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Caerphilly County Borough Council
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19th September 2018

Consultation response Sports and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation and highlight the impact that the outcomes may have on the Upper Rhymney Valley which forms part of my Constituency.

Firstly, can I congratulate Caerphilly CBC on developing a Sport & Active Recreation Strategy to guide the authority's thinking and planning in this area over the next 10 years? I also acknowledge the work of the authority is sustaining sport and leisure provision across the County Borough in the face of ongoing financial pressures.

Background

I am certain that you will be aware that all communities in the Upper Rhymney Valley are deprived and isolated with poor transport links. The communities are identified in the Index of Multiple Deprivation and have in recent years been the target of EU structural funds. Communities in the Upper Rhymney Valley are also identified as experiencing significant health inequalities and many residents do not enjoy good health and wellbeing. Whilst I appreciate that this strategy is much wider than physical buildings and structures, I do feel it is hugely important that the above situation is not compounded further by the closure of key facilities which could have a further negative impact in these communities.

Current Position

At present the area I represent does not have any swimming facilities, there is one leisure centre, in New Tredegar, along with 2 bowling greens with 6 community Centres that are managed by the Authority and 2 that are managed independent of

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the Council. 5 Community Centres have been lost in the past 10 years at Brithdir, Butetown, New Tredegar, Lower Rhymney and Pontlottyn. I also note that there are leisure facilities based at the Idris Davies School.

The area benefits from a Country Park at Parc Cwm Darren and the Memorial Park off Rhymney High Street. We also have several play facilities, bowling greens, playing fields and 2 Skate parks.

Outcomes of the Strategy

I note the consultation focuses on three key outcomes:

- Better Health
- Healthier and Prosperous Communities
- Efficient and Sustainable future Provision

Whilst I fully accept and appreciate that due to ongoing UK Government austerity resulting in a significant cut in Local Authority budgets, savings have to be made and services rationalised in line with this situation.

However, I feel that it is key to point out that any loss of provision in these, already isolated and deprived areas, will have greater impact on health and wellbeing due to the infrastructure and poor transport links which results in communities being less accessible, particularly in the evening. The impact will be greater than in other less isolated parts of the County Borough.

The community centres in these areas are therefore focal points for the community and act as a HUB where Health Provision, such as baby clinics and other health and wellbeing groups meet and receive support.

Advice agencies such as C.A.B provide help and support at the heart of the community as well and Job Clubs and further education and training courses can be delivered in these isolated areas.

Since the closure of many clubs and institutes in the area, the community centre in most communities is now often the only facility with a hall big enough to host large groups. I would also be keen to see greater use of the sports provision at Idris Davies School, Rhymney.

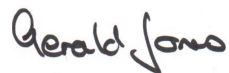
Conclusions

I fully appreciate that some of the facilities are not used as regularly as they could be by members of the community and this then makes it harder to make the case for the ongoing need for such facilities. However, I am deeply concerned about the potential loss of provision in areas where there is very little alternative and I am ready and

willing to work collaboratively with the authority and other agencies to explore ways in which we can further promote these facilities in an attempt to ensure they remain viable in the longer term. I would also be interested to see if we can work more closely with schools to increase participation and use of the current facilities.

I would be happy to hold further discussions once the full extent of the community consultation is known.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerald Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

Gerald Jones MP

Cc Cllr Dave Poole - Leader, Caerphilly CBC
Jeff Reynolds - Leisure Services Manager, Caerphilly CBC