1. Meeting: Lifelong Learning, Culture & Leisure Cabinet Member and Advisors

2. Date: 12th December 2006

3. Title: Culture & Leisure Awards

4. Programme Area: Children & Young People’s Services

5. Summary

This report identifies recent achievements in Culture and Leisure that have received nationally recognised awards.

6. Recommendations

Members acknowledge the awards.
7. Proposals and Details

During the past 6 months the Leisure & Green Spaces Team have received 3 awards that recognise the quality and variety of the services they provide. These awards help to give confidence to service users; raise the profile of the service within the borough, regionally and nationally; increase staff morale and motivation; contribute to service planning and improvement; and often support access to external funding. Obtaining awards requires a great deal of hard work and preparation by the officers and partners involved. As a result the service has sought to target those opportunities that it believes will be of most benefit to service improvement and which it is able to strive for without any detriment to front line service delivery. The awards the service has achieved, along with a brief description of each, are identified below.

1. Aquamark (All Swimming Pools)

The Sport & Leisure Facility ‘Swimsmart’ programme has been awarded ‘Premier Scheme Status’, the highest award in the industry’s accreditation scheme ‘Aquamark’. This demonstrates a commitment by the service to improve the quality of service delivery and to raise standards in swimming. Aquamark is an external validation of performance that recognises the achievements of the staff in working together to improve the swimming programme through:

1. Effective implementation of a nationally recognised award scheme.
2. Provision of a consistently effective service to customers and pupils and ensure this continues to improve.
3. Provision of framework to meet requirements of Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
4. A commitment to encouraging continuing professional development of swimming teachers.

The service received commendations for:

1. The very best was made of the facilities in light of the impending demolition programme.
2. Enthusiasm of the staff
3. Displays and availability of colourful information
4. Information for Parents booklet
5. The range of activities accessible to all exceeds the expectations of the customer
6. Partnerships
7. Management team and management style
2. Green Flag Award (Thrybergh Country Park)

Green Flag is a national quality benchmark for local authority green spaces. It is run by the Civic Trust and supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly ODPM), English Heritage and Natural England. It is also a recognised quality standard in CPA. The award is judged by the following criteria:

1. A welcoming place
2. Healthy safe and secure
3. Clean and well maintained
4. Sustainable
5. Conservation and heritage
6. Community involvement
7. Marketing
8. Management

To achieve the award the service/facility has to:

- Carry out a comprehensive self-assessment
- Produce a five year management plan including reference to documented procedures etc
- Facilitate a site inspection by judges
- Reapply on an annual basis in order to retain the award
- Provide an annual application fee (between £150 and £300)

Benefits to the service/facility include:

- Internal and external recognition of service quality
- Opportunity to review requirements at key sites and to plan resource allocations accordingly
- Promotional opportunity
- Meet a Culture & Leisure Performance indicator
- Achievement of target in Culture & Leisure Service Plan and Corporate Plan

3. Parkforce Award - Park Worker of the Year (Paul Spriggs, Ranger, Rosehill Park, Rawmarsh)

This is an award within a new scheme celebrating the valuable work of park management teams and individuals. It is run by CABE Space (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and is open to local authorities that are signed up to the ‘Parkforce Pledge’. The award recognises excellence in the following areas:-

- Help make my park a safe clean and beautiful place
- Contribute to the health and well being of local people
- Contribute to the quality of the natural environment
- Make visitors feel welcome and help them to learn more about my park
- Work as part of a team to make my park a place to be proud of
There is an award for the team and the individual who are judged to have made the greatest difference to their park or parks. To achieve the award the service/facility has to submit a five thousand word application with supporting evidence.

Benefits to the service/facility include:

1. Endorsement and national recognition of work being undertaken as being best practice
2. Similar to ‘Beacon Status’ for green space management
3. Local recognition of the progress made in addressing previous problems
4. Raising the profile of the service
5. Further networking opportunities – e.g. attendance at ‘Paying for your Parkforce’ conference (Oct 06) and trip to Central Park, New York
6. Putting Rotherham on the map

The Leisure & Green Spaces Team is also in the process of preparing applications for the following awards:

1. QUEST – Sport & Leisure Facilities
2. QUEST – Sports Development
3. Race Equality Scheme – Sports Development
4. Green Flag – (Rother Valley Country Park, Rosehill Victoria Park, Ulley Country Park and developing plans for a number of urban parks)

8. Finance

The majority of the awards require officer time to prepare and submit, whilst the action plans that follow will in many cases require capital or revenue funding to be identified, often from external sources. Application for QUEST accreditation does require a fee and this will need to be identified before the bid can be submitted.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Of those awards gained, action plans will need to be monitored in order to ensure the service, where appropriate, can maintain the award. Planned submissions will be subject to the assessment process.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Regeneration:

Equalities: No implications.

Sustainability: All of the wards can be considered to making a contribution to the sustainability of the service and the facilities to which they apply. Green Flag award in particular requires the production of a management plan which takes account of the future sustainability of the site.
**Health:** The awards support the Culture & Leisure objective to increase active participation in cultural services and as such make a contribution to health improvement.

**Human Rights:** No implications.

**Corporate Priorities:** Achievement of the awards provides external recognition of Leisure & Green Spaces’ contribution to the Council’s priorities of *Rotherham Learning, Rotherham Achieving, Rotherham Alive and Rotherham Safe*. In particular it will contribute to Culture and Leisure Service outcomes under the following strategic objectives.

**Learning** - Improve the potential of Rotherham people by assisting them to develop through the provision of lifelong learning opportunities.

**Alive** - Improve quality of life and levels of health and wellbeing for all people in Rotherham by increasing and widening participation in cultural activities.

**Safe** - To contribute to safer neighbourhoods and better environments, through the active engagement of priority communities in cultural activity and targeting resources to improve priority sites

**Contribution to CPA:** The awards will help to demonstrate the team’s commitment to continuous improvement and providing a high quality service.

11. **Background Papers and Consultation** – none

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