

To: Cabinet
Date: 18 June 2025
Report of: Director of Communities and Citizens Services
Title of Report: Leisure Contract Annual Service Plan (2025-26)

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To update Cabinet on the highlights of the first year of the new leisure contract and approve the Annual Service Plan 2025-26, which is an annual requirement of the operator, aiming to align outcomes to the Council's priorities and to address health inequalities.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Thriving Communities Strategy

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:
1. Approve the Leisure Annual Service Plan 2025-26.

Information Exempt From Publication
N/A – no exempt documents

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Oxford Annual Service Plan 2025-26	No
Appendix 2	Active Communities Plan	No
Appendix 3	Leisure Upgrades Overview	No
Appendix 4	Risk Register	No
Appendix 5	Equalities Impact	No

	Assessment	
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Introduction and background

1. The Cabinet agreed on 24 January 2024 to receive annual reports on the performance of the Council's leisure contractor and agree the service plan priorities for the following year.
2. The Council appointed its new leisure contractor (More Leisure) on 27 March 2024, and provision officially started on 30 March 2024.
3. This report provides an update on the first year of the contract and an overview of the Annual Service Plan for Year 2 (2025-26).
4. The Annual Service Plan will be reviewed in monthly client meetings and the quarterly meetings of the Strategic Partnership Board which includes officers from the Council and More Leisure's senior management teams, and key partners such as Active Oxfordshire, Public Health and the Integrated Care Board (ICB)

First year performance

5. A summary of the first year's performance of the leisure contract is highlighted below. The first year of performance in the contract is to establish a baseline for future years. It is important to note that at the start of the contract there was a transition of both computer and customer entry systems (turnstiles). While systems were being initiated and to minimise the impact on communities and citizens (i.e. granting entry but not recording full details), not all user data at point of sale will have been captured. Headline figures include:
 - a. 280,311 recorded visits (compared to an estimated 474,000 visits in the previous year; NB there is lower confidence in how robust the previous year's figures were given actual intel from visits at site)
 - b. 12,803 pay as you go members (comparison data not collected by previous operator)
 - c. 4,611 total members, of which 678 are concessionary members (compared to 6,762 recorded members in the previous year; again, we have lower confidence in the previous year's figures)
 - d. 2,268 swimming lesson members (compared to 1,448 in the previous year)
 - e. 162 membership referrals for people experiencing homelessness and supported by the Council's commissioned homeless pathway services (compared to 40 in the previous year)
 - f. A Net Promoter Score of -5 (as of March 2025, compared to -44, how the previous operator ended); areas identified for improvement include changing rooms and facility cleanliness, which is expected to change later in the year following planned investments
6. £32,000 of in-kind funding has been generated and has supported a number of activities such as:
 - a. Free swims with Oxford Community Action's half term activity groups

- b. Goals Beyond Grass (wheelchair football) sports hall hire
 - c. Youth Ambition ice skating
 - d. Oxford Pride inclusive swimming sessions
 - e. 12 week joint pain programme at Leys Pool and Leisure Centre (led by South East Oxford Health Alliance PCN, a working group of GP practices)
 - f. Memberships and activity sessions for sanctuary seekers
7. The Council's leisure centres are undergoing significant transformation and have improved immensely over the last year. Key investments and achievements so far include:
- a. Appointment of an Active Communities Manager (sport/community development role) who will work with communities to improve accessibility of the leisure centres and develop new programmes to reach a wider audience, including working with the new Leys Youth Hub
 - b. The new Leys Youth Hub which is opening in Summer 2025 will provide positive activities to young people including a climbing wall, music and ICT, kitchen, group activity areas and quiet space.
 - c. Continuation of the Council's under 17s free swimming programme, which currently offers 37 hours of free swim sessions across its pools, at no cost to the Council
 - d. Continuation of the Council's excellent concessionary scheme, which offers low cost pay as you go and monthly membership to residents on low incomes
 - e. New state-of-the-art gyms at all of the Council's leisure centres, including E-GYM equipment at Ferry Leisure Centre and Leys Pool and Leisure Centre, and Genius AI (which creates personalised training plans for members – the first UK leisure centre to get this technology)
 - f. Extended opening hours and programming at all leisure centres (various times) to improve the customer offer
 - g. Refurbishment of two squash courts at Ferry Leisure Centre and conversion of unused court into spin studio
 - h. Leys Pool and Leisure Centre sports hall conversion of 4 courts, creating a new climbing area, bespoke soft play (which includes Oxford landmarks such as the Radcliffe Camera, Bridge of Sighs and Covered Market) and ninja tag arena; painting other half of hall and plan to refresh the flooring
 - i. Successful mobilisation and opening of Hinksey Outdoor Pool (both years)
 - j. New energy and water saving showers at all leisure centres, another initiative to help reduce the Council's environmental impact
 - k. New catering and café facilities, which includes bringing catering in-house and working on achieving a balanced offer of healthy options and treats
 - l. New ice pad and low-emissivity ceiling at the Ice Rink, helping to reduce carbon emissions
 - m. Redecoration of many spaces to help bring the leisure centres back to life and improve the customer experience

8. A summary slide deck that highlights some of these key achievements and photos is available in Appendix 3.
9. The Council's relationship with More Leisure has been a positive one, with good communication and support from before the contract even formally commenced. An example of this was Hinksey Pool opening as planned a week into the contract. There are monthly formal meetings to track progress and regular updates with the local team. The company is very flexible and keen to work in partnership with the Council.
10. For the year ahead the Council will look to strengthen this relationship and work to secure stronger communications (both internal and external) and improved resolution times in relation to feedback and complaints.

Annual Service Plan

11. The Annual Service Plan ("the Plan") (Appendix 1) outlines the priorities and actions to enhance leisure services in Oxford, including key capital investments. It focuses on improving health and wellbeing across target groups including children, young people, women, people with disabilities, and older adults.
12. The Plan cross-references the Council's Active Communities Plan (Appendix 2) and includes initiatives for physical activity, mental health support, community engagement, and environmental sustainability, aiming to create inclusive and accessible leisure opportunities for all Oxford residents.
13. The Plan aligns with key Council strategies such as the Thriving Communities Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and wider ones such as Oxfordshire County Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and Sport England's Uniting the Movement. Some of the key initiatives are outlined below:

Children and young people:

14. Activities for Children (0-11): HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programmes, breakfast clubs, free swimming, and junior sports activities.
15. Youth engagement (12-19): Friday youth night activities, free U17s swimming, and partnerships with youth-focused groups.

Women and girls:

16. Female-only swimming sessions.
17. Promotional activities: initiatives like "Let's Lift the Curfew" and "This Girl Can," along with menopause awareness training.

People with disabilities:

1. Inclusive activities: disability swimming lessons, multi-sports sessions, quiet hours, and SEN (Special Educational Needs) swimming.
2. Specific condition sessions: activities for individuals with conditions such as Parkinson's, dementia, and other disabilities.

Older adults and long-term conditions:

3. Referral schemes: collaborations with healthcare providers for GP referrals, smoking cessation, falls prevention, COVID recovery, cancer recovery, and cardiac rehabilitation.

18. Dedicated activities: programmes like E-Gym, 50+ badminton, Move Together and the Good Boost initiative in Barton.

Multicultural communities and engagement:

19. Community outreach: targeted activities for diverse groups, including Muslim prayers on Friday evenings and partnerships with multicultural community groups.

20. Community engagement: volunteer schemes, partnerships with health and social care services, and support for local community groups.

Environmental initiatives:

21. Carbon Reduction Plan with specific targets for reducing emissions and waste.

Health and wellbeing:

22. Health Hub Initiatives: Chatty Café, You Move, Little Lungs Matter policy, and quiet hours across all sites.

4. Healthy catering: promotion of healthy catering and vending options across the sites, including cafés.

5. More Leisure and teams from the Council's Communities and Citizens Services to continue working with key partners such as the ICB, Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care and Thames Valley Police.

23. These initiatives are designed to create inclusive and accessible leisure opportunities, improve physical and mental health, and foster community engagement across Oxford.

Financial implications

24. There are no financial implications.

Legal issues

6. There are no legal implications arising from the report.

Level of risk

25. The level of risk is low. A Risk Register is shown in Appendix 4.

Equalities impact

26. The Equalities Impact Assessment is shown in Appendix 5. The Annual Service Plan incorporates equalities at its core and there are no implications arising from this.

Carbon and environmental considerations

27. Not required, as for key decisions only.

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Background Papers:
None