

Subject:	Our Place, Our Facilities, Our Plan – our vision for leisure facilities in Rossendale (Leisure Facilities)	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Council	Date:	20 December 2022
Report of:	Director of Communities	Lead Member:	Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Council agree the vision for leisure facilities in Rossendale, including initial proposals for the council's leisure assets.
- 1.2 That further work is undertaken to finalise designs and secure potential funding partner(s).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Rossendale's leisure centres were built in 1972 and 1974 and are in need of significant refurbishment.
- Over the past two years, extensive consultation has taken place to establish a long-term vision for our leisure and wellbeing facilities.
- A vision for a comprehensive leisure and wellbeing offer has been developed and a summary is attached to this report.
- The vision has been design to align with Sport England's "Uniting the Movement" vision to strengthen our ability to lever in external funding to improve the facilities.
- Delivering aspects of the vision are underway, however a national increase in construction costs and the council's financial constraints make a large-scale capital investment in facilities not possible at this time. This position will be kept under review and proposals will be moved forward accordingly.
- Funding will need to come from a range of external partner(s) and further engagement is taking place with potential funders. Agreeing a clear vision is an essential step in securing a funding partner.
- A further update will be provided to Council when a potential partner funding is secured, the council generates significant capital receipts which can be invested in new facilities and the council's revenue budget position is sufficiently strong to sustain long-term large-scale borrowing.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Rossendale has an ageing stock of leisure facilities and this is affecting their achievable income and their long-term financial sustainability, as well as providing an attractive offer to users. Leisure providers are being disproportionately affected by increased fuel costs and inflationary rises. A significant deficit is projected for the Rossendale Leisure Trust (the Trust) for the current financial year.
- 3.2 During late 2020 and early 2021 a decision was taken by Council to support the consolidation of the leisure portfolio bringing Ski Rossendale, Whitworth Leisure Centre, and the Ashcroft into the Trust. In addition, the Trust merged with the Whitaker Museum which remained as an independent “not for profit” entity but legally transferred to be a wholly owned subsidiary of the Trust.
- 3.3 Ski Rossendale and Whitworth Leisure Centre were considered to be financially unsustainable at the time and the transfer provided a business plan for longer-term financial sustainability. Ski Rossendale now runs at a surplus. However, Whitworth Leisure Centre is running at a deficit estimated to be over £200k per annum.
- 3.4 In May 2022, the Trust took direct control of Pioneer Gym. This facility runs at a small deficit however it is likely to make a surplus in future years.
- 3.5 A number of studies have been completed that relate to health and leisure provision in the Valley, these include the Indoor Sports Facilities Study, the Playing Pitch Strategy and the Local Plan which was adopted in December 2021. These have all informed the development of the new vision for leisure facilities.
- 3.6 In parallel to these studies, Rossendale Connected has brought together community groups and health partners. This work has resulted in a health plan for Rossendale: “Our Place, Our Wellbeing, Our Plan”. A key priority of this plan is to establish a future vision for our leisure facilities. The long-term vision has been a product of extensive engagement with the community and partners. This community and partner feedback has been amalgamated with all available technical data regarding the usage and condition of our facilities, catchment areas, national standards and estimated costings to produce an evidence based vision for our facilities.
- 3.7 Community engagement included:
- The completion of 675 surveys
 - 12 interactive workshops
 - A community health Activity Audit
 - Stakeholder engagement with over 25 organisations
 - On-going workshops and engagement with Rossendale Connected
- 3.8 In close association with Sport England, the consultants Knight Kavanagh and Paige (KKP) were commissioned in late 2021 to undertake a feasibility study to bring these elements of work together to help the council develop a long-term vision for our facilities. The vision recognises the strong desire from our residents to maximise our wonderful outdoor assets and to maximise the contribution of our many community groups and venues to offer activities that

contribute to health and wellbeing. This includes existing work to improve our tennis courts and 3G football pitches along with establishing walking and cycling routes across the valley.

3.9 In summary, technical assessments suggest that:

- Rossendale is short of swimming provision and ideally requires an additional 6 lanes
- Additional sports hall provision is required, either by opening up school facilities or additional build
- Grass football pitches are of poor quality and there is a need for additional artificial pitches
- Tennis provision is mixed with good quality provision at private clubs but poor quality public courts
- Gym provision is strong but additional capacity at Marl Pits would meet demand
- Changing facilities for outdoor sports at Marl Pits are not fit for purpose

3.10 In summary, community engagement concluded that:

- A strong desire for locally accessible offer that meets the needs of the immediate local community (travelling can be difficult for some and each town has a strong local identity)
- Smaller local facilities rather than larger
- Strong desire to consider both indoor and outdoor activities
- Desire for more general health/wellbeing space in the community
- Need for swimming/fitness in the East and West in addition to Marl Pits

4. A COMMUNITY VISION FOR LEISURE AND WELLBEING IN ROSSENDALE

4.1 The vision document is attached to this report for consideration by Council. It sets out an ambitious all-encompassing long-term strategy for Rossendale that maximises our community and outdoor assets. This vision contains three interlinked and complimentary elements. This includes:

- improvements to our leisure centres by creating new and refurbished local activity centres
- an improved community offer that enhances existing community spaces for activity and
- an outdoor offer that encourages activity across the valley including in our parks.

4.2 Local Activity Centres

The long-term vision is to have three enhanced local activity hubs. Marl Pits will be developed into a Sports Village with a refurbished pool and changing area, a doubling in the size of the gym and a redeveloped pavilion to better support the outdoor sport taking place on the site. The refurbished running track is now in use and officers are working with the rugby and football clubs to provide enhanced leases for the facilities to unlock more investment.

Adrenaline Centre at Haslingden aims to see the addition of an 18m pool that satisfies unmet demand for swimming lessons and casual swimming. Marl Pits will remain the key pool for competitive swimming. There is also the desire to seek to upgrade/refurbish Adrenaline Centre to provide a 25 year life for the sports hall and other areas. As part of our upgrading of artificial pitches, Adrenaline will benefit from a fully refurbished nine-a-side AstroTurf pitch and the grass pitches will receive improved maintenance following a staff training programme in partnership with the Football Association.

The vision includes a new facility in the East of the borough that proposes a new 18m pool and associated gym facility with a multi-purpose space suitable for sports, group exercise, and

community groups. This addresses the poor state of the current Whitworth Pool which is beyond useful and economic repair and requires replacement. A site for the new facility will be subject to further local consultation. All local activity centres will consider provision for minor medical interventions and therapies.

4.3 Our Outdoor Offer

All our activity centres along with Ski Rossendale will act as outdoor gateways to encourage and facilitate users to adventure outdoors for activities. We build on an already strong offer in the natural environment, particularly around walking, cycling and outdoor play. Simple additions such as picnic areas, leaflets and route maps will make it easy for residents to walk and cycle across the valley.

The outdoor offer includes our parks by building on the Love Parks programme which has been so successful in attracting investment into Stubblelee and Edgeside parks. Masterplans have been produced for Whitaker and Victoria parks and these will help us to bid for new facilities such as the skateboard park and pump tracks at Stubblelee and Edgeside. This will also be supported by Shared Prosperity funding, which has been recently secured.

The council continues to provide remodelled play facilities and new equipment for our younger residents, with three schemes at the bidding stage and more to follow.

Officers have successfully attracted funding through the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish our tennis courts at Stubblelee and Whitaker.

Through the Shared Prosperity Fund and by working with the Football Association and Football Foundation officers have commenced a scheme for two new full size AstroTurf pitches at Haslingden High and Valley Academy with an additional smaller pitch at the Adrenaline Centre.

4.4 Our Community Offer

Rossendale has stronger involvement from the community than many other areas. There was a very strong theme throughout the consultation that the council should make more of our community assets and further support our brilliant community groups and activities. The community offer seeks to identify key community venues which can be upgraded with audio visual equipment in order for local groups to provide a wider range of health and wellbeing activities out in the community.

The community offer builds on the Trusts' partnerships with local schools. New publicly available AstroTurf pitches and access to some school sports halls will address two key findings of the study.

5 **NEXT STEPS**

5.1 Following commencement of this study, the financial pressures on the Council and the Trust have increased significantly. Inflationary pressures have increased construction costs by an estimated 20 percent and worsening national government finances suggest that council funding may be further squeezed. Borrowing costs for the council have risen and could rise further. In addition to this the running costs of leisure facilities have increased significantly due to the rise in energy costs and minimum wage. These factors have changed the environment for leisure substantially during 2022. Given the scale of the anticipated improvement/redevelopment works the implementation of this will be phased. The timing of the phases will be largely determined by the availability of capital and the council's ability to sustain borrowing.

- 5.2 The vision outlined has many interlinked and complementary elements. A small number of these are complete or in the pipeline. For example, the running track and our improvements to parks and play areas. Many have funding identified such as football pitch and tennis court improvements. It is also hoped that through our strong relationships with health partners external funding can be identified to upgrade community venues.
- 5.3 The highest level of capital investment required is for the refurbishment/redevelopment of our leisure centres. Further work is required to finalise accurate costs for this work and to pursue possible funding streams. The vision, if approved by Council, will give us the basis on which to further engage potential funding partners and assess up to date costs.
- 5.4 By engaging Sport England throughout the process and aligning our vision with Sport England's new strategy, they have indicated that they would like to support the vision financially. The level of funding being offered is under discussion currently at national level. Other potential funding partners are also being pursued. For example, British Cycling have expressed interest previously in supporting a cycle hub in the east of the borough linking to Lee Quarry.
- 5.5 An exercise to evaluate potential capital receipts that could be allocated to the project will also be undertaken. A further update will be provided to Council when a potential partner funding is secured, the council generates significant capital receipts which can be invested in new facilities and the council's revenue budget position is sufficiently strong to sustain long-term large-scale borrowing. Only when these conditions are met will the council be able to deliver the first phase of the larger-scale improvement works to facilities.
- 5.6 Further design work to provide accurate costings is included within the cost of the initial commission for the feasibility. If Council agrees the vision, further design work will take place on the facilities outlined in this report.

6. RISK

- 6.1 The council own an ageing stock of leisure facilities that are still popular and operational but require significant refurbishment and investment. There is a risk in not refurbishing our facilities in the long-term as they will become increasingly expensive to operate and a failure to improve the offer may affect usage.
- 6.2 The council is not in a position to directly fund or use borrowing for the entirety of the proposals and therefore it will be necessary to seek partner funding and also source capital receipts that will contribute to funding the proposals. Seeking to press ahead in borrowing to fund the scheme in the short term would expose the council to an unsustainable financial risk.

7. FINANCE

- 7.1. There are no financial implications for the council arising directly from this report. However, the cost of implementing the full vision will have significant financial implications. The current financial situation for all leisure providers and the council is especially difficult. The council is expecting a deficit of approximately £1.5m this current year and the Trust are likely to have a deficit of approximately £700k. The cost increases being experienced are largely outside of the Trust's and the council's control.
- 7.2. The council has always sought to fund the vision through a combination of its own capital, borrowing and external funding. Establishing a funding package to improve the facilities is extremely challenging in the current financial climate. The council is working with funding bodies such as Sport England who are extremely supportive of the proposed vision as it aligns

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with their national strategy “Uniting the Movement”. This should strengthen the council’s ability to lever in external funding. The council has provisional agreement for funding contributions to new tennis courts and new 3G football pitches. The council will however have to identify capital receipts. The strength of the council’s revenue budget position to sustain long-term large-scale borrowing is a critical part of the large-scale funding to deliver the vision.

7.3. The current economic climate and the council’s resultant financial position is inhibiting its ability to deliver the full vision at this time. However, when significant external funding become available and capital receipts are achieved, the situation will be re-evaluated. As individual projects within the vision are developed and funding secured, they will be reported to Council or Cabinet for approval as set out in the Constitution.

8. LEGAL

8.1 This report sets out the council’s proposed vision in relation to leisure and wellbeing in the borough which at this point has no arising legal implications. As work progresses there will be a need to bring further reports back to Council for consideration. For those funding streams identified and already in train, officers will continue to address Council or Cabinet as necessary and enter into all necessary legal agreements and grant funding arrangements as required by the Constitution.

9. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Elements of this extensive programme will require equality impact assessments to be completed at a time when more detail is available. Developing a future vision for our leisure facilities is a key action within the councils Corporate Plan.

10. REASON FOR DECISION

10.1 This report sets out an ambitious vision for our future leisure and wellbeing offer. Part of the programme has funding identified. However, by agreeing a vision it will be possible to better secure potential funding partners.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Our Place Our Facilities Our Plan	Attached

Our Place Our Facilities Our Plan

A Community Vision for Leisure & Wellbeing Facilities in Rossendale



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Rossendale's Leisure facilities are amongst the Boroughs most appreciated local buildings. Residents young and old visit venues for a wide range of activities from swimming to adventure climbing, group exercise classes, sports, fitness, skiing and specialist health support. Most of our local leisure and wellbeing assets were built in the early 1970s and whilst they are much-loved by local people, they are ageing and in need of refurbishment and renewal. We recognise that we could not have a more challenging financial backdrop but we have identified funding for some elements. The larger investments in facilities however will require further work by the Council and partners to identify possible funding and to make it happen.

This vision has been developed with our partners Rossendale Leisure Trust, Local Health Stakeholders, and Sports Bodies. It has been produced in collaboration with our community through the Rossendale Connected network. This vision establishes a local place based community offer that uniquely fits the needs of Rossendale - one that maximises our strengths such as our great outdoors, our engaged community groups and our community venues. This is all underpinned by our ambition to improve our leisure centres as a central focus of the vision. This vision provides the basis on which we can talk to partners and explore routes to bring the vision to reality.

Why are local leisure centres important?

Rossendale's leisure centres are well used with over 750,000 visits per year. Leisure facilities like Adrenaline in Haslingden, Marl Pits and Whitworth Leisure Centre are anchor points in our communities and play a vital role in keeping 75% of our adult population active and healthy.

However, research from Sport England shows that around a quarter of adults in the borough do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week, and we know that low activity levels can contribute to poor health and an increased chance of becoming unwell with serious illness.

Having the right leisure centres in the right place can help all local people to have the opportunity, confidence and motivation to be active. Complimenting these centres with a wrap around community and outdoor offer will "Unite the movement" and help to transform the health and wellbeing of people in Rossendale.

Facilities that contribute to health and wellbeing are also a priority with Rossendale's collaborative plan for health and wellbeing – "Our Place, Our Wellbeing, Our Plan". The timeline below shows how the plan was developed and why the facilities are so important to our overall plan for increasing wellbeing within communities. Our approach in Rossendale is all about working together, understanding the views and needs of local people and designing solutions together.

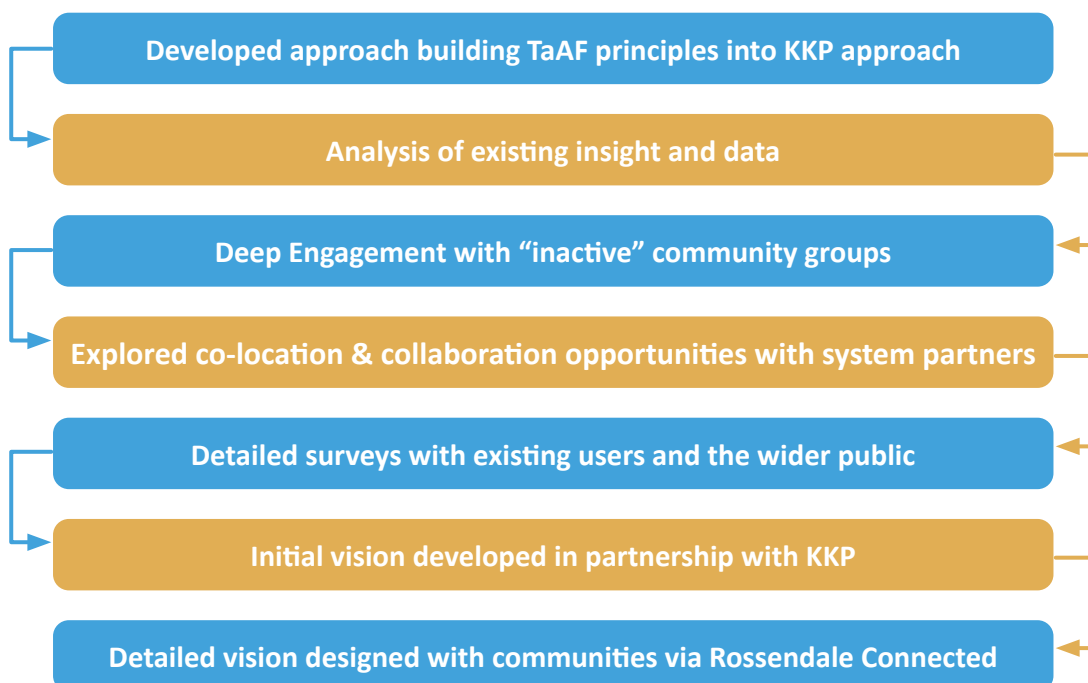


What have we learned?

What do we know about how people use leisure centres in Rossendale?

The recent Leisure Facility Review (conducted by the consultants KKP) advises that not only are leisure facilities in need of refurbishment, they also need expansion to meet demand. Adrenaline and Marl Pits in particular are operating at capacity, and far above national averages and recommended comfort factors. For example, in 2022, Marl Pits pool operated at over 90% capacity compared to the optimum 80% capacity for swimmer experience. At that time 700 children per week had swimming lessons, but there were over 500 on the waiting list.

Building on the work of KKP, we felt we needed to really understand what local people felt about local leisure facilities, and the changes that could be made to make it easier for more people to be active. The process we follow looked like this:



We talked to local groups in spaces and places that allowed them to comfortably and honestly share their thoughts on leisure facilities in Rossendale. We did activities together where we explored what a good health and physical activity hub might look like, and the features that would make them most accessible. We also surveyed local people and received over 650 responses.

What have we learned from our community:

- Local facilities within easy access of local communities is important, including provision in the East and West of the borough.
- Travel in the Borough is a barrier for some.
- Family friendly local community type facilities are seen as less intimidating and more likely to be used by those that most need them.
- Swimming is a preferred activity for lots of residents of all ages and backgrounds.
- Facilities that support access to outdoor spaces would help link people to our natural assets.
- People are looking for spaces and places where families can be active together.

Our emerging vision: Local Activity Hubs

Our ambition is to provide a high quality Activity Hub in the West, Central and East areas of the borough. Each of these Activity Hubs will include a fitness offer, a swimming offer, and an exercise and sport offer, as well as being a gateway to the outdoors. So what does this look like in practice:



West

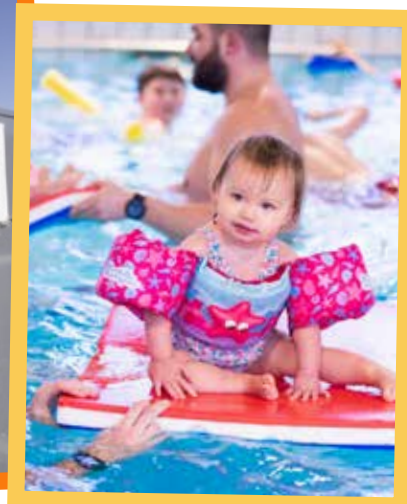
A refurbishment of Adrenaline to ensure its fit for the next generation including a new swimming pool and changing provision. We'll also provide improved cycling and walking infrastructure including outdoor picnic areas. We will work with health partners to see if new rooms can be added to allow health consultations from local clinicians such as nurses and GPs. The family offer of adventure climbing, laser tag and more will be retained and improved.

We will also work with Haslingden high school to open some facilities to the community and improve current provision, including a new full size floodlight 3G football pitch.

Central

The Marl Pits complex will be developed into Rossendale's Sports Village. The new running track would be complemented with a redeveloped pavilion. The Leisure Centre will be refurbished, and the gym and fitness facilities will be extended to provide more group exercise space, and a sauna and steam room will be added to create a more holistic wellbeing experience. We will work with health partners to see if new rooms can be added to allow health consultations from local clinicians such as nurses and GPs.

We will also work with high schools in the area to open facilities to the community and improve current provision, including a refurbishment of the full size floodlit 3G football pitch at VLA.



East

A new community facility to serve the East of the Borough. The new centre will include swimming pool, fitness space and community activity room that can be used for some sports, group exercise and community activities. We will work with British Cycling to explore a possible trail head centre which will link to the Scout Moor and Cowm mountain biking spaces.

We will work closely with Whitworth high school and seek to provide quality sports and activity space to local people.

Our Community Venues

Rossendale already has brilliant community centres and venues across the borough. These venues are trusted local spaces where local people feel comfortable, supported and welcome. Our discussions with local people suggest they are much more likely to take part in activities in known local venues. Rossendale Connected has grown to be a network of community groups that are changing Rossendale for the better. There are already a brilliant range of activities happening in these venues and our vision is to build on those strong foundations and provide additional support and equipment to enhance the physical activity offer.

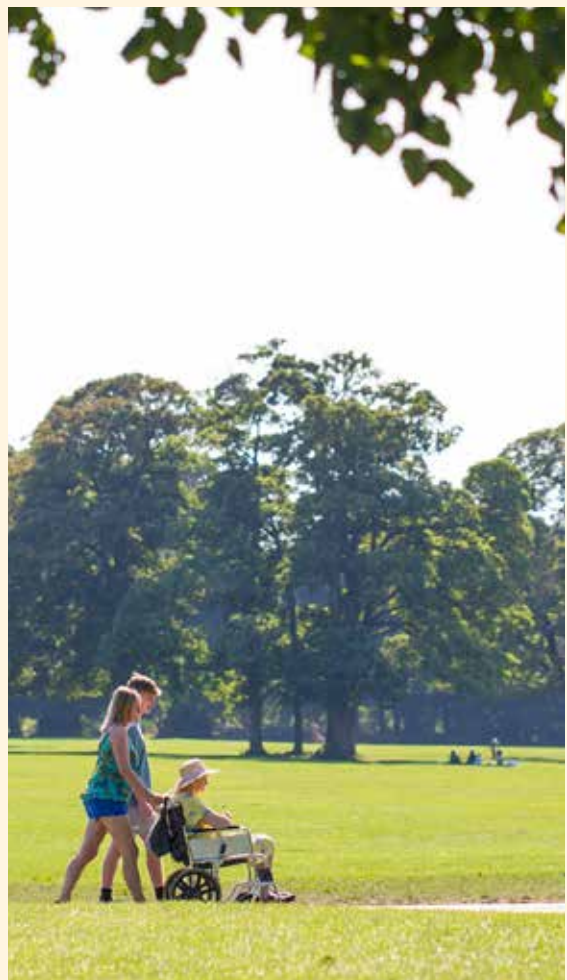
Virtual Group Exercise:

Many of our community venues have rooms and halls that would be brilliant for accessible group exercise classes. However, for small venues, instructor costs can be prohibitive. We want to provide each community venue with a large screen with pre-loaded group exercise classes. These classes will be recordings of local people from local sport and leisure venues so that as confidence grows, participants might decide to go and try a live class at a local physical activity hub.



Gateway to the Outdoors:

Working collaboratively with our venues we will invest to make venues a local gateway to the outdoors. We hope to make cafés visitor friendly for those with muddy shoes. Walking maps and cycles racks available for those who wish to travel, and where possible open up and improve existing outdoor spaces like fields and playgrounds to make the most of outdoor spaces.



Our emerging vision: Our Great Outdoors

Something for everyone!

Rossendale is blessed with fantastic open spaces. When asked over fifty percent of residents said they want us to consider outdoors and not just indoors. Our ambition for facilities in the Valley is to provide something for everyone, across the geography of the borough. This means play facilities in our parks for all ages, gateways to the outdoors and improved playing pitches and tennis courts in our parks. Ski Rossendale goes from strength to strength and we will soon be adding the longest tubing track in the UK.

Our Great Outdoors

We will continue to work to improve outdoor spaces and actively attract people to the outdoors.



Parks

Our ambition is to build on our “Love Parks” programme which has brought Green Flag status to Stubblelee Park and developed long term masterplans for Whitaker, Victoria and Edgeside. This has attracted external funding for a new skate park and pump tracks as well as the renewal of many play areas for our younger residents. Three more major refurbishments are planned for next year. We are working with the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish our tennis courts at Stubblelee and Whitaker Park to provide activity for all ages.



Walking & Cycling

By working with our partners at the County Council, Together an Active Future and within our cycling forums we want to further develop our maps, signage, accessible routes, upgrades to paths and greenway infrastructure so that everyone in the borough has easy access to walk and cycle in safe and enjoyable spaces. We will enhance our leisure centres to be outdoor gateways which will connect people with the outdoors and make exploring the borough on foot or on bike much easier.



Playing Pitches and Green Spaces

We will work to ensure that we have high quality playing pitches across the borough through a flagship partnership with the FA so that young people, families, clubs and groups can get back to grass, connect with nature and enjoy team sports and activities together.

We have allocated investment through the Shared Prosperity Fund so we can partner with the Football Foundation and Lancashire FA to bring high quality 3G pitches to the West and East of the borough.

Linking it all together

Leisure centres are significant community assets that can make a real difference to the lives of residents. We do need a long term vision to maximise the benefit that people get from our centres, but in Rossendale we are going much further.

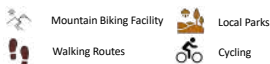
By working with all our stakeholders and by listening to our communities, we have developed a vision that goes far beyond the renewal of leisure centres and is now a genuine community leisure vision for everyone living in Rossendale.

This vision makes the most of our natural assets, our fantastic community groups and community centres and then glues it all together through high quality local activity hubs.



Our Natural Assets (Free)

- Walking routes and maps
- Walking groups
- Cycling for travel and leisure
- Parks
- Open Spaces



Our Community Centre Offer:

- Working with existing community centres
- Invest in virtual group exercise equipment with local instructors
- Connect to walking and cycling routes "Gateway to Outdoors"



Local Activity Hubs

- Activity Hubs with gym, swimming and sports for each part of the borough
- Sustainable approaches
- "Gateways to the outdoors"
- Within walking distance of most residents



Next Steps

What we have developed in partnership is a long term vision that meets the needs of partners and the community. Elements of the vision such as football pitch and tennis court improvements do have identified funding streams. We continue to work with health partners to develop and fund the community offer.

Investment in our leisure centres will require a high level of capital investment and we continue to have very positive discussions with Sport England regarding shared investment in delivering the vision.

Funding an ambitious vision such as this could not be more challenging at the present time and we do not have the necessary funding available as a council. But by developing an innovative vision based on what the community wants and by working in partnership over the coming years we have the best possible chance of success.



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