LEISURE ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE

Background

Introduction

West Dorset District Council is committed to equal opportunities and to the concept and practice of social inclusion. One of the council’s strategic aims is to provide equality of access to leisure activities.

In order to achieve this goal, it was decided that further research needed to be carried out to identify sections of the community that were prevented from easily accessing recreational facilities. The results presented in the council’s user satisfaction Best Value performance study, completed by MORI in December were examined. It was found that people in full time employment were more likely to use recreational facilities operated or supported by the council than those not in full time employment. It was decided that further investigation should be carried out to find out the reason for this. It was assumed that people not in full time employment may be on a low income and entitled to council tax benefit. It was decided that in order to assess the needs of these people a questionnaire would be sent to a sample of people in receipt of council tax benefit. There are approximately 6000 receivers of benefit in the West Dorset area and questionnaires were sent out to 25% randomly selected residents. 30% of questionnaires sent were returned to the Leisure and Tourism division completed.
The Results

The results from the survey indicated that only 25% of people in receipt of council tax benefit attend a leisure centre, 35% have ever attended an arts event and only 28% have ever visited their local museum.

This can be compared to the number of people in full-time employment, who attend leisure centres (71%)\(^1\), arts events (71%)\(^1\) and museums (76%)\(^1\). 38% of the recipients, when asked, would like to take part in leisure activities more often.

When asked what barriers prevent people on benefits attending recreational facilities currently, cost and lack of transport were the two major drawbacks. In total 45% of respondents claimed that with better transport and cheaper facilities, they would participate in leisure activities more often. Other factors included lack of time (5%), limited choice (6%), lack of information (6%), lack of childcare (1%), accessibility to venues (7%), not interested (6%) and opening times (3%). The survey also gave an indication of the potential increase in visitor numbers if a discount scheme was introduced. Of the recipients surveyed, the number of visitors to leisure centres per year is 24,909. 21% of recipients indicated that they would visit the centre more often if they were given discount, this results in a potential increase of 5230 extra visits per year. The average cost of a visit to the leisure centre is £3. So, potentially, this could mean an extra income of £10983.

\(^1\) MORI USER Satisfaction Best Value Performance Indicators 2003/2004.
for leisure centres in West Dorset if a leisure pass is issued allowing 30% discount to use the facilities.

The percentage increase in visitor numbers to arts centres and museums is very similar to that of leisure centres. An extra 2834 visits to arts centres and 1370 visits to museums, would result in an extra income of approximately £15870 and £2877 respectively. The table below considers potential additional income using various discounts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue and average cost per visit</th>
<th>Potential number of extra visits</th>
<th>Additional income if no discount was given</th>
<th>Additional income using 30% discount with leisure pass</th>
<th>Additional income using 50% discount with leisure pass</th>
<th>Additional income using 70% discount with leisure pass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Centre - £3</td>
<td>5230</td>
<td>£15690</td>
<td>£10983</td>
<td>£7845</td>
<td>£4707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Event - £8</td>
<td>2834</td>
<td>£22672</td>
<td>£15870</td>
<td>£11336</td>
<td>£6802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum - £3</td>
<td>1370</td>
<td>£4110</td>
<td>£2877</td>
<td>£2055</td>
<td>£1233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey also gave some general information regarding recipients’ recreational habits with swimming being the most popular sports activity, music events are the most popular arts activity and more people have visited Dorset County Museum than any other in the district. Local press and radio are the most effective way of informing people about leisure services with word of mouth being the second most preferred method. Full details of the survey are attached as Appendix A.