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| Report to: | TOURISM ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Mr John Greenbank, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser (Scrutiny) |
| Date of Meeting: | 09 September 2020 (TEC) |

SCRUTINY INPUT INTO ACTIVE LIVES STRATEGY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update on the work undertaken by members of the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Adults Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee on the scrutiny input into the development of the Active Lives Strategy.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the update.

2.2 To receive a final version of the strategy identify any further monitoring work to be undertaken on the strategy.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure the Committee has an overview of ongoing work.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

- 7.5 The strategy would also seek to address the complex issues surrounding encouraging active lifestyles, through education, improved communication and the provision of leisure infrastructure to improve physical wellbeing.
- 7.6 An important part of the new strategy would be ‘Making Every Contact Count’ ensuring that whenever someone interacted with services something was achieved, such as directing them towards a health or sport service. This would however require Council officers to be aware of the wide range of options available and how to refer to them.
- 7.7 Communication of events and services to support an active lifestyle, noting that there was a limited number of green spaces within Blackpool, would include making better use of digital platforms, such as phone apps, to share information and was considered the best way to engage the widest range of people, particularly the young.
- 7.8 Although there was a limited number of green spaces with in Blackpool, the town had several miles of seafront and beach that could be used for physical activity, such as running, walking and cycling. The use of seafront on the continent, where beaches were promoted and facilities provided to encourage activity were highlighted as possible examples Blackpool could follow. It was also recognised that the promenade represented an open space with clean air. Ways to encourage greater use of the promenade by local residents would be considered as part of the strategy, however it was recognised that education would be needed to encourage people to do this as parts of the seafront were regarded as areas primarily for tourists where local people do not regularly go.
- 7.9 The strategy could also seek to improve levels of habitual walking through improvements to streets, by ensuring they are safe and clean. An example of good practice was Wyre Council’s successful embedding of a “Walking Bus” scheme for children travelling to school, learning from which could be used to inform a similar program in Blackpool.
- 7.10 Scrutiny members asked that it be noted that walking schemes had been attempted in the past and that despite initial enthusiasm they had ultimately failed to attract sufficient public interest. Going forward therefore the Council would utilise its Living Streets Officer, part of whose role included working with schools to promote programs, such as walking buses, and that they could be utilised to make them more successful in the future.
- 7.11 The strategy should seek to address the needs of a wide range of different groups. Young people often became disengaged from sport and activities as they got older. It was further recognised that the use of digital communications such as phone apps, would present challenges as well as opportunity for engagement with young people.

- 7.12 Work would also have to be undertaken to ensure that young people would download any app encouraging active lifestyles, as they would only use ones that they saw value in and would regularly use. The possibility of including a competitive element was highlighted as a solution to this, so users could compete with friends or groups from other areas of the town.
- 7.13 Utilising local health providers such as GPs to engage with elder residents would also be considered as part of the strategy however it was recognised that any offer would have to be universal across health services. It was also noted that physical activity could be used to promote mental wellbeing among older residents. Any offer would have to be as simple as possible, to reduce the “hassle factor” for residents. This would make any offer appear more attractive to those being referred and increase take-up.
- 7.14 Changing the mind-sets of residents was also identified as an important obstacle that would need to be addressed in promoting healthy lifestyles. Inter-personal contact was viewed as the most effective way of engaging with people and addressing this issue. This should be through services such as health and housing that have regular contact with residents and could refer them to leisure activities and programs. Although it was recognised that the number of successful referrals would initially be small the aim would be to gradually grow numbers over time.
- 7.15 Consideration also needed to be given to how to measure the success of the strategy. Impact assessment work was complicated by the fact that although data was available there had been limited work to analyse its implications and that this was an issue across the leisure sector nationally. The use of short surveys, encouraging a greater volume of responses, had been identified as a possible way of measuring impact. It was stressed that the success of the strategy would be based on the outcomes it achieved rather than the resources that had been input into it.
- 7.16 The wording used in communication would need careful thought as words such as “Exercise” were noted as being discouraging to some people, therefore it should be considered if use of them should be avoided. The Council was aware of this issue and therefore the strategy would include the concept of “Health By Stealth”, whereby people would be encouraged to adopt healthier alternatives through making changes to their lifestyle, such as walking short distance they would normally drive. This was noted as method to engage more people, than those who would be willing to take-up more intensive activities like joining a sports team.
- 7.17 The review panel emphasised the need to promote greater activity amongst the more deprived areas of the town. Blackpool had several programs working with people in deprived areas but that there was limited linkage between them. By improving the links between programs the Council could ensure that the maximum impact on the highest number of people had been achieved. The strategy would therefore have a

focus on the groups that the Council wanted to help rather than specific programs.

- 7.18 The cost of accessing the Council's leisure resources would also be considered as part of the new strategy. The Council's charges for use of its gym and swimming pool were lower than at privately owned alternatives and the facilities owned by neighbouring local authorities. Although this had been done to allow access by the widest range of people, it has been suggested that it should be considered that if the charges were raised the resulting revenue could be used to support schemes to encourage further use by under-privileged groups. As part of the policy development the Council could review its pricing structure to determine how to allow the widest available access to its facilities.
- 7.19 As part of this the strategy would also need to be clear on what the Council wanted to do with its leisure facilities and who it wanted to use them. This would involve working to overcome the pre-conceptions that many people had regarding places such as gyms and ensuring they are welcomed when they did attend.
- 7.20 Members have expressed the view that the strategy should in part focus on young people approaching the end of their time in education. This was noted as an age when many young people would stop taking part in physical activity in school and move towards employment. Many of these young people would stop taking part in sports and regular physical activity once they had left school and re-embedding the habit of exercise would consequently become more difficult. Therefore consideration should be given to how to continue the habit of exercise during this period making it more likely young people would continue to lead active, healthy lifestyles in the future. It was considered that offering the widest range of choice possible could assist in addressing this issue.
- 7.21 Following the workshop the comments of members were noted by Mr Eady and Ms McLeod for their input into the development of the strategy.

The following specific points were raised at the meeting for consideration during development of the strategy;

- That consideration be given to the wording of the strategy so that words such as "Exercise" which could be regarded as being discouraging to some people, where possible be avoided;
- That the strategy encourage the use of Blackpool's seafront and promenade for physical activity;
- That if an app is adopted as part of communicating the strategy, that consideration should be given to making sure that it is attractive for young people, by including elements such as competition; and
- That the strategy should in part have a focus on young people approaching the end of their time in education to encourage them to continue to lead active

lives beyond this time.

7.21 A draft version of the strategy will also be brought to future joint-meeting of the ASCH and TEC Scrutiny Committees.

7.22 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

8.0 List of Appendices:

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Human resources considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Financial considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Risk management considerations:

13.1 None.

14.0 Ethical considerations:

14.1 None.

15.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

15.1 None.

16.0 Background papers:

16.1 None.