-provision site – attracted 287,668 visitors in its first year of operation and 449,668 in the second year. Woodside welcomed 659,585 visitors; and in the following year, 811,214.

Lessons Learnt

This partnership was successful for several reasons:

- A strategic need and a mutually beneficial opportunity between two councils
- Political will and strong leadership, developed on the basis of trust and respect between senior council officials and elected members
- Determination to address community expectations
- Recognition of the most effective means of increasing local participation
- Reduction of risk for both partners
- Long term sustainability of both the physical asset and operational delivery.

Table 51: Elmbridge Borough Council

Elmbridge Borough Council – Elmbridge’s public private partnership
<p>Challenges</p> <p>In 2003, Elmbridge Borough Council’s three ageing leisure facilities were becoming increasingly expensive and inefficient to operate.</p> <p>Refurbishment of the two oldest sites – Walton swimming pool and Elmbridge leisure centre – would have been a quick but costly solution with no long term benefits. Instead, and following consultation with councillors and the public, Elmbridge decided to close the outdated Walton pool and use the capital receipt from the sale of the land to offset some of the costs of building a new, state-of-the-art wet and dry leisure facility.</p> <p>The decisions raised three specific issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of the existing centre 21 months before the new centre opened • Relocation of clubs and user from the existing centre into temporary accommodation • Termination of the existing operator contract with DC Leisure.
<p>The approach</p> <p>The council decided to create a Private Public Partnership to build the new facility for three reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It transferred all the cost and project delivery risks, including design to the private leisure contractor building the centre • Ongoing maintenance costs were also moved to the private sector • The council would pay according to performance and service delivery, rather than having to deal with upfront costs. <p>Elmbridge produced a business case with estimated £14m capital costs, income levels and expenditure predictions demonstrating that the scheme was affordable, realistic and had a clearly defined timetable.</p> <p>A tightly-managed evaluation process enabled the council to award the contract to DC Leisure after just 55 days, confident that all commercial, legal, services delivery issues and timescales had been addressed. This was achieved by a dedicated lead officer who co-ordinated an evaluation team including external specialists.</p> <p>Consultation was integral to the process, the local community were asked, for example, what facilities the new centre should offer and what it should be called. Council officers worked with displaced clubs to help them find temporary homes, sometimes within the private sector, while the new centre was under construction.</p> <p>The build was completed in 14 months and the new Elmbridge Xcel Leisure Complex was handed over six weeks early by DC Leisure and its building contractor Willmott Dixon. It opened for business on 14 August 2006.</p> <p>Elmbridge has recently installed a 3G floodlit synthetic pitch and dedicated changing facilities on the site, with the help of a £949,500 grant from the Football Foundation. The contract with DC Leisure has subsequently been amended to include the management of this facility.</p>
<p>The results</p> <p>The new leisure centre came in under budget at just £12.8m. The local authority’s annual revenue costs have reduced from £600k per annum to £187k per annum. This will save Elmbridge more than £6m over 15 years.</p>

The contract states that, after that time period, the facility must be returned to the council at in at least as good a condition as they started. This ensures on-going investment by the operator through its lifecycle and maintenance programme.

In terms of service delivery, DC Leisure and the council's sports development team are working closely together to increase participation and develop strong working relationships with sports clubs and national governing bodies (NGBs).

More people are using the centre – in 2009/10 the total number of visits was 851,896 compared to 294,410 before the new facility was built.

Fitness, swimming, squash, badminton, football and aerobics has seen particularly strong growth, and the sports development team has also worked with NGBs to encourage participation of underrepresented groups, for example, working the England Squash and Racketball to introduce a women's league.

The centre has achieved Quest accreditation and uses the process as an important improvement tool. It has contracted Leisure-net to carry out a customer insight programme with monthly focus groups and a mystery shopper programme.

Sport England's Market Segmentation and Active People data combined with appropriate marketing techniques are used to ensure its services are designed for and communicated to the appropriate audience.

Lessons Learnt

A number of lessons can be taken from Elmbridge's experience:

- If you take time to understand everyone's objectives and how you can best work together to deliver, you can achieve real value for money
- Allowing the private sector partners to design the facility ensures it is developed from a users' perspective rather than an architectural statement
- Be ambitious and aim for high quality, as customer expectations are rising – additional costs will be covered by greater usage
- The leisure contractor's expertise and buying power can deliver financial and time economies – DC Leisure's project management experience in construction allowed the Elmbridge centre to open on time and on budget.

*Active Communities Malvern Hills District:
A Vision for the Future*

**Malvern Hills District
Sport and Leisure Strategy 2014 - 2024**

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