

# Leisure Trusts in a Changing Environment

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## Introduction to Sporta

- The Sports and Recreation Trusts Association – the UK association for charities and societies in public leisure
- Incorporated in 2006, still member led Executive Board
- Tight membership criteria
- Small central team
- London and Edinburgh

**110** Members

**67,000** staff

**3700** services &  
facilities

**The Sparta  
Membership**

Combined turnover  
**£1.5bn**

**233 million**  
customer visits

# How Sporta supports members - Strategic Objectives

## Sporta's Mission

To be the recognised voice of leisure and culture trusts; to raise awareness of our members' and their social impact; and to protect the status of the trust model.

- To lead the leisure and culture trust sector, and enhance the recognition of trusts as services focused on and impacting upon public policy
- To invest in research to define the proposition of member trusts and Sporta
- To champion good procurement practice for leisure and culture services
- To protect leisure and culture trusts by supporting them to be future proof and resilient
- To enable trust networking & knowledge sharing through 'Special Interest Groups' and regional meetings
- To ensure Sporta is a sustainable organisation

# What is the 'Trust' Model?

- Council ownership of facilities, which are leased to the Trust
- CLG, CBS and Mutuals
- Trusts are charitable (most registered charities)
- Significant financial savings mainly from charitable reliefs, but much more...
- Some Council representation on their Board, but limited to less than 20%
- Genuine charitable trusts reinvest ALL their surpluses back into their communities

## What does this mean?

- **Independent, transparent** organisations, governed by skill-based Trustees
- **Quality facilities and services**
- Increased access to **charitable and grant funding**, and **social investment**
- Embedded **partnerships and connections** in the local community
- **Local jobs, training and career pathways** supporting the local economy and population



*Falkirk Community Trust*

# The environment is changing...

- Financial challenges
- Increased competition for income-generating activities
- Increasing demand for services
- Procurement and contracting environment





# Trusts are evolving

- **Diversification of services**

- Schools
- Children's Centres
- Parks
- Catering

- A significant role in **Health**

- Referral schemes
- Social Care

- **Cultural services**

- Arts
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Events



*Wave Leisure: Seaford Downs*



*Vision Redbridge*



The background features a light blue geometric pattern of overlapping triangles. On the left side, there are several large circles in shades of grey and light blue. A central rectangular area contains a blue-tinted image of a DNA double helix.

Our DNA is  
different....

**sporta**   
social enterprises within culture & leisure

# “Altruistic Mission” versus “Shareholder Value”



*Keep asking “Why?” and the answer you arrive at is “Profit”*

*...Genuine Social Enterprises are different.*

# “Altruistic Mission” versus “Shareholder Value”



- *“A Community More Active, More Often”* – Oldham Community Leisure
- *“Creating Active Places and Healthy People”* – Places for People
- ....they appear to be similar, but each type of organisation has a different outlook!

## Not all Trusts are as they seem...

- As well as in-house provision, Private Contractors and Leisure Trusts, there is an “in-between” model – a Charitable arm of a private sector organisation structured to maximise profit for shareholder value
- ...Beware of Charitable status claims!!
- Regional Director LinkedIn profile:

*“Over the last decade have been at the forefront of the commercialisation of the local authority leisure sector. I advocate a wholly commercial approach, believing that local authorities must recognise the importance of a profit-driven operational style or risk closure”*



## How are we similar?

1. We are professional and customer focussed
2. We perform well against industry standards

## How are genuine charitable Trusts different?

1. Profit is for resilience & reinvestment (not shareholders)
2. We collaborate & share best practice
3. We are more flexible when it comes to what's written in the contract
4. We work with, not for the Council
5. We are committed to the Community we serve
6. We can attract inward investment through charitable status



# Quality Facility Management, a More Active Community, or both?



## *Examples of “Added Value” in Oldham:*

- Investment to set up Junior Parkrun, plus expanding Run Event Series
- Community-based classes, targeting those who self-exclude or can't travel
- Chair-based exercise classes in residential homes
- Award sponsorship and charitable donations
- Supporting local charities & community groups
- Strategic contribution to Council priorities





## The Importance of Wider Outcomes in Commissioning

- Like a job interview, commissioning should be about selecting a partner based on the best fit for what you need going forward
- If its important, make it a contractual requirement, not a method statement!
- Make the commission fit YOUR local needs
- Measuring wider outcomes is difficult, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try
- Why not set the price first, then make your decision based on outcomes, with a contractual requirement to review and agree these periodically?

# Thank you

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