

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 30 June 2009
Subject: Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Heather Harding **Item:** 7(h)

Recommendation:

That the report of the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Grant Aid - Portfolio Holder Responsibility

Following the re-organisation of portfolio responsibility, my portfolio now also incorporates responsibility for the Council's Grant Aid programme for individuals and voluntary, community and leisure groups.

Grant Aid Scheme – Voluntary and Community Groups

These include grants as part of a service level agreement with groups such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Victim Support, Alzheimer's Society and local care groups. In addition, they include one-off grants to groups involved in community work, cultural activities and sport.

A number of grants for the 2009/10 financial year have already been agreed by my predecessor Councillor Syd Stavrou and I will be looking at the next round of bids shortly. I will also be reviewing the existing Service Level Agreements as this is the last year of the current three year agreements, and propose to carry out visits to the groups concerned.

Ongar Campus Fields Development – Update

At Cabinet in October 2008, Members agreed a capital contribution of £507,000 towards the development of playing fields at Ongar Leisure Centre, to match fund external funding from Essex Football Association as part of the Essex 2012 Legacy Funding, and potential funding to be sought from the Football Foundation in January 2009.

Unfortunately, the Football Foundation made last minute changes to its funding criteria in January, which meant that the Ongar Project no longer met the required specification. However, a new Sport England Project Fund was launched this month and an application has been submitted for the shortfall required for development at Ongar. The bid also includes a request for the revenue costs of a Rural Development Officer, who would work on an outreach basis from the site. It is expected that notification of success of the bid will be received by September.

Community Delivery Initiatives -

District Play Strategy – Limes Farm multi - use games area is being completely refurbished during the forthcoming school holidays and work is currently being undertaken on phase two of the Play Strategy, with three new facilities currently being constructed in Nazeing, including a youth zone. A further £50k has also been secured from Play Builders Fund to provide a new playground in Westall Road Loughton, which is managed by Loughton Town Council.

New Youth Activity Provision – A new youth activity club has been launched on Ninefields Estate Waltham Abbey, which is held every Wednesday evening. The weekly activity programme is designed by the young people, who have named the session 'we don't do bored' and attracts around 30 youngsters per night to take part in anything from street dancing and beauty care, to boxercise and fitness classes.

Limes Farm – Progress is being made with the plans to establish a new community facility on Limes Farm, with £270k secured from Essex County Council as part of its Extended Schools fund. Consultation with key stakeholders and local residents has identified the need for more accessible, key local services on the site and a full report will be presented to Cabinet in July.

Limes Farm Festival Day for the resident community, is being coordinated by Community Services and will be held on Saturday 4 July.

Summer Holiday Activities – The 2009 Summer Activities brochure has been circulated to all local schools and information outlets and contains over 35 different activities for children and young people provided across 160 sessions. Several courses and activities are already fully booked.

Epping Forest Youth Council – September sees the election of 25 Youth Councillors for the district. EFYC Candidate Information Packs are now out, with a closing date of end of August. Any existing Youth Councillors who are under 17 can be re-elected and the current group will stay on until December 2009, to mentor their successors.

Environment and Street Scene -

Epping Sports Centre Contract - Legal and Environment and Street Scene officers are progressing to finalise the legal document for signature as soon as possible

Waltham Abbey Sports Centre - Closure

The Headmaster of King Harold School has left the school so officers have contacted the School again to try and seek a meeting to discuss the exit strategy. A reply has been received from the Acting Head who is trying to arrange a meeting with the Kennall Trust who are now managing the school.

Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool Hall extension

The feasibility study to erect the hall extension to Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool has been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the request for funding is the subject of a report to Cabinet in July. It is envisaged that the project would be completed around summer 2011

Other Sports Centres (SLM managed)

There are still issues around the accomplishment of the Building Maintenance requirements. The Income Share has now been paid by SLM as per the agreed Variation Order. We are awaiting the signed copy of the Variation Order and SLM are being chased.

Free Swimming for over 65s

523 people have applied for a free-swimming card of which 383 (73%) were existing swimmers and 140 (27%) are new customers.