

**To:** Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 30 January 2017

**Report of:** Head of Community Services

**Title of Report:** Response to further committee questions on Fusion Lifestyles performance 2015/16.

## **Summary**

**Purpose of report:** To provide further response to member questions.

**Key decision?** No

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Linda Smith, Executive Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sports.

## **1. Introduction**

The performance report for the Council's leisure provider, Fusion Lifestyle (Fusion) 2015/16 was presented to the Scrutiny Committee, 4 July 2016.

Officers presented further response to committee questions on 28 July 2016, the committee requested further response at the 30 January 2017 meeting which this report provides.

## **2. Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is part of the process Fusion use to ensure prices are set at a suitable level. Competitors are chosen from neighbouring districts, comparable cities and information is also used from other local Trusts and public and private operators

In most cases, benchmarking provides reassurance to the Council that prices remain extremely competitive and any price increases can be justified as they are still equal or in most cases below those of our competitors/comparators. It is though important to make sure the service remains sustainable and that we are not charging too little for

the services provided. Our pricing policy is to charge what the market can afford and offer concessions to ensure the services are inclusive. Each year the Leisure Partnership Board is consulted on the fees and charges before they are ratified by the Council. If Fusion proposes to increase prices above the RPI threshold then benchmarking also serves to provide justification for the proposal. Recent proposals to increase or decrease charges is part justified by the benchmarking exercise as it shows that even with the proposed increases, concessionary charging would still be much lower than any other councils in a comparable area.

### **3. Customer satisfaction**

A representative reference group was an intrinsic contributor to the Leys Pools and Leisure Centre development project. This enabled the Council, in partnership with Fusion, to include requests and needs into the design of the new facility. This included accessible steps in to the pool, splash features, and accessible changing facilities, alongside other overarching operational elements such as timetabling and activity mix.

*“...The big windows with views on to trees are a very attractive feature of the pool...”*

*The light kept changing as we swam...it was magical!*

*“ [The receptionist]...offered to show me some of the facilities offered to disabled people.*

*These included a portable ramp with hand rails on each side into the main pool; a pool side hoist in the main pool; two disability changing rooms, one with a hoist and both with toilet facilities; two disability toilets; an accessible sauna; an accessible weights room and café area.*

*All of these were situated on the ground floor level. I concluded my visit by having a swim in the pool, using the portable ramp with hand rails...the dropped kerb access from the bus stop in Pegasus Road to the leisure centre and the wheelchair entrance...[were] fine*

*... the Leys Leisure Centre has first class facilities for disabled people. I congratulate Fusion and Oxford City Council for this development and especially for the facilities for disabled people which are included.*

*“Myself and my family visited for the first time today and had a great time. My 4 year old and 2 year old loved the fun pool and took some persuading to leave.....”*

*“...Love the shower built into the changing room - brilliant idea...”*

*“...I use the gym every week and today used the pool for the first time. My daughter loved it, crèche is well run she loves it in there also...”*

User Group meetings held for Ferry Leisure Centre and Hinksey Outdoor Pool have led to good practice being developed and better implemented in our other facilities. For example, lane swimming has been included at Hinksey Outdoor Pool following requests from regular users. Session times for the Council funded free swimming sessions have been amended to complement school hours. These times are reviewed in partnership with Fusion at least annually to ensure they achieve best value and accessibility for those the scheme is intended for.

Fusion has improved facility management regimes including:

- Implementation of new cleaning programmes
- A new audit scheme for facility maintenance and Planned Preventative Maintenance
- Introduced new internal applications to improve responsiveness for repairs
- Replacement pool water treatment valves to better regulate pool water temperatures
- Improved customer facing elements in facilities (i.e. new flooring at Ferry Leisure Centre).

Fusion prosed to discontinue the Aqua membership offer; however feedback from our customers means that the offer continues to be available to our legacy members.

Improved technology systems (i.e. media and connection for radio and TV provision on gym equipment).

Timetables have and continue to be reviewed to increase accessible participation opportunities (i.e. earlier opening times, increased and introduced new exercise classes, and increased crèche hours).

Improved food and beverage provision and piloting healthier vending machines.

Fusion have learnt from the success of their Swim School and implemented this good practice by introducing a Learn to Skate programme at Oxford Ice Rink.

Fusion have developed partnership meetings with National Governing Bodies to add value to existing activity programmes.

Innovative new activities have been included in programmes for our younger people (i.e. Birthday parties, themed events at Oxford Ice rink and toddler sessions at Oxford Ice Rink).

*"We had an amazing children's swim party yesterday!  
Helpful staff, massive party room space and fun pool time.  
I would highly recommend it"...*

#### **4. Marketing and accessibility**

Fusion records participation through their management information system. The system enables Fusion to manage membership, bookings, security, sales and business information.

Where a user has a membership, loyalty card or a targeted session is being attended (i.e. PrimeTime Session for older people), the system allows Fusion to record visits based on:

- Facility used
- Membership type
- Age
- Gender
- Postcode
- Activity type
- Visit date/ time
- Ethnicity \*
- Religion\*

(Those marked \* are not compulsory).

Fusion's challenge is to capture all data by signing up every non-member to a loyalty card or membership. They strive to do this through membership campaigns and promotion.

#### **5. Visibility of services**

Exercise on Referral is a programme whereby a clinical practitioner refers a patient to a fitness programme. Usually (though not exclusively) this will typically ensure a 12 week supervised programme of physical activity tailored to suit the needs of the referrer and the referred client, with a view to improving their state of health. During 2014/15, Fusion saw 229 participants in the Exercise on Referral scheme across Council facilities.

It is difficult to measure qualitative and quantitative impact of Sports and Community Development outreach work. Fusion's principles are to engage with all sections of society and use outreach work to signpost to activity and provision in the city. Fusion are looking to improve how they measure the success of outreach work such as uptake of swimming lessons following community events.

#### **6. Beyond simple provision**

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a process of estimating the economic, social and environmental value of an intervention. It enables us to demonstrate that the investment made in partnership with Fusion

is delivering a genuine return – not necessarily in terms of money or profit, but in terms of benefits that add real value to people's lives.

SROI is much more than just a number; it can be used as a management tool to inform expenditure decisions and ensure that activities deliver valuable benefits to stakeholders. Advantages of undertaking SROI measurement include:

- Influencing funders
- Influencing decision making
- Influencing partners
- Stakeholder communication.

During a period of financial uncertainty (i.e. reduced funding), SROI particularly demonstrates to our stakeholders (i.e. commissioners), the wider overarching value of investing in Oxford leisure provision.

A clause added to the Leisure Management contract when we extended it in 2014 required Fusion, at their own cost, to commission an independent study (undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced consultant) of the social impact of the provision of the Oxford leisure service.

The use of the SROI model isn't designed to be undertaken regularly/annually to create a view of changing social impact. Rather, the intention is that the assessment process itself will draw attention to the elements of activity which has demonstrable social value and hence can be used as contextual information in the creation of future service plans.

The assessment process analysed impact against any relevant social elements, and, in our case, these will include:

- Personal satisfaction and better social life;
- Improved overall health (both physical and mental);
- Improved educational outcomes; and
- Crime reduction;
- Social inclusion and community cohesion.

The evaluation found that Fusion generated £18,286,935 of gain from its work in 2014. This gain arose from improvements in health and wellbeing, as well as improvement in life-course for some service users – such as improved achievement and productivity at work, increased independence through better health and reduced reliance on social care services.

	Total gain	NHS	Wider Economy	DWP
General Leisure	£10,293,068	84%	16%	0%
Young people	£7,252,148	0%	98%	1%
Older people	£14,370	100%	0%	0%
People with additional needs	£22,068	74%	26%	0%
Women	£706,280	100%	0%	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£18,286,934</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>



Oxford leisure provision offers activities targeted at many different sections of society. The research focussed on the evaluation of five core groups of interest:

- General leisure service users
- Young People
- People with additional needs
- The over 50's
- Women

#### The Social Netball League

This was set up to allow women to play but without the regular commitment and club politics that often come with joining a regular league, attracting a wide range of women back into sport.

#### No Strings Badminton

Is a programme run nationally as well as Oxford leisure facilities. Sessions are low cost, low commitment, social and suitable for players of any ability. The 50+ sessions in Oxford are specifically aimed at older people and are 'extra social'; including subsidising the café for players after each session.

#### Prime Time classes

Day time group exercise classes and timetabled to appeal to older people.

#### Youth Ambition Project

Provision for young people to exercise, and at reasonable cost is made in Oxford facilities. Experience suggests that many of the young people who use basketball, football, athletics, dodgeball and fitness sessions

for free through the Council Youth Ambition project – and supported by Fusion – would otherwise be prohibited by cost.

#### Oxford Social Swimming Club

Sport is not just for those with the ability to compete at the highest levels, so Fusion set up a Social Swimming Club, where young people who had left the competitive club in the City could train regularly. The sessions are led by coaches from the competitive club and attendees still have opportunity to enter swim galas.

#### Active Women

The scheme is an Oxfordshire wide project coordinated by the Oxfordshire Sports and Physical Activity partnership – hosted by Oxford City Council – to encourage more women and girls (16 plus) to take part in sport. The focus is to have fun and meet new people. Activities are designed to overcome many of the barriers that prevent women being active, such as lack of childcare.

#### General Leisure Service Users

Users have access to a wide range activity offer. This is supported by a competitive membership scheme – including a Bonus concessionary offering further discount to those most in need. The purpose of the membership offer is to provide sustained affordable and accessible participation to all.

#### Oxford Swans

The Oxford Group received free access to facilities, which use the Hallwick concept to teach people to swim. Most swimmers have a disability or additional need and the focus remains on the ability in water and not on disability. Swimmers usually attend with their carer or with volunteers helping the swimmer and their carer to learn how to be confident in water and where appropriate, how to use the specialist accessibility equipment in facilities.

Evidence shows that when users regularly engaged in these types of activities they changed their behaviours and sense of wellbeing. Common behaviour changes include:

1. Regular exercise participation
2. Increase in self-discipline and direction
3. Reduced social isolation
4. Peer to peer support

The impact of this type of behavioural change can lead to:

1. Improve physical health
2. Improved mental wellbeing
3. Increased productivity
4. Improved ability to act as a carer

5. Reduced risk of falls, and remaining independent for longer
6. Improved family dynamics
7. Improved behaviour at school

*“a member of staff contacted the Oxford Taekwondo School on my behalf, and they contacted me and I was back training the following week. Having experienced stress-related anxiety and hypertension following a difficult period at work, then redundancy, it was exactly what I needed at the time! After only a few weeks of training, I found I was getting less joint pain, was much more flexible, had more energy, felt mentally motivated, had regained my confidence and was more positive about my future”*

**Name and contact details of author:**

Lucy Cherry  
Leisure and Performance Manager

Tel: 07483 010 323  
[lcherry@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:lcherry@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers: None**

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