

TITLE OF REPORT: Health and Wellbeing Group Review – update

REPORT OF: Alice Wiseman, Director of Public Health

Purpose of the Report

1. In February 2021, the Public Health and Wellbeing (PHWB) Group commenced a review of its services to ensure their support in delivering the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Also, in February 2021, Council agreed its budget for 2021/22, which included a £1.2million saving to be identified within the PHWB Group. This report provides an update on progress of the ongoing PHWB Group review.

Background

2. The inequalities faced by many families and individuals in Gateshead have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. To help meet this challenge, the PHWB Group (PHWB), is reviewing its services. The aim is to develop a health and wellbeing offer, which improves opportunities for all and helps to maximise the wellbeing of our residents. This will require a significant change of approach so that community need, and improved equity are the main focus. This approach will support the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy, and the Council's Vision of making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives.
3. The current service operating models need to change to focus more on communities' needs, but also to make the £1.2m saving required. The review covers leisure services and the statutory library services run by Gateshead Council and will develop a health and well-being offer that ensures equity of access and opportunity.
4. This report sets out the progress to date toward identifying immediate efficiencies and planning the longer-term transformational work which will be required to deliver savings and ensure that scarce resources are directed toward those most in need.

Proposal

5. Cabinet is asked to endorse the progress to date and agree the next steps as detailed in Appendix 1.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - i. Endorse the short-term management actions to secure efficiencies within leisure services as set out in Appendix 1.

- ii. Agree to progress with the development of a 3-year transformation plan for leisure and library services as set out in Appendix 1, noting the separate paper on Library services consultation.

For the following reasons:

- i. To enable officers to begin making changes within Leisure Services to align the service offer with the HWB Strategy and to begin to make efficiency savings.
- ii. To develop and implement a 3-month public consultation on library services, which will be required due to the statutory nature of these services.

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Policy Context

1. Local authorities are statutorily required to provide Public Health programmes to improve the health of the local population, to the extent that they consider appropriate in their areas. Bringing the Leisure and Library services into the PHWB Group enabled consideration of how those services contribute to improving health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities across the Gateshead population.
2. On 19 November 2020 Council agreed the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which identified a financial gap of £18.6 million to be closed for 2021/22 to achieve a legally balanced budget. The MTFS also identified significant uncertainty in the future funding of the Council by Government.
3. Council, at its meeting in February 2021, agreed a revenue budget of £238.758m including budgeted use of reserves, investment growth and savings (Total £8.117m) for 2021/22. It was agreed that a saving of £1.2m was to be found in the PHWB Group, through a review of Leisure, Library and Culture services.

Background

4. The HWB Strategy requires us to take a different approach based on fairness, human rights, justice, relationships, and trust that will facilitate the circumstances that enable people to have the best opportunities in life. It requires us to focus our community development expertise to galvanise both the power and commitment of individuals, supporting communities to take greater control over what happens in their neighbourhoods, creating relationships, improving confidence and encouraging a greater sense of belonging.
5. The PHWB review provides an opportunity for us to take this different approach and to rethink why and how we engage with communities, and importantly, who we engage with. People use the places and spaces that they trust and for many that is linked to how far they can travel, what they know is available and why it might be suitable for them, what they can afford to pay for, and how that fits into busy lives. In reviewing and reshaping our PHWB services we want to ensure that people have opportunities to engage with us close to their locality, as well as by attending specialist buildings.
6. Colleagues often showcase excellent outreach activities but freely (and understandably) admit that the overarching aim of this work, beyond the immediate activity, is to bring people into buildings like leisure centres or libraries to access a range of available services and to generate income. However, a huge amount of sport and physical activity takes place in community spaces – parks and open spaces, village halls, community centres and schools. These places are a vital resource for many people who might never go to a sports club, leisure centre or private gym.

Consultation

7. Phase 1 Consultation began in March 2021 with local people being asked about their current health and wellbeing and how the Council might support them 'to be as well as they can'.
8. In the first consultation phase approximately 3000 individuals provided information through an online survey, a telephone survey and through a range of focus groups run on digital media and in person.
 - Digital Health and Wellbeing survey on Council portal – 2442 responses
 - Phone Health and Wellbeing survey council housing tenants - 462 responses
 - Focus group sessions – 100+ individuals
9. The survey gave an insight into how people have managed during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, and how they view their wellbeing.
10. Most respondents wanted Council services to be delivered within their local area. The barriers to participation in activities such as Leisure Services were cost, motivation, confidence, caring and work commitments, lack of/ or cost of transport, disabilities and cultural concerns.
11. The majority of respondents saw their locality as very important and indicated that well-kept playgrounds, parks and open spaces, access to shops, health services and community buildings, availability of social activity and activities for teenagers and young people, were priorities for them.
12. Future consultation on the format and delivery of PHWB services will be service specific:
 - In October 2021 a public consultation on proposals to change the way that some Library buildings in Gateshead are managed (see separate Cabinet paper: Library Consultation 2021).
 - Any future significant changes to the Leisure service estate will be subject to public consultation.

Short term: Immediate management actions

13. In July 2021, the Council's senior management team considered a series of immediate management actions to be taken in the initial phase of the review to cut service costs and make efficiencies. These are listed in bold below with an update on current progress and timelines.
14. **Commence a management restructure in leisure Services.**

The service review identified that a management restructure would improve lines of accountability within the Service and that this could also result in some financial savings. The formal process of consultation with services, employees/Trade Unions (TU) on the proposals is intended to be from 27th September – 26th October.

The service review identified that the café at Gateshead leisure centre and the Gymnastics offer are not viable in their current form and that these offers should

cease. Staff consultation has commenced about possible redeployment and opportunities are being explored.

15. **Fixed Rotas.** It has been identified that further savings could be made by implementing fixed rotas within leisure services which will allow for less reliance on premium rates of pay. This is currently being explored and discussed with TUs.

16. **External advice to develop a 3-year transformation plan.**

FMG Consulting have been recruited to provide independent expert advice on proposed changes to the way the service is delivered and to provide support to the Council. The subsequent conversations have identified the need for a more wide-ranging review of the physical activity environment across the borough and the strategic planning of its sport and leisure facilities, in line with Sport England's Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance (SOPG).

Sport England have agreed to fund FMG to carry out the SOPG and this was completed in September 2021. The report provides a set of recommendations which amount to a roadmap for the Council to develop a sustainable leisure offer as part of a wider PHWB offer.

17. **Recruit a Health and Wellbeing Director to lead the transformation of services.** A Service Director post in Public Health will be advertised externally in October 2021. This post will oversee the change process and release public health management capacity back to service.
18. **Gateshead Events functions.** It is felt that the operational events function overseen by PHWB would be better placed within the Commercialisation & Improvement function of the Council which retained the major events function when the PHWB Group was formed in 2019. This would provide continuity by ensuring all events are overseen by one Service Director. The intention is that this will be transferred with the associated staff group, budget, and savings target. The culture team will remain with Public Health as a part of the Libraries and community offer.
19. **Gateshead International Stadium (GIS)** We continue to discuss the option of transferring responsibility for GIS in the same manner as events. A proposal will be brought forward for discussion/decision in due course. As GIS staff will be subject to the same Human Resources processes as other leisure staff within the PHWB review, any proposed change could not take place until the review process is complete.

Medium term: Service transformation

Leisure Services

20. The Gateshead Physical Activity Needs Assessment 2021 has shown that the service needs to gather local insight regarding barriers and facilitators to being more physically active through qualitative methods and greater consultation with local people in the next phase of the leisure review.

21. Current strategies covering physical activity, indoor sports facilities and outdoor playing pitches need to be updated and explicitly linked to the HWB Strategy to ensure consistency and strategic direction.
22. Using the evidence base and review findings, we will develop a business case for a new operating model which will support the implementation of the HWB Strategy and provide opportunities for wider community engagement in physical activity. A strategic plan for implementation will be developed to deliver this sustainable model.
23. It is important to develop a greater understanding of the role of the voluntary and community sector and how they can help to promote active lifestyles through supporting local communities and capacity building.
24. There are opportunities to be innovative and creative in the way we engage with and take healthy activities to people in the community, and to better use community assets and non-traditional facilities or spaces. Gateshead is two thirds rural and has an abundance of green space that could be better utilised by a broader population group.
25. Physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyles should not be seen in isolation, and we must use every opportunity to make every contact count in every setting and encourage our communities to adopt this approach.
26. Efforts should focus on the early years and families to ensure that we create active lifestyles for life.
27. The ageing population, the current and future physical activity needs of the over 50s and the growing number of retired people living alone should be considered as priority groups in relation to improving mobility, core strength, mental health and wellbeing and tackling social isolation and helping people to live independently for longer. This will save costs to the Gateshead Health and Care system.
28. Areas and communities of highest need should be targeted using a proportionate universalism approach. We should also ensure more effective monitoring of residents use of facilities and uptake of opportunities, activities, and programmes to better inform on need in Gateshead and commissioning going forward.
29. We need to ensure appropriate evaluation of any commissioned activities related to physical activity, particularly with regards to reach, user profiles and accessibility. No activity should be commissioned without clear evidence that it meets the needs of the population of Gateshead.
30. There should be better linkage among opportunities taking place locally to avoid duplication, play to the strengths of each provider and ensure a diverse offer to residents. This should be reflected in more joined-up and collaborative commissioning of opportunities related to physical activity.
31. Local opportunities should link more effectively with local and national campaigns, such as Change4Life, and ensure lasting legacy. Thrive Gateshead provides a clear mechanism with which to do this.
32. While the short-term actions defined will deliver some efficiencies the service must ensure that its future offer meets the needs of local people across all demographic

groups. Work is currently ongoing to develop a 3-year plan for the transformation of leisure services in Gateshead.

33. It is important that local people are offered access to community-based activities and that we move away from a solely facilities-based model.

Library Service

34. The Gateshead Library service is delivering a comprehensive service, but it needs to innovate and transform to ensure that it is fit for purpose in the future.
35. People's experience and expectations around living, learning, shopping, leisure, and entertainment are radically different to those which existed a decade ago. Libraries must adapt accordingly by developing their offer and respond to changing needs and circumstances. There needs to be consideration of accessibility, quality, availability, sustainability.
36. The Library Service transformation will be taken forward over the next 2 years as a separate work stream. While savings will be sought through efficiencies there are no immediate plans to cut staff or close library buildings.
37. We are proposing that in the future some council library buildings will be transformed into "community spaces". A community space is a public space that brings council services, community agencies and neighbourhood groups together to offer a range of activities, programmes and services to meet the needs of local residents. The idea of a library offer being part of a community space alongside other services is not a new one. It aims to increase footfall in the building by offering a wider range of activities for local people.
38. Community spaces have an important social function bringing people together from a cross section of the community, addressing isolation, and being a safe space where anyone is welcome. Library buildings are well placed to play a role as community spaces because of their existing position of trust within local communities, the contribution they make across a range of agendas, and their ethos of partnership working.
39. This arrangement of library and partner services will vary from place to place as it will need to be driven by local circumstances – success rests on reflecting and responding to local need so every community space will be different.
40. Our vision is that some of our library buildings, currently operated by Gateshead Council, will in the future be managed day-to-day by a partner Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisation. We will also continue to operate some of the library buildings directly, which will be managed and staffed by Gateshead library service.
41. Our library staff in the future will work from both council-run libraries and VCS managed community spaces, as well as delivering more library services out in the community from non-traditional library facilities.
42. We anticipate that these VCS partners will bring their expertise and specialisms to allow the offer in the VCS managed community spaces to be expanded to meet local need.

43. Transforming some of our libraries in this way will help us to sustain access to library resources and facilities in the long term and enable library staff to work differently. It will also facilitate bringing other services and organisations into local areas. A public consultation on proposals to change the way that some Library buildings in Gateshead are run and managed will begin with Cabinet approval in October 2021 (see separate Cabinet paper 19th October 2021)

Alternative Options

44. The review is considering options to deliver savings in a timely manner which will be presented to Cabinet in a future paper. A 3-year transformation plan will also be developed.

The only alternative which could deliver these savings immediately would be through the closure of buildings and release of staff.

Implications of Recommended Option

45. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms any savings identified from the proposals within this report will contribute to the achievement of the £1.2m PHWB saving.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – The proposals within this report will have an impact on a number of employees. The terms and conditions of staff, including the application of salary allowances and job evaluation, will be applied in accordance with existing HR policies and procedures. Employees and recognised trade unions will be consulted throughout the process.
- c) **Property Implications** - There are no direct property issues resulting from this report.

46. Risk Management Implication -

There are no risk management implications resulting directly from this report. A future report will detail, if necessary

47. Equality and Diversity Implications -

Needs assessment work shows that the data quality on the protected characteristics of leisure service users is not systematically collected. Action to review data collection and GDPR aspects is ongoing. Changes in future service delivery to target those most in need and involving wider community partners has the potential to have positive equality and diversity impacts.

48. Crime and Disorder Implications –

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

49. Health Implications –

The proposed transformation and focus on community engagement have the potential to develop new positive health outcomes.

50. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications -

There are no climate emergency or sustainability implications arising from this report

51. Human Rights Implications -

There are no human rights implications arising from this report

52. Ward Implications

The views of the public and local councillors will be a part of the future transformation consultation process and will be detailed in a subsequent report.

Appendix 2

Leisure Service Review – Integrated Impact Assessment (see separate document)