

**Report**  
**Have Your Say – Leisure Feedback**

Bacup            Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009  
Haslingden    Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009  
Rawtenstall   Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Background            p 2  
The Set-up.            p 2  
The Results.            p 4  
Conclusion.            p 10

## **1. Background**

Rossendale Borough Council held a series of three consultation/feedback sessions designed to hear the views of local people on the leisure services in the Borough with particular regard to the financial options presented to Cabinet in January 2009. Sessions were held at three different venues across Rossendale as follows:

The sessions were held on:

Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009 18.30 - 20.30 at the Maden Centre, Rochdale Road, Bacup

Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009 18.30 - 20.30 at Haslingden Community Link, Bury Road, Haslingden

Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009 18.30 – 20.30 at Kay Street Baptist Church, Rawtenstall

These events were designed and facilitated in such a way as to provide people with a open and transparent mechanism by which individuals and groups could tell the Council what should be done to secure the future of leisure services in Rossendale and to comment on the financial options identified in the January Cabinet report.

This report outlines the format of the events, what tools were used to allow the public to air their views and the results and conclusions drawn from the event.

## **2. The format:**

The format of the sessions was designed in such a way as to enable people to provide feedback in an informal setting on a range of different aspects of the Leisure report and to enable people to “drop in” at any time whilst the sessions were ongoing.

To ensure the Council responded to the learning from each event the Communities Team held a review on the morning following each consultation. At this review meeting it was decided if anything needed improving or adapting within the parameters that each event followed the same pattern, to ensure consistency of results.

### **2.1 At each event**

Copies of the reports were provided, answers to frequently asked questions, the financial contributions of each aspect of the leisure facilities and the current options as presented to Cabinet were all displayed.

Rossendale Borough Council and Rossendale Leisure Trust staff were on hand to provide assistance and to provide an explanation of the consultation tools displayed at a number of stations around the room. They were not there to directly answer questions asked about the Trust or the Council. If this occurred, people were asked to either fill in a pre-printed feedback form or utilise one of the stations around the room to record their comments.

Each station was laid out in the following manner:

## 2.2 Voting Pods

The voting pods were used to give those that participated the opportunity to provide one answer to each of the questions. These questions were not aimed at providing information about the usage of facilities provided by the Trust but to demonstrate the range of services provided such as the 'Exercise on Prescription Service'.

The results were instantly displayed to the public in the form of a bar-chart.

The results did display good to excellent usage of the pools and current facilities, and were a reflection of those who attended.

## 2.3 H Form

The H Form was designed to provide opinions on the current facilities. This was non-exclusive, so all facilities were covered. As expected at the Bacup event the Leisure Hall was the main focus for discussion whilst at Haslingden and Rawtenstall the swimming pools at Haslingden and Marl Pits were mainly commented about.

|                                      |  |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| What's good about current facilities | What do you think about current facilities | What's bad about current facilities |
|                                      | Suggestions for improvement                |                                     |

## 2.4 Leisure Options

Each 'Option' A - G was presented with the opportunity to vote on a preferred option, by sticking a dot under the relevant option.

After reviewing the first nights event a selection of feedback indicated that the community wanted an opportunity to provide an alternative option which would fully reflect their views as the majority of people expressed the need for the continual use of two pools, whilst a new one was being built.

## 2.5 Covering the cost

Lists of statements were provided, along with the different financial needs of each of the facilities, which were taken from the Cabinet report. Individuals were asked to either agree or disagree with each statement by putting a dot in the appropriate column.

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| Public leisure facilities and services are really important for Rossendale                                   |       |          |
| Their should be more private leisure facilities and services in Rossendale                                   |       |          |
| Council tax should be increased to pay for improved Leisure facilities.                                      |       |          |
| Some leisure services should be stopped to save money  |       |          |
| Some leisure facilities should close to save money   |       |          |
| Rossendale Borough Council should take over management of Leisure facilities and services                    |       |          |
| Rossendale Leisure Trust should continue to run leisure facilities and services in Rossendale                |       |          |
| Leisure facilities and services have improved in recent years  |       |          |
| Other options should be looked at in relation to who should run Rossendale's leisure facilities and services |       |          |

## 2.6 Graffiti Wall

This was an open space for members of the public to write down their views on a 'Graffiti Wall' with post-it-notes. This was not provided in conjunction with sections of the leisure report to allow for any comment/view to be expressed.

## 3. The Results

Across the three nights 280 people attended the events, coming either individually, in their capacity as a Councillor, a representative of the Leisure Trust, or from organisations that use the facilities, such as Rays; Rossendale Multi-ability Swimming Group, SOP's; Save Our Pools and Haslingden over 50s swimming group.

The results have been coded to enable the analysis to be manageable and coherent. They have been presented to reflect *suggestions* the community had, *questions* they felt needed answering or addressing, the *positive and negatives* of the current facilities and an overall conclusion.

It should be noted that participants attended in their own individual capacity and in groups so answers were provided independently and as a group. It was also noted that people placed more than one vote particularly at the bean counting Options and Finance stations which could have a marginal distortional affect on results. It is also accepted that not every comment expressed to one of the facilitators would have been recorded however; participants were asked to ensure they had written their comments down at the appropriate station.

### 3.1 Suggestions

#### Bacup Leisure Hall

- The Leisure Hall should stay open as others have all closed i.e Astoria, Public Hall.
- The Leisure Hall should be used more for Council meetings etc to give them more money.
- Provide better advertisement for all services and events at the Leisure Hall.
- Should be suitable for the arts

#### Current Facilities

- Offer reward schemes for Leisure use.
- Hold consultations at the facilities themselves.
- The old facilities should not close until new ones have arrived.
- Open more, with a more diverse range of lessons, especially for new-borns.

#### New Facilities

- The pool should be in the hub of the valley as Haslingden Sport is not easily accessible.
- Work with communities more and consult more, especially concerning the new pool and facilities.
- New Leisure facilities should be competitive with private sector.
- New facilities need to be easily accessible by public transport and accessible in the evening.
- Look at how other local authorities have run their facilities and how they have funded them.
- The new pools should have diving facilities for better group and individual usage.
- More facilities for non-sports leisure, the balance in expenditure should be equal across all facilities, e.g. art, theatre.

## Leisure Trust

- The people of Rossendale shouldn't need to rely on private finance for Leisure Facilities
- Make the Trust disband and put as part of the "Adrenaline" initiative
- Close the Trust and employ a funding officer
- The Trust should go out to tender
- Investment plus a long term Leisure strategy is needed.
- Provide complete plans of new facilities, with time plans for completion.

## 3.2 Questions

- Where are young people supposed to go swimming, or people who can not drive?
- What has been done to enable all sections of the community to participate in the consultation?
- How do pool closures link to health awareness? Especially concerning the Government's agendas for health.
- Where else does the money from our Council tax go?
- What's really happened to Marl Pits (especially is it to be sold)?
- Are we exploring other sites for the new pool?
- How accurate are the estimates for the new pool at Haslingden? How can we be guarantee a new pool will be built?
- Has a risk assessment/impact survey only been carried out for 1 pool?
- What will be the impact on the remaining pool?
- Is there another option? Option H?
- Is it realistic that private businesses will invest?
- Will there be enough opportunity for swimming clubs to use the pools?
- What will happen if RLT don't stick to the new plan?
- Why are RLT not more accountable?
- What about the arts provisions provided by RLT?

- Why is the Council investing in staff accommodation and not Leisure
- Why were Cabinet members not present to take questions

### 3.3 Comments on the current facilities

#### Positive

- Leisure hall is a multi-use facility
- Leisure hall is the only one of its kind in the valley
- All the facilities are community assets
- They are a local service
- The front line staffing is excellent
- The volunteers are excellent and committed
- There are excellent swimming clubs, with top-class swimmers

#### Negative

- Lack of investment over the years
- Not up-to-date and run down
- Local community not involved enough
- No clear strategy
- Haslingden has limited facilities for disabled use.

### 3.4 Results from the pod voting and financial bean counting

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| Public leisure facilities and services are really important for Rossendale                                   | 189   | 1        |
| Their should be more private leisure facilities and services in Rossendale                                   | 4     | 143      |
| Council tax should be increased to pay for improved Leisure facilities.                                      | 47    | 92       |
| Some leisure services should be stopped to save money  | 3     | 175      |
| Some leisure facilities should close to save money   | 1     | 167      |
| Rossendale Borough Council should take over management of Leisure facilities and services                    | 23    | 101      |
| Rossendale Leisure Trust should continue to run leisure facilities and services in Rossendale                | 85    | 119      |
| Leisure facilities and services have improved in recent years  | 107   | 105      |
| Other options should be looked at in relation to who should run Rossendale's leisure facilities and services | 110   | 47       |

### 3.5 Pod answers.

The answers are on the left of the questions. These indicate that the leisure facilities used regularly in the valley are the swimming pools, not other facilities such as the Ski Slope or gymnasium. It also indicated that the location of the facilities was more important than their standard.

**Q1 I live closest to?**

- 30 A Haslingden
- 40 B Rawtenstall
- 23 C Bacup
- 13 D Waterfoot
- 0 E Whitworth
- 1 F Edenfield
- 1 Unanswered

**Q2 How often do you use the swimming facilities in the valley?**

- 3 A Never
- 14 B Very rarely
- 12 C At least monthly
- 17 D Once a week
- 59 E More than once a week
- 0 Unanswered

**Q3 Which swimming pool do you most regularly use?**

- 74 A Marl Pits
- 39 B Haslingden
- 1 C Whitworth
- 3 D None
- 1 Unanswered

**Q4 How often do you visit Bacup Leisure Hall?**

- 36 A Never
- 48 B Very rarely
- 7 C At least monthly
- 3 D Once a week
- 13 E More than once a week
- 0 Unanswered

**Q5 How often do you use Ski Rossendale?**

- 64 A Never
- 24 B Very rarely
- 7 C At least monthly
- 8 D Once a week
- 3 E More than once a week



1 Unanswered

**Q6 Which of the following do you use most regularly?**

- 11 A Fearn's Sport and Leisure
- 6 B Alder Grange Community Sports Centre
- 0 C Whitworth Leisure Centre
- 23 D Haslingden Sports Centre
- 46 E Other Sports and Leisure facility in the valley
- 25 F None
- 1 Unanswered

**Q7 Have you attended an event run in conjunction with Rossendale Leisure Trust in the last year, such as The Rossendale Weekend, The Mela and Rural Fair, Rossendale Food Festival or Marl Pits Firework Display?**

- 55 A Yes
- 34 B No
- 18 Unanswered

**Q8 Do you use the Exercise on Prescription Activities provided by Rossendale Leisure Trust?**

- 13 A Yes
- 77 B No
- 17 Unanswered

**Q9 Which sport or leisure activity do you utilise most in the valley?**

- 62 A Water Based
- 9 B Gym based
- 5 C Winter Sport
- 17 D Classes - taught sessions
- 7 E Private - home based, walking, running etc
- 8 F Other
- 16 Unanswered

**Q10 Which facilities do you visit most outside of the valley?**

- 26 A Swimming pools
- 4 B Gyms
- 5 C Winter sports
- 6 D Classes
- 22 E Other
- 34 F None
- 18 Unanswered

**Q11 The most important thing to me about leisure facilities is?**

|    |   |                         |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| 9  | A | Lower cost              |
| 38 | B | Location                |
| 22 | C | Standards of facilities |
| 32 | D | Access to facilities    |
| 9  | E | Variety of facilities   |
| 1  | F | Other                   |
| 17 |   | Unanswered              |

**Q12 If a new pool was built, where would you like it be?**

|    |   |             |
|----|---|-------------|
| 14 | A | Haslingden  |
| 13 | B | Rawtenstall |
| 15 | C | Bacup       |
| 1  | D | Other       |
| 64 |   | Unanswered  |

#### 4. Conclusion

Some people attended anticipating a theatre style debate and were a little disappointed this wasn't the case. This view needs to be balanced against the Cabinet's clear primary objective of allowing those that attended the event to be given the opportunity to participate in a consultation exercise where they could register their comments and views in an unbiased and non-confrontational atmosphere. The majority of those that attended expressed that this objective was achieved. This was clearly evident by the range of young people who registered their comments. Other forums such as the Neighbourhood Forum offered a more formal meeting with cabinet members in attendance.

A clear and resounding message was the need for a complete review of all Leisure facilities, which would lead to a clear strategic understanding of the Rossendale Leisure offer within the valley and a vision and direction of travel to sustain it in the long term. To deliver this the Council would clearly need to reconsider / review the present options and allow for deeper consultation.

There was a clear message that participants wanted the pools to remain open mainly due to concern about the lack of capacity as it would impact on school, group and individual use. This view was widened to not wanting any pool to close until a new one was built.

A number of the people expressed concern in relation to the Council's commitment relating to a new facility. But in contrast individuals and groups expressed how they wanted to be closely involved in any consultation about its design, location, usage as this would demonstrate that the plans are definite.

The involvement of private facilities was a secondary issue to peoples' initial opinions on the pool and leisure hall facilities. People expressed that they wanted community facilities to be provided, without having to rely on private provision.

The majority of the community who expressed an opinion were not opposed to new facilities and recognised that although the facilities provided by Rossendale Leisure Trust have improved over recent years, there was clearly a need for a review of the present Council/Trust arrangements. Many of those that participated expressed concern at the running of the Leisure Trust and if it was a viable delivery agent for leisure provision in the valley.

People also expressed the need for Rossendale Borough Council to work in partnership with partners. This ranged from simple suggestions as the Council utilising the Trust spaces more, to looking into the health impact for future generations, if pool provision is low, especially for young people and the elderly and its impact on regeneration and tourism.

In addition there was a view about improving income generation from the Leisure offer with suggestions including more advertising for all the leisure facilities, with a greater range of opening times and taught lessons. Suggestions were made that consultation points should be available in all public spaces that are run by the Leisure Trust.

**Produced:** Portfolio Holder, Leisure and Deputy Chief Executive.

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