

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 November 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Leisure Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for A Healthy Oxford
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 4 November 2024 to consider a report on Leisure Update. It was recommended that the Committee note the update on the leisure investment programme and leisure contract clienting arrangements in line with the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee that were approved at Cabinet on 24 January 2024, followed by an opportunity for discussion, and agree any recommendations.
2. The Committee is grateful to Councillor Chewe Munkonge (Cabinet Member for A Healthy Oxford), Hagan Lewisman (Active Communities Manage), James Baughan (Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager) and Nigel Kennedy (Head of Finance Services) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for A Healthy Oxford introduced the report.
4. The Committee asked wide ranging questions, including questions about the progress and reassurance of improvements made by the new leisure supplier, as well as the level of accountability held by the supplier for facility conditions. Discussions based on these questions covered various aspects such as the sufficiency of ongoing renovations, particularly at the Ferry Leisure Centre and Oxford Ice Rink, and whether sufficient steps were being taken to address issues inherited from the previous supplier.
5. The Committee sought clarity on specific actions demonstrating the new supplier's commitment to improved standards, noted efforts made on recruitment for essential roles, and commented on the state of some facilities, particularly the changing rooms at Barton, which were noted to appear less than satisfactory since the transition to the new provider.
6. Recognising that the transition process requires time to fully address inherited issues, the Committee acknowledged and welcomed the new practice of a dedicated officer responsible for overseeing facility conditions and ensuring issues are picked up on a more timely manner.
7. Further key points were noted by the Committee in relation to facility enhancement and resource planning, including an 18-month improvement roadmap which prioritises essential upgrades to facilities in Barton Leisure Centre, including the installation of improved ventilation and retrofitting of changing rooms.
8. In particular, the Committee proposed exploring a business case for year-round access to the lido, leveraging the existing water source heat pump to support eco-friendly operations, and prioritisation for enhanced ventilation in changing rooms to ensure air quality and safe environment for all facility users, aligning with health and safety standards.

Recommendation 1: That the Council requests Officers to explore a business case for the availability and year-round access to the lido, utilising the existing water source heat pump to support sustainable operations.

Recommendation 2: That the Council ensures enhanced ventilation is included in any retrofitting or renovations of the leisure centre changing facilities, with a specific focus on health and safety.

9. In reflection on past experiences and lessons learned, the Committee identified that regular, structured financial reviews would enable the Council to monitor the supplier's financial health and address any emerging concerns early on.

Recommendation 3: That the Council establishes a process for a six-monthly review of the leisure supplier's finances, with update reports provided to the Finance and Performance Panel for ongoing review and oversight.

Report author	Celeste Reyeslao
Job title	Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252946
e-mail	creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank