

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time - **Monday 17 October 2022 – 6:30pm**

Venue - **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea**

Councillors appointed to the Committee:

P.N. Osborne (Chair), Mrs V. Cook (Vice-Chair), J. Barnes, J.J. Carroll, C.A. Clark, S.J. Coleman, P.C. Courtel, Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, P.J. Gray, K.M. Harmer (ex-officio), C.A. Madeley, C.R. Maynard and M. Mooney.

Substitute Members: Mrs M.L. Barnes, L.M. Langlands and R.B. Thomas.

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To authorise the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 September 2022 as a correct record of proceedings.

2. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

The Chairman to ask if any Member present is substituting for another Member and, if so, to declare his/her name as substitute Member and the name of the absent Member.

3. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

To consider such other items as the Chair decides are urgent and due notice of which has been given to the Head of Paid Service by 12 Noon on the day of the meeting.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

To receive any disclosure by Members of personal and disclosable pecuniary interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Member regards the personal interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct. Members are reminded of the need to repeat their declaration immediately prior to the commencement of the item in question.

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Rother District Council putting residents at the heart of everything we do.

5. **ROTHER HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY**
(Pages 3 - 60)
6. **EAST SUSSEX TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY** (Pages 61 - 72)
7. **ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL OWNED/LEASED ACCOMMODATION COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY** (Pages 73 - 82)
8. **WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 83 - 84)

Malcolm Johnston
Chief Executive

Agenda Despatch Date: 7 October 2022

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Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	17 October 2022
Title:	Rother Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy
Report of:	Deborah Kenneally, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Timpe
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To present the draft Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy for consideration and amendments prior to public consultation and final approval by Cabinet and full Council.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That Cabinet be requested to approve the draft Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy prior to public consultation commencing in November 2022.

Introduction

1. The Corporate Plan 2014 included a priority regarding the development of the former Bexhill High School site as a leisure destination which consisted of building a new leisure centre including a swimming pool, and residential housing.
2. Following a review by the Project Steering Group in June 2020, Cabinet, at their meeting on 27 July 2020 (Minute CB20/22 refers), approved the suspension of the above project given the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on leisure facilities and future use, and uncertainty surrounding Council finances.
3. Rother District Council (RDC) undertook to review leisure requirements in the longer-term, including the possibility of a new facility in Bexhill, as demand for leisure services and the financial climate became clearer. In the meantime, it was agreed that a new contract to maintain existing leisure services up to 31 March 2024 would be procured.
4. The new leisure management contract for Bexhill Leisure Centre and Bexhill Leisure Pool, operated by Freedom Leisure (FL), commenced on 1 April 2021 and will expire on 31 March 2024. The separate Rye Sports Centre contract, also operated by FL, expires on 31 March 2026.
5. The leisure facilities buildings in Bexhill are coming to the end of their structural 'life' and patch repairs to the current structure are no longer economical or environmentally efficient. The buildings are in need of major refurbishment or replacement and it is therefore important that a strategy is agreed for the provision of appropriate leisure facilities for the future.

6. On 10 January 2022, Cabinet approved the appointment of a leisure strategist to complete market research on residents' use and requirements from built leisure facilities across the district and on health and well-being in general to inform a draft Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy that is realistic and achievable, and supports an active and healthy lifestyle (Minute CB21/70 refers).

Strategists' Brief

7. The strategists' scope includes the following:
 - Identify and engage with a broad spectrum of people across Rother District that accurately reflects the demographic nature of the district.
 - Through using a variety of methods, which may include interviews, focus groups and sample groups, gather specific data on who are current users of leisure facilities and what they use, including Council owned sites; who are not using leisure facilities and why; what facilities current consumers and potential users would wish to have.
 - Gather information on the barriers preventing people using facilities and how these may be overcome.
 - Identify and map current provision of leisure facilities including the type, quality and access for the public. This should build on previous strategy data and use Sport England Methodology and tools to comply with the Sport England Assessing Needs and Opportunities guidance.
 - Undertake a district wide survey with stakeholders, clubs, residents and groups to identify views of current provision and future needs.
 - Consult with agreed stakeholders to identify opportunities and partnerships including the NHS & Public Health, education partners, RDC officers and Members, Active Sussex and the Active Rother Partnership.
 - Develop the Strategy to build on and compliment the strengths of the local area including its natural assets, built and other outdoor physical activity opportunities.
 - Establish the role of physical activity in contributing to Rother communities' health and well-being, Rother's Public Health Strategy, Active Rother Partnership, East Sussex Healthy Weight Plan and RDC's Corporate Plan.
 - Review of national and local relevant strategies and policies, including Moving Communities' trends, demographic data specific to Rother, and industry best practise.
 - Review of each facility in relation to key strategic factors: meeting local need; community capacity; adjacency to/competition with other provision; financial (cost, investment, income generation); building condition; catchment areas; unmet demand; key users e.g. schools for curriculum delivery.

- Draft a Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy, informed by the above research, that includes setting out:
 - Existing provision – facilities and services.
 - Development of national and local strategic context and policy.
 - Assessment of the Rother demographic data.
 - A Needs Analysis for Rother (facilities and services, supply and demand).
 - A new Vision and Strategic Framework for Physical Activity facility provision in Rother – why, what, where, and how this links to and reflects shared priorities for Rother.
 - Delivering the Vision (this will reflect review and assessment of all other aspects of the brief), and what this means in terms of facilities, finance, timescales, resources (Interventions and Commitment).

Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy

8. Please find attached at Appendix B the draft Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy for consideration and amendments prior to public consultation.
9. The timetable and process for review, amendments and final approval is as follows: -
 - O&SC -17 October -review draft and make recommendations for changes to Cabinet.
 - Cabinet -31 October -agree recommendations and any amendments to be made to the draft strategy.
 - November - December -public consultation on final draft strategy
 - O&SC - 23 January 2023- report on results of public consultation
 - Cabinet - 6 February 2023 -final draft strategy for approval
 - Full Council 20 February 2023

Please note: no new proposals can be added to the draft strategy once it has gone to public consultation; proposals included in the consultation can be amended following responses from members of the public.

10. In addition to the above, it should be noted that the current Freedom Leisure contract expires on 31 March 2024 and so time is short in which to procure a new contract if required. It is therefore important that the above timetable is met.

Conclusion

11. The current contract with Freedom Leisure to operate Bexhill built leisure facilities ends on 31 March 2024 and the Bexhill buildings need major refurbishment or replacement prior to a new contract. It is important that the Council has a realistic and achievable strategy in place to ensure continuity of provision of leisure facilities that promotes health and well-being and an active lifestyle across Rother District.

Recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12. That Cabinet be requested to approve the draft Rother Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy prior to public consultation commencing in November 2022.

Financial Implications

13. On the 27 July 2020, Cabinet agreed to suspend the proposed redevelopment of the Bexhill Leisure Centre (Minute CB20/22 refers). Therefore, any recommendations arising from the strategists' report that require significant investment would be unfunded. Should Members decide to proceed with these recommendations funding would need to be identified before commencement.
14. Failure to have a strategy in place may mean further Council funding will be spent on maintaining old, inefficient buildings that may not meet the needs of residents and could mean sites cannot remain open.

Risk Implications

15. There is a risk that if a Rother Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy is not agreed and in place there will be a delay to decisions on the future of built leisure facilities in Rother District and how they will be managed and operated in the future, and this may result in loss of service.

Environmental Impact

16. Fully understanding the needs and requirements of residents in the Rother District, and then providing appropriate leisure facilities to meet these needs, is vital to support the community's health and well-being.
17. The existing built facilities are old and beyond their useful structural lifespan and no longer meet the environmental and 'climate change' aspirations of the future.

Equalities Impact

18. Equalities – a new strategy may improve the offering and inclusiveness of the sites, including making them more welcoming for disabled people.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive:	Malcolm Johnston
Report Contact Officer:	Deborah Kenneally, Head of Neighbourhood Services
e-mail address:	deborah.kenneally@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	A – Executive Summary B – Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy
Relevant Previous Minutes:	CB09/57, CB20/22, CB21/70

Background Papers: -

Reference -

Documents:

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Rother District Council

Executive Summary

Introduction

Our Vision for the future provision of leisure services and facilities in Rother is:

‘Working in partnership to enable provision of good quality, accessible, and inclusive leisure for both residents of, and visitors to, Rother, because of the positive impact being active has on our health and wellbeing in our place.’

In order to challenge and address inactivity in Rother our Shared Outcomes are:

- **Active Environments** – environments that support and facilitate every day physical activity for everyone
- **Active Communities** – supported and developed community assets to increase physical activity levels and build community resilience
- **Healthy Individuals** – decreasing inequalities, increased awareness and capability in our inactive population to change their behaviour and increase physical activity levels long-term
- **Partnerships and Collaborative Working** - improved partnership working to increase physical activity opportunities and participation across our population

Key Principles

The key Principles underpinning our Vision are:

Key Principles	
1. The council’s role is one of enabler and sign-poster to opportunities to be physically active.	5. Leisure facilities are inclusive and sustainable and should create opportunities for residents and visitors to be active, irrespective of ability, age, gender, ethnicity, income and belief.
2. Mutually beneficial partnerships aligned to deliver on shared priorities and outcomes and maximise community access to existing leisure provision.	6. To promote and provide infrastructure to encourage and facilitate increased use of walking and cycling routes.
3. All new provision should be designed to achieve carbon neutrality.	7. The Leisure Strategy will co-exist with, and support, other relevant RDC and partner strategies, particularly the RDC Corporate Plan 2020-2027, the RDC Emerging Local Plan (to 2039) and the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy (draft) to promote amongst the residents of Rother the benefits of physical activity for good health, positive wellbeing, cultural diversity and economic development.
4. Enabling provision of accessible and inclusive place-based provision of leisure facilities is important to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the district.	

Our approach will provide for residents who are socially and economically disadvantaged to ensure they are able to benefit from affordable and accessible opportunities which contribute to reduced health inequalities and improved quality of life.

Partnership is key to delivery of our Leisure Strategy and Options to ensure co-ordination across services, and that it co-exists with the policies and priorities of our local and wider partners.

Why does RDC need a Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy?

The importance of physical activity for individual and community health has been highlighted through the impact of Covid 19 pandemic which has also exacerbated health inequalities across the UK. It has become more important than ever to focus on preventative health measures, including physical activity and to invest in those people who need it most. In Rother, 26.5% of the population is inactive, higher than regional and national averages. RDC needs a strategy against which it can make decisions about priorities for future leisure provision which will impact on community health and wellbeing.

Extensive community and stakeholder consultation were undertaken to inform this strategy:

Table 1 Consultation Feedback Summary

Summary Consultation Feedback	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly, Rother residents recognise the need to be more active to improve their health. Many of them are already active but there are issues e.g. cost, time, awareness that prevent individuals from taking part. Some residents responding to consultation want to be more active but have not yet changed their lifestyles – engaging them in opportunities to be active is key moving forward. Whilst many people use the existing RDC facilities there is a desire to see more modern facilities e.g. pools and gyms, and to be able to access provision during the day. This is an issue in respect of dual-use sites due to curriculum use. There is a desire to see a new swimming pool, preferably laned. The lack of any teaching pools impacts on the ability of children to learn to swim; in a coastal area this is a critical life skill. Many clubs have ambitions to grow and would like to see improved facilities to support this. Improved facilities for those with a disability are highlighted as a priority. Access to facilities in the daytime is key, particularly for older residents. There is a need to provide more physical activities for children The facilities most wanted in the district are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Laned swimming pool ➢ Outdoor fitness facilities ➢ Café <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Improved facilities for disabled ➢ More local gyms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of residents want to travel no more than 15 minutes to a leisure facility (31.4%) Over 40% of residents said they wanted to do exercise outdoors (4 times more than any other response). Over 40% of residents said the cost of current facilities was too high. 50% of respondents would like prices at RDC facilities to be 50% cheaper The vast majority of respondents (51%) want to see a laned swimming pool in the District, more outdoor fitness facilities, and more local gyms and studios Key barriers to residents being physically active include cost, awareness of facilities and activities, limited disability access, lack of provision for teenagers and young people, distance to travel The activities that people most want to take part in include walking, cycling, swimming, 80% of residents said they did the same or more exercise since Covid. 55% of residents said that the change in their exercise regime was permanent 80% of residents wanted to be within 15 minutes of any centre or facility they used with 60% still travelling by car. At 30% swimming facilities were twice as much wanted as any other facility. Gyms attract 10% of respondents and studios/halls 20% of respondents. A very positive outcome from Covid is that 55% of residents have become aware that they need to be more physically active to improve their health.

Summary Consultation Feedback

- Partnership working is key, particularly in relation to swimming provision.
- Provision of inclusive and affordable activities is as important as good quality facilities

In terms of RDC’s leisure facilities:

Table 2 Summary Overview of RDC’s Leisure Facilities

Summary Overview of RDC’s Leisure Facilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leisure assets are ageing (community leisure facilities have a lifespan of 30-35 years, in general) • There is no teaching pool in the district • There is limited access to laned swimming pools in Bexhill • Bexhill Leisure pool is well-used but anecdotal feedback identifies it is challenging to do lane swimming in the leisure pool environment • The dual-use sites all have different arrangements; some are supported by RDC and others are not. These facilities do not provide daytime access to the Rother community, the majority of whom are ageing and want to use facilities during the day. Financially, RDC’s subsidy should reflect the extent of community use provided, and the community benefit derived. Financial arrangements underpinning the dual-use agreements are outdated and are in need of review. • There is an under-supply of swimming pools to meet demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The future of Bexhill Leisure Pool needs to be considered; retention of the existing building will require significant investment, or there could be an option to retain the building but change what is provided or divest of the building. A decision is needed now given the existing lease has a surrender clause in it for 2024. • There is significant opportunity to work in partnership with Hastings Borough Council to invest in a range of sustainable swimming pool offers, that complement each other and offer best value to both communities • There is currently sufficient provision of sports halls, but none should be lost, and community access needs to be retained at all those that currently offer it. Moving forward, provision of multi-purpose hall space would offer increased flexibility offer a range of both formal and informal activity programmes, targeted at those who would benefit from being more active. • There is opportunity to develop increased use of the outdoor space and other informal assets e.g. community centres/village halls to reduce reliance on formal built provision, as well as the beach, seafront, recreational grounds and parks. This reflects the move for some residents to being active outside.

Strategy Aim

The aim of developing this strategy is to contribute to improved quality of life for Rother residents and visitors and facilitate provision of good quality opportunities to be physically active on a regular. The role of Rother District Council (the Council/RDC) in co-ordinating, facilitating, enabling, and in some cases delivering opportunities to be physically active is key e.g. Active Rother, whether provision relates to facilities or services, indoors and outdoors.

RDC Objective

To provide the maximum access to residents for the various health, leisure and well-being activities they wish to engage in with specific regard for those living in deprived circumstances or who have disabilities/life-limiting conditions. Access to services must address affordability and find a balance between the needs of Bexhill and rural residents and be affordable in the long term to RDC.

The criteria for assessing proposed developments are identified as:

- Be or become accessible by public transport from those living in the most deprived communities and encourage alternative forms of transport where possible.
- Make a contribution to addressing health inequalities.
- Contribute to the goal of the Council achieving carbon neutral status by 2030
- RDC provision should complement that delivered by the private sector

Strategy Implementation

RDC will be focusing on the points listed in paragraphs 6.9 to 6.20 of the Leisure Strategy report.

It is clear from the research that residents want a laned swimming facility. Primary research also shows a need for providing a learn to swim and exercise/pleasure pool facility. Rother has the opportunity to deliver a facility that services a much broader catchment area than the District.

The needs in the rural areas and Bexhill are broadly the same but when considering a pool facility regard needs to be given to location and the size and type of pool. The time taken to get to any facility will be a strong determinant in how much it is used.

Outdoor facilities are now a high priority for residents both in rural areas and Bexhill.

There is a need to consider the significant cost to invest in any facility given historic low user rates, and the significant increase in energy costs combined with the need to make any facility carbon neutral.

There is an opportunity to reduce the risk of the leisure operator's dependency on RDC through changing the parameters of the leisure contract.

Where possible RDC will work across boundaries with neighbouring authorities.

Proposed Strategy

To become the provider of a swimming facility which is not offered by private providers and to become partners in providing 'dry' indoor services and outdoor built services.

To provide a pool facility which will maximise accessibility for residents. The location should be assessed on the current and future location of residents in the district taking into account the radius of travel for residents in different parts of the district. To provide specific focus on support for disabled and those from deprived areas. Any new facility should be designed to achieve carbon neutrality so location and building orientation will be a key determinant. To deliver the strategy without the need for closure of the existing facilities to ensure residents do not 'fall away' during any construction period.

<p>1. Become a 'sign poster' rather than a 'provider of facilities' for residents.</p>	<p>3. Support all Towns and Parishes with the creation of better outdoor facilities where required. Town and Parish Councils have a clear understanding of their residents' needs and can create very successful facilities with high usage as demonstrated by the Battle model.</p>
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<p>2. Optimise delivery of available non-swimming 'dry' facilities through joint arrangements with existing owners of private sports facilities including clubs and schools using subsidies to help offset the increasing cost those facilities are now facing. This approach will give RDC long term flexibility.</p>	<p>5. RDC will work in partnership to plan and deliver inclusive and accessible swimming pool facilities effectively across Rother and Hastings areas, given proximity of geographical boundaries.</p>
<p>3. RDC's swimming offer will complement facilities provided by the commercial sector, and will maximise accessibility for residents, assessed on both existing and future locations of residents. Any new swimming offer may need to be co-located with other provision that generates both throughput and revenue to ensure financial sustainability. Existing swimming provision would remain open until any new facility provision is developed.</p>	<p>6. To build on promoting and providing infrastructure to increase the use of cycling and walking.</p>

RDC is clear it is a priority to improve community health and wellbeing; facilitating opportunities for physical activity and leisure can support people to be more active. This Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy provides a summary of need up to 2033 using technical analysis and consultation with partners and residents. It sets the strategic framework for addressing this need through a range of both formal and informal provision. This approach mirrors the feedback from the independent market research. The Strategy should be updated periodically alongside other RDC key corporate plans.

In order to deliver the Strategy, investment (resources, finance and time) will be required in outdoor places and spaces in which to be active, existing community facilities, partnerships, and indoor facilities, Innovative funding models, strong partnerships and collaboration will be required.

The next steps in Strategy delivery are:

- Production of a Delivery Plan with timescales
- Work with existing partners to identify options to meet priorities in existing facilities
- Identify new potential partnership working opportunities
- Establish the resources required to deliver the priorities
- Investigate external funding opportunities

The Delivery Plan will support this strategy, identifying priorities for action including how and when actions can be taken.

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Health, Well-being and Leisure Facilities Strategy 2023-2033

Rother District Council

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A report by Strategic Leisure Limited

September 2022



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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Built Facility Audit- Rother

Appendix 2 - Supply and Demand Evidence Base (in preparation to follow)

Appendix 3 - Summary of Community Consultation (Survey Mechanics Market Research)

Appendix 4 - Summary of Community Consultation (SLL)

Appendix 5 - Summary of Sports Club Consultation (from joint Hastings and Rother work)

Appendix 6 - Summary of Schools' Consultation (from joint Hastings and Rother work- to follow)

Appendix 7 – Summary of Parish and Town Council Consultation

Appendix 8 – Stakeholders Consulted

Appendix 9 – Rother District Strategic Context

Executive Member Foreword

TBC

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The aim of developing this strategy is to contribute to improved quality of life for Rother residents and visitors and facilitate provision of good quality opportunities to be physically active on a regular basis. The role of Rother District Council (the Council/RDC) in co-ordinating, facilitating, enabling, and in some cases delivering opportunities to be physically active is key e.g. Active Rother, whether provision relates to facilities or services, indoors and outdoors.
- 1.2. 'Leisure' means physical activity, sport and recreation – programmes, services and facilities – provided/facilitated by the Council, its partners, community organisations, private facilities and schools, which provide an opportunity for individuals, clubs and teams to take part and be physically active. "Leisure Facilities" refers to all built facilities which are used, or could be used to deliver the concept of leisure within Rother.
- 1.3. This strategy sits alongside the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2027, Emerging Local Plan 2019-2039 , and the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy to ensure that important corporate considerations including carbon reduction, reducing inequality and maximising the value of Rother's assets are integral principles in the way that leisure facilities are delivered.
- 1.4. The strategy is supported by a detailed Built Facilities Supply and Demand Audit (Appendix 2) which identifies the current and future facility needs to support an increase in population in the District. The Strategy is also informed by detailed community, sports club and school consultation and feedback from key stakeholders, National Governing Bodies of Sport and neighbouring authorities.
- 1.5. Rother's Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy identifies the current and future built leisure facility needs of Rother's population through to 2033 and provides the Council with an overview of leisure provision and requirements across the District. Linked work currently being undertaken across Hastings Borough and Rother District into built facilities also informs this Strategy and particularly the future direction for swimming pool provision.
- 1.6. The Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy recognises that there are significant challenges with delivering the level of infrastructure required, and whilst the Council has a role in championing and enabling this, it is unrealistic to expect the Council to be able to deliver everything. Innovative partnerships, particularly cross-boundary working, cross-sector sustainable delivery and funding models, and capital investment will be needed.

2. Our Vision, Outcomes and Key Principles

2.1. Our Vision for the future provision of leisure services and facilities in Rother is:



2.2. Our vision is guided by a recognition of national, regional and local policy framework but particularly through local insight identified through the development of the strategy.

2.3. Moving more as part of everyday life is recognised as an essential component of our physical and mental wellbeing. Our population is ageing, people live more sedentary lives and health inequalities have increased.

2.4. In order to challenge and address inactivity in Rother our Shared Outcomes are:

- **Active Environments** – environments that support and facilitate every day physical activity for everyone
- **Active Communities** – supported and developed community assets to increase physical activity levels and build community resilience
- **Healthy Individuals** – decreasing inequalities, increased awareness and capability in our inactive population to change their behaviour and increase physical activity levels long-term
- **Partnerships and Collaborative Working** - improved partnership working to increase physical activity opportunities and participation across our population

Key Principles

The key Principles underpinning this Vision are:

1. Enabling provision of accessible and inclusive place-based provision of leisure facilities is important to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the District.
2. The council's role is one of enabler and sign-poster to opportunities to be physically active.
3. Leisure facilities are inclusive and sustainable, and should create opportunities for residents and visitors to be active, irrespective of ability, age, gender, ethnicity, income and belief.
4. That the Council's partner Leisure Provider (for RDC owned/leased facilities) is financially sustainable in both the short and long term.
5. Mutually beneficial partnerships aligned to deliver on shared priorities and outcomes and maximise community access to existing leisure provision.
6. All new provision should be designed to achieve carbon neutrality.
7. To promote and provide infrastructure to encourage and facilitate increased use of walking and cycling routes.
8. The Leisure Strategy will co-exist with, and support, other relevant RDC and partner strategies, particularly the RDC Corporate Plan 2020-2027, the RDC Emerging Local Plan (to 2039) and the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy (draft) to promote amongst the residents of Rother the benefits of physical activity for good health, positive wellbeing, cultural diversity and economic development.

- 2.6. Our approach will provide for residents who are socially and economically disadvantaged to ensure they are able to benefit from affordable and accessible opportunities which contribute to reduced health inequalities and improved quality of life.
- 2.7. Partnership is key to delivery of our Leisure Strategy and Options to ensure co-ordination across services, and that it co-exists with the policies and priorities of our local and wider partners.
- 2.8. The term “Leisure Facilities” refers to built facilities used to deliver opportunities to be more physically active within Rother, as well as informal provision such as outdoor gyms, walking and cycling routes

Why do we need a Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy?

- 2.9. The importance of physical activity for individual and community health has been highlighted through the impact of Covid 19 pandemic which has also exacerbated health inequalities across the UK. It has become more important than ever to focus on preventative health measures, including physical activity and to invest in those people who need it most. In Rother, 26.5% of the population is inactive.

National Context

- 2.10. There is now a national focus on physical activity and health and wellbeing, particularly through the Health Promotion Office (announced in March 2021); this focus will need to be a national drive to achieve pre Covid 19 physical activity participation rates and to build on this to ensure those who are inactive are provided with opportunities to become active. Chair of ukactive, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson said in January 2021: “ the sport and physical activity sector must be able to survive, recover, and develop to play its fullest role in society”.
- 2.11. Developing a strategic framework to support and promote collaboration in terms of physical activity provision will strengthen the Rother offer, and support the targeting of those communities who will most benefit by being more active.
- 2.12. Nationally a more active population is not only healthier, but also impacts positively on the current costs of social care, mental health, dementia and it is estimated reduces GP visits nationally by 30 million a year. The 2019 study by Sheffield Hallam University for Sport England showed that for every £1 invested in sport, £4 of value is returned. Community sport and physical activity is worth £85.5 billion annually; £42 billion of this figure is social value, including improved work productivity, reduced crime, stronger communities, educational attainment, and of course healthier people.
- 2.13. Rother District Council recognises the value and importance of physical activity. Rother District Council (RDC) is a leading partner and has a well-established and respected independent leisure provider. It also has an active and engaged voluntary sector, a supportive and proactive Active Rother, private sector provision, high quality outside environments, including the coast, and a network of sports clubs.

- 2.14. There is a growing acknowledgment within government, national organisations and services about the benefits of becoming and staying active and there is a willingness to work collaboratively. There is a real understanding of the need to focus on increasing activity in those least likely to participate and embedding active living (i.e. embedding activity into everyday lives), into communities in an inclusive way.

Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality accounting for 6% of deaths globally. People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20% to 35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke compared to those who have a sedentary lifestyle. Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon and breast cancer and with improved mental health. In older adults physical activity is associated with increased functional capacities. The estimated direct cost of physical inactivity to the NHS across the UK is over £0.9 billion per year. ¹

Recommended sport and physical activity guidelines

- 2.15. In July 2011 (updated January 2020) the four UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) published physical activity guidelines in a joint CMO report 'Start Active, Stay Active' ([UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/431222/uk-cmo-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf)) covering early years, children and young people, adults and older adults. These guidelines emphasise that physical activity does not refer in its entirety just to sport; it is wholly inclusive of all forms of activity for example play, gardening, and walking. Early experiences often shape feelings, which can discourage activity, resulting in little or no interest to participate at any stage in life.
- 2.16. This presents a huge challenge to educate and promote the benefits of leading an active lifestyle which can improve our mental and physical wellbeing, confidence, interpersonal skills and sense of achievement. In Rother it is important that we promote and educate individuals and communities about this message, creating awareness of these benefits.
- 2.17. **Public Health England's Everybody Active Every Day (EAED 2014) (and the review of the implementation of this strategy, March 2018 [Everybody active, every day: framework for physical activity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681222/everybody-active-every-day-framework-for-physical-activity.pdf))** sets out the context in which long term health conditions associated with inactivity such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease contribute not only to NHS costs, but cause a greater dependency on homes, residential and nursing care. The framework centres around 3 agendas:
- Making physical activity the social norm;
 - Making environments accessible for all; and
 - Making physical activity inclusive for everyone.

¹ Source: Public Health England

2.18. It recommends action in 4 areas:

1. **Creating a social movement towards an active society**, this message is that being active should not be a choice, needs to be a linking thread that unites the public sector with the voice of charities, local residents and community leaders. It is a message that should be woven into the policies, commissioning and planning decisions made every day across the country.
2. **Activating a network of moving professionals**, this is about encouraging and supporting the hundreds of thousands of professionals and volunteers who work directly with the public every day to do what's best to make physical activity the social norm.
3. **Creating the right spaces in active environments**, shaping the built and natural environment so that being active becomes the preferred choice.
4. **Scaling up working interventions that make us active**, understanding what works using evidence based approaches and such interventions to achieve large impact.

Figure 1: Benefits of regular physical activity ²



² Public Health England's Everybody Active Every Day (EAED 2014)

2.19. The 2018 review of the Public Health Strategy recognised these specific challenges:

1. Tacking inequalities
2. Creating an active society
3. Creating an active environment

Sport England Strategy – ‘Uniting the Movement’

2.20. Sport England’s vision is that everyone in England feels able to take part in sport or physical activity, regardless of age, background or ability; key priorities of the 2021 Sport England Strategy are:

1. Recover and reinvent
2. An active and healthier life
3. Fairer access to physical activity
4. Strengthen communities
5. Active environments

3. Background Context

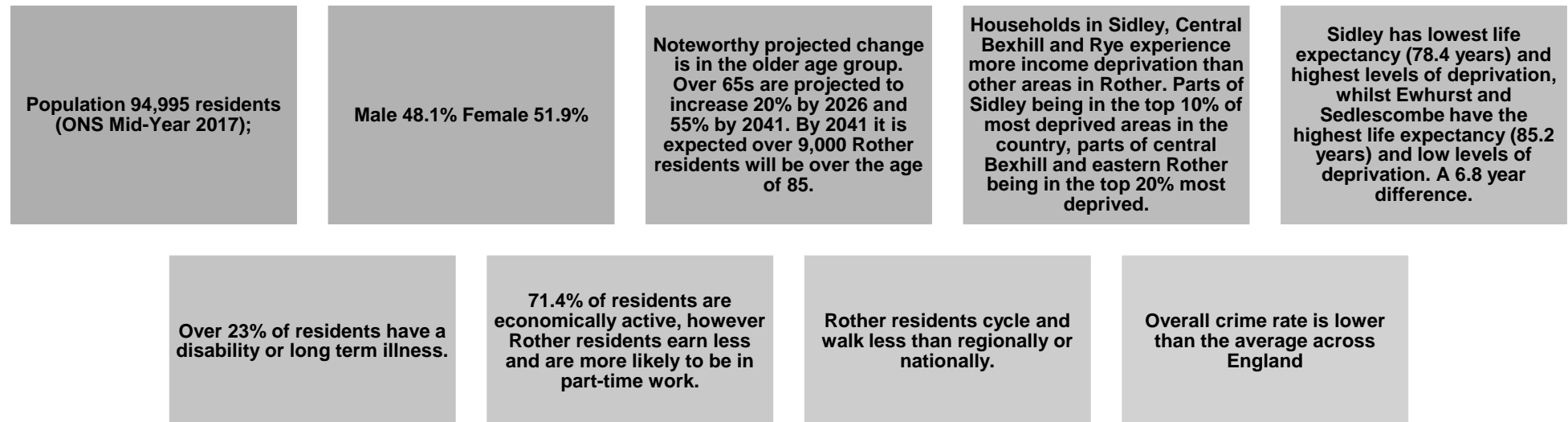
Rother – the District

- 3.1. Located in the easternmost part of East Sussex, and bordering Kent, Rother is a predominantly rural district which includes pockets of severe and enduring deprivation, within an area of relative affluence. The District derives its name from the River Rother which traverses the northern part of the area from Ticehurst through rural villages to reach the English Channel at Rye.
- 3.2. The District covers some 200 square miles and serves a population of around 90,000 residents. The main urban areas are Bexhill with its distinctive town centre and seaside character and the historic towns of Battle and Rye.

Figure 2: Map of Rother District



Figure 3: Key district statistics



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Table 1: Summary - Rother district profile

Statistic	Rother District	England Average
Car Ownership	19.0% of the existing population does not own a car	26% of people across England do not own a car
Single person households	36.8% all ages; almost 14% are aged 65 or over. This has implications with an increased risk of loneliness.	England average all ages 30.21%. England average aged 65 or over 12.35%
% of the population with qualifications	25%	22%
People aged 16 – 74 in full time employment	29%	39%
Life expectancy	83.7 for females and 81 for males	Higher than the South East male (80.7) and higher than England average male (79.6). Lower than the South East female (84.1) but higher than England average female (83.2).
Obesity level at Year 6	16.6% 2018/2019	20.2% 2018/2019
Adult obesity level	22.9%	24.1%
Lone parent families	23.3%	24.5%
Physically active (Undertake at least 150 minutes per week in the past month)	62%	63%
Physically Inactive (Undertake less than 30 minutes in the past month)	26.5%	25%
Rural residents under Output Area Classification	30.6%	10.5%
Urbanites under Output Area Classification	22.2%	18.6%
Suburbanites under Output Area Classification	23.8%	20.8%
Constrained city dwellers under Output Area Classification	6.6%	6.2%
Hard pressed living under Output Area Classification	14.6%	17.2%

N.B Output Area classification refers to a hierarchical geodemographic classification across the UK which identifies areas of the country with similar characteristics; it covers identified as Output/Super Output areas which are small areas with specific deprivation indicators.

Health in summary

- 3.3. The health of people in Rother is varied compared with the England average. About 17% (2,210) children live in low income families.
- **Health inequalities:** Life expectancy is 7.4 years lower for men and 5.5 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Rother than in the least deprived areas.
 - **Child health:** In Year 6, 16.6% (134) of children are classified as obese, lower than the average for England. Levels of smoking in pregnancy are worse than the England average.
 - **Adult health:** Estimated levels of excess weight in adults (aged 18+) are lower than the England average. The rates of new sexually transmitted infections and new cases of tuberculosis are lower than the England average. The rate of killed and seriously injured on roads is worse than the England average. The rates of under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases and under 75 mortality rate from cancer are lower than the England average.
- * rate per 100,000 population

Adult Participation

- 3.4. The Sport England Active Lives Survey (November 2020-2021) identifies that
- 61.6% of the district's residents do 150+ minutes of physical activity per week.
 - 11.9% of the district's residents do 30-149 minutes of physical activity per week.
 - 26.5% of the district's residents do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week. This level of inactivity is higher than both the national and regional averages.

Demographic Summary

- 3.5. Rother has an ageing population. This is set to increase significantly by 2036. This will have an impact on healthcare, housing requirements, the labour market and economic growth.
- 3.6. The District is ranked 181st on the Indices of Multiple deprivation. Within the District, the areas with higher levels of deprivation are the Sidley, Central and Sackville parts of Bexhill and the eastern extremes of the District.
- 3.7. In comparison with the national picture, the only part of the District to fall within the top 20% most deprived areas is within the Sidley ward.
- 3.8. However, for child poverty specifically, the Bexhill areas of St Michaels and Sackville as well as a part of Rye are within the top 20% nationally whilst part of Sidley falls within the top 10%.
- 3.9. About 17% (2,210) children live in low income families. Life expectancy for men is higher than the England average.
- 3.10. Life expectancy is 7.4 years lower for men and 5.5 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Rother than in the least deprived areas.
- 3.11. In Year 6, 16.6% (134) of children are classified as obese, better than the average for England. Levels of smoking in pregnancy are worse than the England average.
- 3.12. Estimated levels of excess weight in adults (aged 18+) are better than the England average. The rates of new sexually transmitted infections and new cases of tuberculosis are better than the England average. The rate of killed and seriously injured on roads is worse than the England average. The rates of under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases and under 75 mortality rate from cancer are better than the England average.
- * rate per 100,000 population
- 3.13. There are also relatively low levels car ownership, reflecting the deprivation in the district. In Bexhill, and Sidley 20% of the population do not have access to private transport; the majority of these residents will be the elderly.

Overview of the Leisure Facilities Supply and Demand Audit

- 3.14. The Leisure Facilities Supply and Demand Audit (Appendix 2) considers facility provision for both the existing and projected future population of Rother through to 2033 (to inform the end date of the Council's Emerging Local Plan 2019-2039).

3.15. The scope of the audit incorporates the following public, private and voluntary sector owned/operated facilities:

- Sports Halls (3 badminton courts +)
- Swimming Pools
- Studios
- Indoor Bowls Rinks
- Martial arts/boxing facilities,
- Gymnastics facilities
- Activity Halls (1 badminton Court)
- Health and Fitness Suites
- Indoor Tennis Courts
- Squash courts
- Indoor cricket nets,
- Outdoor facilities

3.16. This audit has been carried out using the methodology provided by Sport England (Assessment of Needs and Opportunities Guidance (ANOG)) and provides a robust and objective evidence base to support requests for on-site provision and contributions from developer . It can also be used to support applications for grant funding for sport and leisure projects, not just by the Council but by others, such as sports clubs and schools.

7. Key findings from the Built Leisure Facilities Supply and Demand Audit are summarised in Table 2:

Table 2: Key Findings – Leisure Facilities Supply and Demand Audit

Facility Type	Key Issues to Address
Sports Halls and Activity Halls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 11 sports halls, on 9 sites. There is an equivalent of 43 badminton courts, of which 28 are available for community use in the weekly peak period (12 sports halls provide for pay and play usage, and 16 sports halls provide for sports clubs/organisations. The fifteen unavailable courts represent 34% of the total supply. • The average build date for all the sports halls is 1999, and 1990 for the public leisure centres only. This means there is an ageing stock of sports halls in Rother (the average lifespan of public sports facilities is 30 years). On average, publicly accessible sports halls are 32 years old. • There are two public leisure centres (Bexhill Leisure Centre and Rye Sports Centre) and five educational sites, of which one is managed by a Trust rather than in-house. • Battle Sports Centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Is the largest overall sports hall site in the District, in terms of scale and capacity. ➢ Has a four-court hall and an extensive activity hall. ➢ Has a capacity of 2,427 visits in the weekly peak period. ➢ Can provide for multiple sports use across the two halls. • Five of the other sites have a four-court hall

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Facility Type	Key Issues to Address
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three are 35m x 20m: Bexhill Academy, Bexhill College Sports Centre and Bexhill Leisure Centre. This is the size that Sport England and the National Governing Bodies for hall sports recommend for a four-court hall. These dimensions provide a sports hall that can cater for all hall sports at the community level of participation. The scale also meets the requirements for hall sports club development. • The four-court halls at Battle Sports Centre, Robertsbridge Community College and Rye Sports Centre are 33m x 18m i.e. they are smaller. This size of hall can also accommodate most indoor hall sports at the community level of participation but has less space behind and between the courts. • There is a 27m x 18m three-court hall at Vinehall School. • The existing district population needs access to 26 badminton courts to meet demand. • 91% of all demand for sports halls in the district is met. • The three sports halls in Bexhill are the busiest facilities in the district. • 59% of all available sports hall capacity is used in the weekly peak period. • Bexhill Leisure Centre has an estimated 100% of its capacity used at peak times i.e. weekday evenings. • There is unmet demand of 2.3 badminton courts in the district. Whilst the best location to address this is close to the site of the existing Bexhill Leisure Centre, the level of unmet demand is insufficient to require the building of a new sports hall. Unmet demand could be addressed by opening up increased capacity in existing sports halls in the district e.g. Bexhill Academy, Bexhill College. • Supply of, and demand for sports hall badminton courts is balanced in the district; this means that none of the existing stock can be lost unless a replacement is provided, or additional capacity is created in the remaining facilities. • Community access to the existing dual-use sites (Northam, Battle, Robertsbridge, Rye) needs to be maintained, but there is potential to review the financial arrangements underpinning these dual-use agreements. Battle provides the optimum model of dual use which could provide a template for other similar sites in the district. RDC’s financial contribution should be aligned to the extent of community access provided, so that community benefit is the element subsidised.
Swimming Pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are four swimming pool sites in Rother, each has one main pool. • There are no teaching pools in the District.

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Facility Type	Key Issues to Address
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average build date of all swimming pools in the district is 1992 and 1997 for the public sites. This means public swimming pools are an average of 25 years old. • There are three 25m pools in Rother • Bexhill Leisure Pool has four lanes, but is L-shaped with a substantial element of leisure water. • Rye Sports Centre is a four-lane pool but is the smallest in the District. • Battle Abbey Prep School is the largest pool and has six lanes. Battle Abbey Prep School is a private facility, does not provide for pay and play use. • Crowhurst Park is a free-form pool with 324 sqm of water, making it the second-largest swimming pool in the District. • The current population needs 988 sq. m of water space to meet demand. There is currently publicly accessible swimming pool provision of 843 sq. m. This means there is an existing under-supply of swimming pool provision. • 78% of the demand for swimming in Rother is met; this is lower than both the regional average (92%) and also the national average (90%). • A total of 4% of Rother's demand for swimming comes from the 10% most-deprived lower super output areas (LSOAs) nationally. Overall, Rother ranks in the 50% most deprived of all local authorities. • Rye Sports Centre is very close to the largest areas of most deprivation. There are small areas of high deprivation close to Battle Abbey Prep School. Bexhill Leisure Pool is located on the boundary with Hastings and there is an area of high deprivation in Hastings very close to the site • Unmet demand for swimming is highest in Bexhill -on Sea. • There is limited provision of laned swimming in the district. • Future opportunities to increase provision of swimming pools should be considered, and specifically a laned pool with daytime access. This would better meet the needs of older residents in district and better contribute to opportunities for residents and visitors to be more active. The older population, and specifically the 85+ age group is set to increase significantly to 2036.

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Facility Type	Key Issues to Address
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer term, if the Council considers replacing its ageing leisure facilities, consideration should be given to provision of a dedicated teaching pool. The depth of the existing pools may limit the water space suitable for learn to swim, which requires a depth of 0.9m. • A dedicated teaching pool maximises the water space for learn to swim. Swimming is an important life skill, especially in a coastal authority.
Health and Fitness Suites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 361 fitness stations in Rother. 149 (41% of these are in pay and play facilities. There are 47 fitness stations on educational sites, and 165 in commercial facilities. • There is a need to increase provision of community accessible fitness stations
Studios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to provide additional studios to cater for demand from a growing population.
Indoor Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no existing indoor tennis courts in the district. • RDC has been approached concerning the development of Padel Tennis courts in the district. This is a fast growing sport, with potential commercial benefit; RDC should consider the feasibility of introducing paddle tennis as part of any future outdoor sports hub provision.
Indoor Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two club-based indoor bowls facilities in the district. • RDC to support the continued provision of existing indoor bowls clubs in the District, and the continued availability of community pay and play.
Squash Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 7 squash courts in the district. • There are 2 pay and play squash courts at Bexhill Leisure Centre, 3 at Cooden Sports and Social Club (open for community use), and 3 at Rye Lawn Tennis and Squash Club. Membership is required to access this facility. • As a minimum, RDC need to maintain existing level of pay and play squash provision at Bexhill Leisure Centre. • Using the NGB requirement of 1 court per 10,000 population, there is no current shortfall of squash courts across the district. • RDC to consider the inclusion of squash courts as part of the development of any new leisure facility within the district, to replace existing ageing facilities. • Given that there is projected population increase of circa 12,000 by 2036, there is sufficient existing provision of pay and play squash courts to meet demand.

Facility Type	Key Issues to Address
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of provision needs to reflect existing levels of demand and participation in squash
Martial arts/ boxing facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is one main martial arts club in Rother district, based in Bexhill on Sea. This is Kuk Sool Won club, offering a range of martial arts activities.
Indoor cricket nets,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are indoor cricket nets provided at Robertsbridge Community Sports Hall. These are the only indoor cricket nets in the district, and are well-used.
Gymnastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1066 Gymnastics Club has its own dedicated gymnastics facilities; this club has circa 800 members. • Gymnastic activities are also offered from Bexhill Leisure Centre.
Outdoor activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor provision in the district includes walking and cycling routes, green gyms, the beach and seafront

- 3.18. In addition to the built facility provision, it is important to highlight the significant contribution to physical activity by Active Rother and the programmes they provide around the district, and at facilities such as Bexhill Leisure Centre, the latter in conjunction with RDC’s partner leisure operator, Freedom Leisure.
- 3.19. The range of Walking Programmes e.g. walking football, walking netball offered from Bexhill Leisure Centre attracts significant levels of daytime participation from those who are inactive/older/have a long term health condition. These are vital activities for these individuals as being physically delivers both social and health benefits.

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3.20. Active Rother currently works in partnership to provide the following:

Table 3: Active Rother Provision

Activity	Partner Provider
Walking Football	Old Bexhillians in partnership with Freedom Leisure
First Steps Into Walking Football	Volunteer led group in partnership with Freedom Leisure
Walking Netball	Volunteer led group in partnership with Freedom Leisure
Bexhill Walking Cricket	Bexhill Walking Cricket Club in partnership with Freedom Leisure
Sidley Walking Cricket	Sidley Walking Cricket Club in partnership with Freedom Leisure
Battle Knights Walking Football	Battle Town Football Club
Walk2Run	Running Space in partnership with The Pelham Community Hub
Active Friends	Sally Taylor
Pilates and Lattes	PureFit
Exercise To Music – Low Level	Dance-Ability
Exercise To Music – Medium Level	Dance-Ability
Chi-Gong	Alex Bolton
Pickleball	Bexhill Pickleball
Ninfield Health Walk	The Conservation Volunteers
Ravenside Health Walk	The Conservation Volunteers
Rye Health Walk	The Conservation Volunteers
Bexhill Seafront Health Walk	The Conservation Volunteers
Battle Health Walk	The Conservation Volunteers
Sidley Health Walk	The Conservation Volunteers
Tennis For Free	RDC in partnership with LTA and Adam Field
Beginners Running	Rye Runners

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Activity	Partner Provider
Table Tennis	The Pelham Health and Wellbeing Community Hub
The Pelham Growz - Gardening Group	The Pelham Health and Wellbeing Community Hub
Powerhooping	Fit and Fab Families
Clubbercise Adults	Fit and Fab Families
Exercise for COPD	Bexhill Breathers
Exercise for Cancer Rehabilitation	Brighter Outlook
Ladies Only Exercise Class	Jas Fit

3.21. These are activities which specifically meet Active Rother Partnership priorities (* see below) and have been supported by Active Rother through grant funding to support sessions and/or coach training. It is far from being a list of all sport and physical activity opportunities in Rother. The sessions are in the main happening on an on-going and weekly basis, unless specified.

3.22. There are also activities funded/promoted by Active Rother which partners run for fixed time periods e.g. children’s activities during the summer holidays.

*** Active Rother priorities are: To facilitate the provision of flexible, attractive and sustainable opportunities in Rother for the population to participate in sport and physical activity, with a particular focus on inactive individuals from under-represented population groups and priority areas.**

3.23. This type of activity offer is really important given the fact that over a quarter of Rother residents are inactive and over a third are not active enough to derive any health benefits. Outreach health and wellbeing is defined as programmes/activities/opportunities to be physically active in environments other than leisure centres. This could include the great outdoors, including beaches, informal facilities such as village halls or community centres, and informal settings such as parks, open space, walking and cycling routes. Outreach health and wellbeing provision encompasses a range of formal and informal activities.

3.24. Resident feedback makes it very clear that having access to more local outdoor provision is key, so establishing sustainable partnerships to develop and deliver this is important moving forward. RDC cannot provide all local outdoor provision, but in an enabling and facilitating role it has a key part to play in supporting Town and Parish Councils and other local partners to develop e.g. outdoor fitness provision (most wanted), better quality pitches, play equipment and facilities for teenagers and young people.

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4. Summary of Consultation Feedback

4.1. Consultation was undertaken to inform this Strategy across a wide range of stakeholders (see Appendix 8). The following reflects the headline feedback from the Rother community, parish and town councils, sports clubs and education institutions.

Table 4: Summary of Consultation Feedback

Stakeholder	Summary Feedback
Community Market Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 94 responses to the online survey. • The majority of respondents participate in physical activity • Walking/hiking is the activity in which most participants take part • Swimming(outdoor and indoor) is the third highest participative activity • The majority of respondents take part in physical activity to stay fit, for enjoyment and for their physical and mental health and well-being. • The majority of respondents take part in physical activity in a public park/recreation area/facility. • Most of the respondents would prefer to participate in physical activity during the day, Monday – Friday, or a weekend morning. • Barriers to participation at public leisure facilities include cost, lack of provision, and limited safe walking and cycling routes. Lack of time and awareness of what is available are also issues for some respondents. • The pandemic has increased respondents’ awareness of the need to be more active to improve health and wellbeing.

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Stakeholder	Summary Feedback										
	<p>Key comments received include:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="389 405 2114 973"> <tr> <td data-bbox="389 405 1301 531">We need to promote what outdoor facilities we already have and improve and make more accessible, with better signposting, our current footpaths. Walking sports and led health walks have made a huge positive affect on more mature residents. Let's do the same for our young parents too!</td> <td data-bbox="1301 405 2114 531">Please don't price out individual fitness groups who bring a lot to the area including into the local economy i.e. car parking, coffee shops & other shopping</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="389 531 1301 600">I would like to swim but there are no decent local swimming pools</td> <td data-bbox="1301 531 2114 600">It would be nice to have some facilities in the Sidley area</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="389 600 1301 726">Used to do Tai Chi classes but Covid and medical vulnerability put me off.</td> <td data-bbox="1301 600 2114 726">More ... physical activity yoga outside martial arts more community for lonely isolated scaredy cats ... bigger swimming pool?</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="389 726 1301 880">Let's have a David Lloyd or Sovereign Centre level of facility in Bexhill. It does not make sense that residents travel out of Rother to attend facilities in Eastbourne.</td> <td data-bbox="1301 726 2114 880">I would like to promote the amazing achievements of Running Space at the Pelham and the new BMX facility at Sidley also The Pelham and the Table Tennis and The Community Centre in Station Road Bexhill on Sea</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="389 880 1301 973">We need a decent indoor or outdoor swimming pool</td> <td data-bbox="1301 880 2114 973">There is no freedom leisure run sports/activities for children at Bexhill leisure centre. Hastings offers so much more</td> </tr> </table> <p>Other feedback received includes:</p> <ul data-bbox="389 1070 2114 1129" style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for a large, laned swimming pool, re-instatement of plans to provide a new leisure centre, the need for gyms to be cleaner, and the opportunity for improved joined-up thinking around costs e.g. access to facilities, car parking charges, etc 	We need to promote what outdoor facilities we already have and improve and make more accessible, with better signposting, our current footpaths. Walking sports and led health walks have made a huge positive affect on more mature residents. Let's do the same for our young parents too!	Please don't price out individual fitness groups who bring a lot to the area including into the local economy i.e. car parking, coffee shops & other shopping	I would like to swim but there are no decent local swimming pools	It would be nice to have some facilities in the Sidley area	Used to do Tai Chi classes but Covid and medical vulnerability put me off.	More ... physical activity yoga outside martial arts more community for lonely isolated scaredy cats ... bigger swimming pool?	Let's have a David Lloyd or Sovereign Centre level of facility in Bexhill. It does not make sense that residents travel out of Rother to attend facilities in Eastbourne.	I would like to promote the amazing achievements of Running Space at the Pelham and the new BMX facility at Sidley also The Pelham and the Table Tennis and The Community Centre in Station Road Bexhill on Sea	We need a decent indoor or outdoor swimming pool	There is no freedom leisure run sports/activities for children at Bexhill leisure centre. Hastings offers so much more
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Community Survey	<p>1,295 responses, of which 1,114 completed the survey.</p> <p>Sample:</p> <ul data-bbox="389 1289 2114 1417" style="list-style-type: none"> • 67% female; • 42% over 65, 16% under 36; • 88% are own car users (12% other's cars), 24% bus, 20% bike; • 10% suburban, 27% smaller town, 25% village, 25% outskirts, 9% rural. Only 3.5% consider they live in a large town centre. 										
Postcode breakdown											

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Stakeholder	Summary Feedback																																																												
	TN19	54	TN19 village	43	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>TN38</td> <td>21</td> <td>TN38 large town</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2%</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>TN39</td> <td>330</td> <td>TN39 smaller town</td> <td>95</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>30%</td> <td>TN39 village</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>TN39 outskirts</td> <td>133</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>TN39 suburban</td> <td>79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TN40</td> <td>222</td> <td>TN40 large town</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>20%</td> <td>TN40 smaller town</td> <td>108</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>TN40 village</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>TN40 outskirts</td> <td>57</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>TN40 suburban</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TN5</td> <td>23</td> <td>TN5 village</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2%</td> <td>TN5 outskirts</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>TN5 rural</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </table> <p>66% currently do something, 17% are lapsed and 17% have not done anything in the past three years.</p>	TN38	21	TN38 large town	21		2%			TN39	330	TN39 smaller town	95		30%	TN39 village	23			TN39 outskirts	133			TN39 suburban	79	TN40	222	TN40 large town	18		20%	TN40 smaller town	108			TN40 village	4			TN40 outskirts	57			TN40 suburban	35	TN5	23	TN5 village	11		2%	TN5 outskirts	6			TN5 rural	6
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Biggest activities in the past three years are:																																																													

Stakeholder	Summary Feedback			
		Last three years	Current	Stopped
	Walking	76%	93%	4%
	Gardening	52%	62%	4%
	Swimming	44%	33%	47%
	Cycling	27%	26%	14%
	Attending the gym alone	24%	17%	32%
	Yoga	22%	17%	20%
	Gym classes	18%	12%	21%
	35% have participated in council run facilities, 32% in private clubs.			
	Main reasons for stopping are:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too expensive 27% • Didn't want to mix during pandemic 21% • Temporary injury 18% • Too difficult to access 17% 			
	Biggest reasons for non-participation:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost 35% • Too far to travel 19% • Coronavirus nervousness 16% • Prefer to do at home or outdoors 16% 			
	Effect of pandemic:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 28% • Put me off public facilities 24% • Still going as frequently 22% • Found other ways to exercise 17% 			
	Most wanted:			

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Stakeholder	Summary Feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laned swimming pool 52% • Outdoor fitness facilities 29% • Café 22% • Improved facilities for disabled 21% • More local gyms 20%
Parish and Town Councils	<p>18 Parish/Town Councils responded to the online survey:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Battle Town Council 2. Bodiam Parish Council 3. Brightling Parish Council 4. Burwash Parish Council 5. Camber 6. Crowhurst 7. Ewhurst Parish Council 8. Guestling Parish Council 9. Hurst Green Parish Council 10. Icklesham Parish Council 11. Mountfield Parish Council 12. Peasmarsch Parish Council 13. Pett Parish Council 14. Rye Town Council 15. Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council 16. Sedlescombe Parish Council 17. Udimore Parish Council 18. Westfield Parish Council <p>Out of the 18 Parish/Town Councils, 3 indicated that they did not have any indoor sports facilities.</p> <p>These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Udimore P C • Bodiam Parish Council • Guestling Parish Council <p>Of the 18 Parish/Town Councils, a further 6 did not indicate that they did not have any indoor sports facilities, but they left the entire survey blank.</p>

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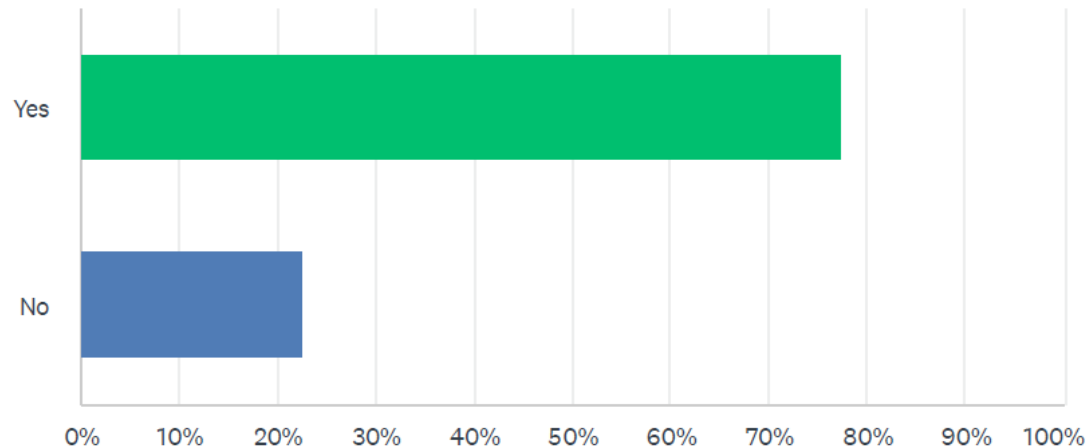
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Stakeholder	Summary Feedback
	<p>These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountfield Parish Council • Icklesham Parish Council • Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council • Sedlescombe Parish Council • Burwash Parish Council • Camber <p>Therefore for analysis purposes only 9 Parish/Town Council responses are detailed in the analysis below.</p> <p>Appendices 2 and 7 include full detail of the Parish and Town Council feedback.</p> <p>The main investment needs raised are outdoor facilities and changing facilities. No need was identified for investment in indoor sports facilities.</p>
Education Institutions	TO FOLLOW FROM CONTINUUM
Sports Clubs	Clubs' expansion/growth

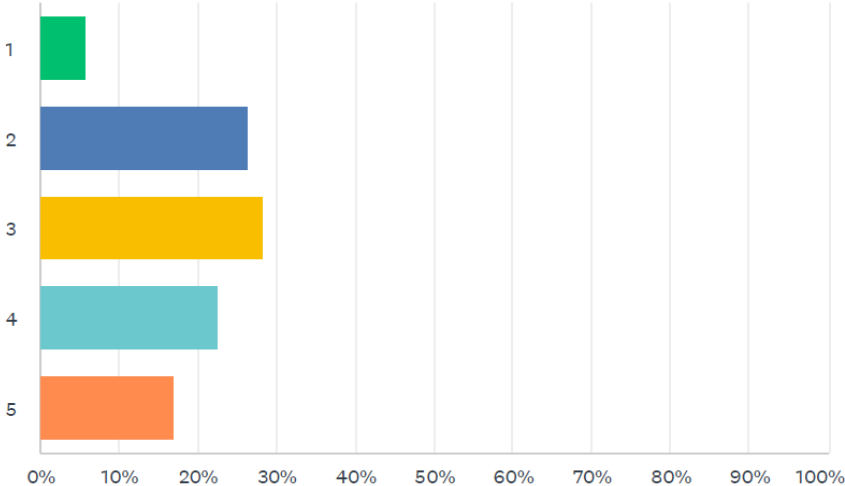
Stakeholder Summary Feedback

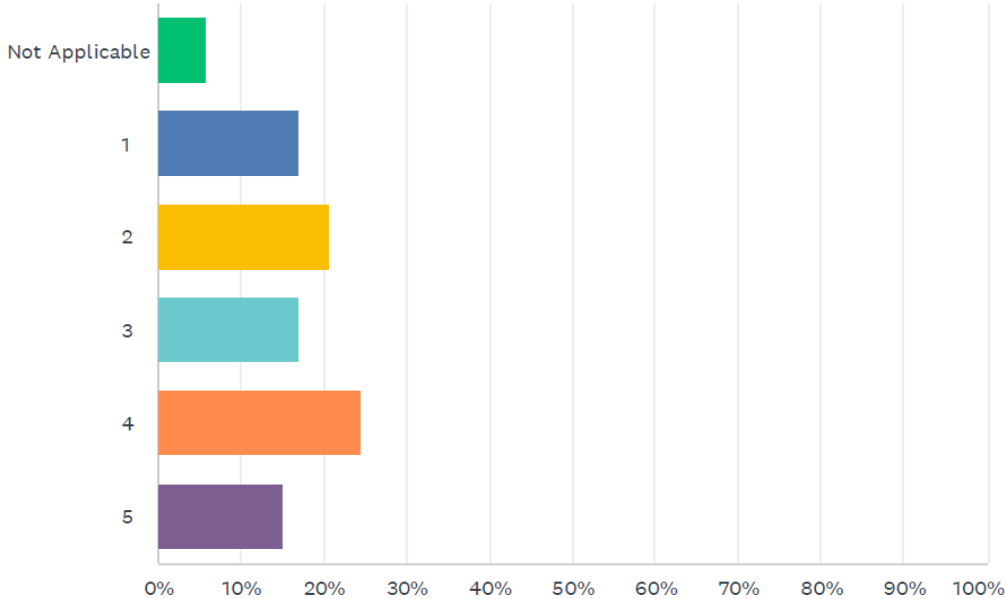
Q8 Does your Club/Association have plans to grow in the next three seasons/years?

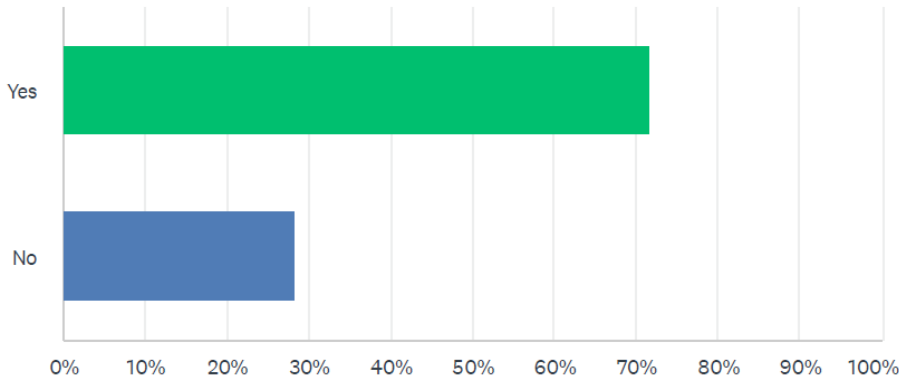
Answered: 53 Skipped: 0



Looking to the future, 77.4% of the clubs surveyed were positive regarding plans for growth over the next three years/seasons, emphasising further the strength of the club sector in the areas as well as likely rising demand.

Stakeholder	Summary Feedback												
	<p data-bbox="383 347 779 373">Rating of Pitch/Playing Surface</p> <p data-bbox="461 453 1765 576">Q16 How do you rate the quality of your Club's/Association's main playing facilities, including playing surface? (1 being very poor and 5 being very good)</p> <p data-bbox="987 608 1256 627">Answered: 53 Skipped: 0</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="712 679 1554 1166"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>5%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>28.3%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>32%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>22%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>12.7%</td></tr></tbody></table> <p data-bbox="383 1233 2136 1350">In terms of the quality of the stock of sports facilities available to the areas sports clubs, 32% of those surveyed rated the playing facilities they use as 'poor' or 'very poor' and 28.3% as 'average'. Just under 40% consider their main playing facilities to be 'very good' or 'good'. This finding reflects the need to upgrade facilities and the increase of investments made in maintaining and enhancing the facility stock by the Councils, national sports bodies, and the clubs themselves through fund raising.</p>	Rating	Percentage	1	5%	2	28.3%	3	32%	4	22%	5	12.7%
Rating	Percentage												
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Stakeholder	Summary Feedback														
	<p data-bbox="383 347 853 376">Rating of Changing facilities/pavilion</p> <div data-bbox="383 405 1839 1302"> <p data-bbox="434 424 1771 552">Q17 How do you rate the quality of the changing facilities/pavilion at your Club's/Association's main site? (1 being very poor and 5 being very good).</p> <p data-bbox="972 580 1261 603">Answered: 53 Skipped: 0</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="568 655 1570 1257"> <caption>Rating of Changing facilities/pavilion Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Rating</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Applicable</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>21%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>16%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p data-bbox="383 1337 2141 1457">The table above shows the ratings of changing facilities and pavilions given by those surveyed. 37.7% of respondents rated their ancillary facilities as 'poor' and 'very poor'. Just under 17% rated their pavilion and/or changing room as 'average' and 39.6% rated it a 'good' or 'very good'. This data emphasises the need for investment for clubs/groups to maintain their 'good' or 'very good' ancillary facilities and funding for the upgrade, improvement and creation of changing rooms and pavilions for those who have 'poor' or 'very poor' facilities.</p>	Rating	Percentage	Not Applicable	5%	1	17%	2	21%	3	17%	4	24%	5	16%
Rating	Percentage														
Not Applicable	5%														
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2	21%														
3	17%														
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5	16%														

Stakeholder	Summary Feedback						
	<p data-bbox="383 347 801 371">Need to improve/extend facilities</p> <div data-bbox="383 405 1823 1070"> <p data-bbox="421 448 1742 539">Q19 Is there a need to improve/extend these facilities to sustain or grow your Club/Association?</p> <p data-bbox="949 571 1234 595">Answered: 53 Skipped: 0</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="645 651 1541 1034"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>71.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>28.3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p data-bbox="383 1102 2130 1222">71.7% of the respondent clubs consider they need to improve their facilities to sustain the appeal of their club to existing members and to attract new members. This is particularly an issue for accommodating the growth of sports clubs as many sports clubs in the area have aspirations to grow in the next three years, this is identified in Q8. Therefore, whilst a high majority of clubs are keen to expand further, there appears a link to need for investment of facilities for clubs/groups.</p>	Response	Percentage	Yes	71.7%	No	28.3%
Response	Percentage						
Yes	71.7%						
No	28.3%						

- 4.2. It is important to highlight feedback from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Public Health; they see physical activity having both a preventative and improvement role in relation to community and individual health. ESCC view the provision of good quality places and spaces where people can be active, and interact with others as vital to both physical and mental health and wellbeing across the community.

- 4.3. Taking all the consultation feedback into account (there is other National Governing Body and stakeholder feedback in the annexes to Appendix 2), the key findings are:
- Increasingly, Rother residents recognise the need to be more active to improve their health.
 - Many of them are already active but there are issues e.g. cost, time, awareness that prevent individuals from taking part.
 - Some residents responding to consultation want to be more active but have not yet changed their lifestyles – engaging them in opportunities to be active is key moving forward.
 - Whilst many people use the existing RDC facilities there is a desire to see more modern facilities e.g. pools and gyms, and to be able to access provision during the day. This is an issue in respect of dual-use sites due to curriculum use.
 - There is a desire to see a new swimming pool, preferably laned.
 - The lack of any teaching pools impacts on the ability of children to learn to swim; in a coastal area this is a critical life skill.
 - Many clubs have ambitions to grow and would like to see improved facilities to support this.
 - Improved facilities for those with a disability are highlighted as a priority.
 - Access to facilities in the daytime is key, particularly for older residents.
 - There is a need to provide more physical activities for children
 - The facilities most wanted in the district are:
 - Laned swimming pool
 - Outdoor fitness facilities
 - Café
 - Improved facilities for disabled
 - More local gyms
 - Partnership working is key, particularly in relation to swimming provision.
 - Provision of inclusive and affordable activities is as important as good quality facilities

4.4. Key messages from the market research undertaken (see Appendix 3) include:

- The majority of residents want to travel no more than 15 minutes to a leisure facility (31.4%)
- Over 40% of residents said they wanted to do exercise outdoors (4 times more than any other response).
- Over 40% of residents said the cost of current facilities was too high.
- 50% of respondents would like prices at RDC facilities to be 50% cheaper
- The vast majority of respondents (51%) want to see a laned swimming pool in the District, more outdoor fitness facilities, and more local gyms and studios
- Key barriers to residents being physically active include cost, awareness of facilities and activities, limited disability access, lack of provision for teenagers and young people, distance to travel
- The activities that people most want to take part in include walking, cycling, swimming,
- 80% of residents said they did the same or more exercise since Covid.
- 55% of residents said that the change in their exercise regime was permanent
- 80% of residents wanted to be within 15 minutes of any centre or facility they used with 60% still travelling by car.
- At 30% swimming facilities were twice as much wanted as any other facility. Gyms attract 10% of respondents and studios/halls 20% of respondents.
- A very positive outcome from Covid is that 55% of residents have become aware that they need to be more physically active to improve their health.

5. Our Challenges and Issues in Providing Health, Well-Being and Leisure Provision

5.1. The Leisure Strategy involved extensive consultation with key stakeholders including District Councillors and officers, the Council's Leisure Operator, and town and parish councils. Surveys were also distributed to schools, sport clubs and local residents (1000+ responses). Appendix 3 – 7 incl. of this strategy provides a summary of these consultations. National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGB's) were contacted regarding the current club and facility provision for their sport and their aspirations for future provision in Rother. Neighbouring authorities were also consulted to gain an understanding of their current and future plans for leisure provision, recognising that residents living close to the borders of Rother would visit their closest facility, regardless of geographical boundaries. Feedback from NGBs, neighbouring local authorities and other stakeholders is included in the annexes to the Needs Assessment Appendix 2.

5.2. In addition, it is important to be clear that in terms of RDC's leisure facilities:

- The leisure assets are ageing (community leisure facilities have a lifespan of 30-35 years, in general)
- There is no teaching pool in the district
- There is limited access to laned swimming pools in Bexhill
- Bexhill Leisure pool is well-used but anecdotal feedback identifies it is challenging to do lane swimming in the leisure pool environment
- The dual-use sites all have different arrangements; some are supported by RDC and others are not. These facilities do not provide daytime access to the Rother community, the majority of whom are ageing and want to use facilities during the day. Financially, RDC's subsidy should reflect the extent of community use provided, and the community benefit derived. Financial arrangements underpinning the dual-use agreements are outdated and are in need of review.
- There is an under-supply of swimming pools to meet demand
- There is significant opportunity to work in partnership with Hastings Borough Council to invest in a range of sustainable swimming pool offers, that complement each other and offer best value to both communities
- There is currently sufficient provision of sports halls, but none should be lost, and community access needs to be retained at all those that currently offer it. Moving forward, provision of multi-purpose hall space would offer increased flexibility offer a range of both formal and informal activity programmes, targeted at those who would benefit from being more active.

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- There is opportunity to develop increased use of the outdoor space and other informal assets e.g. community centres/village halls to reduce reliance on formal built provision, as well as the beach, seafront, recreational grounds and parks. This reflects the move for some residents to being active outside.

5.3. The following table provides a summary of the key issues identified from the stakeholder consultations undertaken. These issues inform the identified Core Objectives and the areas recommended for action moving forward.

Table 3: Summary of Key issues identified from stakeholder consultations

Key Issue	Relevant Factors to consider in developing the future Leisure Strategy
Built Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key issues concerning the existing leisure facilities in Rother are: • Age and condition, particularly of the RDC facilities • The lease on Bexhill Leisure Pool needs to be cancelled, or confirmation of continuation given in 2024 (lease runs until 2059). • Activities offered - type, timing and nature • Need for investment • Location of existing facilities, which means that for many residents it is easier to travel to Hastings to use facilities • Dated dual-use agreements which do not facilitate daytime community access (particularly daytime), although sites like Battle are very busy at evenings and weekends • There are no teaching pools in the district • Residents identify daytime use as a priority • Residents' priorities are a new swimming pool (laned), better and more modern gyms, a café, outdoor facilities e.g. green gyms and improved disability facilities
Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The success of Active Rother programmes, particularly at Bexhill Leisure Centre and the opportunity to expand these as part of RDC's priority for health and wellbeing Partnership with ESCC over health and well-being • GP Referral/Social Prescribing- how can these partnerships be developed

Key Issue	Relevant Factors to consider in developing the future Leisure Strategy
The Outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of, and interest in, using the natural active environment for physical activity • Concern to ensure walking, running and cycling routes are safe • Growing participation in wild swimming • Growing participation in informal activities e.g. skateboarding, BMX • Use of Bexhill seafront as a venue for physical activity and how best to optimise and manage this • Residents like being active outdoors but want to feel safe
Specific Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited indoor netball facilities • The role of sports clubs in terms of increasing and sustaining participation moving forward needs to be better defined • Potential development of indoor tennis facilities at Rye Tennis and Squash Club • Opportunity to develop new sports e.g. Padel tennis in Rye and Bexhill
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for improved disability facilities and access e.g. pool pods
Strategic Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDC Public Health Strategy should be the driver for the outcomes of the Leisure Strategy • Also the Leisure Strategy should align to the Active Rother and Active East Sussex Strategy
Demography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother has a predominantly older population; provision needs to meet their needs; Community survey identifies daytime as the favoured time to take part in physical activity • Cost is an issue for some Rother residents • Residents think physical activity is very important – to stay fit, for enjoyment, to improve health • Residents identify barriers to participation as: cost, time, poor quality facilities, lack of safe routes, lack of provision, inability to access activities at the time they need them • In general, residents want to be more active, but they want to be able to do this in more varied indoor and outdoor environments

- 5.4. The above summary highlights that there are gaps in leisure provision and its quality due to age and condition.
- 5.5. RDC's existing leisure portfolio includes 3 leisure centres; these facilities are ageing and would benefit from investment to meet the needs of the current and future population of the district. The two facilities in Bexhill are on separate sites so have higher operational costs than if they were co-located on one site. The leisure pool is effectively a stand-alone facility. The long term lease on Bexhill Leisure pool (Ravenside) needs to be surrendered, or its retention confirmed in 2024. There is a problem with the roof of Bexhill Leisure Pool and to retain the facility as operational, either as a pool or alternative offer e.g. soft play, there is a significant investment required (circa £100k).
- 5.6. Bexhill Leisure Centre is an ageing building and in need of investment; its location is very advantageous to the local community, given its adjacency to areas of deprivation, but its age and condition do not make it an efficient building to operate. There is no café, there is significant space which does not generate any income, the fitness offer is disparate, and changing rooms could be improved. Replacing the existing dryside facilities as part of a co-located health and wellbeing hub could provide the opportunity to offer a range of services alongside physical activity, whilst improving operational sustainability. This type of approach reflects what is happening in the wider leisure market, and the type of future provision achieving external funding through the Towns Fund, Levelling Up and Sport England.
- 5.7. There is an under-supply of swimming pools to meet the needs of the existing population; there are no teaching pools in the district and there is limited access to laned water space in Bexhill.
- 5.8. The current under-supply of swimming pools equates to 145 sq. m. For context, a 4 lane x 25m pool equates to 200 sq. m. Bexhill Leisure Pool provides 250 sq. m of water space. If this was replaced by a new, modern laned swimming pool there would be a case for providing between a 6 lane x 25m or 8 lane x 25m pool. This would mitigate the current under-supply of swimming pools.
- 5.9. RDC needs to make a decision as to whether it retains the lease on Bexhill Leisure Pool and invests in a new laned pool, or whether it surrenders the lease and invests in a laned swimming pool and perhaps a splashpad on an alternative site. The existing leisure pool is well-used, particularly at weekends and in holiday periods, but it does not facilitate many swimming activities e.g. club use, lane swimming, etc. Although lessons take place the environment for learn to swim could be better.
- 5.10. Hastings Borough is planning to invest in swimming provision as part of its Bohemia development and is keen to look at a leisure pool as part of this.. This would also provide for Rother residents. Given these proposals and the geographical proximity of Hastings Borough and Rother District there is significant opportunity to work strategically in partnership on future swimming provision. This type of approach is also more likely to be sustainable long term, and potentially to attract external funding the new Sport England Place Fund likely to be announced in 2023.
- 5.11. If RDC invested in a laned pool this would benefit the older population and continue to provide for families and younger people, as well as those with a disability. It would also provide a better environment for schools and individuals to learn to swim. A learn to swim programme i.e. swimming lessons is the second largest income generator in a leisure centre.

- 5.12. Co-locating replacement swimming facilities and a range of other provision in one location in Rother would also create a more operationally efficient offer and one that would be more attractive to the leisure operator market, which could result in long term income to RDC through the leisure management procurement. This approach has been successfully delivered across multiple local authorities in the UK.
- 5.13. Planning strategically across the boundary of the two local authorities would realise good quality and sustainable swimming facilities, providing for both areas, Providing different types of swimming provision would make investment and future operation more sustainable as each swimming offer will appeal to a different market.
- 5.14. There could also be some benefits in partnership working of this nature in terms of attracting external investment into both places, based on a strategic approach to provision of swimming. The geography between Rother and Hastings means that residents can access services in both areas so it makes sense to plan for a range of swimming facilities across the two districts, rather than investing in duplicate and competing provision.
- 5.15. The market research and consultation feedback clearly indicate that Rother residents would like to see the development of a laned swimming pool in the district. Clearly this will require capital investment to deliver.
- 5.16. Addressing the development of a new pool plus other identified needs will require an approach combining capital investment, partnership working and better use of existing assets
- 5.17. A further challenge is the dual sites. Given the supply and demand analysis, the same level of provision of sports halls needs to be retained in the district. Provision of swimming pools needs to be increased. However, the cost of any contribution to dual sites for RDC should be commensurate with the access afforded to the local community because that is RDC's priority.
- 5.18. Whilst all existing dual-use sites should be retained, and community access confirmed through a formal agreement, given the participation value for the local community, it would be opportune to review the value RDC received from financial support to the facilities. Whether RDC still needs to contribute to facilities that are well-used needs to be reviewed, as RDC could be inadvertently subsidising education use, which is statutory provision, through a discretionary service. If the dual-use sites are operated well, usage will remain high, and RDC's financial contribution, where made, may not be needed.
- 5.19. A large proportion of facilities are on school sites; 4 have dual use arrangements. There is significant variance in the dual use agreements, as RDC does not subsidise some, but does others.. The dual use arrangements restrict daytime community use for those who would benefit the most e.g. young families, retired etc.
- 5.20. All leisure facilities need to be self-sustaining; to achieve this some facilities may need to operate differently e.g. vary membership types to the specific facility mix of a facility and the needs/demographics of the community it serves, integrate a range of services, optimise use of facilities through diversifying use.

- 5.21. There is opportunity to improve disability access within existing facilities and ensure that new leisure facility provision is compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. Facilities should be accessible to all residents therefore location is critical, but also ensuring that walking and cycling routes provide access to both built and informal leisure facilities.
- 5.22. There is a current under supply of health and fitness suites across the district and this is exacerbated by the restricted availability at dual use sites. This situation will only get worse as the population grows.
- 5.23. Active Rother currently delivers a very successful outreach health and wellbeing programme, using a range of venues and working with multiple partners, including Freedom Leisure., Provision of inclusive and affordable activities is as important as good quality facilities; the success of Active Rother activities based in facilities around the district is already increasing activity levels, but more could be achieved with investment in multi-purpose, fit for purpose space. Ensuring the Active Rother programme is appropriately resourced is important to further develop the informal activity offer both at RDC sites and other facilities.
- 5.24. To facilitate continued delivery of Active Rother programmes and other similar initiatives, the built facility infrastructure needs to be more flexible and include multi-purpose space, plus social facilities such as a café. Good quality, inclusive and affordable facilities will help to develop participation in a social environment, beneficial to both physical and mental wellbeing. Ensuring RDC's leisure operator/partner continues to work in partnership with this programme should be a requirement of the future leisure management contract.
- 5.25. Equally there is a need to invest in the active outdoor environment e.g. green gyms, informal provision for young people e.g. BMX/cycling/skateboarding to encourage and facilitate increased levels of physical activity.
- 5.26. Consultation highlights cost of using leisure facilities as an issue as well as concern that the needs of those who are socially and economically disadvantaged at not being met. There is an opportunity to better join up other costs of using leisure facilities e.g. parking, with participation fees.
- 5.27. More active lifestyles will continue to reduce health inequalities (mental and physical) and benefit both individual and community health. The provision of quality, affordable and accessible leisure facilities, and community outreach activities (e.g. healthy walks) can contribute towards significantly towards:
- Maintaining an active lifestyle
 - Maintaining low levels of diabetes and cardio-vascular disease
 - Further reducing levels of obesity for both children and adults
 - Improving mental health which is becoming a specific challenge for many younger people in the district

- 5.28. Responses to the community surveys highlight the importance of walking, hiking and cycling in the district and the need for a safe network of routes for these activities. Equally the need for more outdoor facilities is highlighted through the consultation. Provision such as green gyms, or other outdoor facilities are seen as important given the number of people who, following the pandemic, now choose to be active outdoors.
- 5.29. In the rural areas, safe routes for walking and cycling are a priority, responding to residents who would like to do more outdoors. Equally better and more use of the informal network of halls – community centres and village halls, for a range of physical activities would mean that residents are able to access opportunities to be more active closer to home. There is significant potential for Active Rother, if appropriately resourced, to extend the work they are already doing in the district, in partnership, to open up such opportunities for activity in these halls.

Learning

1. The Rye facility primarily provides a swimming facility where usage is shared with the school i.e. dual-use.
2. Claverham in Battle provides an excellent example of shared gym and hall facilities outside of curriculum time i.e dual-use of leisure facilities during evenings and weekends
3. Battle also has created an excellent model for outdoor provision which brings together many activities and attracts a broad range of ages using a 'health path' for safe off-road activities.
4. A significant amount of health and leisure activity currently takes place in 'non-traditional' locations like village halls in addition to school and private facilities.
5. Experience from the existing RDC facilities is that over the life of a building usage needs change. This results in significant parts of the facility becoming redundant during the lifespan of the building. In the case of Bexhill Leisure Centre the squash courts have been redundant for some time.

6. Strategy Development

- 6.1 The condition, age and maintenance costs of the existing two leisure facilities in Bexhill has triggered a discussion over how the Council should contribute to providing health and well-being facilities in Rother.
- 6.2 Proposals brought to the existing Administration in late 2019/early 2020 highlighted that replacement of the existing facilities could not be made viable as it could not be demonstrated that the proposed plan could be financed at the build stage or be cost neutral to the Council once operational.
- 6.3 This followed the announcement that the MOD had pulled out of negotiations to transfer the land known as the Drill Hall to Rother District Council. Without the Drill Hall land, the element of the project, a commercially operated hotel was not possible. Without the hotel the project was no longer cost neutral.
- 6.4 In recent years it has become increasingly challenging for UK local authorities to operate leisure facilities for a number of reasons; most recent closures reflect rising energy costs. Older facilities are generally energy inefficient and the cost of replacing obsolete plant prohibitive.
- 6.5 Generally, as is the case in Rother, leisure facilities are built by the local authority and are then operated by a leisure provider. In Rother, and much of the surrounding local authorities, this is Freedom Leisure.
- 6.6 The impact of Covid has caused a significant change in residents' behaviour in relation to physical activity and health in general.
- 6.7 As a result of all of the above-mentioned factors a comprehensive assessment of health and leisure behaviour and needs was commissioned. This forms the basis of a comprehensive strategy which delivers what residents want and need and can be afforded by the authority. This is in contrast to the historic approach of 'build a centre and residents will come'. This historical approach has been proven unsuccessful as membership of the current leisure centres is only circa 5% of the Rother population. In addition, there is a real desire and need to ensure provision is made for those with disabilities and those in more deprived circumstances.
- 6.8 Any investment in indoor facilities would be for replacement, not additional facilities, with the exception of swimming, given identified need.
- 6.9 Based on the above the offer in Rother needs to be different. There is a need to invest in outdoor places and spaces where people can be active, in building an active environment, in active travel, and where possible in indoor facilities. However, the model for these needs to look different. Public sector leisure is now about placing physical activity at the heart of communities, and co-locating both services and opportunities to be active with a wider range of community services.

RDC Objective

- 6.10 To provide the maximum access to residents for the various health, leisure and well-being activities they wish to engage in with specific regard for those living in deprived circumstances or who have disabilities/life-limiting conditions. Access to services must address affordability and find a balance between the needs of Bexhill and rural residents and be affordable in the long term to RDC.
- 6.9 The criteria for assessing proposed developments are identified as:
- Be or become accessible by public transport from those living in the most deprived communities and encourage alternative forms of transport where possible.
 - Make a contribution to addressing health inequalities.
 - Contribute to the goal of the Council achieving carbon neutral status by 2030
 - RDC provision should complement that delivered by the private sector

Strategy Implementation

- 6.11 It is clear from the research that residents want a laned swimming facility. Primary research also shows a need for providing a learn to swim and exercise/pleasure pool facility. Rother has the opportunity to deliver a facility that services a much broader catchment area than the District.
- 6.12 The needs in the rural areas and Bexhill are broadly the same but when considering a pool facility regard needs to be given to location and the size and type of pool. The time taken to get to any facility will be a strong determinant in how much it is used.
- 6.13 Outdoor facilities are now a high priority for residents both in rural areas and Bexhill.
- 6.14 There is a need to consider the significant cost to invest in any facility given historic low user rates, and the significant increase in energy costs combined with the need to make any facility carbon neutral.
- 6.15 There is an opportunity to reduce the risk of the leisure operator's dependency on RDC through changing the parameters of the leisure contract.
- 6.16 Where possible RDC will work across boundaries with neighbouring authorities.

Proposed Strategy

- 6.17 To become the provider of a swimming facility which is not offered by private providers and to become partners in providing 'dry' indoor services and outdoor built services.
- 6.18 To provide a pool facility which will maximise accessibility for residents. The location should be assessed on the current and future location of residents in the district taking into account the radius of travel for residents in different parts of the district. To provide specific focus on support for disabled and those from deprived areas. Any new facility should be designed to achieve carbon neutrality so location and building orientation will be a key determinant. To deliver the strategy without the need for closure of the existing facilities to ensure existing users do not 'fall away' during any construction period.
1. RDC's swimming offer will complement facilities provided by the commercial sector, and will maximise accessibility for residents, assessed on both existing and future locations of residents. The swimming offer will need to be financially sustainable. Existing swimming provision would remain open until any new facility provision is developed.
2. RDC will work in partnership to plan and deliver inclusive and accessible swimming pool facilities effectively across the two areas, given proximity of geographical boundaries.
3. Optimise delivery of non-swimming 'dry' facilities through joint arrangements with existing owners of private sports facilities including clubs and schools using subsidies to help offset the increasing cost those facilities are now facing. This approach will give the Authority long term flexibility.
4. Support all Towns and Parishes with the creation of better outdoor facilities where required. Town and Parish Councils have a clear understanding of their resident's needs and can create very successful facilities with high usage as demonstrated by the Battle model.
5. Become a 'sign poster' rather than a 'provider of facilities' for residents. It is clear that private facilities are run more efficiently than those run by authority leisure operators. The latter group fall back on the Authority for both the facility itself and for subsidies.
6. To build on promoting and providing infra structure to increase the use of cycling and walking.
- 6.19 RDC is clear it is a priority to improve community health and wellbeing; facilitating opportunities for physical activity and leisure can support people to be more active. This Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy provides a summary of need up to 2033 using technical analysis and consultation with partners and residents. It sets the strategic framework for providing this need. It should be updated periodically alongside other RDC key corporate plans.
- 6.20 In order to deliver the Strategy, investment will be required in facilities. Innovative funding models, strong partnerships and collaboration will be required.

6.21 The next steps in Strategy delivery are:

- Production of a Delivery Plan with timescales
- Work with existing partners to identify options to meet priorities in existing facilities
- Identify new potential partnership working opportunities
- Establish the resources required to deliver the priorities
- Investigate external funding opportunities

6.22 The Delivery Plan will support this strategy, identifying priorities for action including how and when actions can be taken.

Disclaimer

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Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	17 October 2022
Title:	East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy
Report of:	Joe Powell (Head of Service Housing and Community)
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To propose the implementation of the East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy and make recommendations to Cabinet.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy be recommended to Cabinet and full Council for adoption.

Introduction

1. All Councils in East Sussex aim to work with households to prevent homelessness occurring wherever possible; however, in some cases households will become homeless and require temporary accommodation (TA).
2. The East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy was written by the operational housing managers across all five districts and boroughs. The Policy outlines the standards applied to the size and location of TA as well as the processes and procedures we will follow. The Policy applies both within district or borough, and outside of the placement authority area. The Policy is appended at Appendix A.
3. The Policy covers both interim placements made under Section 188 Housing Act 1996 (as amended), during the relief duty and while homelessness enquiries are undertaken, and longer-term TA placements for households accepted as homeless under Section 193 of the Act.
4. The East Sussex Housing Officers Group (ESHOG) has identified that a more consistent approach to the placement of households in TA is needed across East Sussex. The new policy will lead to a more efficient process and procedure for making placements between local authorities and the various private providers of TA within East Sussex.
5. The Policy does not cover the standard of TA used, with these standards being dictated by the national Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) overseen by the different local authority housing teams. In the Rother area, we conduct routine inspections against these standards as demanded by the Housing Services' risk assessments. The operational housing managers within East Sussex are working on aligning the application of the HHSRS standards across East Sussex presently.

The Policy

6. The Policy is relatively limited in its scope, focussing on the suitability standards for the size and location of TA, as well as the processes and procedures local authorities will follow when placing households in TA. The main areas of the Policy are:
- What local authorities agree constitutes suitable TA, in terms of its size and location, enabling us to better manage the expectations of the customer.
 - To provide a more consistent approach to the amount of money households that are working are expected to contribute, if they are not eligible for full housing benefit.
 - That the districts and boroughs do not accommodate pets in TA and how breaches of licence conditions will be addressed.

Conclusion

7. There are many different private providers of TA that local authorities use and it is beneficial for the Council, accommodation providers and the customer to have a consistent approach to making placements across the East Sussex area.
8. It is recommended that the Council adopt the East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy. The proposed Policy will enable the Council to work in partnership with the other district and boroughs to ensure a consistent approach across East Sussex.

Financial Implications

9. Historically, the Council would meet more of the cost of TA if a household is working. The Policy will lead to working households making more of a contribution towards the full cost of their placement.

Legal Implications

10. While not a legislative requirement, a Temporary Accommodation Policy will support the Council and its statutory duty to provide interim, temporary, accommodation.

Equalities and Diversity

11. An equalities impact assessment has been completed to accompany the Policy.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

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Report Contact Officer:	Joe Powell
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Appendices:	Appendix A - East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy

Relevant previous Minutes: None

Background Papers: None

Reference Documents: None

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East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All Councils in East Sussex aim to work with households to prevent homelessness occurring wherever possible. However, in some instances this will not be possible and as a result some households will require temporary accommodation.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the five East Sussex councils' policy for the placement of homeless households in emergency and temporary accommodation, both within District or Borough, and outside of the placement authority area.
- 1.3 This Policy covers both interim placements made under Section 188 Housing Act 1996, during the relief duty and while homelessness enquires are undertaken, and longer-term temporary accommodation placements for households accepted as homeless under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996. Within this document placements under both of these duties will be referred to as temporary accommodation placements.

2. Securing Temporary Accommodation resources available in East Sussex

- 2.1 All Councils will, where possible, try to secure suitable emergency and temporary accommodation within their own District or Borough to allow a household to maintain their existing networks, such as employment, schooling, medical care and family and social support. However, due to the very limited supply of temporary accommodation, this may not always be possible.

3. Cost of Temporary Accommodation

- 3.1 Households placed in temporary accommodation will usually have to make a financial contribution towards their housing costs. This contribution can include:
 - responsibility for utility bills and rent in self-contained temporary accommodation (the rental element may be covered by housing benefit if the client is eligible),
 - 'personal contribution' or 'service charge' recoverable by the Council which usually covers non-eligible accommodation charges and /or management costs.
- 3.2 In cases where a homeless household does not receive full housing benefit due to eligibility, income or savings, the applicant will be responsible for meeting the cost of the difference between their maximum housing benefit entitlement and what they received in housing benefit. For example, if the cost of placement is £350 per week and the maximum HB award £150 per week, the client is responsible for this element. The local authority will cover the difference of £200. If the client's HB award is then £100 per week, then they have to pay an additional £50 per week (to make their contribution up to the maximum HB award) as well as their personal contribution/service charge and / or utility bills.

4. Making an accommodation placement

- 4.1 Homeless households who are accommodated under an interim duty (s.188

Housing Act 1996) will normally be offered bed and breakfast or short term self-contained accommodation while the Council fulfils their relief duty and enquiries are carried out.

- 4.2 The Council will seek to avoid placing families with children, pregnant women into bed and breakfast accommodation with shared facilities. In the unusual event that such a placement cannot be avoided, the household will be moved to self-contained emergency accommodation as soon as possible and within six weeks of initial placement.
- 4.3 In the case of any 16-17 year-olds that are homeless and approach the Council, they will be referred to East Sussex County Council Children's Services so that appropriate accommodation and support can be provided as per their obligations under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- 4.4 Homeless households placed in accommodation under an interim duty (s.188) are not protected under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and do not have security of tenure. Where the Council decides it does not owe the household a main housing duty, they will be notified and given a reasonable timescale to vacate, as detailed in their homelessness decision letter.
- 4.5 Homeless households who are placed in accommodation outside the placing authority's own area, the placing Council will notify the area in which placement is made under s.208 of the Housing Act 1996. In addition, in relevant cases, they will notify the Violent and Sex Offender Register (VISOR) or equivalent in order to ensure public protection obligations are fulfilled. Consent to disclose relevant risk information to emergency or temporary accommodation providers will be obtained from Police or Probation or other relevant agency prior to placement, as appropriate.
- 4.6 Where emergency accommodation within the placing District or Borough is available, the Council will prioritise cases in accordance with Section 7 of this policy for this accommodation.
- 4.7 Where accommodation is not available within the placing District or Borough's own area, the Council will look to neighbouring Council areas within East Sussex, and following this, into Kent or further afield.
- 4.8 As assessment of housing and support needs is carried out for all applicants which will identify any support needs and risks that the household presents with that may need to be taken into account in any temporary accommodation placement.
- 4.9 Households will be provided with information on how to access services and support in the area of placement.
- 4.10 Households assessed with known risks to themselves or others, such as history of offending, licence conditions, drug and alcohol use, mental or physical health may be placed outside of District or Borough due to the shortage of accommodation able to accommodate their needs.

5. Offers and refusals of accommodation

- 5.1 Homeless households will be made one offer of suitable interim or longer term

temporary accommodation and will be asked to accept it straight away. There is no opportunity for households to view the accommodation offered under s.188 or under the Council's discretionary powers, prior to acceptance.

- 5.2 In making any offer of temporary accommodation, the needs, requirements and circumstances of each homeless household member will be considered, taking into account the factors set out in section 6 of this policy. All offers of temporary accommodation have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 5.3 Where a homeless applicant refuses an offer of suitable temporary accommodation, or fail to take up occupation of the property, they will be asked for their reasons for refusal or non-occupation. The Council will consider the reasons and undertake further enquiries if necessary.
- 5.4 If the Council accepts the reasons for refusal and agree the offer was unsuitable, a further offer will be made.
- 5.5 If the Council does not accept the reasons for refusal, no further offer of temporary accommodation will be made and the homeless household will need to make their own arrangements. There is no right of appeal against the suitability of offers made under s.188 Housing Act 1996 (although judicial review can be applied for). For homeless households where the Council has accepted a housing duty under s.193 they can exercise their right to review the suitability, under s.202 within 21 days of being notified that the offer is suitable; after that time the only remedy is judicial review.
- 5.6 Homeless households who question the suitability of the temporary accommodation are advised to accept the offer of accommodation and pursue a review of the suitability of the accommodation whilst in occupation.

6. Factors affecting suitability of accommodation

- 6.1 The Council will take into account s.208 and s.210 of the Housing Act 1996, the Code of Guidance and relevant case law when determining the suitability of any offer of temporary accommodation. The accommodation must be suitable in relation to the homeless applicant and to all members of their household who normally reside with them, or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them. Through consideration of the following factors the Council will meet their obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 by showing due regard for an individual's medical condition and vulnerability.

In determining this, the following factors will be considered:-

- i. *Whether suitable accommodation is available within the District or Borough* – if accommodation is available, homeless households will be accommodated within the area subject to section 7. However, given the shortage of short-term, temporary accommodation, it is inevitable that accommodation outside the District, Borough or County may be used.
- ii. *Size of the accommodation* – accommodation must provide adequate space standards for the household to inhabit. However, given the short term nature of the accommodation and lack of available housing at short notice, it is possible that a homeless household would be offered a placement with fewer bedrooms than a household would be entitled to on a permanent

basis.

- iii. *Medical needs of the household/Physical needs* – consideration will be made in relation to the homeless applicant or resident member of the household's medical needs, such as ability to climb stairs, medical equipment required within the accommodation, care and support provided by other agencies and access to any specialist treatment only available locally. If the homeless applicant, or a member of the resident household identifies medical needs as an issue with any potential offer of temporary accommodation that were not identified at the point of initial application, the homeless applicant must provide medical evidence in support of this within 24 hours. The test applied by the Council with regards to medical needs is whether the condition makes the offer unsuitable.
- iv. *Education* – consideration will be given to the impact on schooling and travelling distance to the school. However, it is not considered unreasonable that children enrol in a school closer to the temporary accommodation. Pupils who are close to taking public examinations or those with specialist educational provision that is only available in a particular school, will be considered for temporary accommodation within or closest to the District (see section 7 below).
- v. *Care and Support*- consideration will be made in relation to the homeless applicant or any resident member of the household who is receiving care and support provided by other agencies and who made need to access local support/care services.
- vi. *Age and vulnerability* – consideration will be given to the age of the homeless applicant and their resident household members as well as any vulnerability (also see medical, care and support needs and risk of violence or harassment).
- vii. *Employment* – consideration will be given to the needs of applicants in paid employment who need to reach their place of work from any temporary accommodation within a reasonable commuting distance of less than 60 minutes.
- viii. *Proximity to services* – consideration will be made of the proximity to a school, public transport, primary care and other local services, to avoid isolation of the household. This does not extend to providing temporary accommodation in the applicants' chosen area to access preferred services.
- ix. *Affordability* - In determining whether accommodation is suitable, the Council will take into account affordability and will consider:
 - financial resources available to the homeless applicant; including salary, benefits, pensions and savings
 - costs in respect of the accommodation; including rent, mortgage costs, service charges, council tax, any deposit and payments to an accommodation agency
 - maintenance and child support payments
 - reasonable living expenses.
- x. *Risk of violence or harassment* - the Council will take into account any social considerations relating to the homeless applicant and their household that

might affect the suitability of accommodation, including any risk of violence, racial or other harassment in a particular locality. Where domestic violence or abuse is involved the Council will consider Refuge in the first instance.

- xi. *Exceptional circumstances* – consideration will be made of any special circumstances submitted by the applicant that may impact on the suitability of the offer of temporary accommodation.

6.2 Assessments are made within the context of the accommodation available and limited options and resources available to the Council on the day of the applicant presenting as homeless.

7. Criteria for prioritising placements within the District or Borough

7.1 In the event that short term interim accommodation within the District or Borough is available to the Council, priority for such accommodation will be given to homeless households whose circumstances may include:-

- i. *Applicants with children on the Child Protection register* or with significantly high or complex welfare needs where support can only be provided by statutory agencies within the placing District or Borough area.
- ii. *Households with a dependent child with an Education Health Care plan* who is receiving specialist education support within the placing District or Borough area and where this cannot be transferred to another school.
- iii. *Applicants with a diagnosed severe and enduring mental health issue* who is receiving regular psychiatric treatment within the within the placing District or Borough area and a transfer of care would severely impact on their wellbeing.
- iv. *Applicants who have been continuously employed within the placing District or Borough area* for a period of at least one year and for 16 or more hours a week. Women on maternity leave from employment meeting the same criteria would also be considered.
- v. *Applicants who have a child within the household who are due to take public examinations* within the current school year, e.g. GCSEs, 'A' Levels or equivalent.
- vi. *Exceptional circumstances* – where a household's circumstances are particularly complex or significant vulnerabilities exist, to be considered on a case by case basis.

7.2 The above categories are not listed in priority order, nor is the list exhaustive. It may be considered that, following a detailed assessment of the household's circumstances, they should qualify for an offer of accommodation within the placing authority area, or outside it.

7.3 Given the shortage of temporary accommodation, it is inevitable that Councils will need to make decisions to prioritise the offer of particular temporary accommodation within their own areas. This means that prioritisation may occur, not just between those who fall within one or more of the priority groups set out above and those who do not, but between those households who fall

within the priority groups.

7.4 The following circumstances will be taken into account by the Council when reaching decisions on prioritisation between households:

- Welfare and safeguarding of any children in the household
- Level of special educational need
- Risks posed by living in particular areas;
- The permanency/flexibility of employment;
- Access to transport, services, medical facilities, support, cultural or religious amenities;
- Impact on caring responsibilities;
- Affordability of the accommodation.

7.5 Where accommodation is available within the District or Borough's area and no priority groups require this accommodation, all other households, subject to suitability and risk assessment, will be considered for this accommodation.

8. Moving within temporary accommodation

8.1 Where it is considered that the household falls within a priority group for accommodation within the placing authority but no accommodation is available, the households will be placed in any location where there is availability on that day. This accommodation may be suitable in the short-term but not the long-term. If the accommodation provided is deemed unsuitable in the longer term a household will be given priority to be transferred to alternative accommodation within the Council's area, or as close to it as possible, as soon as a more suitable unit becomes available.

8.2 It may be necessary to move homeless households to another temporary accommodation property to make best use of available resources.

8.3 Households will be required to move when requested. If the households refuses to move, this may result in the Council ending their duties.

9. Ending of temporary accommodation placements

9.1 The Council may end emergency/temporary accommodation for those placed under a relief duty, after informing the household in the following circumstances:

- Where a homeless applicant is found not to be in priority need, or is intentionally homeless,
- Where it is accepted that the homeless applicant has 'deliberately and unreasonably refused to cooperate' with a step in the personalised housing plan,
- If a homeless applicant rejects or doesn't move following a reasonable offer of accommodation,
- Where the behaviour of the household results in loss of the emergency or temporary accommodation.

9.2 The household will be informed of the situation and the date that the placement will end so that they can make alternative arrangements. If there are children in the household the Council will notify East Sussex County Council's Children's

Services for assistance under Section 17 Children Act 1989.

10. Breaches of licence conditions

- 10.1 The household will have been notified about the consequences of breaching the terms of their placement, at the beginning of the placement.
- 10.2 In the event of a breach of the terms of placement, the placing authority will issue a verbal and written final warning to the applicant or a member of their household. If this is the first breach and not of the most serious nature then the placement (or an alternative placement) will not be ended but a final warning will be given explaining that a further breach will result in the termination of the placement. If following a final warning, a further breach is committed, the placement will be terminated and any duty or discretionary power offered by the Council is likely to end.
- 10.3 If the household's behaviour is extreme (e.g. violence), the placement may be ended immediately. If the placement is terminated any duty or discretionary power offered by the Council will then be ended.

11. Pets

- 11.1 The Councils do not have a duty to accommodate pets and are usually not able to accommodate pets within emergency or temporary accommodation. Applicants will need to make alternative arrangements for any pets whilst they are in such accommodation and the placing Council will discuss these options with them.
- 11.2 The Council can help place dogs and cats in kennels and catteries. Applicants are liable for the cost of accommodating pets, and will need to ensure the pet/s are vaccinated, neutered, wormed and de-fleaed.
- 11.3 There is no provision for accommodating non-domestic pets, but support will be provided to access appropriate re-homing options.

12. Data Protection and Information Sharing

- 11.1 Applicants' privacy is protected and the Council's party to this policy will only use and store personal data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 11.2 The information provided by the customer will be treated confidentially at all times. Security safeguards apply to both manual and electronically held data and only relevant staff can access this information. As a data controller, each Council has a responsibility to make sure the applicant knows why and how their personal information is being used in accordance with relevant data protection laws.
- 11.3 The Councils will only use the applicant's personal data for the purposes for which it is collected, unless it is reasonably considered that we will need to use it for another legitimate reason and that reason is compatible with the original purpose. If personal data is used for an unrelated purpose, the placing Council will notify the applicant and explain the legal basis for doing so. Processing

personal data without the applicant's knowledge or consent, where this is required or permitted by law, may be done.

13. Performance Monitoring and Review

- 13.1 The Policy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis and updated as required, for example due to changes in legislation, guidance or case law.
- 13.2 Monitoring will include, the numbers of applicants placed in temporary accommodation within and outside the District or Borough.

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	17 October 2022
Title:	Rother District Council Owned/Leased Accommodation Complaints Handling Policy
Report of:	Joe Powell (Head of Service Housing and Community)
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To propose the implementation of the Rother District Council Owned/Leased Accommodation Complaints Handling Policy
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the Rother District Council Owned/Leased Accommodation Complaints Handling Policy be recommended to Cabinet and full Council for adoption.

Introduction

1. In 2020, Rother District Council (RDC) became a Registered Provider of accommodation. Thus far, we have 24 units of accommodation that we own and one unit of accommodation that we lease and manage. The number of units of accommodation we own and lease is set to rise further as we increase the scale of the Temporary Accommodation Support Scheme (TASS) and leasing scheme.
2. This is the first Policy that we are statutorily required to have as part of the emerging Social Housing White Paper, which includes a range of improvements to the safety and management standards of social housing following the tragic events of Grenfell. A suite of further policies is presently in development as we prepare for the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill to progress through its readings in Parliament. The Bill is currently approaching the third reading in the House of Lords. These policies will include, but not limited to, a Reasonable Adjustments Policy, Rent Setting Policy, Tenant Involvement Policy, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and Domestic Abuse Policy.
3. The Policy applies to RDC tenants of temporary accommodation and leased properties only. The complaints handling policy will apply to all activity undertaken by Council staff or contractors that may be involved in property management and support of tenants. The policy can be read in full at Appendix A.

Complaints Policy

4. In July 2020, the Housing Ombudsman introduced the Complaint Handling Code which sets out good practice that would allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. An updated Code took effect from 1 April 2022,

with Landlords having until 1 October 2022 to become compliant. The Council has already adopted the new Policy standards in practice, ahead of formal adoption therefore.

5. There are a range of benefits to be gained from having an effective and efficient complaints policy:
 - Complaints allow an issue to be resolved before it becomes worse. Those issues not resolved quickly can take significant resource and time to remedy.
 - Involvement in complaint resolution develops staff ownership, decision-making and engagement.
 - Complaints provide senior staff with essential insight into day-to-day operations allowing them to assess effectiveness and drive a positive complaint handling culture.
 - Good complaint handling promotes a positive landlord and resident relationship
6. It was felt, after consulting with the Council's Complaints Team, that a separate complaints policy was needed as the standards required by the Housing Ombudsman for housing tenant complaints are higher than the Council's complaints standards.
7. To complement the Policy there is a leaflet that will be given to all tenants at tenancy sign-up to ensure the tenant is aware of the complaints process and standards to expect.
8. We will also have to complete an internal self-assessment of our complaints handling performance annually. Following each self-assessment, we must:
 - report the outcome of our self-assessment to elected Members; this will be to the Audit and Standards Committee when standards related matters are considered at the December meetings, commencing in December 2023;
 - publish the outcome of our assessment on our website and make accessible to residents; and
 - include the self-assessment in our annual report to tenants.

Conclusion

9. It is a requirement of the Housing Ombudsman that we have a housing Complaints Handling Policy adopted and we recommend that Members approve the Complaints Handling Policy proposed at Appendix A.

Equalities

10. An equality impact assessment has been completed.

Financial Implications

11. If we are found to be in breach of the Complaints Handling Code, RDC could be prosecuted which is likely to include a significant fine and may impact on future funding bids.

Legal Implications

12. All bodies registered with the Regulator for Social Housing must be in the Ombudsman's jurisdiction by effect of the 1996 Housing Act and 2011 Localism Act. Through having this membership, RDC are held accountable and if we do not follow our complaints handling policy then compensation may be requested by Ombudsman to our tenants.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive:	Malcolm Johnston
Report Contact Officer:	Joe Powell
e-mail address:	joe.powell@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A - RDC Owned Accommodation Complaints Handling Policy
Relevant previous Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

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RDC owned and leased
accommodation complaints handling
policy

1.0 Introduction

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

The policy applies across housing that is owned or leased by Rother District Council. It does not cover social housing by other Registered Providers but administered by RDC Homemove or complaints about homelessness services.

There are times when we get things wrong and do not meet the standards we aim to achieve. We are open to receive complaints about our service. This policy sets out how we will investigate complaints and our aim to resolve things promptly, fairly and politely, and say sorry when we have got things wrong.

We recognise complaints can tell us a lot about how our service can be improved and we commit to understand and act on both the overall headlines about complaints and the learning from individual cases.

We take all complaints seriously and have developed a complaints procedure (see Appendix 1) to ensure we:

- ensure that lessons learnt from our complaints and are used to inform service improvements
- monitor and check our performance
- have a clear process that we tell people about so that our clients and other stakeholders know what to do when they are not happy with something about our services
- comply with current data protection law.

2.0 Complaints – Key Principles

We will:

- resolve complaints where they arise (locally, informally, quickly), wherever possible through in person meetings, or via the telephone
- receive complaints in any format including written, telephone, text, email and verbally
- make the complaint process easily available to all
- treat all complaints seriously
- deal with complaints as sensitively as possible. Information will only be divulged if it is necessary to the investigation, and with the consent of the complainant
- issue an apology where a complaint is upheld, with an explanation of any action or learning taken because of the complaint

Summary of process (see also the procedure in Appendix 1):

- we will acknowledge the complaint in writing as soon as possible, within a maximum of 5 working days from when received. There will be a lead person to investigate the complaint;

the complaint lead will provide a written response to the complainant within a maximum of 10 working days from receipt (if this must take longer, they will let the complainant know)

- any staff members who are the subject of the complaint will be informed of the complaint (and its outcome)
- if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome they can request a review (this should be requested within 10 days). The complaint will then be escalated to an appropriate manager to review, known as Stage 2
- this is the final phase of RDC's internal process. Responses will be provided in 20 working days from when the request to escalate is received – if this is not possible an explanation and a date provided explaining when the Stage 2 response will be completed. This will not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason
- RDC owned/leased accommodation residents may refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman at any stage in the process or once the internal process has been completed, as described above, if they are not satisfied with the outcome www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Complaint-Handling-Code.pdf
- RDC has a complaints register; this is part of our quality assurance processes so we can monitor the number of complaints, their progress and any themes to support service improvements

Matters excluded are as follows:

- the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago, other than in exceptional circumstances
- the issue is or has been subject to legal proceedings
- the element of the complaint that relates to an insurance claim
- the complaint has been considered already
- the complaint is being pursued in an unreasonable way

3.0 Complaints Register

This register will be securely stored, electronically, within a central location. This register is accessed by those with responsibility for complaints and for Subject Access Requests. The information held on the register will be minimal but will include brief details of complaints, along with the named lead for the complaint and dates of key progress, learning and outcomes.

4.0 Data Retention

We comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 in relation to keeping records of each complaint we receive. Records relating to each case will be kept for 6 years after which they will securely destroyed.

Appendix 1: Complaints Procedure

1.0 How to raise a complaint

You can raise a complaint by:

- speaking to a member of staff, by telephone or face to face
- writing a letter or email
- asking someone else to raise a complaint on your behalf (we will need permission from you to investigate)

2.0 Stage 1 – what happens when a complaint is raised

The manager for the service will acknowledge your complaint, in writing, no more than 5 working days from receipt, or you may receive an acknowledgement from one of the staff who manage the complaints email system. On most occasions we will contact you to either meet with you in person, or talk to you over the telephone, to resolve your complaint. Where this is not possible or appropriate, we will tell you about the next steps, and who will be leading on the complaint. If we decide not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to explain to you the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. You have the right to challenge this decision by raising your complaint with the Housing Ombudsman.

2.1 Discussing your complaint

If a meeting is to be held, it will be with the accommodation manager (or other senior member of staff who will investigate the complaint). The meeting may also be attended by another member of staff to take notes. Any actions will be written by the manager, or the note taker, for you. If you are satisfied with the complaint outcome, then the complaint will be recorded as closed. If you are not satisfied with the outcome then you may ask that your complaint is reviewed by another manager at Stage 2 of the process, in line with the complaints policy which will require further investigation, if needed. Any earlier meetings relating to your complaint will form part of this stage.

2.2 Complaint Investigation

If a full investigation is needed, someone appropriate will be asked to investigate your complaint. This will normally be a manager who is not directly connected to the accommodation scheme. The subject of the complaint i.e. staff member will be informed as to the nature of the complaint that has been made. The investigating manager will look at all evidence from anybody involved in the complaint. They will also talk to the relevant staff involved. They will then write a report, issuing you with a written response, and deciding what actions to put forward.

2.3 Investigation Outcome

You should receive a formal and final written response within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint. The letter will state:

- the nature of the complaint raised
- the nature of the investigation undertaken

- the conclusions reached by the investigating manager, for example whether it is upheld, partially upheld, or we do not uphold each of your points
- what action has been taken to resolve the situation and to avoid such situations reoccurring
- a full apology, if applicable

If you complained about a staff member they will also be informed of the outcome of the complaint, and opportunities to improve e.g. training will be made available. You may not be told of any formal action taken against a member of staff, for data protection reasons.

If a final written response cannot be sent within 10 working days we will notify you, explaining the reasons for the delay to you and when we will provide a final response. We aim to ensure that any extension will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

2.4 How to withdraw your complaint

You can inform the investigating manager at any time that you want to withdraw a complaint. This will need to be in writing (letter or email). It may be that despite repeated attempts we are unable to contact you and in this case the Head of Service may deem the complaint is withdrawn and close it.

2.5 Stage 2 – if you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint

If you are not happy with the outcome of the complaint you can request that someone else review your complaint. This must be done within 10 working days and should be done in writing. Your request will be acknowledged within 5 working days and escalated to an appropriate person not connected to the original complaint. We aim to consider complaint reviews within 10 working days. If a final written response cannot be sent within 10 working days we will notify you, explaining the reasons for the delay to you and when we will provide a final response. We aim that any extension will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. This is the final stage of our internal complaints handling procedure.

2.6 Housing Ombudsman Service

Tenants have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaint process. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted via email at info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk. Their website is www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2022 – 2023		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
17.10.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy • East Sussex Temporary Accommodation Policy • Rother District Council Owned/Leased Accommodation Complaints Handling Policy 	Timpe Byrne
18.10.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Hall Renaissance Project 	Oliver
21.11.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28 • Performance Report: Second Quarter 2022/23 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2022/23 • Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area TAN Task & Finish Group 	Jeeawon
23.01.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24 • Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2024) • Rother Health, Well-Being and Leisure Facilities Strategy • Key Performance Targets 2023/24 	Jeeawon Byrne Timpe
13.03.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2022/23 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2022/23 • Recommendations of the Off-Street Car Parks Task & Finish Group 	Jeeawon Field
24.04.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council 	
ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration inc. Leisure Centre, Fountains, Skate Park and Accessibility of Green Spaces across the district • Review of the Economic Regeneration Strategy • Peer Review • Draft Corporate Customer Services Strategy Proposals • Litter Strategy • Review of the Tourism Strategy and the impact of Airbnbs – date TBC • Impact of Airbnb and second homes in Rye/Winchelsea/Camber • Effectiveness of 'MyAlerts' • Update report from the Local Strategic Partnership • Update report from the Health and Wellbeing Board • Corporate Plan review – to be referred back by Cabinet – date TBC • Two six-monthly reviews of the Environment Strategy – date TBC • Review of the Financial Stability Programme – date TBC • A review of Mental Health across the district – date TBC 		

