

**EIT Review of
Sport, Leisure and Recreation**

**Arts, Leisure and Culture Select
Committee**

Final Report

November 2010

DRAFT

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1LD

Contents

	Page
Select Committee Membership and Acknowledgements	4
Foreword	5
Original Brief	6
1.0 Executive Summary	7
2.0 Introduction	11
3.0 Background	12
4.0 Evidence	15
5.0 Conclusions	26
Appendices	27

DRAFT

Select Committee membership

Councillor Jean O'Donnell (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Sherris (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Aggio
Councillor Dixon
Councillor Lewis
Councillor Mrs Nelson
Councillor Mrs Walmsley
Councillor Womphrey

Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank:

- Reuben Kench, Head of Culture and Leisure, Stockton Council
- Graham Clingan, Countryside and Greenspace Development Manager, Stockton Council
- Neil Russell, Leisure and Sports Development Manager, Stockton Council
- Martin Graham, Strategic Manager – Children and Young People, Stockton Council
- Peter Seller, Head of Children and Young People Strategy, Stockton Council
- Richard Bradley, Care for Your Area Manager, Stockton Council
- Chris Renahan, Local Transport Plan Manager, Stockton Council
- Vanessa Shiel, Accountant, Stockton Council
- Andy Bryson, Finance Manager, Stockton Council
- Steve Chaytor, Managing Director, Tees Active Ltd

Contact Officer

Peter Mennear, Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 01642 528957
E-mail: peter.mennear@stockton.gov.uk

Foreword

[TBC]

Councillor Jean O'Donnell
Chair

Councillor Andrew Sherris
Vice-Chair

DRAFT

Original Brief

1. What services are included?

The review covers the following functions:

- Sport development
- Sports and leisure strategy and action plans, including commissioning of services from Tees Active Limited (TAL)
- Recreational management of the Borough's parks, countryside sites and other greenspaces, including delivery of events in parks and countryside
- Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan - including development of parks, greenspaces and other recreational infrastructure such as footpaths and cycle routes
- Play Strategy and Spaces for Play programme

Within the Council, responsibility for these functions is held by the following services:

- Leisure and Sports Development (DNS)
- Countryside & Greenspace (DNS)
- Care For Your Area (DNS)
- Technical Services (DNS)
- Children's Strategy (CESC).

NB. Grounds maintenance issues for parks and greenspaces will be covered by a separate review of Care For Your Area in Year 3.

The Youth Services review will cover the provision of activities in Youth Centres; reference is made in Sport and Active Leisure Strategy.)

(Due to the significant scale of capital works at TAL facilities at the time of this review, it may not be possible to fully interrogate the finances and trading profile of TAL in order to investigate opportunities for efficiencies or savings. It is proposed that the overall purpose and role of TAL is reviewed, and a subsequent piece of budget work is scheduled after the Forum reopening and the Barrage 2nd Course opening Spring 2011).

2. The Thematic Select Committee's overall aim / objectives in doing this work is:

To identify options for future strategy, policy & service provision that will deliver efficiency savings and sustain / improve high quality outcomes for SBC residents in relation to sport, leisure and recreational services. Options for increasing earned income through trading activities will also be explored.

Ensure that the different service providers and partners are complementary, with the right agencies delivering the right work to ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Identify options for further improvement to the area's sport, leisure and recreational infrastructure to improve the health and social well being of residents by ensuring a seamless provision. Options for private and voluntary sector partnerships and outsourcing will be considered.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report presents Cabinet with the outcomes of the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review of Sports, Leisure and Recreation undertaken by the Committee during the municipal years 2010-11.
- 1.2 The review formed part of a three year programme of EIT reviews covering all services provided by the Council. The programme aims to ensure that all services are reviewed in a systematic way to ensure that they are provided in the most efficient manner, provide value for money and identify opportunities for service improvements and transformation.
- 1.3 The services under review aim to provide a wide variety of high quality and accessible leisure and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to the Borough. Evidence received by the Committee highlights the value that residents place upon such services, and the good levels of satisfaction that have been achieved.
- 1.4 The Committee wish to explore options that will continue to maintain the quality and accessibility of the Borough's green spaces. Discussions have been held with Tees Valley Wildlife Trust in order to explore the possibility of transferring responsibility for the management of sites to the Trust, with the freehold being retained by the Council. Subject to the successful conclusion of negotiations, it is envisaged that transfer of responsibility for two sites could take place on 1 April 2011. Further consideration must be given to this issue and the precise level of savings is yet to be determined. However, the Committee agree in principle to the proposal and therefore recommend:
- 1. that the Council should transfer management responsibility for Billingham Beck Valley Countryside Park and Cowpen Bewley Countryside Park from the Council to Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, subject to agreement with TVWT, and that further consideration be given to the transfer of other countryside sites to alternative providers as appropriate;**
- 1.5 The Committee have considered the role of the Countryside Ranger team. The team undertake day-to-day management of the Council's countryside sites, visitor centre and nature reserves, and this includes the provision of various events and educational activities are provided at sites across the Borough. A number of options were considered but due to the levels of savings that will be required, the Committee consider that the Ranger Service should cease educational activity.
- 1.6 This measure would enable the Council to retain high standards of maintenance; however the cessation of community engagement activity would mean that Green Flag Standards will not be met in future. It is envisaged that the providers of non-Council managed sites will continue to provide educational activities, and course leaders will be still be able to undertake visits to Council-run sites and undertake activities without Ranger involvement. The Committee recommend:

2. that the Countryside Ranger Service be reconfigured to focus on maintenance activities in future and therefore cease educational activity;

1.7 The Countryside and Greenspace Strategy Team co-ordinate delivery of the Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy and related activity, including a number of greenspace regeneration programmes, and tree and woodland management.

1.8 In order to facilitate the research work of the Team, the Professional, Consultancy & Hired Services budget has been used to undertake contributions to various projects including the Local Development Framework, and the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The majority of related work on these major strategies has been completed; however a reduction in this budget would limit the Council's capacity to return to related issues in the near future. A reduction would also reduce the Council's capacity to develop future evidence-based strategies. The Committee recommend:

3. that the £25,000 research element of the Countryside and Greenspace Professional, Consultancy and Hired Services budget be removed;

1.9 Consideration was also given to reducing the funds allocated to the Environmental Development Budget. This budget is used to undertake small scale schemes on open spaces. The budget for 2010-11 is £22,362; the Committee considered the option of reducing the budget by £15,000 from 2011-12 onwards. This would reduce the Council's ability to fund, and match fund, such projects in future, and the remaining budget could be used to cover various technical and professional fees. The Committee recognised the value placed on the schemes funded through this relatively small scale budget, however the Committee agreed to support the reduction of the budget as it currently stands and therefore recommend:

4. that the Countryside and Greenspace Environmental Development budget be reduced by £15,000 per annum;

1.10 The Committee found that the Sport Development team were heavily dependent on external funding. Out of a total of twenty-one staff, thirteen are funded by external sources, in particular NHS Stockton-on-Tees, Sport England, and the Future Jobs Fund (FJF).

1.11 The Committee recognise that the continuation of external sources of funding is not guaranteed and that the service needs to plan for the worst case scenario. Therefore it is envisaged that a remaining core team would be based around three full time, and three part time staff. This team would be unable to deliver programmes directly, and it is envisaged that the team would concentrate on strategy, research, and the commissioning of services from alternative providers.

1.12 There are elements of service delivery that could be readily provided by alternative means. This may involve partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors. However it is also recognised that some providers particularly in the VCS may need additional support in order to deliver services, and it is proposed that a re-focussed service should aim to facilitate their development. The Committee recommend that:

- 5. that, in line with the expected cessation of external funding streams for direct delivery, the Sports Development team should be reduced and re-focused in order to provide a service based on strategic commissioning as outlined in the report;**

1.13 The majority of spend in leisure services is related to the management fee provided by the Council to Tees Active for the operation of the Borough's leisure centres. The level of management fee is currently at £2,841,235.

1.14 Tees Active has been consulted as part of the Committee's review and the organisation has identified efficiencies. Subject to the generation of additional income from the delivery of the new business plans for Billingham Forum and Tees Barrage International White Water Course, measures have been identified in order to reduce costs whilst maintaining service delivery. It is proposed to merge Tees Active's river-based activities on one site at the Tees Barrage. It has also been established that once the Forum re-opens, efficiencies in relation to staffing could be made. The Committee recommend that:

- 6. that the efficiencies identified by Tees Active be supported, including the withdrawal from the Castlegate Quay facility and consolidation of water-based and river-related activity at the Tees Barrage location, and staffing measures linked to the re-opening of Billingham Forum;**

1.15 The Committee recognise that TAL is currently experiencing significant business disruption as a result of the work at the Forum, and the conclusion of capital schemes at Splash and The Pavilion. As noted above, additional income is projected from the re-opened Barrage and Forum, and the provision of improved facilities at Splash and The Pavilion should also lead to additional income being realised. As this will not be able to be analysed with any great certainty until 12 months of trading has taken place, it is proposed to undertake a full analysis at the end of the period 2011-12, in order to investigate the potential for further efficiencies. The Committee therefore recommend:

- 7. that a further review of Tees Active's financial position be undertaken in the summer of 2012, once the full earning potential of the new facilities has been realised and allowing for a full year of trading in the new facilities, with the expectation that further reduction in subsidy would be realised from April 2013;**

1.16 During the period of the review, work has been undertaken in order to explore the potential for TAL services to be commissioned by one or more other Boroughs within the Tees Valley. Joint commissioning may lead to substantial economies of scale, and greater potential to improve the range of services without increasing delivery costs.

1.17 Within the Tees Valley, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council is the only other Authority that has outsourced the management of its leisure facilities. The remaining authorities have retained in-house service delivery. Each Council within the Tees Valley is undertaking its own transformation process and all are at different stages. Discussions are at an early stage and it is not yet able to determine the precise level of savings that may be achieved by this process. However feedback from initial consultation has been favourable, Members support the proposal to undertake further work and therefore the Committee recommend:

8. **that further work be undertaken in order to explore the options for the joint commissioning of Tees Active in partnership with one or more Tees Valley local authorities.**

And

9. **that if, following implementation of the measures in relation to improving trading (recommendation 7), and joint commissioning (recommendation 8), the consequent reduction in the Council's subsidy to Tees Active is insufficient, consideration should be given to options for service reduction.**

1.18 The Committee recognise the importance of play and its importance for children and young people in the Borough, and support the continued focus upon it within future Plan and Strategy development. However due to the uncertainties surrounding funding and the relatively small amount of Council funding involved in any investment in facilities, the Committee do not propose to make recommendations on play at this time.

1.19 A number of estimated savings will be achieved by the implementation of the Committee's recommendations. Recommendation 1 is subject to further discussion however it is projected that the saving could be approximately £20-25,000. Recommendation 2 would produce savings of £122,924, recommendation 3 would save £25,000, recommendation 4 would produce savings of £15,000 and recommendation 5 would produce savings of £33,880. Recommendation 6 is subject to the generation of additional income from the delivery of the new business plans for Billingham Forum and Tees Barrage International White Water Course and would lead to a saving of £200,000 based on a reduction in the level of the Tees Active Management Fee provided by Stockton Council; the element linked to the consolidation of river-based activity on the Tees Barrage site (£100,000) would be realised from 2012-13. In relation to recommendations 7, 8 and 9, the precise level of savings that will be achieved is also subject to future work.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The report presents Cabinet with the outcomes of the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation undertaken by the Committee during the municipal years and 2010-11.
- 2.2 The review formed part of a three year programme of EIT reviews covering all services provided by the Council. The programme aims to ensure that all services are reviewed in a systematic way to ensure that they are provided in the most efficient manner, provide value for money and identify opportunities for service improvements and transformation.
- 2.3 The topic was identified for review by the Scrutiny Liaison Forum on 10 February 2010 and was subsequently included in the Select Committee work programme by Executive Scrutiny Committee on 2 March 2010.
- 2.4 As outlined in the Original Brief, the review covered a number of service areas within the Council, and the commissioning of services from the independent leisure trust, Tees Active Limited (TAL). The Committee had reviewed Tees Active services during 2008-9, and had made a number of recommendations for service development. The Committee continue to monitor the implementation of these recommendations but recognise that funding constraints may impact upon their completion.
- 2.5 This review has close links with other EIT reviews, particularly the Built and Natural Environment review. It is proposed that a subsequent management review of staff roles and relationships will be undertaken in relation to the council's green infrastructure planning, development, management and maintenance functions, with the aim of identifying any further possible efficiency savings. This work will be informed both by this review and the Built and Natural Environment EIT Review.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Committee received a number of detailed baseline reports in order to outline the scope of relevant services in their current form. The baseline reports are attached within the Appendices as follows: Leisure and Sports Development (Appendix 1), Countryside and Greenspace – Strategy and Development (Appendix 2), Care for Your Area – Parks and Countryside Management and Maintenance (Appendix 3), and Play Strategy (Appendix 4).
- 3.2 The services under review aim to provide a wide variety of high quality and accessible leisure and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to the Borough. A number of strategies underpin this work. These include:
- the Sport and Active Leisure Strategy 2010-14 and associated Action Plans;
 - the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan;
 - Play Strategy 2007-12.
- 3.3 As well as focusing on the recreational development of the Borough's countryside and greenspace it addresses wider issues such as biodiversity, sustainable travel, landscape and heritage and flood risk management. The current Play Strategy is overseen by the Children's Trust Board.
- 3.4 Implementation of these strategies has a positive impact upon the full range of Sustainable Community Strategy themes. For example, the provision of well-managed and accessible greenspace benefits nature and activity based tourism, encourages the promotion of healthy lifestyles, reduces crime and the fear of crime, provides venues for events, and provides the opportunity for enhanced community involvement in the local area. The provision of leisure centres and activities provided by Sports Development contributes to increasing the number of adults and young people taking part in sport and leisure, improved health outcomes and reducing health inequalities. Opportunities for older people, adults with disabilities, and looked after children are specifically promoted by the service. Both of these service areas aim to contribute to better use of the River Tees.
- 3.5 The Play Strategy supports the development of play, positive activities and healthy lifestyles, thereby contributing to the 'Enjoy and Achieve', 'Make a Positive Contribution', and 'Be Healthy' outcomes within the overarching Children and Young People's Plan 2009 – 2012.
- 3.6 In order to achieve these aims, partnership working is well developed. For example, the development of the River Tees Heritage Park has seen close co-operation between the Countryside and Greenspace Strategy Team, the community group Friends of Tees Heritage Park, Groundwork North East, and the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. Other partners of the section include the Environment Agency, Natural England, British Waterways, Town and Parish Councils, and Sustrans amongst others.
- 3.7 The Sports Development section work in partnership with many services within the Council, and external partners include NHS Stockton-on-Tees, the local voluntary and community sector (VCS), Sport England and the education sector, including through School Sports Partnerships.

3.8 The financial position of the services under review is outlined as follows:

COUNTRYSIDE & GREENSPACE	2009/10 Budget	2009/10 Outturn	2010/11 Budget
EMPLOYEES - DIRECT	274,842	276,145	281,879
EMPLOYEES - INDIRECT	8,189	13,984	14,701
PREMISES	24,799	50,084	25,362
TRANSPORT	10,534	13,380	10,782
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	348,804	262,359	282,704
THIRD PARTY PAYMENTS	0	0	0
TRANSFER PAYMENTS	0	0	0
SUPPORT SERVICES	30,251	79,975	11,049
CAPITAL FINANCING	0	67,353	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	697,419	763,280	626,477
INCOME	(89,759)	(198,850)	(60,104)
NET EXPENDITURE	607,660	564,430	566,373

COUNTRYSIDE PARKS (CFYA)	2009/10 Budget	2009/10 Outturn	2010/11 Budget
EMPLOYEES - DIRECT	525,473	444,079	511,159
EMPLOYEES - INDIRECT	9,319	54,601	9,612
PREMISES	146,542	125,600	143,234
TRANSPORT	24,652	16,474	17,665
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	85,860	105,790	91,050
THIRD PARTY PAYMENTS	0	0	2,602
TRANSFER PAYMENTS	0	0	0
SUPPORT SERVICES	15,144	26,711	1,820
CAPITAL FINANCING	0	0	3,361
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	806,990	773,255	780,503
INCOME	(37,893)	(56,571)	(35,893)
NET EXPENDITURE	769,097	716,683	744,610

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT	2009/10 Budget	2009/10 Outturn	2010/11 Budget
EMPLOYEES - DIRECT	614,246	567,960	492,504
EMPLOYEES - OTHER	55,414	74,402	55,867
PREMISES	105,384	90,232	106,425
TRANSPORT	34,835	36,408	31,619
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	683,172	776,361	609,000
THIRD PARTY PAYMENTS	2,582,429	2,764,429	2,867,179
TRANSFER PAYMENTS	0	0	0
SUPPORT SERVICES	7,930	26,848	(282)
CAPITAL FINANCING	60,321	0	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4,143,731	4,336,639	4,436,501
INCOME	(535,351)	(803,837)	(831,784)
NET EXPENDITURE	3,608,380	3,532,803	3,604,717

- 3.9 In relation to the management of the Play Strategy, the only direct costs are associated with a proportion of the responsible officer's time ie. the Strategic Manager – Children and Young People. There are no capital costs, aside from the management of external grant funding. Stockton Council currently oversees a contract with Futurity Tees Valley to deliver a Mobile Play scheme, using Big Lottery grant funding worth £200,000 over 3 years and scheduled to end in September 2011.
- 3.10 In total since 2008, grant funding from the Big Lottery Fund has totalled £488,188, and the Government's Playbuilder Programme has provided funds worth c.£1.1m. Matched with other funds this has been used to develop and refurbish a range of fixed play areas across the Borough.

4.0 Evidence

Parks and Countryside Management and Maintenance

- 4.1 The Committee have considered the results of various consultations in relation to countryside and greenspace services, including the GreenSTAT survey (Appendix 5). The results highlight the value that residents place upon such services, and the good levels of satisfaction that have been achieved. In terms of satisfaction with individual parks, as may be expected, parks that have had substantial recent investment achieve high ratings (Romano Park, Ropner Park and Wynyard Woodland Park in particular). Preston Park, Cowpen Bewley and Billingham Beck also scored well. The Committee wish to explore options that will continue to maintain the quality and accessibility of the Borough's green spaces.
- 4.2 In addition to the Council owned sites that are maintained by the Parks and Countryside Section of Care for Your Area, there are a number of sites in the Borough that are managed by alternative providers. These include:
- Tees Valley Wildlife Trust – responsible for various sites including Bowesfield Nature Reserve and Portrack Marsh;
 - Forestry Commission – responsible for Coatham Wood;
 - RSPB – manages the Saltholme Wildlife Park;
 - Natural England – responsible for Teesmouth National Nature Reserve.
- 4.3 In addition, the Admiralty Ecology Site Forest School operates within the former Elementis site in Eaglescliffe. All of these providers run educational programmes, and some host public events within their sites.
- 4.4 As part of the review, discussions have been held with Tees Valley Wildlife Trust in order to explore the possibility of transferring responsibility for the management of sites to the Trust, with the freehold being retained by the Council. Particular consideration has been given to Billingham Beck Countryside Park, and Cowpen Bewley Countryside Park.
- 4.5 Benefits to the Borough would include the ongoing maintenance of these sites by a willing and able provider, and the increased opportunities for the involvement of volunteers. The Trust could benefit from acquiring another site on a long term lease. This would enhance its prospects of attracting grant funding, including funding that the Council would be unlikely to obtain.
- 4.6 This option would still be dependent on an ongoing revenue contribution from the Council, and a Service Level Agreement may be required in order for the continued provision of some services such as cleansing and horticultural services. Savings for the Council would come through rationalisation of the Countryside Ranger service (in addition to the measures proposed at recommendation 2).
- 4.7 Subject to the successful conclusion of negotiations, it is envisaged that transfer of responsibility could take place on 1 April 2011. Further consideration must be given to this issue and the precise level of savings is yet to be determined. However, the Committee agree in principle to the proposal and therefore recommend:

1. **that the Council should transfer management responsibility for Billingham Beck Valley Countryside Park and Cowpen Bewley Countryside Park from the Council to Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, subject to agreement with TVWT, and that further consideration be given to the transfer of other countryside sites to alternative providers as appropriate;**

- 4.8 The Committee further considered the role of the Countryside Ranger team. The team undertake day-to-day management of the Council's countryside sites, visitor centre and nature reserves. Various events and educational activities are provided at sites across the Borough. To illustrate this, the following attendance figures were achieved between October 2008 and September 2009:
 - Countryside events – 7638 people attending 114 scheduled events;
 - School groups – 2910 pupils attended 86 educational sessions;
 - Cubs, scouts etc – 462 youngsters attended 24 activity led sessions;
 - Community groups - 3397 people attended 85 activity led sessions such as walks;
 - Other groups & talks – 1571 people attended 95 activity led sessions such as walks.

- 4.9 Ten out of the fifteen members of staff are involved in undertaking educational and event activity to some extent as part of their duties.

- 4.10 In addition to the impact of the proposed transfer of countryside sites as outlined above, the Committee considered the options of either a partial or full reduction in the provision of educational activities. Due to the levels of savings that will be required, the Committee consider that the Ranger Service should cease educational activity and focus on maintenance-led activity.

- 4.11 It is recognised that the impact of this will lead to a reduction in staffing of four full time staff including two Head Rangers and two Assistant Rangers, and some costs in supplies and services. The total saving would amount to £122,924. This measure would enable the Council to retain high standards of maintenance; however the cessation of community engagement activity would mean that Green Flag Standards will not be met in future.

- 4.12 It is envisaged that the providers of non-Council managed sites will continue to provide educational activities, and course leaders will be still be able to undertake visits to Council-run sites and undertake activities without Ranger involvement. The Committee recommend:
 2. **that the Countryside Ranger Service be reconfigured to focus on maintenance activities in future and therefore cease educational activity;**

Countryside and Greenspace – Strategy and Development

- 4.13 The Committee considered the role of the Countryside Strategy Team. A detailed description of the team's work is included in the baseline report but this is summarised as follows:

- Coordinating delivery of the Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- Developing and delivering greenspace regeneration programmes and projects in collaboration with other sections of the Council, local communities and external partners;
- Management of Council-owned trees and woodlands;
- Some aspects of open space management and development, including the title transfer of land from developers, easements, wayleaves and licence agreements, and policy development;
- Research and consultation to inform delivery of services.

4.14 In order to facilitate the research work of the Team, the Professional, Consultancy & Hired Services budget has been used to undertake contributions to various projects including the Local Development Framework, and the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The majority of related work on these major strategies has been completed; however a reduction in this budget would limit the Council's capacity to return to related issues in the near future. A reduction would also reduce the Council's capacity to develop future evidence-based strategies. The Committee recommend:

- 3. that the £25,000 research element of the Countryside and Greenspace Professional, Consultancy and Hired Services budget be removed;**

4.15 Consideration was also given to reducing the funds allocated to the Environmental Development Budget. This budget is used to undertake small scale schemes on open spaces, and has previously been used for planting trees and shrubs to restrict ball games near housing, small improvements such as seating and path works, signage and interpretation, and contributions to larger schemes such as the Thornaby Spitfire.

4.16 The budget for 2010-11 is £22,362; the Committee considered the option of reducing the budget by £15,000 from 2011-12 onwards. This would reduce the Council's ability to fund, and match fund, such projects in future, and the remaining budget could be used to cover various technical and professional fees. The Committee recognised the value placed on the schemes funded through this relatively small scale budget, however the Committee agreed to support the reduction of the budget as it currently stands and therefore recommend:

- 4. that the Countryside and Greenspace Environmental Development budget be reduced by £15,000 per annum;**

4.17 During the review, consideration was given to the role of Groundwork and the type of services that they provide. Groundwork North East is a charitable organisation that delivers a range of environmental regeneration projects across the region. There are a number of different models as to how Groundwork operates in a particular area. Some authorities provide core funding for the provision of services, whereas others including Stockton engage with Groundwork on a project-by-project basis, for example the River Corridors project.

4.18 A review took place in 2004 in order to assess the scope for the establishment of a Groundwork Trust 'north of the Tees'. The review concluded that Groundwork was:

- '[...] an effective vehicle for accessing additional financial resources;
- It can draw in additional expertise, based on national experience;
- It introduces another organisation with the capability to mobilise local community participation and capacity building;
- It is an organisation with experience of working in partnerships;
- It is independent of the local authority sector.'

4.19 However, the report also highlighted that:

'Groundwork should not and must not replace or undermine the activities and responsibilities of any existing agency or organisation. The role must be to enhance the existing activities, adding value, or to introduce solutions to known un-addressed gaps.'

4.20 The review at the time concluded that as Stockton did not have such gaps in service provision, any increase in the role of the organisation in the Borough may have led to the 'duplication of services and a false raising of expectations and aspirations amongst local communities'.

4.21 Over the past 2-3 years Stockton Borough Council has developed a closer working relationship with Groundwork. This has increased local capacity to deliver greenspace regeneration projects, and has added value to projects and programmes being delivered by the Council, including the River Corridors project. In addition they have also contributed to other projects including Harewood Pleasure Gardens in Thornaby.

4.22 The Committee found that the Council itself has an excellent track record in delivering similar greenspace regeneration schemes 'in-house'. The Council has developed sound working relationships with local community organisations and partnerships, and through partnership working has also been able to secure significant external funding (in recent years the Countryside & Greenspace team has secured £6 of external funding for every £1 of SBC capital expenditure).

4.23 It is proposed that the Council should continue to work closely with Groundwork as a project partner where this delivers added value, but that it should also retain 'in-house' capacity to develop and deliver schemes. However, the Committee agree that the Council's partnership with Groundwork should be kept under review to ensure that 'no duplication of services' emerges, and to take advantage of the wider benefits of Groundwork's status.

4.24 Discussions are also on-going to explore what opportunities might exist for collaborative working with other Tees Valley local authorities in relation to tree and woodland management, with the aim of identifying possible efficiency savings and more effective ways of working.

Leisure and Sports Development

- 4.25 The Committee found that the Sports Development team currently provide services that can be categorised as Strategy and Advisory, Commissioning, and Sports Development (development and delivery of programmes).
- 4.26 The Committee found that the team were heavily dependent on external funding. Out of a total of twenty-one staff, thirteen are funded by external sources, in particular NHS Stockton-on-Tees, Sport England, and the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) that has funded four trainee sports developments officers. Nine posts are contracted until March 2011, two posts are contracted until September 2011, one post is contracted to December 2011, and one is contracted until March 2012.
- 4.27 The Committee recognise that the continuation of external sources of funding is not guaranteed and that the service needs to plan for the worst case scenario. Therefore it is envisaged that the remaining core team would be based around three full time, and three part time staff. This team would be unable to deliver programmes directly, and it is envisaged that the team would concentrate on strategy, research, and the commissioning of services from alternative providers.
- 4.28 There are elements of service delivery that could be readily provided by alternative means. This may involve partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors. However it is also recognised that some providers particularly in the VCS may need additional support in order to deliver services, and it is proposed that a re-focussed service should aim to facilitate their development.
- 4.29 The Sports Development service has identified that the proposed approach will enable it to meet a commitment to the following three agenda areas - 1) Inspire 2) Sustain and 3) Excel:

1. Inspire

Currently there is no organisation coordinating the process of inspiring more people to be physically active and take up participation in sport. We have a large number of providers promoting their own facilities/ activities and unsurprisingly they promote their own programmes. This is a long way from the strategic approach we would advocate and could benefit from a coordinated approach led by SBC as an impartial organisation. Through our inspire agenda we are proposing the following:

- With partners (internal and external) facilitate the delivery of a range of events of varying scales (from small – medium) aimed at engaging more people to be physically active and engage in sport. These would be developed primarily with the aim of facilitating greater participation in activities/ facilities that already exist within the borough. E.g. Park Runs designed to promote running and use of our urban and country parks.
- With partners develop events which aim to inspire sports tourists to the borough, e.g. Golf, Rat Race, Triathlon. We are committed to developing a range of events that are not 'run of the mill' and will capture the imagination of people both within and beyond the Tees Valley.

- Working with the school sports partnerships to support the provision of high quality PE and out of school hours sports provision for young people
- Take a lead in facilitating what the Olympics/ Paralympics can deliver as a legacy for the residents of the borough
- With all stakeholders develop a cohesive plan for the promotion of sport & active leisure within the borough
- Work with colleagues in Children's Centres/ Early Years and Play to facilitate the development of programmes that promote active play in young children forging links between active play and sport for lifelong participation in active leisure
- Work with under-represented groups via the appropriate networks, namely older people, people with disabilities, the BME community, Children Looked After and Carers to facilitate greater participation in sport & active leisure
- Ensure our strategic plans are accessible and have the aspiration to engage our communities and make real positive differences to our communities whilst being realistic that perfection is not an option!
- Be a provider of impartial advice and guidance (or facilitate this) to organisations across the sectors/ borough on all aspects of sport and leisure provision
- Through SBC Central Communications, Public Health and colleagues in the public, private and voluntary sectors support the development and delivery of an appropriate communications plan and campaign for the borough, taking account all of the above.
- To explore opportunities for income generation through avenues such as events, coach development programmes and the facilitation of coaching programmes for children and young people.

2. Sustain

In order to maximise the number of people who sustain their involvement in sport we want to develop the sporting infrastructure within the borough and this includes the following:

- Ensure that we work closely with our strategic leisure partner Tees Active to ensure that commissioned provision meets the needs and aspirations of our community and delivers excellent value for money
- Developing voluntary sector/ community sports organisations to become vibrant, safe and effective organisations providing sports participation and competition for people of all ages and abilities
- Through advice and guidance enable the development of appropriate facilities and management regimes that facilitate ease of access and sustained participation for our communities
- Work with sustainable organisations to improve the provision of sport & active leisure, e.g. youth centres/ Uniform groups
- Support the development of coaches/ teachers/ volunteers to support the sustainability of sport in schools and in the community
- With all key stakeholders including SBC Communications and Access to Services to develop an approach to the provision of information and booking systems which maximises ease of access for participants
- Throughout 2011 develop appropriate exit strategies for the delivered initiatives which we would want to be sustained by third parties, e.g. Health Walk scheme

3. Excel

- To work with our Strategic partner Tees Active to ensure that our gifted and talented sports people are provided with as much support as is possible to enable them to achieve their goals
- Work with Schools and the School Sports Partnership to support our talented young sports people to gain access to the facilities, coaching and advice they need to progress
- To work with colleagues to attract events to the borough that promote excellence/ high performance, e.g. 2012 Training camps

4.30 The cessation of external funding should not be underestimated and the following programmes will be affected: development of services based around a life-stage model, small scale event delivery, contributing to sub-regional and regional events (eg. Tees Valley Youth Games), delivery of health interventions (eg. Active Health), dedicated work with under-11s, health walks, inclusion work with under-represented groups, women's outdoor exercise programmes, community centre based boxercise, workplace health initiatives, programmes such as sports leadership courses.

4.31 Where appropriate, the potential for other organisations to deliver these activities will be explored. The Committee noted that through improved collaboration with other sectors and an increased willingness to engage from alternative providers, it is hoped to develop partnerships in order to deliver such activities over the medium term.

4.32 Although the majority of staffing costs are met by external funding, a move to a smaller core team would lead to a saving to the Council of £33,880. The Committee recommend that:

- 5. that, in line with the expected cessation of external funding streams for direct delivery, the Sports Development team should be reduced and re-focused in order to provide a service based on strategic commissioning as outlined in the report;**

Tees Active

4.33 The majority of spend in leisure services is related to the management fee provided by the Council to Tees Active for the operation of the Borough's leisure centres. The level of management fee is currently at £2,841,235.

4.34 Tees Active has been consulted as part of the Committee's review and has been asked to identify efficiencies. The Committee noted that Tees Active has been commissioned to manage the improved Tees Barrage International White Water Course, following the completion of the upgrade works. Billingham Forum is currently closed due to extensive refurbishment. New business plans for these facilities have been developed and are based on the re-opened centres raising income totalling £1.1m.

4.35 Subject to the generation of this income, measures have been identified in order to reduce costs whilst maintaining service delivery. It is proposed to merge Tees Active's river-based activities on one site at the Tees Barrage. Negotiations have taken place in order to secure a new tenant for Castlegate

Quay Watersports Centre. Subject to this being agreed, savings for 2011-12 would be invested in alterations at the Barrage site. Savings of approximately £100,000 could be achieved from the following year.

- 4.36 It has been established that once the Forum re-opens, efficiencies in relation to staffing could be made. During the period of closure, arrangements were made to retain staff and provide services at alternative venues, and the re-opening will provide the opportunity to review staffing arrangements, with a view to making a potential saving of approximately £100,000.

6. that the efficiencies identified by Tees Active be supported, including the withdrawal from the Castlegate Quay facility and consolidation of water-based and river-related activity at the Tees Barrage location, and staffing measures linked to the re-opening of Billingham Forum;

- 4.37 Tees Active is committed to funding prudential borrowing repayments in order to fund a proportion of the costs of the Forum, Pavilion and Barrage works, and the full cost of the development of Splash. This therefore reduces the proportion of the management fee that is available for operational purposes to approximately £1.9m.

- 4.38 The Committee recognise that TAL is currently experiencing significant business disruption as a result of the work at the Forum, and the conclusion of capital schemes at Splash and The Pavilion. The loss of income and redeployment of staff from the Forum, and the three month extension to the works period, will lead to a cost of £1m; current TAL predictions suggest that this cost will be contained.

- 4.39 As noted above, additional income is projected from the re-opened Barrage and Forum, and the provision of improved facilities at Splash and The Pavilion should also lead to additional income being realised. As this will not be able to be analysed with any great certainty until 12 months of trading has taken place, it is proposed to undertake a full analysis at the end of the period 2011-12. The Committee therefore recommend:

7. that a further review of Tees Active's financial position be undertaken in the summer of 2012, once the full earning potential of the new facilities has been realised and allowing for a full year of trading in the new facilities, with the expectation that further reduction in subsidy would be realised from April 2013;

- 4.40 At present, Tees Active manages all of the Borough's leisure centres on behalf of Stockton Council, and also operates a leisure centre under a specific contract in Berwick-upon-Tweed. During the period of the review, work has been undertaken in order to explore the potential for TAL services to be commissioned by one or more other Boroughs within the Tees Valley.

- 4.41 Joint commissioning may lead to substantial economies of scale, and greater potential to improve the range of services without increasing delivery costs.

- 4.42 Within the Tees Valley, Redcar and Cleveland are the only other Authority that has outsourced the management of its leisure facilities. The remaining authorities have retained in-house service delivery. Each Council is undertaking its own transformation process and all are at different stages. Discussions are at an early stage and it is not yet able to determine the precise

level of savings that may be achieved by this process. However feedback from initial consultation has been favourable and the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services is to lead on this process. Members support the proposal to undertake further work and therefore the Committee recommend:

8. that further work be undertaken in order to explore the options for the joint commissioning of Tees Active in partnership with one or more Tees Valley local authorities.

- 4.43 The Committee have given consideration to the option of reducing the subsidy for Option 3 users of Tees Active facilities. Option 3 Cards are available free to Stockton-on-Tees Borough residents who receive a number of benefits or who participate in education.¹ Option 3 card holders are entitled to up to 50% discount on selected activities at participating Leisure Centres. Option 3 prices are available at all venues but there are some exceptions by activity, for example Option 3 is not offered on any power boating at Castlegate Quay and certain other sailing and paddling activities.
- 4.44 Option 3 has been developed as part of TAL's pricing structure in order to maximise opportunities for all sectors of the community to participate in healthy leisure activity. In the first five years of operation, the number of Option 3 users increased by 46% which was four times the rate of increase for general users. TAL pricing structure specifically provides Option 3 to target disadvantaged members of the community in order to meet the social aims of the organisation and indeed the Council. This is a scheme that private providers would not normally provide.
- 4.45 However, the Committee note that with regard to fitness activities, for instance, there is significant downward pressure in the market with low cost gyms now growing in popularity across the country. The Option 3 offer would be well placed to counter other low cost operators, should they reach Teesside.
- 4.46 The Committee have considered the issue but have decided that the Option 3 subsidy should be retained at the current level. During 2009-10, income worth £680,000 was generated via Option 3, and had these users paid the standard rate an additional £300,000 would have been generated. However it is not possible to accurately predict the level of income that would be achieved either by a reduction, or the complete removal, of the level of subsidy. It is likely that the number of users would fall and it would significantly offer the character of leisure provision in the Borough. Projected figures show that the additional income could be between £30,000 and £300,000.
- 4.47 As a result of the future review of TAL's finances and trading position, joint commissioning, a reduction in service delivery, or a combination of these, it may be possible to achieve savings of between approximately £200-250,000. It is recognised that reductions in service provision would become increasingly contentious. The Committee recommend:

¹ Residents are entitled to Option 3 if they receive or are the following: Income Support; Pension Credit; Working Family Tax Credit; Housing Benefit; Incapacity Benefit; Job Seekers Allowance; Invalid Care Allowance; Council Tax Benefit; Y.T. Placements / Apprenticeships; War Disablement Pension; Full Time Students in Further Education; Disability Living Allowance; Industrial Injuries Benefit; School or college attendees under 18, whose parents receive any of the above benefits.

9. **that if, following implementation of the measures in relation to improving trading (recommendation 7), and joint commissioning (recommendation 8), the consequent reduction in the Council's subsidy to Tees Active is insufficient, consideration should be given to options for service reduction.**

Play Strategy

- 4.48 The Committee considered the role of play and the play strategy. The Stockton-on-Tees Play Strategy 2007 – 2012 is overseen by the Children's Trust Board. The overall aim of the strategy is to meet the play and learning needs of children and young people through the development of locally based, easily accessible play facilities across the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees both through the extension of existing provision and the development of new facilities.
- 4.49 The Committee found that play areas are integral to the strategy in the form of free imaginative space as well as more structured play environments. All play provision should challenge children and young people whilst ensuring their safety. Within the strategy, where support is provided directly by staff employed either by the local authority or another organisation, they will be appropriately trained, qualified and have Criminal Records Bureau checks completed to allow them to undertake their roles appropriately.
- 4.50 The responsibility for the implementation of the strategy rests with multi-agency Play Partnership that includes the voluntary and community sector.
- 4.51 The Play Strategy has supported the development and refurbishment of over 15 Play Areas across the borough plus the creation of a mobile play scheme through grants from both the Big Lottery Fund Children's Play Programme and the Department of Children Schools and Families Playbuilder Programme (now allocated under the Department for Education). Both of these grants end in 2011; a further 7 Plays Areas will be completed before the Playbuilder funding ceases in March, and the Children's play programme funding continues until September.
- 4.52 The Children's Trust Board, through the strategy has supported the development of play and positive activities as part of the "Enjoy and Achieve", "Make a Positive Contribution" and the "Be Healthy" priorities by supporting healthy lifestyles.
- 4.53 Play has also been a theme delivered through the Extended Schools agenda in supporting schools to delivery a range of activities outside of normal school hours. This has seen schools operating in cluster groups and opening up their premises at the end of the school day, at weekends and during school holidays. The Extended Schools finances are however due to end on 31st March 2011 and discussions are ongoing with schools as to how this agenda can be continued.
- 4.54 Positive Activities have been a significant element in the delivery of youth services, both in terms of the in-house youth work service and in supporting voluntary and community groups to deliver a wide range of activities, often to targeted groups. The in-house youth work services have been reviewed as part of the EIT Review of Youth Services, which has been undertaken by the Children and Young People Select Committee.

- 4.55 The Children's Fund has provided financial support to a range of voluntary sector providers in delivering a broad range of activities under the headings of positive activities and play, over a number of years. This funding is also due to come to an end on 31st March 2011 and at this stage it is not clear what future funding may be available. This will have an impact on a number of voluntary sector providers and in the overall delivery of services.
- 4.56 The Children's Trust Board is presently reviewing its priorities for 2011-2013 as part of the delivery of a new Children and Young People's Plan. Although the board have not yet formally agreed the final priorities, it is likely that supporting play and positive activities will figure to some extent in supporting key outcomes for children, young people and their families within the new plan.
- 4.57 The Play Strategy is now due for revision; grant funding previously available is due to end in 2011, and the future direction will be to ensure that where gaps in provision are identified, that the resources available resources are used to reduce inequality of access for children and young people through the refocusing of mobile play facilities and / or the securing of new revenue and capital funding opportunities. This can be achieved through the continuation of partnership working where the ethos and culture of the principles of play are shared and services are provided in a manner that avoids duplication.
- 4.58 The Committee recognise the importance of play and its importance for children and young people in the Borough, and support the continued focus upon it within future Plan and Strategy development. However due to the uncertainties surrounding funding and the relatively small amount of Council funding involved in any investment in facilities, the Committee do not propose to make recommendations on play at this time.
- 4.59 A number of estimated savings will be achieved by the implementation of the Committee's recommendations. Recommendation 1 is subject to further discussion however it is projected that the saving could be approximately £20-25,000. Recommendation 2 would produce savings of £122,924, recommendation 3 would save £25,000, recommendation 4 would produce savings of £15,000 and recommendation 5 would produce savings of £33,880. Recommendation 6 is subject to the generation of additional income from the delivery of the new business plans for Billingham Forum and Tees Barrage International White Water Course and would lead to a saving of £200,000 based on a reduction in the level of the Tees Active Management Fee provided by Stockton Council; the element linked to the consolidation of river-based activity on the Tees Barrage site (£100,000) would be realised from 2012-13. In relation to recommendations 7, 8 and 9, the precise level of savings that will be achieved is also subject to future work.

[Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)– The recommendations may need to be subject to an EIA and the score will be inserted]

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Committee have considered a range of services that are concerned with providing high quality leisure and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the Borough. It is clear that these services are well-regarded and valued by users.
- 5.2 The Committee have sought to identify options that would maintain service delivery wherever possible, however due to the financial position facing the Council, it has been necessary to restrict the scope of service provision in some areas.
- 5.3 It is also clear that further savings could be achieved through a range of measures which become increasingly difficult. Some of these options have been considered during the review, for example the subsidy for Tees Active Option 3 users, however others would need further consideration as appropriate.

DRAFT

Appendices

[Baseline reports to be inserted – these were considered at Committee on 30 June and 21 July]

Appendix 1 - Leisure and Sports Development

Appendix 2 - Countryside and Greenspace – Strategy and Development

Appendix 3 - Care for Your Area – Parks and Countryside Management and
Maintenance

Appendix 4 - Play Strategy

DRAFT

Appendix 5

Countryside & Greenspace Survey & Consultation Findings

Results from a number of surveys and consultations can be used to inform the EIT review; for example, by highlighting how any changes in service delivery may impact on customers and how services might best be developed in the future to meet their needs and aspirations.

Brief details are given below with more detailed information available via the website: www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysidegreenspaceyourviews

Background information on the surveys and consultations is provided in **Appendix 5 A**.

In addition to this Borough-wide research a number of more detailed consultations have been undertaken in relation to individual project proposals.

1. Use of the Borough's parks and open spaces

Sport, Recreation and Leisure Survey (2008):

- 70% of residents had used the Boroughs' parks, greenspaces or natural areas in the past year.
- 18.5% did not visit any outdoor areas for leisure.
- 'Walking and/or enjoying outdoors/nature' was the favourite leisure activity amongst the sample overall, referred to by 61% of all respondents as one of the activities they most like to do in their leisure time².
- The majority of adults visit these spaces to enjoy the outdoors/nature (52%); to walk (56.8%); to walk with the dog (21.5%); or take children to play areas (29.8%). *GreenSTAT* data also suggests that these activities are the most popular, although the percentage figures vary.

Children and Young People's Parks and Greenspaces Consultation (2009):

- When visiting parks most children and young people like to: Hang out with friends (19%); chase/run (15%); use the play area (15%); and play ball games (14%).

The *Sport Recreation and Leisure Survey (2008)* also gave residents the opportunity to say why they didn't use parks and other types of open spaces. The vast majority said this was due to personal reasons (e.g. poor health, lack of time or no interest) rather than factors relating to the actual spaces. However, from this survey and other feedback received, it is known that in some cases people are discouraged from accessing parks and open spaces due to issues such as: poor access, perceptions of anti-social behaviour and a lack of information.

2. Overall satisfaction parks and open spaces

Ipsos MORI Place Survey (2008):

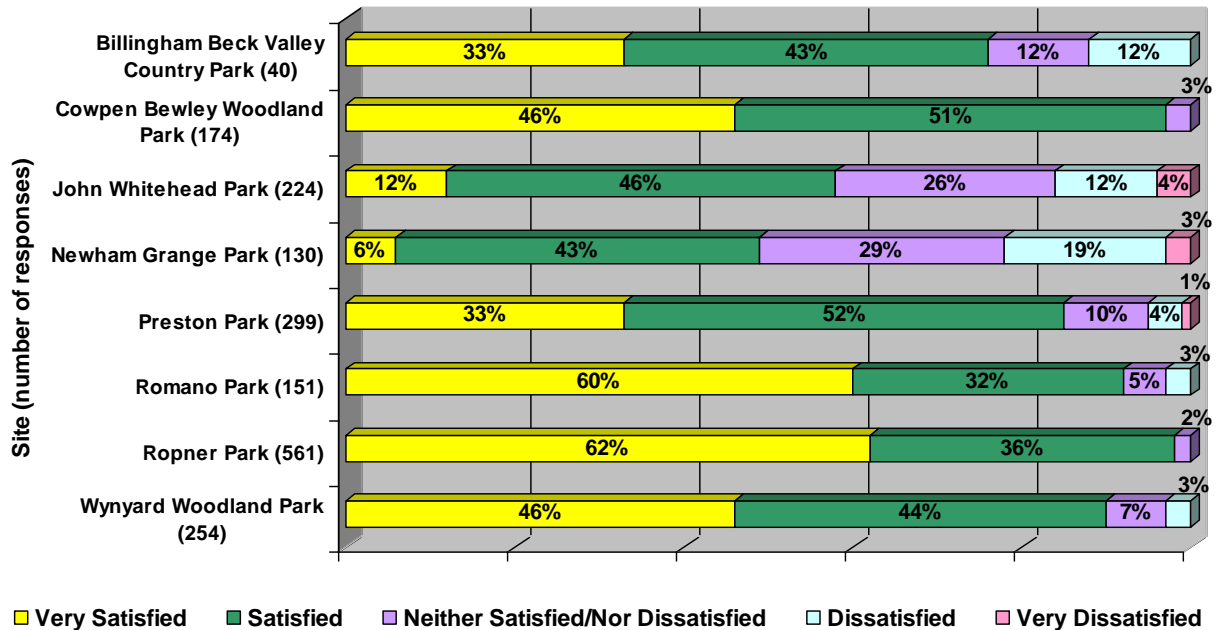
- 60% satisfied with parks and open spaces

² The other most popular activities were: Watching films (56%); shopping (55%); visiting pubs & restaurants (52%)

GreenSTAT Surveys (2009/10):

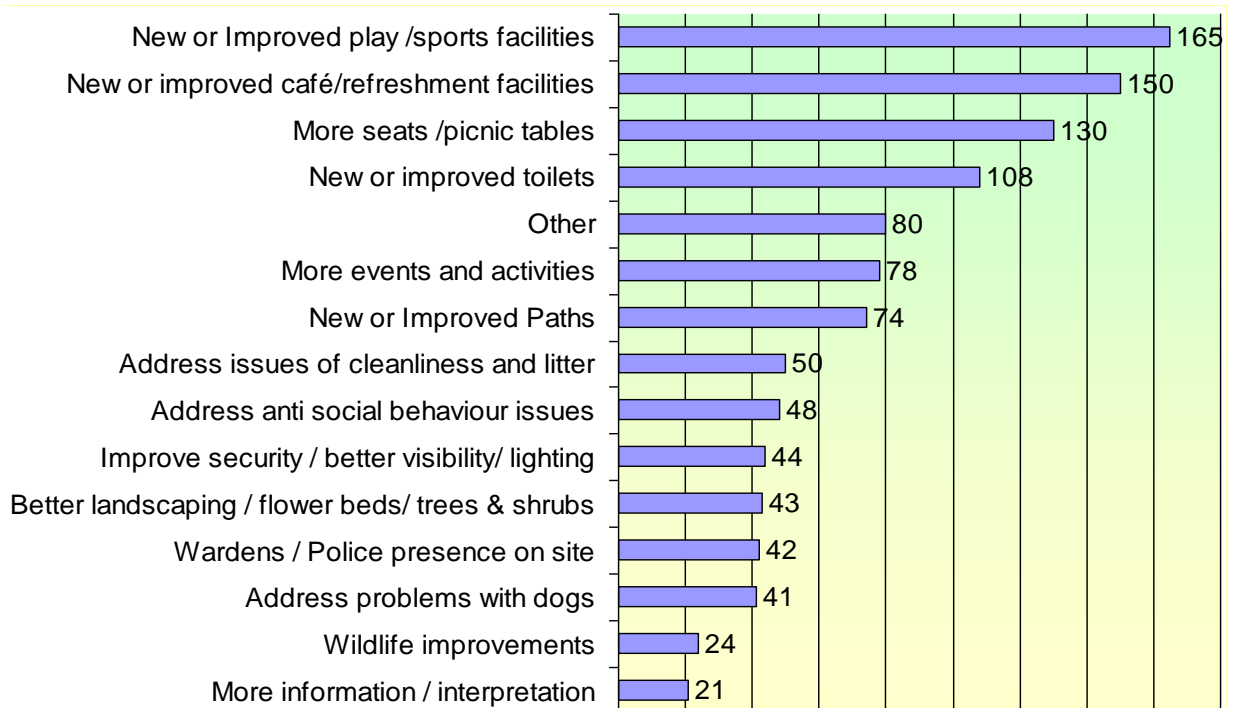
- 77% of park or greenspace users satisfied

The *GreenSTAT Surveys* also provide detailed information on the public's satisfaction with individual parks and open spaces. This reveals quite wide variations in satisfaction levels. For example, the following chart shows people's 'overall impression' of some of the Borough's major parks (data from all surveys up to September 2010):



3. Improving our parks, greenspaces and play spaces

The *GreenSTAT Survey* asks 'Can you think of anything that would encourage you to use the park or open space more often, or stay for longer?' Of the 2427 completed questionnaires up to September 2010, 48% of respondents have said 'yes'. These were the main issues raised (by number of respondents):



Further information on what improvements people would like to see in their local parks and open spaces was also derived through the *Children and Young People's Parks and Greenspaces Consultation (2009)* and *'Your Local Green Spaces' Consultation (2009)*. Play provision for all age groups, but particularly for older children and young people emerged as priorities, as well as improved footpaths and allotments, and more seating/picnic areas.

4. Trees and Woodlands

Viewpoint Survey (2008):

- 55% respondents were satisfied with how the Council looks after trees and 11% were dissatisfied (remainder expressed no preference or didn't know).
- 96% of people think trees are important in the urban environment.
- 88% people prefer to live in a street with trees.
- 88% of people think more trees should be planted.
- 94% people think trees should be protected during new development & regeneration.
- 81% people think trees cause no problems to them.

Appendix 5 A: Background information on the surveys and consultations

Sport, Recreation and Leisure Survey (2008): Carried out by NWA Social & Market Research on behalf of Stockton Council this survey involved face-to-face interviews with 2705 adult residents of the Borough. Approximately 100 interviews were undertaken in each of the 26 wards in the Borough.

Viewpoint Survey on Trees (2008): A questionnaire sent to all 1417 members of the Borough's Viewpoint Panel. A total of 685 questionnaires were completed (a response rate of 48%).

Children and Young People's Parks and Greenspaces Consultation (2009): Carried out by consultants A4e this consultation involved a series of workshop sessions in local schools, asking children and young people to give their views about local parks and play areas. A total of 1,391 children and young people were involved in this work and 1087 questionnaires were completed.

'Your Local Greenspaces' Consultation (2009): From April to June 2009 Stockton Council, in partnership with Tees Valley Rural Community Council, the Environment Agency and Groundwork organised a Borough-wide consultation exercise to gain an improved understanding of how people view their local green greenspaces and countryside. This included 22 drop in-sessions and other meetings with community organisations. The public were invited to record their views and ideas using maps and questionnaires.

GreenSTAT (on-going): A national on-line survey operated by the charity Greenspace, which gives residents and users of parks and greenspaces the opportunity to comment on the quality of their open spaces and how well they feel they are being managed and maintained. By September 2010 a total of 2427 questionnaire had been completed.

DRAFT