



Cabinet

Monday, 1 August 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

C1, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

Supplemental Agenda 2

6 .2 Leisure Recommissioning (Pages 3 - 134)

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Agenda Item 6.2

Cabinet 1 August 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: James Thomas, Corporate Director of Children and Culture	Classification: Part exempt
Leisure Recommissioning	

Lead Member	Councillor Iqbal Hossain, Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation
Originating Officer(s)	James Thomas (Corporate Director of Children and Culture) james.thomas1@towerhamlets.gov.uk Michael Coleman (Interim Leisure Programme Director) michael.coleman@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Reason for Key Decision	Financial threshold and Significant impact on wards
Forward Plan Notice Published	6 May 2022
Exempt information	<p>This report and/or its appendices include information that has been exempted from publication as the Monitoring Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has deemed that the information meets the definition of a category of exempt information as set out in the Council's Access to Information Rules; and • has deemed that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. <p>The exempt information is contained in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix 1 <p>The exempt information falls into this category</p> <p>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority handling the information)</p>
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Priority 1: People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities Outcome 3: People access joined-up services whey they need them and feel healthier and more independent

Reasons for Urgency

This report needed to be updated to clarify specific aspects of the options set out within it and ensure that the full financial and legal implications of these changes had been properly assessed to provide the Mayor and Cabinet with the most complete information possible prior to a decision being made on which operating model to take forward.

The report cannot be delayed until a subsequent Cabinet as the existing contract for the operation of the Leisure Service expires on 30 April 2024. It has been estimated that it will take between 18-24 months to put any of the alternative models being considered in place to ensure the transition from the current to the future operation is as straightforward as possible. If the report was delayed until the next Cabinet, on 14 September, the programme would slip by six weeks, which would put achieving an efficient transition at risk.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to set out for the Mayor and Cabinet the different options for running the Leisure Service in the future to inform a decision on which model should be taken forward. Officers recommend the use of an outsourced contract model for the delivery of the Leisure Service, as it is considered most likely to achieve a favourable transfer of operational and commercial risk. It is understood that the Mayor and Cabinet prefer to insource the service to provide greater direct control over its operational delivery, without the need to manage an intermediary and if this is the option pursued then officers will seek to run the service as efficiently as possible. In choosing to bring the service in-house the Council would be accepting the risk and potential need to subsidise the service if it did not achieve a financial surplus.

The Council will operate the service to benefit those hard-to-reach communities, such as BAME women and SEND children, to promote healthy living and wellbeing. These are groups who often suffer from chronic health conditions, including diabetes and heart disease, and a greater control of Leisure Service resources would enable the Council directly to encourage an increase in exercise, dietary improvement and mental and physical wellness in these groups.

The Council will seek to maximise the local economic and social benefits that result from control of an insourced operation, with the ability to create jobs, augment the talent-pool via training and employment schemes and removal of reliance on agencies and external staffing contracts. This should boost the local economy and provide opportunities to residents during a cost-of-living crisis.

The financial modelling undertaken indicates there is likely to be at least an initial shortfall that requires the Council to top up and subsidise the Service. The period of transition from now to the current contract's expiry on April 30, 2024, will be used to prepare for a changeover that is as smooth as possible and without serious issue. The Council will continue to manage the current contractor to ensure a good

standard of delivery is maintained alongside this preparatory work, to ensure that both sides are working towards a smooth handover of the Service. In adopting an insourced model, the Council will seek to provide a more efficient Service.

Prioritising the mental and physical health of all residents is of even greater importance after the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council is fully committed to providing the means for all living and working in Tower Hamlets to have access to facilities that will allow them to play sport, join together as a community and stay healthy. This decision is, therefore, as much about public health as how we manage the leisure estate on behalf of residents.

The Leisure Service will, therefore, seek to engage with those who currently do not perceive the Council's leisure centres to be the appropriate venue to increase their activity. By ensuring the service is sensitive to the needs of Tower Hamlets' residents, the Council can actively improve the health outcomes of residents by creating both the opportunity to participate and encouraging that engagement. This could include reviewing whether the Council should support usage during the cost of living crisis by subsidising aspects of the service, although this report does not recommend specific options for doing so. This desire to improve residents' access to activities to encourage wellbeing would, of course, be the same under any of the options for managing the service going forwards.

The report also sets out the resources required to deliver the recommendation to put a new delivery model in place in Appendix 1a.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider the initial options contained in the report and confirm which the Mayor in Cabinet wants officers to develop.
2. Note that consultation is required in relation to the options outlined in the report to develop them further and authorise officers to undertake this in parallel with other investigations.
3. Authorise funding for and the establishment of a project team to deliver these immediate works and the subsequent delivery of the option chosen.
4. Note the Equalities Impact Assessment set out in Paragraph 4.1.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Council's Financial Regulations and Procurement Rules require Cabinet approval for the appointment of services over £0.250m and works over £5.000m. The estimated annual value of the income generated by the

Leisure Service contract is £9m based on the current estate.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 If no action was taken, the contract would expire with no alternative operating regime in place. The Council would, by default, need to take over the management of the service and accept the associated financial and operational risks in full. It would need to appoint a full operating team and assume the existing contracts for all running costs and take on the employment of the staff under TUPE regulations.
- 2.2 The Council could decide at this time to bring the management and delivery of the leisure service under its full control if it deemed this to be the main priority for the future management of the service. Insourcing does allow the Council to make changes to the management and operation of the leisure service without the need to vary a contract (if applicable, as not all changes would require a formal variation). It also allows the Council to prioritise its strategic objectives and action changes to these, placing greatest emphasis on how it can directly affect the operational performance of the service over other factors. This would, however, require the Council to accept the full financial and operational risks of running and maintaining the leisure centres and overseeing the daily operation of the activities within each centre, as set out in greater detail from section 3.10 onwards. In particular, the Council would be responsible for meeting the costs of running the estate and ensuring that any financial deficit was met, or costs reduced to provide a balanced budget. The financial analysis completed as part of the options appraisal process set out from section 3.13 onwards modelled that the insourcing option would make an annual deficit of £800k, based on a standard operating specification without significant subsidies to reduce prices or provide free access to some activities. As stated above, the Council could choose to accept the need to provide additional revenue funding in the short term (and approximately £1.3m of capital investment, common to all options) in return for greater control over how the service is delivered, what activities are undertaken, and how the leisure centres interact with and serve residents. In doing so, it would be important to acknowledge an understanding and acceptance of the risks that are intrinsic to adopting insourcing as the preferred model. The Council will, of course, aim to generate a surplus from operating the service efficiently, which could provide funding to reinvest in the service if realised. A more detailed analysis of the difference in risks between options is set out in section 5.7.
- 2.3 The Council could adopt an alternative delivery model, such as creating a wholly-owned subsidiary to operate the estate or establish a trust. This would be subject to some differences in how taxation rules apply compared to an insourced operation (being able to claim national non-domestic rates relief and reclaim VAT on income; please see section 3.18 for further details on the implications of VAT on each option) but would otherwise still require the Council to own and manage all risks associated with the operation of the leisure service.

- 2.4 The Council could also extend the existing contract with GLL, noting that it has already been extended twice, or decide to exit the delivery of a leisure service by either disposing of sites, developing them for alternative uses, or leasing them to a third party.
- 2.5 If it was decided to pursue the insourcing, LA Trading Company or Trust options, a further consultation would be required on that proposal.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

The Current Estate & Contract

- 3.1 The Leisure estate consists of 7 centres (please see Appendix 2 for details). These are managed by GLL, trading as Better, through a contract originally set up in 2004, that will expire on 30 April 2024. This contract has already been extended twice, having originally been due to finish in 2019. The first extension was from 2019-22, the second to cover the period 2022-24. Although some sections of the contract have changed since 2004, it is now out of date and no longer fit for purpose given the commercial environment in which the Leisure Service operates, and the condition of the estate.
- 3.2 The Council needs to decide now how the Leisure Service will be managed in the future, as any of the options identified to replace the current contract will require at least 18 months to put in place and typically longer. The current contract expires in April 2024.
- 3.3 Leisure consultants were procured to assist the Council to examine how the service could be best managed in the future to meet the Council's strategic objectives. The outcome of that analysis is set out in section 3.18 onwards below. They have assisted many local authorities to identify, assess and select their leisure service management model, based on evaluating the local strategic aims, the financial position of the existing estate, and the opportunities for growth.
- 3.4 As part of their work, the consultants have undertaken a detailed analysis of how well the Council's leisure estate performs relative to other local authorities' facilities that they hold benchmark data for. This analysis is the basis of the appraisal of the financial benefits and risks of each of the options.
- 3.5 The overall leisure estate was in deficit in the financial year 2019/20, the last year that did not suffer major disruption due to the pandemic. Prior to that it had made a surplus for over a decade. The levels of use, mix of facilities, physical condition and financial performance of each leisure site differs considerably. As the financial data in Appendix 1b shows, only Mile End, York Hall and John Orwell Leisure Centres produced a revenue surplus in 2019/20. Although the Council's main focus has never been for the service to make a profit, this deficit was not the result of planned subsidies to encourage greater use of the Leisure Service. The reasons for this deficit are set out below:

- The contract was varied to extend it from 2019-22. The payment of a management fee by the Council to GLL was removed, in return for meeting an agreed proportion of GLL's head office costs for overseeing the Tower Hamlets contract; operating risk passed back to them. The impact of Covid from March 2020 onwards has impacted upon the financial performance of Tower Hamlets' leisure operation, in common with every other local authority. The current cost of living crisis, in particular rising energy costs, is also affecting the operation of leisure services nationwide.
- Centres with a balance of 'dry' and 'wet' facilities, such as Mile End, perform better financially as they attract more users relative to their size, and benefit from greater economies of scale for staffing, energy costs, etc. In comparison, the number of visits at St George's had been in steady decline, particularly after Poplar Baths reopened, and the small scale of its 'dry' side activities limited income to offset the high running costs of its pools. Centres with only 'dry side' facilities, such as Whitechapel, have a lower cost base but do not attract as many users as a full specification leisure centre.
- More than half the leisure centres are over 40 years old (York Hall, St George's, Tiller, Poplar Baths and parts of John Orwell), which can make these buildings more expensive and challenging to keep in good repair.
- There is a backlog of condition issues, with an estimated total cost of £11.3m needing to be funded over the next decade. This can affect usage both due to perceptions that the centre needs improving, and due to some facilities being unavailable when repairs have to be carried out. The current contract was set up as a full repairing lease, but some of the investment needed now is far greater in value and scale than a repair. £3m of capital funding was agreed by Cabinet in February 2022 to meet condition needs over the next 3 years, based on the priorities identified in the condition surveys. This funding has been included in the medium term financial strategy 2022-25.
- Minimising any deficit, or ideally generating a surplus, would make it more affordable for the Council to subsidise use of leisure centres. For example, specific groups could be targeted to enable health and wellbeing benefits to be maximised for residents who may be unable to meet the full costs of using the Council's leisure facilities. This assumes that achieving a balanced budget to provide the financial latitude to do so is a greater priority than subsidising usage independent of the estate's overall performance, or assuming greater control of the day-to-day operation of the Leisure Service.

The Leisure Strategy

- 3.6 Whatever option is chosen for how the Leisure Service is run in the future, there is an existing basis for structuring the specification and offer to residents, which has been used to inform this report, both with regard to the operating contract model and the investment strategy in the estate. The

Council's Leisure Offer strategy is set out in Appendix 5. The overarching vision is to:

"Enable and support local people to live healthier and physically active lives using leisure centres that provide affordable and accessible programmes, activities and events for under-represented groups that would benefit most from being physically active".

This vision has been developed into the Physical Activity & Sport Strategy, approved in December 2019, which highlights four priority areas:

- 1) Developing Young Interest
- 2) Driving Health Change
- 3) Shaping Places & Communities
- 4) Physical Activity & Sport as a community engagement tool

Further information is included in Appendix 5 on how each of these priority areas could be continued, where relevant, or further developed better to deliver each as effectively as possible. For example, within the Developing Youth Interest area, the Council may wish to consider offering free or subsidised swimming for young people before noon during school holidays. This, and the other suggestions in the Leisure Offer paper, is theoretically deliverable within any of the management options considered in this report. A decision is not needed at this time on the specifics of practical initiatives to meet the strategy, as these will undergo further development and costing prior to being included in the detailed specification for the future delivery of the Leisure Service and can be presented to Cabinet for approval once drafted.

- 3.7 The Leisure Offer also sets out that the key objectives of the development of the Leisure Service strategy is to deliver:
- A contract that meets the strategic aims of the Council.
 - A leisure contract that operates with a robust financial position, aligning services to increase the physical activity levels of those residents that would benefit most doing so.
 - A contract that is public health outcomes focused, with a holistic approach across the borough that is not specific to health interventions.
 - A contract that ensures leisure centres are affordable and accessible to the residents that need them most.
 - A contract that enables the refurbishment and redevelopment of the borough's leisure assets ensuring that they are best in class.
- 3.8 The Council carried out a consultation from 15 November 2021 to 12 January 2022 inclusive on its proposed approach to improving the Leisure Service and its facilities. A total of 331 responses was received – 316 online or by completing a paper version of the consultation questions, and the remaining 15 provided comments by email including 8 audio files (not full answers to all questions). The report on that consultation is attached as Appendix 4b and is summarised in section 5 below. The Council has since engaged with a wide range of local stakeholders to gain their views on how the service could operate going forwards, and where investment would be most valued.

Recommended Leisure Estate Management Contract Model

- 3.9 The Council needs to decide how the Leisure Service will be managed once the existing contract with GLL expires on 30 April 2024. This decision needs to be taken promptly as it will take 18 months to 2 years to put an alternative management contract model in place.
- 3.10 There are, however, several options that need to be considered to test how well they would meet the Council's specific needs. Several of these increase control over the day-to-day operation, via a Trust, Local Authority Trading Company, or full insourcing (as Lambeth and Southwark recently decided to do). One, the joint venture model, is a more complex variation of outsourcing.
- 3.11 Officers have examined this range of options to provide the Mayor and Cabinet with sufficient information to consider all the potential ways of managing the Leisure Service. This includes their strategic, operational and financial implications. The full list is set out below (more detail is available in Appendix 3):
- Outsource the delivery of the service to a third party operator.
 - Insource the delivery of the service within the Council, as part of an existing directorate.
 - Set up a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council (a Local Authority Trading Company), to run the estate at 'arm's length'.
 - Set up an independent trust (e.g. a charitable trust, or a Public Service Mutual).
 - Create a joint venture with a third party or parties, which could include other local authorities and/or one or more private sector providers. This option has been discounted as it would take longer to negotiate than the other options and there is also no evidence that other parties would be keen to establish a joint venture in the midst of the cost of living crisis, nor that it would be in line with Tower Hamlets' requirements, aims and objectives. It is also, therefore, very likely that creating a joint venture would take longer than 2 years from a standing start.
 - Sell off the leisure centres and associated facilities. This assumes that all the leisure centres would close. This option was discounted immediately for that reason.
 - Enter into a long-term lease for the buildings in the estate. This assumes that all the leisure centres would cease to operate. This option was also discounted immediately for that reason.
 - Extend the existing contract – it was assumed that this would only be considered to bridge a relatively short period between the end of the current contract and the start of a new arrangement if it was impossible to put this in place to start on 1 May 2024. It would not, by definition, improve the current service or its financial sustainability.
- 3.12 To provide an objective analysis of the pros and cons of each option, officers worked with specialist Leisure consultants to identify how to measure how well each model would deliver benefits for residents, be financially sustainable

and meet the Council's strategic objectives. This options appraisal scored each against key criteria, with 40% of the total score for financial performance, and 60% for how well they met operational and strategic aims. It was assumed that each option would run for a ten year period before being reviewed.

- 3.13 The financial scoring assumes that achieving a balanced budget is a key aim of the service and assesses the ability of each option to delivery that outcome based on the experience of operating similar models elsewhere and the structural differences between them. For example, an outsourced service working within a robust contract and performance regime should lever the greatest benefit from the expertise of the operator, while ensuring that the income from the service and the risks attached to achieving a given level are shared in an appropriate way. Typically, the operator would be required to hit a specified level of use and income as part of the contract performance regime. If it fails to do so the profit it would expect to make would be reduced both contractually and as a direct result of its failing to generate sufficient visits by residents. The consultants procured by the Council have developed a financial model based on both the performance of the existing leisure estate (factoring in the positive impact of a new leisure centre on the St George's site), and comparators from other local authorities for each of the options being considered.
- 3.14 The financial element of the options appraisal has, therefore, been set at 40% of the total score (comprised of 30% of marks for relative financial performance, and 10% for the transfer of commercial risk) to provide a clear assessment of each option's net fiscal performance. In this context, 'commercial risk' means that the operator would be responsible for ensuring, for example, that the number of visits to leisure centres was sufficient to cover the cost of running the Leisure Service from that estate, unless the Council had agreed to subsidise some aspects of that service. If the income from a falling number of visits did not meet running costs, the operator would be responsible for the funding gap, not the Council. As set out above, the financial scores were derived using a database that contains information on multiple contracts, allowing the relative performance of different options that are already operating to be used as the basis for this evaluation. Given the current uncertainty over future energy and other operating costs, and the potential reduction in discretionary spend by residents in response to the cost of living crisis, officers have sought to ensure that the financial implications of each option are presented clearly. If, however, the Council was to prioritise the ability to adjust strategic priorities and adapt the service accordingly, then greater weight could be given to the non-financial factors if the Council was willing to reduce the scoring for financial risks.
- 3.15 The full list of criteria is shown in the table below, with the relative weightings for each category. These weightings were agreed collectively by the project team for this workstream, based on an evaluation of the generic priorities for any option (for example, 'will it provide an adequate service?'), through to local priorities (such as, 'will it be possible to change the way the service works over time?'). The full options appraisal scoring, including all the

assumptions made, is attached as Appendix 3 (the financial scoring is set out in Appendix 1c).

Category	Criteria	Weighting
Financial Factors		
Cost	<i>Extent of Council responsibility for/exposure to:</i>	30%
	Income generation	
	Economies of scale for key costs, including utilities	
	Salary levels (not relating to LGPS)	
	Overhead management costs	
	Profit	
	VAT treatment	
	Non-National Domestic Rates (NNDR)	
	Pension liabilities	
Risk transfer (commercial)	<i>Extent to which the Council has ownership of or influence over key risks:</i>	10%
	Day-to-day operations (e.g. costs resulting from unavailability of areas of a building)	
	Change of customer demand	
	Local competition	
	Change in law affecting operation/cost/ facility specification	
	Utility cost (tariff) changes	
	Utility cost (consumption) changes	
	Uninsured risks	
	Operational Factors	
Service delivery	<i>Relative ability of each model to:</i>	30%
	Deliver the Council's current strategic objectives for next 10 years	
	Work with other Council departments, e.g. Public Health, Parks, etc.	
	Deliver excellent customer service	
	Meet the Council's net zero objectives	
	Increase participation in the most economically and sustainable way	
	Engage with the most vulnerable groups within the borough	
Operational flexibility (for Council)	<i>Ability to adapt to changes to the service within the period</i>	20%
	Opportunities for cross-Council initiatives, e.g. joined up IT solutions across leisure/IDEA stores	
	Extent to which arrangement protects service in long-term (10 years)	
Risk transfer (operational)	<i>Extent to which the Council has ownership of and influence over key risks:</i>	10%
	Health and safety	
	Managing, recruiting and retaining staff	
	Planned preventative maintenance, including compliance checks	
	Investment to improve the estate	

3.16 The full financial analysis is not included in the public section of the report, as a decision has not yet been made on which leisure service management model to take forward. If the outsourcing option was selected, the data within that analysis would provide potential bidders with information that may prejudice the Council's ability to achieve the best possible value for money outcome. It does, however, show that outsourcing should deliver the best financial outcome from the service, compared to the other options. The table below shows the high level summary of the financial analysis, and the difference between the options:

Average cost per annum over 10 years

	Outsource	In-House	LATC	Trust
Income	£11.904m	£10.929m	£11.337m	£11.337m
Costs	£9.877m	£10.352m	£9.490m	£9.490m
Net Position	£2.027m	£0.578m	£1.847m	£1.847m
Additional Revenue Costs	£0.710m	£1.399m	£1.071m	£1.071m
Final Position p.a.	£1.317m	-£0.821m	£0.776m	£0.776m
Gap vs. Outsourcing	£0m	-£2.138m	-£0.541m	-£0.541m
One off costs (set up)	£0.15m	£0.84m	£0.45m	£0.45m

3.17 The key financial differences between the models are summarised below:

- Outsourcing/LA Trading Company/Trust:
 - The operator can reclaim a significant proportion of VAT on income (typically 85-90%), which an insourced operation can, in theory, do but would potentially prejudice the Council's overall ability to reclaim Exempt VAT costs. Please see 3.18 for more details on this specific issue.
 - The operator can claim relief on national non-domestic rates (NNDR) that the insourced operation is unable to do.
 - The operator may choose to use a different pensions regime to the LGPS (especially for an outsourced contract) that reduces personnel costs.
- Outsourcing:
 - The operator is likely to have access to a specialist, regional or national supply chain that can generate economies of scale for some costs, e.g. pool chemical supply, specialist equipment service contracts.
 - The operator will benefit from experience and expertise from other projects it runs, as another form of economy of scale.
 - The operator will, however, charge a proportion of its head office costs to reflect this.
 - A management fee may be payable to the operator, depending on the contract form used. It is currently assumed this will not be the case.

- The contract will include a payment mechanism, using key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure compliance with the specification. If the operator fails to meet those KPIs it could be financially penalised. A new contract will provide the Council with the opportunity to define 'on market' terms for the payment mechanism.
 - One off set up costs of £150k incurred by the Council in re-procuring the service, e.g. pre-procurement document preparation.
- Insourcing:
 - There should be negligible costs for any 'head office' input to the operation, unlike in the other options. This is, however, a relatively small annual cost.
 - National Non-Domestic Rates relief is not available to Local Authority-run leisure services but can be claimed within other options.
 - It is more complicated for the Council to reclaim VAT either in the same way as the other options, or to the same extent. The position on VAT was challenged in the context of leisure service delivery in 2017 by the London Borough of Ealing. Although it won the case, reclaiming VAT on income from the leisure service may impact upon the Council's overall VAT position. It is understood, therefore, that most local authorities do not assume a VAT benefit equivalent to other options when assessing insourcing. Please see section 3.18 for more details.
 - The Council would need to enrol all staff in the LGPS. This has cost implications but offers substantive benefits to those employees.
 - The income levels for an insourced operation are reduced partly due to the inability to reclaim VAT on 'sales', but also due to the initial impact of setting up a new operation without the benefit of an operator's broad experience of running the same.
 - The Council carries all commercial and other financial risk, e.g. if the levels of use at each leisure centre fall income will also decline, but fixed costs will still need to be met. The Council will be responsible for all such cost increases.
- Insourcing/LA Trading Company/Trust:
 - The operator would need to employ new senior staff to provide effective leadership and operational management to the service, as GLL's existing senior team would not transfer to the future operation. This is an additional cost both in terms of recruitment and ongoing employment and is calculated to be a greater total cost than for an outsourced contract due to the loss of economies of scale from such staff overseeing multiple local authority contracts for a third party operator.
 - Risk transfer varies slightly across each of these options, but (as set out under the insourcing bullet above) the Council will be unable to transfer as much risk as it can through an outsourced contract with a specialist leisure provider. The only exception to this is likely to be energy costs, given these are rising at recently

unprecedented rates, so that the Council is likely to need to consider retaining a far greater proportion of this risk than it might even a year ago, although the financial cost of this is likely to be common across all models.

- One off set-up costs: for each option, there are costs that the Council will incur to establish the model effectively. These are greater for the insourcing, LA Trading Company and Trust options as the Council would need to fund the purchase of items such as uniforms, IT systems, branding, etc., that a specialist leisure operator would provide all or much of. These costs have not been included in the financial element of the options appraisal.
 - Outsourcing: costs of £150k incurred by the Council in re-procuring the service, e.g. officer time for pre-procurement document preparation.
 - Insourcing: costs of £835k to cover the cost of new IT systems, officer time uniforms, branding, website, facility due diligence, and consultancy support (HR, legal, technical), etc. A contingency of £100k has also been included to cover any additional costs that cannot be confirmed at this stage.
 - LA Trading Company/Trust: the one-off costs for these options are broadly the same. Costs of £450k are estimated for either, to cover officer time, branding, website, etc.

- 3.18 VAT treatment for local authority-run leisure services: as referred to above, the treatment of VAT on income for an insourced leisure operation has implications for its overall financial performance. From the early 1990s until 2017, an in-house leisure operation could not reclaim VAT on income. A charitable trust or LA trading company typically could reclaim 75% or more of the VAT on income, thus in effect boosting its sales. The London Borough of Ealing challenged this position and was ultimately successful at the Court of Justice for the European Union (CJEU) in 2017 in establishing that local authorities could reclaim VAT. There is, however, a risk from doing so: to safeguard the Council's continuing ability to recover all the exempt VAT it incurs on its costs, it needs to ensure that the level of VAT on expenditure it incurs in relation to VAT exempt supplies remains under 5% of all Input Tax it incurs in a year. The 5% level is set by HMRC as the level of Exempt VAT costs that can be reclaimed each year as a proportion of all the VAT the local authority incurs as costs. Although this covers VAT on costs, not on income, any Input VAT on costs which can be shown to support the VAT exempt income areas will be set against that 5% threshold. For example, capital improvements to a leisure centre would be VAT costs that contribute to improving income. If the Council exceeds that 5% input VAT on costs figure, it risks losing all the value of recovering that VAT. This may be a greater value than the income that is gained through the leisure service no longer paying VAT on 'sales', so that there is no advantage in seeking to reclaim the latter. Given that it is understood some local authorities have chosen not to pursue a reclaim on in-house leisure income to avoid prejudicing the 5% threshold on Exempt VAT costs, the financial analysis of the insourcing option assumes VAT is paid on income. If insourcing is selected as the option to take forward

it is recommended that further work be undertaken to understand the implications of reclaiming VAT, or not, in this context on the whole Council VAT position.

- 3.19 The criteria and weighting in the table above were used to assess each option in the list in 3.12 above, except for those to dispose of or lease the whole estate, which were discounted as not meeting the service delivery criteria in any way, and the joint venture option as it would take too long to put in place assuming suitable partners could be found. The option to extend the existing contract would (if used) be a short term measure, so has not been assessed. The final scoring is set out below, initially showing the ‘raw’ score, which represents the total scores awarded before weighting is applied, then showing the weighted score as a percentage, both for the total and the non-financial scores:

Option	Financial Raw Score	Non-Financial Raw Score	Total Raw Score	Total Weighted Score %	Non-Financial Weighted Score %
Outsourced contract	34	43	72	76%	67%
Full Insourcing	15	44	59	65%	65%
LA Trading Company	24	39	59	67%	60%
New Leisure Trust	26	40	62	69%	63%

- 3.20 The highest scoring option was, therefore, for an outsourced leisure contract, based on both financial and non-financial criteria. The insourcing option scored second on non-financial criteria once weighting was applied, but lowest for financial criteria. The Leisure Trust model is second on the total weighted score, and third on the non-financial weighted score. The LA Trading Company has the lowest non-financial weighted score, and third lowest overall weighted score. Officers have, therefore, recommended the outsourcing option based on the criteria set out in the options appraisal. It should, however, be noted that section 2 sets out the alternative options that the Mayor and Cabinet may wish to consider before making a decision on how the leisure service should be managed once the current contract with GLL expires on 30 April 2024.
- 3.21 The estimated timescales for delivering all of the options (including those not taken forward and scored) are summarised in Appendix 3c. The joint venture route is the slowest, with its total duration difficult to predict as it relies on finding suitable JV partners willing to create a new vehicle, and then procure a private sector partner. Delivery of the insourcing, trust and LA trading company options should progress at a similar pace. Each would require an additional consultation process to be completed in advance of their final confirmation. The outsourcing option has been assessed to be quickest to deliver as it follows the most defined process, a procurement, and both operator and local authority are experienced in its use.
- 3.22 Each of the options in 3.17 would require a Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) process (except for outsourcing if GLL was awarded the contract as it already employs all the affected staff). The

insourcing, trust and LA trading company options would also require the recruitment of a new management team to oversee the whole estate, as the incumbent central team at GLL will not transfer.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is included as Appendix 4a. It addresses all of the issues set out within this report, including its recommendations. It is understood that a new consultation and Equality Impact Assessment would be required if the Council chose to insource the Leisure Service management contract as this option was not consulted on when the original consultation was undertaken, and it represents a material change to the way the service operates.
- 4.2 The Council's approval process prevents any proposal which amounts to discrimination from being implemented and any project that is likely to lead to differential impact is varied to mitigate the differential impact.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
 - Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding,
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 Consultations

The Council undertook a consultation on the proposals set out in this report, running from 15 November 2021 to 12 January 2022 inclusive. A total of 331 responses were received – 316 online or by completing a paper version of the consultation questions, and the remaining 15 by email including 8 audio files (not full answers to all questions). The report on the outcome of that consultation is attached as Appendix 4b. That consultation sought specific responses on the provision of leisure services in the south-west of the Borough. Given it has already been decided to build a new leisure centre on the St George's site, that content is not repeated here but can be found in the full consultation report.

- 5.3 Key points arising from that consultation are set out below (percentage and numbers are for answers to specific questions):

- 84% of respondents (267 people) agreed with most of the Council's vision for the future of its leisure facilities
- More than half disagreed that the current facilities meet their needs.
- 94% (297 responses) agreed that the Council should plan for significant investment in our leisure centres.
- 83% (261 responses) agreed that a network of leisure centres should be available within 20 minutes by public transport from where they live.
- 58% (183 people) disagreed with closing centres that are not used enough, or in a bad condition or losing money, while 28% (87 people) agreed.
- 90% (285 people) agreed that Community groups, sports clubs and volunteers should be supported to use open spaces, playing fields, community centres, schools, and colleges to bring leisure opportunities to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active.
- Respondents were able to provide comments within the consultation on specific issues. These are set out in detail in the consultation report. The following are highlighted as particularly pertinent to the recommendations of this report, when considered alongside the multiple choice responses set out above:
 - Multiple respondents asked for more women only sessions and expanded women only gym space.
 - Respondents called for better collaboration with local health services, including physiotherapy, community dietician and smoking cessation sessions, which could be delivered in Leisure Centres to improve health outcomes.
 - 123 respondents provided views on the Council Strategy, including a call for ambitious planning to match provision at Hackney's Britannia Leisure Centre, as well as for investment in the existing facilities, with specific references to Mile End. Others asked that there should be less strategic focus on pools, with a preference for a variety of accessible activities.
 - 140 respondents provided feedback on the existing operation of the leisure estate and their views of GLL's performance in particular. These comments will be considered by the Council's Sports and Physical Activity team as part of their management of the contractual relationship with GLL. These comments can be read in the full report attached as Appendix 4b.

5.4 Risk Implications

The risks that arise from the implementation of each option set out in 3.12 have been considered and financial risks quantified as part of the modelling undertaken for each, as set out in Appendix 1C. Their overall fiscal impact is reflected in the table in 3.17. The options appraisal process also considered operational risks as part of assessing each model. The option-specific risks are summarised below:

- **Outsourcing:**

- The third party operator would be responsible for managing the majority of risks, financial and operational, across the leisure service.
- For example, the operator would need to ensure that the service operated efficiently so that it covered costs through income and was thus able to deliver the service specification without recourse to Council funds under normal trading conditions.
- For operational risks, the operator would manage the risk of staffing the leisure centres appropriately to meet the service specification. It would also be responsible for day-to-day maintenance of the estate and the availability of all facilities and equipment to meet the specification.
- The risk of tariff increases on utilities costs has previously fallen to the contractor under Tower Hamlets' current contract. Given the unprecedented increase in these costs, the distribution of this risk between each party may need to be considered further.
- The Council's management of risk in this context is:
 - To ensure a responsible and financially stable operator is procured.
 - The service specification is transparent, affordable and measurable, to allow performance to be assessed via an appropriate payment mechanism regime.
 - To use the contractual levers available to enforce the delivery of the service specification if necessary.
- **Insourcing:**
 - The Council would be responsible for all risks, financial and operational, under this model.
 - For example, should expenditure exceed income, the Council would need to fund the shortfall in the short term and either reduce costs or increase income in the medium to longer term. The Council will, of course, seek to maximise income and control cost to produce a surplus that could be reinvested in the service if realised.
 - The Council would need to ensure that its workforce was sufficient in scale and expertise to manage the estate and meet the service specification.
 - The transition from the current outsourced contract to an insourced contract risks destabilising the quality of the current operation, particularly if there is a major change in the personnel involved in the delivery of the leisure service and/or existing supply chains cannot be readily replaced to create a smooth transition.
 - The risk of utilities cost increases would sit wholly with the Council.
 - The Council's management of risk in this context is:
 - To ensure that the leisure service has the appropriate human, material and financial resources to deliver the service specification. In particular, the Council would need to identify and recruit the management structure required to ensure the estate has the operational and technical expertise to function effectively. This would need to take account of market rates for employing individuals of the requisite quality and experience.

- To manage the process of transition by ensuring that a team is appointed with the requisite skills in sufficient quantity to ensure that the service is insourced as smoothly as possible to allow a successful transition.
 - To accept the need to fund any deficit in the trading performance of the leisure service and identify means of meeting its costs where no surplus is created.
 - To accept ownership of the broader operational implications of running the leisure centres, in particular health and safety and the systems and practices required to ensure incidents residents are safe whilst using our facilities.
- **LA Trading Company/Trust:**
 - The risk profile of both these models is very similar, so are treated as a single entity. In these options, the ultimate risk owner would be the Council, but the management and board responsible for the day-to-day operation of each model would 'own' the immediate response to risks.
 - For example, should the overall trading position of the organisation be worse than the agreed budget, the Council would expect that the management of a LATC or Trust would present a plan for bringing the service back in line with that budget. If it failed to do so, the Council would need to consider providing assistance within acceptable legal parameters or stepping in to take over the operation entirely.
 - Similarly, operational risks would be owned by the management and board of either model, with performance measured against a service specification. Failures to achieve that standard in the short term would definitely be the responsibility of the organisation. Ongoing failure may, again, lead to the Council needing to step in more formally to address underperformance.
 - It is considered very likely that, at least while energy costs are increasing so rapidly, the Council would need to manage the tariff risk on utilities costs for either option.
 - The Council's management of risk in this context is:
 - To ensure that, as either of these organisational structures were created, it would have the appropriate human, material and financial resources to deliver the service specification. In particular, the Council would need to identify and recruit the management structure required to ensure the estate has the operational and technical expertise to function effectively. This would need to take account of market rates for employing individuals of the requisite quality and experience. Once either body was fully operational it would assume this responsibility, subject to the Council remaining the 'lender of last resort' on financial issues.
 - To adopt a governance regime that provided either model of organisation with the requisite robust oversight to ensure it met the service specification in a safe, accountable and efficient way. This may include officers and/or members being

- appointed to the board of either organisation, subject to complying with relevant statute.
- To monitor delivery of the service specification against a clear set of metrics that would allow the Council to identify and seek remedy for any shortfalls in service quality, financial performance, health and safety, etc.

5.5 Best Value

The Best Value duty requires the Council to, “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.”

The relative financial performance of each option is set out in section 3.17 to 3.19, and set out in detail in Appendix 1c, and section 5.7 in respect of relevant risks. This establishes that outsourcing is the most economically advantageous option. This is, however, only one factor in assessing relative value for money and an assumption was applied that the service should achieve a balanced budget annually, whereas the Mayor and Cabinet may wish to consider investing revenue in the service to provide more affordable access to leisure activities and facilities.

The options appraisal also considered operational factors, as set out in sections 3.20-3.21 and Appendices 3a and 3b. These evaluate the relative efficiency of each option in achieving the Council’s objectives, as articulated in Appendix 5. The options appraisal identified outsourcing as the most effective model for meeting operational requirements, with insourcing a close second. The major difference is in the ability of the Council to change operational delivery at pace, without recourse to contractual changes (if required, as it is intended that the contract for an outsourced operation would include a mechanism for making such changes relatively swiftly).

The options appraisal took account of the benefits of risk transfer from the Council to another party and considered the benefits of the Council taking greater control of the delivery of the leisure service. If the latter criterion was given greater weighting, i.e. was considered a more important strategic priority than other factors, then insourcing would be likely to achieve a higher score relative to outsourcing on operational factors.

The cost model created to assess the options does identify that outsourcing should deliver the best fiscal performance and insourcing the least propitious if measured against existing assumptions. If, however, the Council’s priority was to exert the greatest possible control over the leisure service then insourcing would represent the most advantageous model. In choosing insourcing, the Council would need to ensure that the leisure service was operated in the most efficient way possible going forwards, financially and operationally, which would require the risk mitigations set out in section 5.7 to be applied. In particular, it would be essential to ensure that a suitably resourced and experienced transition team was in place to manage the change from the current contract to an in-house operation, and that the latter

would have a management team capable of meeting the challenges of running the estate to meet the Council's objectives.

5.6 **Crime Reduction**

Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council is under a legal duty when exercising its various functions to have due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area, including anti-social behaviour adversely affecting the local environment and the quality of life of residents, the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and re-offending. This will be taken into account in the design development for any new or refurbished/remodelled leisure centres.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 The financial analysis indicates that the outsourcing option would offer the best financial value to the Council. Core Budgets for Leisure facilities are currently budgeted with a net nil cost outsourced model through GLL and the re-contracting would offer the opportunity to make future budget savings or generate additional income. The significant impacts of the difference in VAT treatments have been detailed in the body of the report however taking this out of the modelling equations would still leave the outsource model in a favourable position. Further work will be required to review the VAT implications on the Council's partial exemption threshold.
- 6.2 The model takes account of business rates (NNDR) whereby an outsourced provider could claim charitable status relief for a majority of the rates and therefore reduce the cost of providing the service. The benefit of these reliefs would be partially reduced by the income loss for the Council from the decreased business rates of which the Council retains a share.
- 6.3 The costs of the external project team are currently unbudgeted and would require additional funding or redirection of current funding of £338k for this financial year and a further £405k for the 2023/24 Financial year. Funding would need to be requested through a growth bid in the MTFS or could utilise short-term non-ringfenced reserves. Internal staffing would be included in current budgets.
- 6.4 One off costs have been identified as £150k for outsourcing and £835k for insourcing. These costs would require additional budget (requested through the MTFS and/or reserves) and would be likely spread over the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Financial years as the new offer is rolled out at the beginning of 2024/25.
- 6.5 On current analysis the outsourcing option would give us an average annual additional £1.317m of available resource for council spend through income generation.

- 6.6 On current analysis the insourcing model would require an average annual growth of £821k in spend. This would require a growth bid to be added into the MTFS and agreed by full Council as part of the 2023-26 budget.
- 6.7 The figures provided are currently illustrative and final detailed growth or saving calculations would be required for inclusion in the Council Medium term Financial Strategy.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Council is not legally obliged to provide leisure services and facilities of this nature. However, it may do so if it wishes and in doing so the provision of such services and facilities is one of the Council's functions under the law.
- 7.2 S.3 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires the Council to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This Best Value duty applies to function referred to in 7.1 above. Both the insourcing option and the various outsourcing options are options that are legally permissible for the Council to pursue.
- 7.3 The legislation (and the central government guidance of which the Council must have regard) requires the Council to consult with stakeholders in the event that the Council is considering high level choices about how, as a matter of principle and approach the Council is going to deliver this legal function. The content of this report meets this threshold triggering the need for the Council to undertake further consultation whilst these proposals are still at a formative stage.
- 7.4 Following the consultation the Council is required to consciously consider the results whilst finalising any such proposal for the future of this function. Any such proposal may or may not be one of the two proposed options provided that the conclusions drawn by the Council from the consultation are conclusions that a reasonable authority ought to be expected to make. Also, the consultation relates to the Best Value duty. However, Best Value is that which the particular council considers to be Best Value in the circumstances of that particular council and therefore, the Council has a relatively wide discretion when reaching conclusions about Best Value from the evidence shown from the Consultation.
- 7.5 The release into the public domain of the information detailed in Appendix 1 could have a significant impact on the business operations of the Council and the Council's existing supplier. This could leave the Council open to expensive legal claims or left in a weak commercial position in any related tender process. It is therefore in the public interest that the public is excluded from the information, and this outweighs the public's interest in knowing the information and withholding the information in Appendix 1 is lawful.

- 7.6 The Mayor is responsible for and has discretion to make decisions relating to the discharge of executive functions under the law and the Council's constitution. The leisure services function is an executive function. Therefore, the Mayor may make any decision other than those recommended.
- 7.7 It is conceivable that any changes from the previous shape of the leisure offer could affect people who have a protected characteristic for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 disproportionately to those people who do not. Therefore, in the event of such changes that Council will have to undertake such actions as are reasonably necessary to understand the impact of such changes. This could include a further Equality Assessment or further consultation.
-

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Reports

- Leisure Investment Plan (approved at Cabinet on 09/02/2022)
- Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2019-2024 (approved at Cabinet on 18/12/2019)

Appendices

- Appendix 1a – Resourcing Costs [Exempt]
- Appendix 1b – Fiscal Performance of the Contract FY 2019-20 [Exempt]
- Appendix 1c – Financial Options Appraisal Scoring [Exempt]
- Appendix 2 – Leisure Centre Details
- Appendix 3a – Options Appraisal Methodology for Management Contract Model
- Appendix 3b – Scoring for the Non-Financial Criteria
- Appendix 3c – Estimated Timetable for Delivering Each Option
- Appendix 4a – Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 4b – Consultation Report
- Appendix 5 – Leisure Offer Paper

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

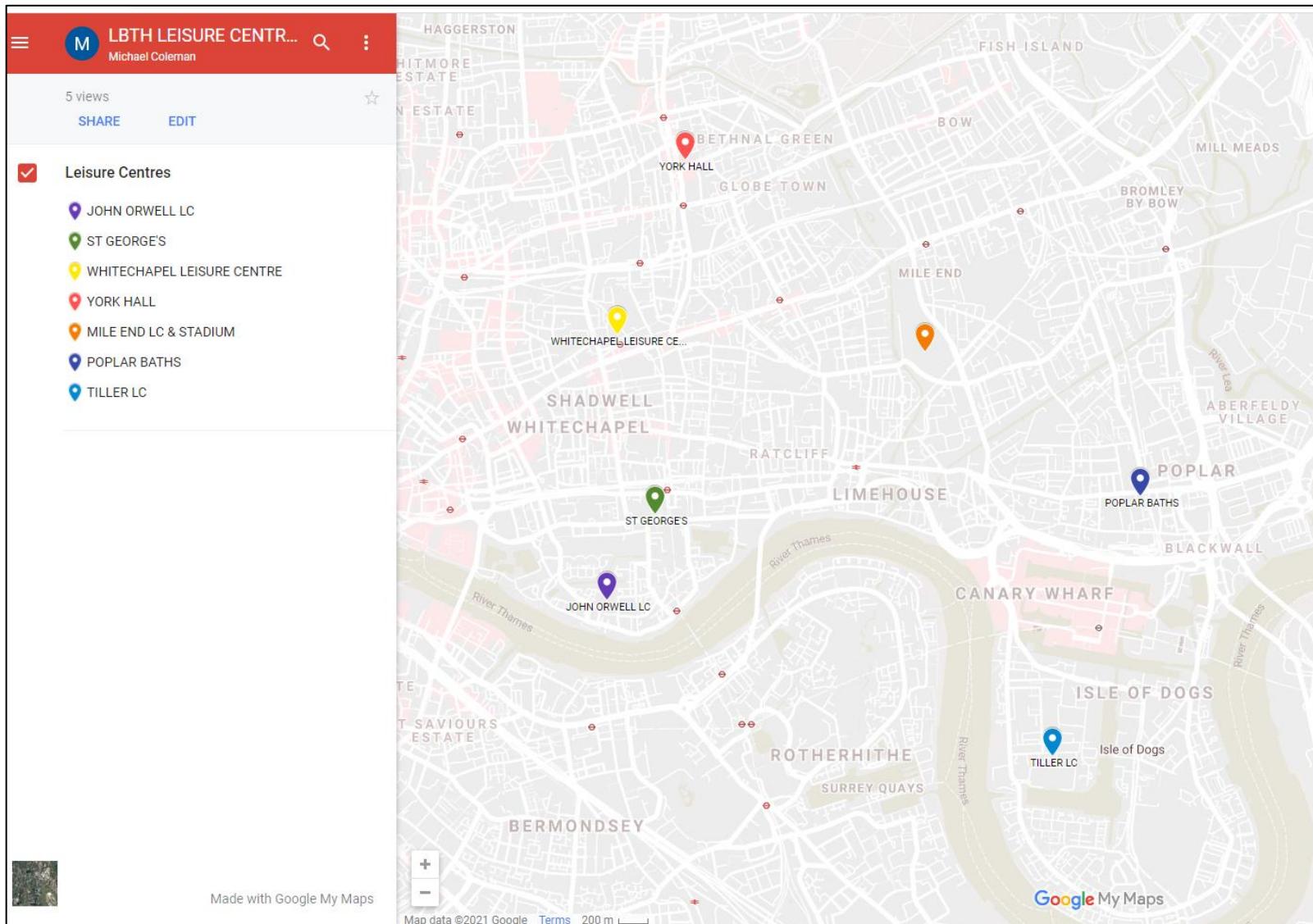
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APPENDIX 2 – Information on the Existing Leisure Centre Estate

INDEX

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2.1 Map of the location of the existing Leisure Centre estate



2.2. John Orwell Leisure Centre

Overview

The John Orwell Leisure Centre was built on the quay of the Wapping Dock, incorporating an original Victorian-era pumping station building into the 1980s-built main accommodation. Part of the outer wall is Grade II listed. The main entrance on Tench Street is inconspicuous as a result, as it has not been possible to create a larger, more accessible, entrance on the street side of the centre.

The Leisure Centre has two car parks – to the north within the main site, to the south outside the boundary wall.

Facilities

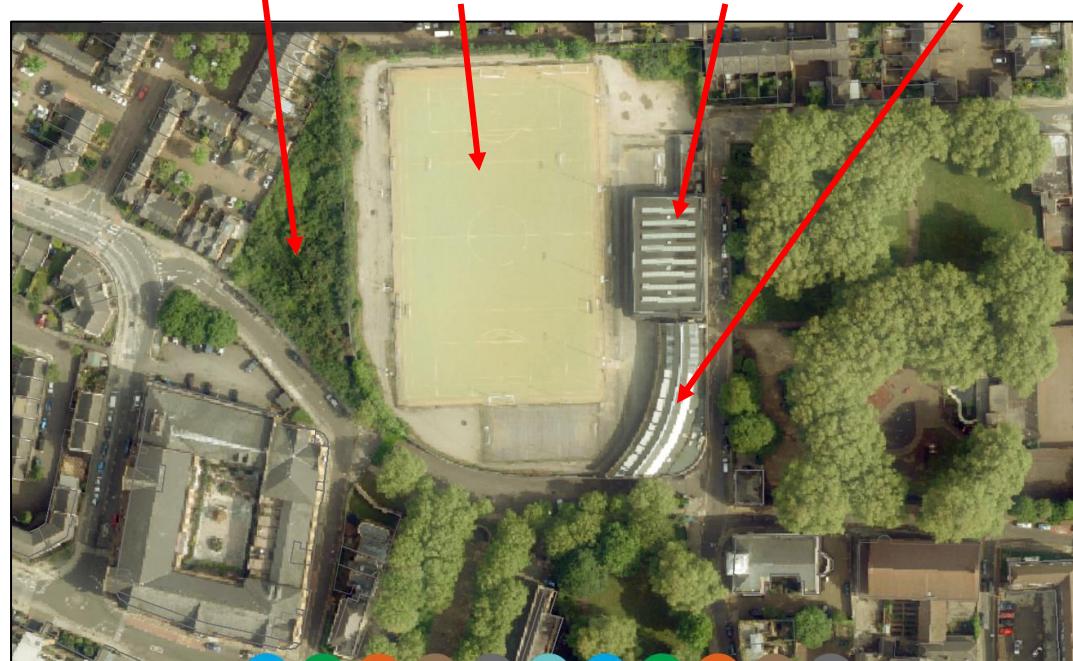
- 4 court sports hall
- 55 station fitness gym
- Studio
- 2G Astroturf, primarily used by Wapping Hockey Club's lower league teams
- Tennis/netball court

Site Specific Issues

1. Given that a large section of the site was previously within the dock, there is likely to be ground contamination and a need for deep piled foundations. The former dock may have been well capped off, reducing the former risk, but detailed geotechnical surveys will be needed to confirm this.
2. As set out above, the outer wall on the eastern side of the site is Grade II Listed, while the Victorian building that now houses the fitness gym is locally listed. None of the proposed options would require works to either as a result, although this reduces the flexibility of what can be achieved within the site.
3. The land on the western side of the site, currently overgrown scrubland, is Council-owned under a different title. A full title search is being conducted, but it is understood there is a covenant on the land which restricts its use to car parking. If this is confirmed, it would be necessary to remove the covenant to deliver options that involve Site 1 within the FaulknerBrowns Feasibility Study (please see Appendix 11) and some of those within Site 2, where the hockey pitch is reorientated.

Photographs

Site map



View of the main entrance on Tench St, looking south



The Fitness Gym



The Sports Hall



View of the Hockey Pitch looking south-west



The Main Car Park



The South Car Park



Scrubland to the west of the main site



2.3 Mile End Leisure Centre and Stadium

Overview

The **Leisure Centre**, located at 190 Burdett Rd, opened in 2006 as a full specification leisure centre, alongside the existing stadium accommodation. A series of improvements were made since 2014, including reconfiguring the main reception, adding a member's lounge, installing a soft play facility, extending the gym, creating a new spin studio, and refurbishing the changing rooms.

The main **Stadium** building houses changing rooms for the external pitches, with a grandstand overlooking the running track. There have been some minor improvements to the building and external pitches, notably the refurbishment of the Astroturf pitch in 2015.

Facilities

- 4 court sports hall
- 25m x 8 lane swimming pool
- Teaching pool
- 84 station fitness gym
- 30 programmable station fitness gym
- Spin studio
- Studio
- Spa facility (sauna, steam room and jacuzzi)
- Soft play area
- Creche (currently out of use)
- 8 lane athletics running track
- Combined grass football pitch and field athletics (javelin, hammer, etc.) within running track
- External pitches: 4 x 5-a-side; 3 x 7-a-side, 1 x multi-use sports pitch (suitable for hockey)

Site Specific Issues

1. The land the Leisure Centre and Stadium sit on is overseen by the King George's Field Charity Board. There are restrictions on what this land can be used for, although none of the current proposals for its use would impinge upon these.
2. Sport England provided grants for works on the external areas of the site, so any changes to pitches would require their permission.
3. The running track that forms part of the Stadium site is unique in the Borough. As such, any proposals that might affect it or its use would be opposed by Sport England.
4. The grassed area inside the running track is used both for football (it is a full size pitch) and field athletics, in conjunction with the throwing cage in the north-east corner. This has modest use, but its loss would again be challenged by Sport England. The football pitch could be more easily replaced on another grassed site.

Photographs

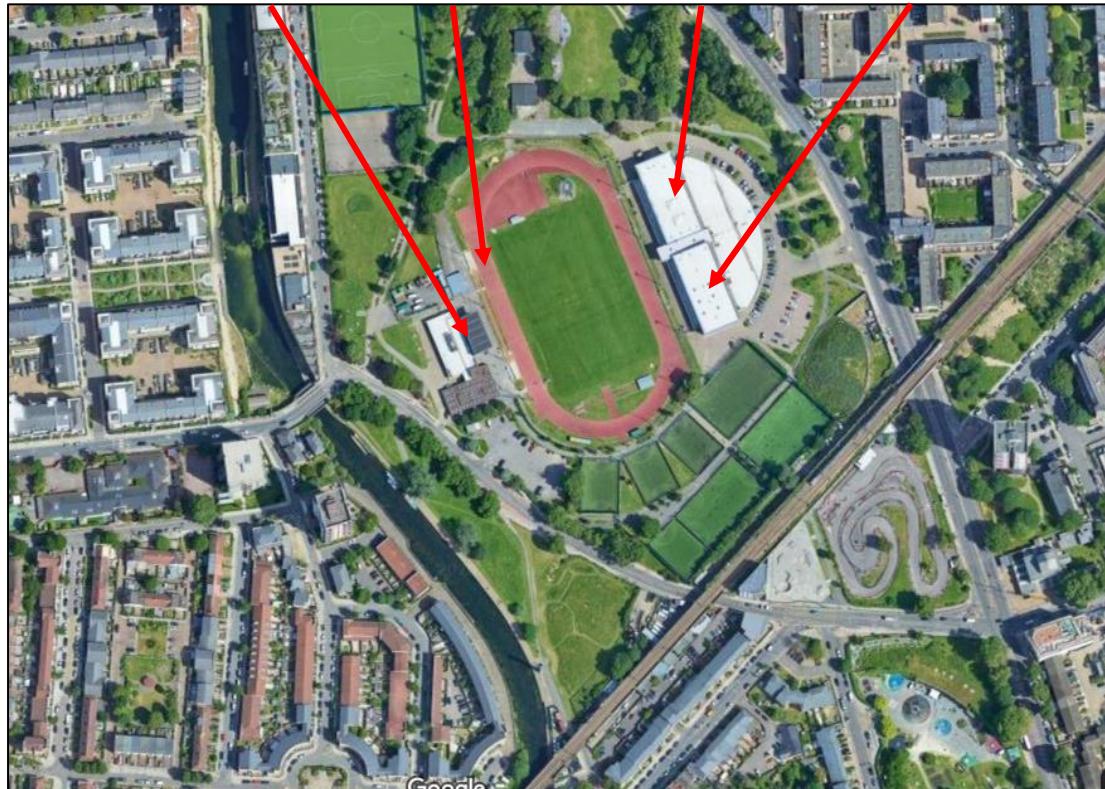
Site Map

Stadium

Running track

Pool

Sports Hall



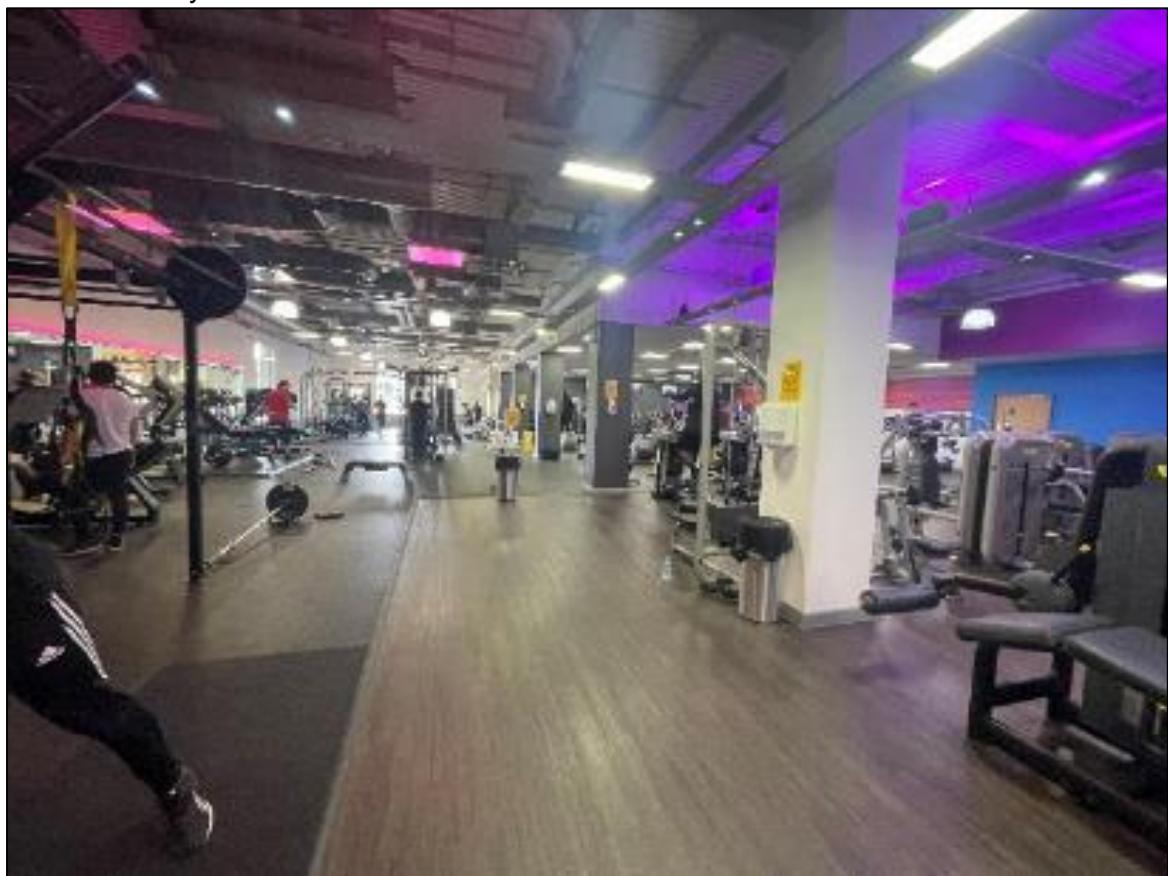
The 25m Pool



The Sports Hall



The Fitness Gym



2.4 Poplar Baths

Overview

Poplar Baths reopened in 2016 in the original 1930s Grade II listed building, with an extension built on the east side to house the new swimming pool. This scheme was delivered as part of a PFI project, the concession period for which expires in 2047. GLL was originally subcontracted to the PFI SPV, but since 2019 has been contracted to the Council outside the main leisure management contract.

Swimming numbers at St George's declined after Poplar Baths opened.

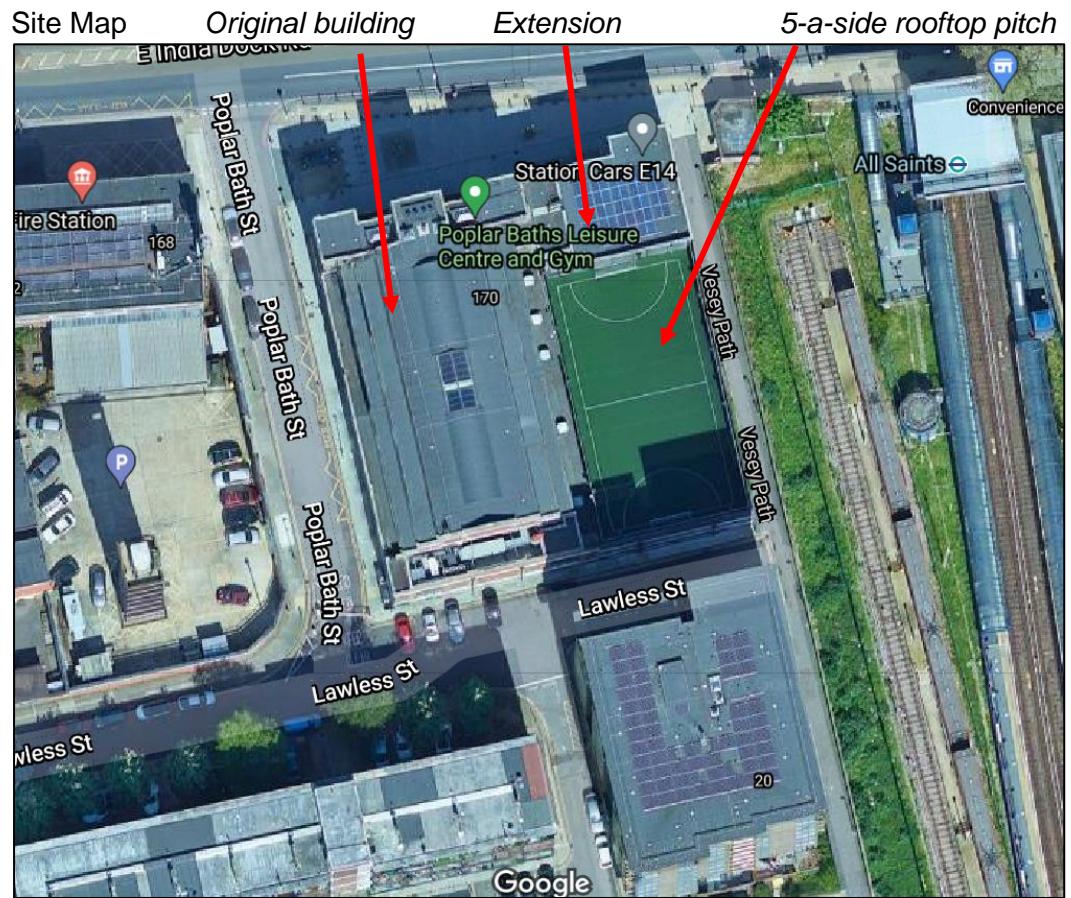
Facilities

- 25m x 6 lane pool
- Teaching pool
- 4 court sports hall (in what was originally the swimming pool hall)
- 74 station fitness suite
- Studio
- 3G 5-a-side pitch on roof
- Space on the east side of the reception area for additional use, currently empty

Site Specific Issues

1. The main site specific issue is the PFI contract that the facility sits within. Although it is not proposed that this site be closed or radically altered, the PFI would make both options expensive and/or difficult to deliver.
2. The original building is Grade II Listed.
3. There is limited scope to make any significant adjustments to the internal layout irrespective of both of the above issues – the site is very tight, and current usage is relatively efficient given what there is to play with.

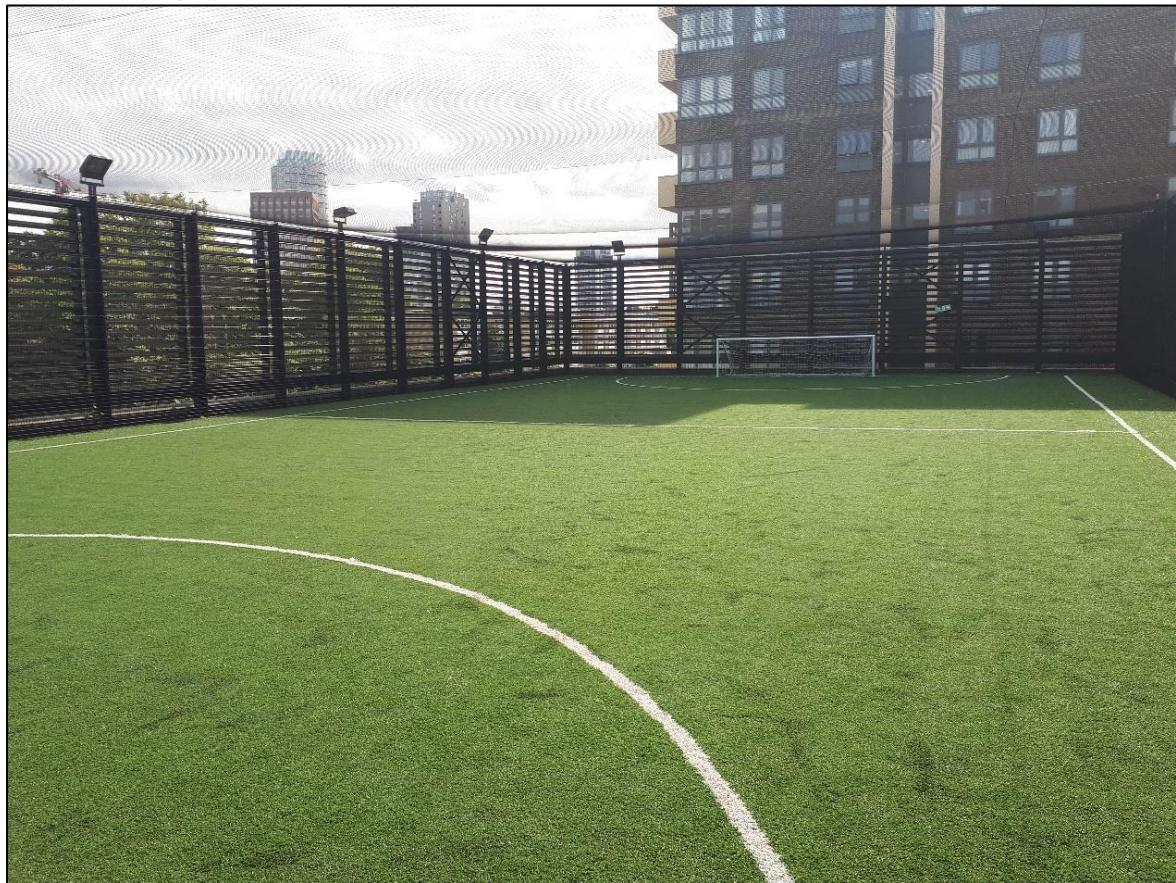
Photographs



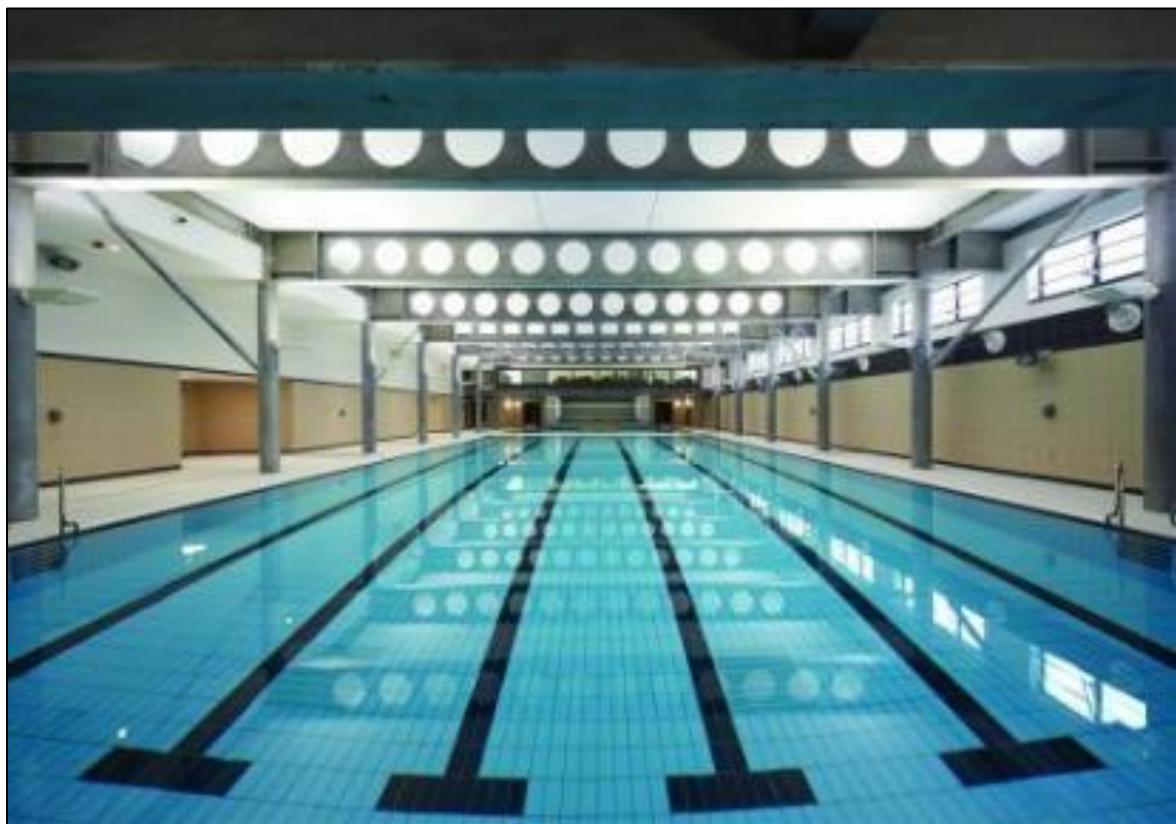
The Main Hall



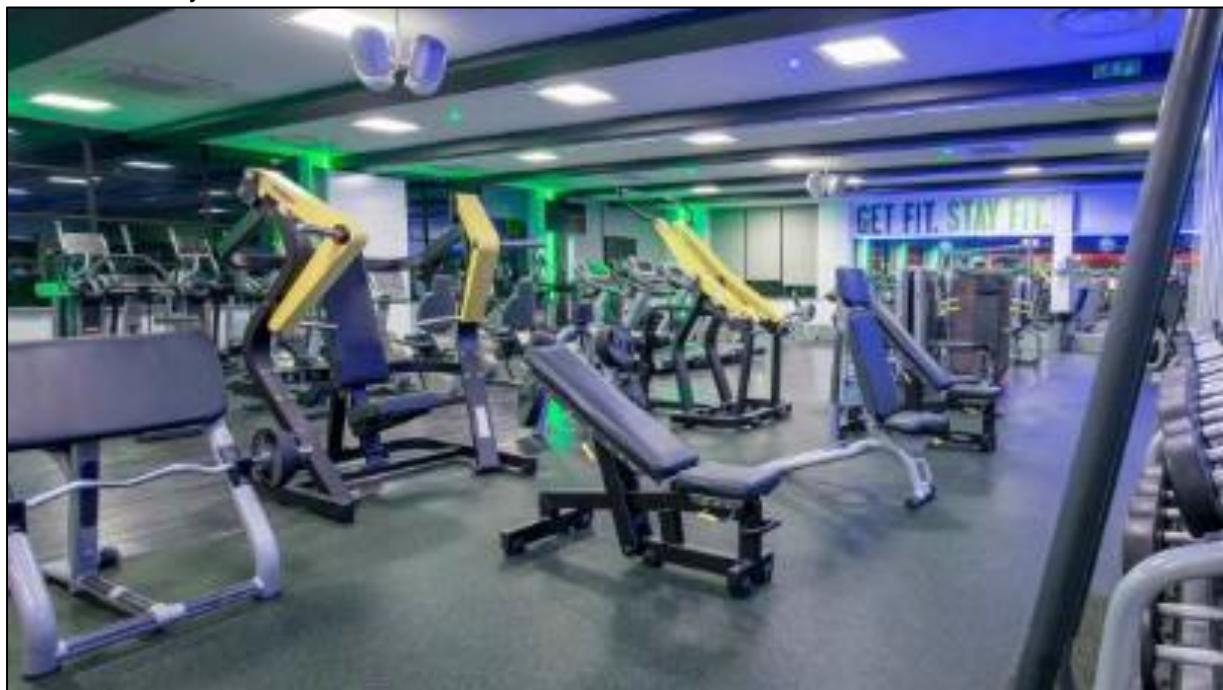
The 5-a-side pitch on the roof



The Pool



The Fitness Gym



2.5 St George's

Overview

St George's originally opened in 1969, on a site immediately next to the Highway, and adjacent to Hawksmoor's Grade I Listed St George's-in-the-East. It is currently shut due to a backlog of major condition needs that must be addressed before it can reopen. Some investment has been made in the past decade, most notably c. £1m in 2011. The internal layout and construction of the building restricts the ability to remodel the interior to introduce new activities. The condition of the reinforced concrete is particularly concerning, as can be seen from the photographs below – the steel rebars have corroded away after years of exposure to humidity and a lack of adequate maintenance, although one would not use the original construction methodology and materials if building a new facility today precisely because it is so difficult to maintain such a structure.

Facilities

- 33.3 yard x 6 lane pool
- Teaching pool
- 33 station fitness gym
- Studio

Site Specific Issues

1. The poor condition of the building is the main issue, as it will be both expensive, time-consuming and difficult to extend its life.
2. The plantroom is too small to accommodate modern equipment, should it be decided to try to reopen the pool. It is thought extremely likely that new plant would be needed, so a separate plantroom would need to be built on the car park to house this.

Photographs

Site Map

Leisure Centre building



Main entrance, off the car park



View looking NE across the Highway at the front façade



Current condition of the main pool



Evidence of corrosion to reinforced concrete



Fitness Gym



Plant room



Plant room



Plant room



2.6 Tiller Leisure Centre

Overview

Tiller opened in the 1960s primarily for swimming, as per St George's. The pool is currently being refurbished and is expected to reopen in January 2022. The building is in better condition than St George's but would be equally difficult and expensive to remodel extensively. What space is available has been reconfigured as effectively as possible. Once the new pool is reopened, the Centre could remain as is for the foreseeable future, but will continue to make a revenue deficit given the lack of sufficient dry-side facilities to subsidise the costs of running the pool.

Facilities

- 25m x 4 lane pool
- 44 station fitness gym
- Small spin studio
- Studio
- Soft play and function room
- 2 beauty therapy rooms

Site Specific Issues

- The Council has explored whether the Leisure Centre could be included in One Housing's redevelopment of its adjacent housing stock. This now looks very unlikely for multiple reasons.
- The existing Tiller site is extremely tight. Rebuilding in situ would take c. 4 years, during which time the Isle of Dogs would have no Council-run leisure provision.
- The centre has the best energy efficiency rating of any of the Council's Leisure Centres, by virtue of its connection to the Barkantine Energy Centre, not its construction, insulation, etc.

Photographs

Site Map

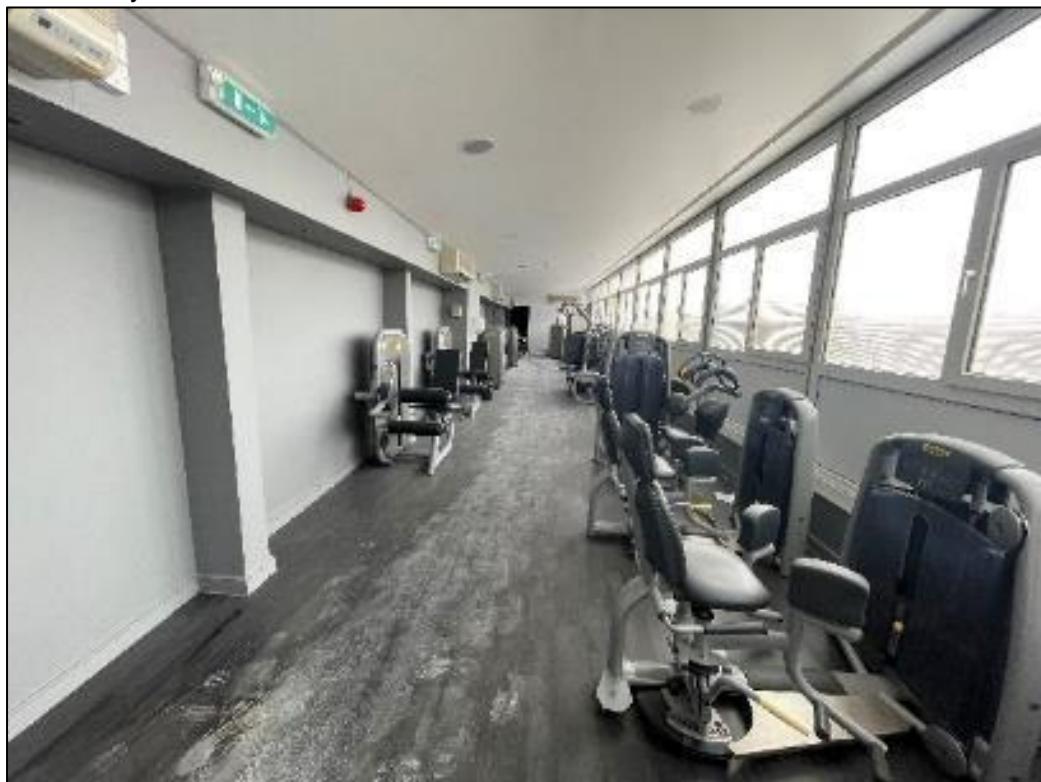
Leisure Centre



The Pool – during refurbishment works c. Sept 2021



Fitness Gym



Whitechapel Leisure Centre

Overview

Whitechapel Leisure Centre opened in 1999, following the refurbishment of existing buildings to incorporate the leisure centre. A very tight site, it sits over the convergence of multiple TfL rail tunnels, now including Crossrail, the construction of which disrupted the operation of the leisure centre. An escape route from the network of tunnels below opens into the Leisure Centre car park.

The centre has a female only gym, one of only two in the estate. Several local schools use it as part of delivering their PE curriculum.

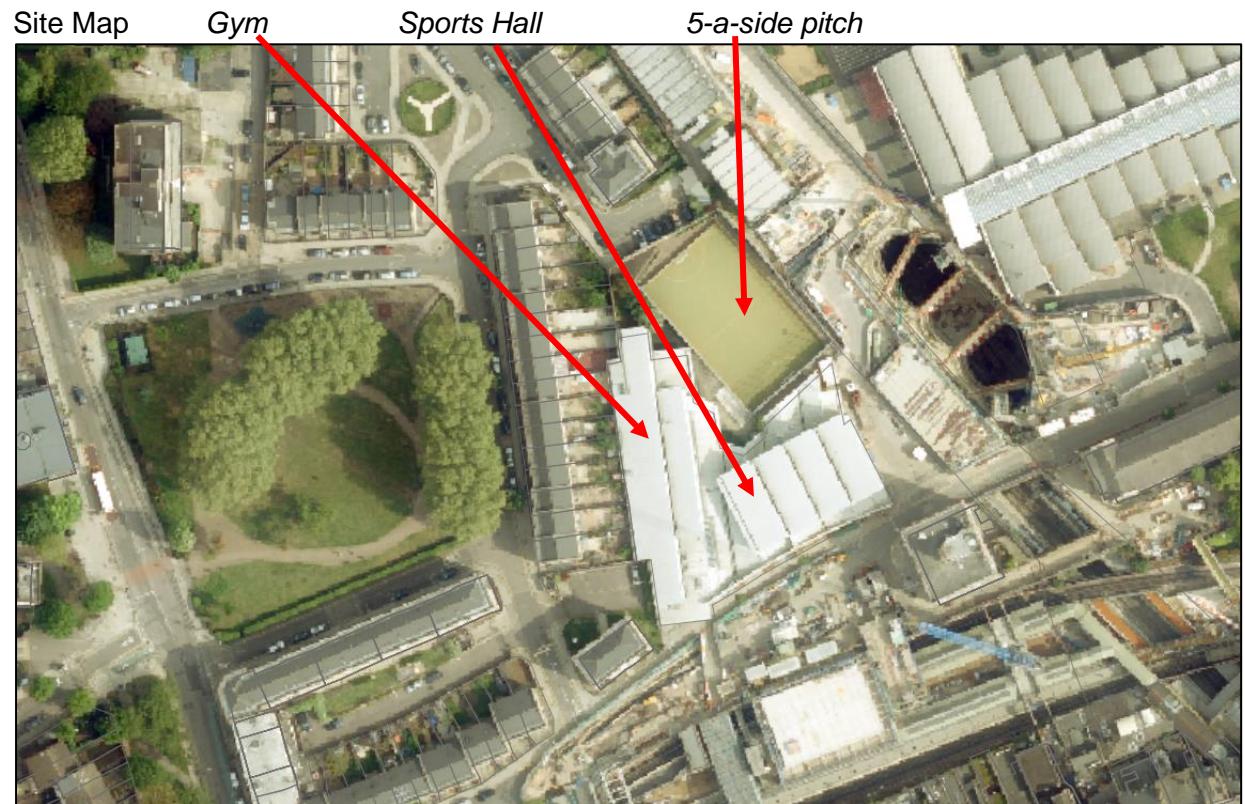
Facilities

- 4 court sports hall
- 80 station unisex fitness gym
- 23 station women's only fitness gym
- 3G 5-a-side pitch
- Male/female saunas

Site Specific Issues

1. Although there are several tunnels in the vicinity of the site, an initial view from a Structural Engineer gives comfort that this is not insurmountable should the Council wish to develop the site.
2. It is assumed that the women only gym would need to be re-provided if the site was redeveloped. Given its scale, this should be possible.

Photographs



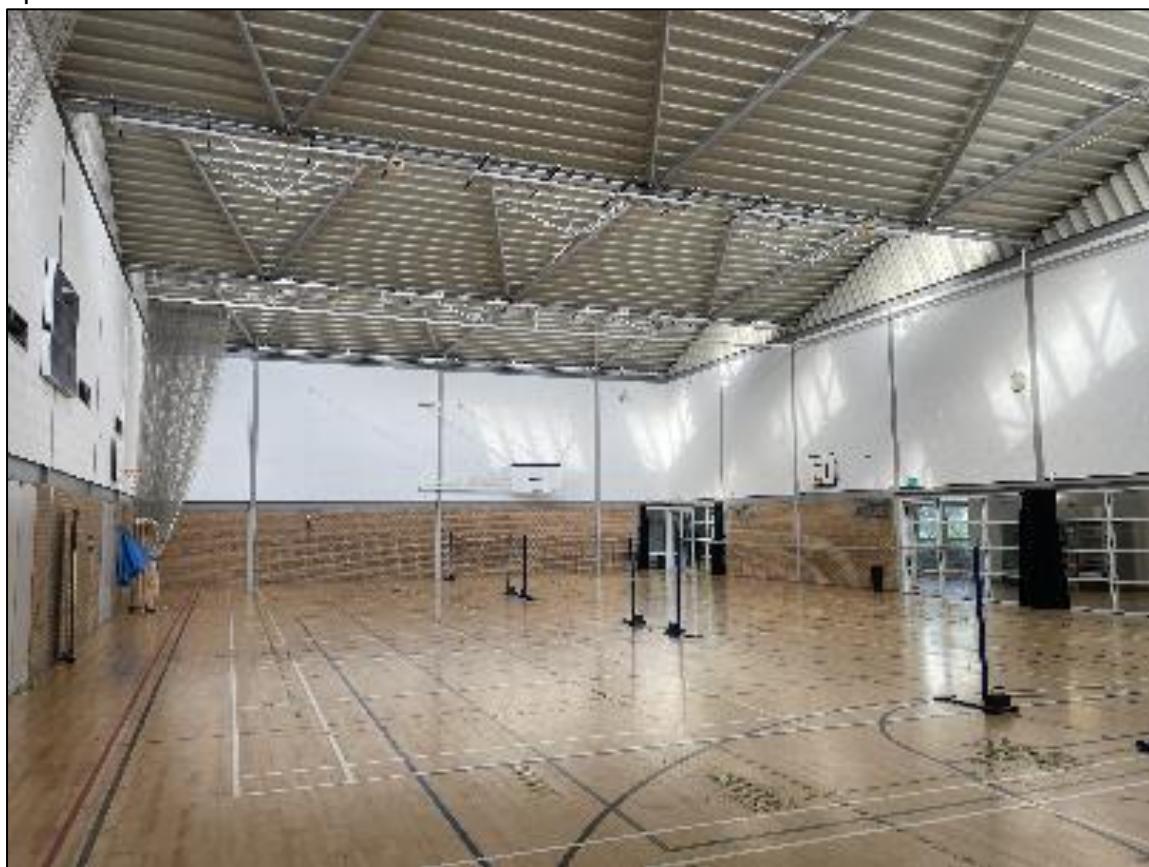
Front entrance



Main Fitness Gym



Sports Hall



2.8 York Hall Leisure Centre

Overview

York Hall was first opened in 1929 and has been Grade II listed since 2013 to reflect its historic and architectural significance. York Hall has long hosted televised boxing, which is a key income stream and without which it would make a significant loss. The pool is currently closed for repairs which are due to be completed in April 2022.

The building underwent a £4.475m refurbishment between 2004-2007 to improve the main hall, swimming pool, fitness areas, changing facilities, laundry, reception, spa and health suite.

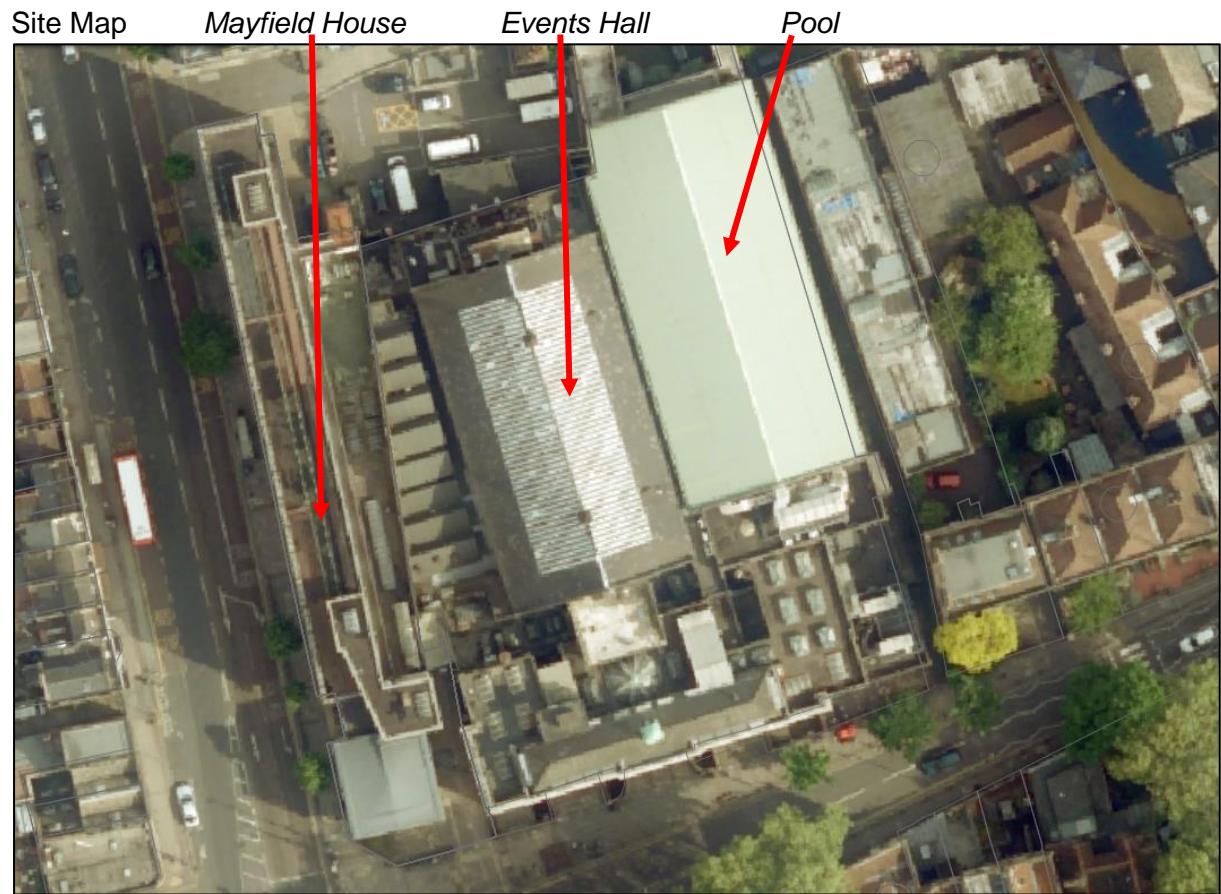
Facilities

- 33.3 yard x 6 lane pool
- Teaching pool
- 72 station fitness gym
- Spa (6 heat therapy and 5 treatment rooms)
- Event space – 1200 person capacity for boxing and other events

Site Specific Issues

- As stated above, York Hall is Grade II Listed. This significantly limits alternative uses, given its function has not altered markedly since it was first opened. Any works undertaken should be cleared with the Conservation Officer before commencement, as materials need to be either original, or as authentic as possible.
- Major events, in particular boxing, contribute significantly to York Hall breaking even. In purely financial terms, such events are more important than the facility's day-to-day use as a Leisure Centre.
- The Council owns the adjoining Mayfield House, so in theory could redevelop the site. This would, however, be a potentially protracted process, given some residents are understood to have pursued right to buy for their flats.

Photographs



Main pool hall – taken in September 2021, showing works underway



Teaching Pool



Events Hall



Appendix 3a – Options Appraisal Methodology for the Management Contract Model

- The Council has worked with specialist leisure consultants to identify what factors should be considered in comparing how well each model would meet the Council's objectives, such as:
 - How well will each option perform financially? Will they generate a surplus or a deficit? How big is the difference between each option, so the Council can understand the financial implications of going with one over another? How much of the financial risk sits with the Council for each option?
 - How well does each option deliver the Council's leisure strategy? Is it flexible enough to be able to change this during the ten year period being considered?
 - Is any given option more or less likely to deliver the quality of service required, relative to other models being considered? What operational risks sit with the manager of the leisure service contractor, and which sit with the Council?
- The first stage of the evaluation was to agree a weighting for the five overall areas of evaluation. This was done as follows:
 - The weighting was split between financial and non-financial considerations 40%:60%. This is the Council's standard position for the evaluation of any procurement opportunity. Given that leisure is an important Council service, it was logical that the evaluation reflected this position.
 - The non-financial weighting (60%) was then sub-divided into the three areas based on the views of the project team. Each member was asked to rank the three areas in order of priority and these results were aggregated to derive an overall split of the weighting.
- The overall weighting agreed was as follows:
 - Net financial position - 30%
 - Level of risk transfer (commercial) - 10%
 - Service delivery - 30%
 - Operational flexibility (for the Council) - 20%
 - Level of risk transfer (operational) - 10%
- In terms of scoring, each of the options was evaluated against each of the criteria on the following basis:
 - Net financial position: scored on a scale of 0 to 5 by reference to the most economically advantageous option, with the highest scoring option receiving 5 and the lowest 0, with those between scoring as a proportion of the difference between the two extremes.
 - Other options: scored on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 representing the lowest/no benefit to the Council and 5 representing the most advantageous for the Council.

The table below sets out the criteria and the weighting described above:

Criteria	Description	Weighting %
Financial Considerations		
Cost	Extent of Council responsibility for/exposure to:	30%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income generation • Economies of scale for key costs, including utilities • Salary levels (not relating to LGPS) • Overhead management costs • Profit level (if appropriate) • VAT treatment • Non-National Domestic Rates (NNDR) • Pension liabilities, etc. 	
Risk Transfer (Commercial)	<p>Extent to which the Council has ownership of and influence over key risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-to-day operations (e.g. costs resulting from unavailability of areas of a building) • Changes in customer demand • Local competition • Changes in law affecting operation/cost/facility specification • Utility cost (tariff) changes • Utility cost (consumption) changes • Uninsured risks 	10%
Non-Financial Considerations		
Service delivery	<p>Relative ability of each model to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Council's current strategic objectives for the next 10 years • Work with other Council departments, e.g. Public Health, Parks, etc. • Contribute to meeting the Council's net zero objectives • Increase participation in the most economically and sustainable way • Engage with the most vulnerable groups within the borough 	30%
Operational Flexibility (for the Council)	<p>Ability to adapt to changes within a ten year period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for cross-Council initiatives, e.g. joined up IT solutions across leisure/IDEA stores • Extent to which arrangements protects the service in the long-term (10 years) 	20%
Risk transfer - operating	<p>Extent to which the Council has ownership of and influence over key risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and safety • Managing, recruiting and retaining sufficient staff • Planned preventative maintenance, including compliance checks • Investment to improve the estate 	10%
		100%

The scoring against each of the above criteria used the guidance set out below:

Score	Description of score
5	The model meets the criteria fully
4	The model meets the criteria to a significant degree
3	The model meets the criteria satisfactorily and has some disadvantages
2	The model does not meet the criteria in a number of areas
1	The model does not meet the criteria in a number of key areas and has significant disadvantages
0	The model does not meet the criteria to any degree

- Four people – three officers and a member of Sports Consultancy – scored each option independently, criteria by criteria, and then met to discuss any substantial differences in scoring (e.g. to check there was a common understanding of what a criteria was seeking to measure). This moderation was not intended to, nor did it, change the outcome based on those individual scores. These scores were then added together and an average taken to represent the score for each criteria. The anonymised scores are included in Appendix 3b.

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APPENDIX 3B
LBTH Management Options Appraisal
Evaluation Framework - Summary

	Weighting	OPTION A: OUTSOURCING TO LEISURE OPERATOR	OPTION B: IN- HOUSE MANAGEMENT	OPTION C: LOCAL AUTHORITY TRADING COMPANY (TECKAL)	OPTION D: NEW LEISURE TRUST	
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS						
Cost	<i>Extent of Council responsibility for/exposure to:</i> Income generation Economies of scale for key costs, including utilities Salary levels (not relating to LGPS) Overhead management costs Profit VAT treatment Non-National Domestic Rates (NNDR) Pension liabilities	30%	Based on net position from financial analysis	Based on net position from financial analysis	Based on net position from financial analysis	Based on net position from financial analysis
		Score: 5.00	0.00	3.97	3.97	
Risk transfer (commercial)	<i>Extent to which the Council can transfer key risks (without losing influence over the delivery of outcomes):</i> Day-to-day operations (e.g. costs resulting from unavailability of areas of a building) Change of customer demand Local competition Change in law affecting operation/cost/ facility specification Utility cost (tariff) changes Utility cost (consumption) changes Uninsured risks	10%	4 5 5 4 3 4 4	2 2 2 2 3 2 2	3 3 3 2 3 3 3	4 4 3 2 3 3 3
		Score: 4	2	3	3	
NON-FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS						
Service delivery	<i>Relative ability of each model to:</i> Deliver the Council's current strategic objectives for next 10 years Work with other Council departments, e.g. Public Health, Parks, etc. Meet the Council's net zero objectives Deliver excellent customer service Increase participation in the most economically and sustainable way Engage with most vulnerable groups within the borough	30%	3 3 4 4 4 3	5 5 4 3 3 5	4 3 4 3 3 4	4 3 4 3 3 4
		Score: 4	4	4	4	
Operational flexibility (for Council)	<i>Ability to adapt to changes to the service within the period</i> Opportunities for cross-Council initiatives, e.g. joined up IT solutions across leisure/IDEA stores Extent to which arrangement protects service in long-term (10 years)	20%	3 4	5 3	3 4	3 4
		Score: 4	4	4	4	
Risk transfer (operational)	<i>Extent to which the Council can transfer key risks (without losing influence over the delivery of outcomes):</i> Health and safety Managing, recruiting and retaining staff Planned preventative maintenance, including compliance checks Investment to improve the estate	10%	4 4 4 3	2 2 2 5	3 3 3 2	3 3 3 2
		Score: 4	3	3	3	
100%						
	Total Raw Score:	72	59	59	62	
	Total Weighted Score:	76% <i>Preferred option</i>	65%	67%	69%	

LBTH Management Options Appraisal Evaluation Framework - Full Scores

	Weighting	OPTION A: OUTSOURCING TO LEISURE OPERATOR	OPTION B: IN- HOUSE MANAGEMENT	OPTION C: LOCAL AUTHORITY TRADING COMPANY (TECKAL)	OPTION D: NEW LEISURE TRUST
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS					
Cost	<i>Extent of Council responsibility for/exposure to:</i>	30%			
	Income generation				
	Economies of scale for key costs, including utilities				
	Salary levels (not relating to LGPS)				
	Overhead management costs				
	Profit				
	VAT treatment				
	Non-National Domestic Rates (NNDR)				
	Pension liabilities				
		Score:			
Risk transfer (commercial)	<i>Extent to which the Council can transfer key risks (without losing influence over the delivery of outcomes):</i>	10%	A B C D	A B C D	A B C D
	Day-to-day operations (e.g. costs resulting from unavailability of areas of a building)	3 5 5 4	1 2 1 3.5	3 3 3 3.5	3 3 5 3.5
	Change of customer demand	5 4 5 4	1 2 2 3.5	4 2 3 3.5	4 2 5 3.5
	Local competition	5 4 5 4	1 2 2 3	4 3 3 3.5	4 3 3 3.5
	Change in law affecting operation/cost/ facility specification	3 3 5 4	1 1 2 3	1 1 3 3.5	1 1 4 3.5
	Utility cost (tariff) changes	3 2 3 3	3 2 3 3	3 2 3 3.5	3 2 3 3.5
	Utility cost (consumption) changes	5 2 4 4	3 2 1 3	4 2 4 3	4 2 4 3
	Uninsured risks	4 4 5 4	2 2 1 3	3 2 2 3.5	3 2 4 3.5
NON-FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS					
Service delivery	<i>Relative ability of each model to:</i>	30%			
	Deliver the Council's current strategic objectives for next 10 years	3 3 4 3.5	4 5 5 4	3 4 4 4	3 4 4 4
	Work with other Council departments, e.g. Public Health, Parks, etc.	2 2 3 3.5	5 5 5 4	2 3 4 4	2 4 3 4
	Meet the Council's net zero objectives	4 3 4 3.5	4 5 5 3.5	3 4 4 3.5	3 4 4 3.5
	Deliver excellent customer service	4 4 4 4	3 4 3 3.5	3 4 3 3.5	3 4 4 3.5
	Increase participation in the most economically and sustainable way	4 2 4 4	2 4 4 3	3 3 3 3.5	3 4 3 3.5
	Engage with most vulnerable groups within the borough	3 2 3 3.5	4 5 5 4	3 3 4 4	3 4 3 4
Operational flexibility (for Council)	Ability to adapt to changes to the service within the period	20%			
	Opportunities for cross-Council initiatives, e.g. joined up IT solutions across leisure/IDEA stores	2 2 3 3	5 5 5 4	2 3 4 3	2 3 3 4
	Extent to which arrangement protects service in long-term (10 years)	4 3 4 4	2 4 3 3	4 4 3 3.5	4 3 4 3.5
Risk transfer (operational)	<i>Extent to which the Council can transfer key risks (without losing influence over the delivery of outcomes):</i>	10%			
	Health and safety	4 4 4 3.5	1 2 1 3	3 2 2 3	3 2 4 3
	Managing, recruiting and retaining staff	5 4 4 4	1 2 1 3.5	4 2 3 3.5	4 2 4 3.5
	Planned preventative maintenance, including compliance checks	5 4 4 4	1 2 2 3.5	4 2 3 3.5	4 2 4 3.5
	Investment to improve the estate	3 2 3 3.5	5 5 5 3.5	2 1 4 3.5	2 1 4 3.5

LBTH Management Options Appraisal
Evaluation Framework - Scoring Methodology

Score	Description of score
5	The model meets the criteria fully in line with the council's requirements
4	The model meets the criteria to a significant degree with the council's requirements
3	The model meets the criteria satisfactorily and has some disadvantages
2	The model does not meet the criteria to in a number of areas
1	The model does not meet the criteria in a number of key areas and has a significant number of disadvantages
0	The model does not meet the criteria to any degree

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APPENDIX 3c - TIMETABLE FOR ALL LEISURE SERVICE CONTRACT OPTIONS

OPTIONS	2022					2023												2024									
	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
Outsourcing	Tender Document Preparation (inc Services Specification, Payment Mechanism, Asset Responsibilities, etc)					Procurement												Mobilisation									
Insourcing	Programme Planning/Consultation					Preparation to Transfer - TUPE, contract closedown, transfer of assets, confirm future operating criteria and contract measurement, staff recruitment, etc.												Mobilisation									
Joint Venture	Market Engagement/LA Negotiation*					Develop Contract & Operating Model*												Procurement						Mobilisation			
Trust	Programme Planning/Consultation					Preparation to Transfer - TUPE, contract closedown, create new trust, transfer of assets, confirm future operating criteria and contract measurement, staff recruitment, etc.												Mobilisation									
LA Trading Company	Programme Planning/Consultation					Preparation to Transfer - TUPE, contract closedown, create new company, transfer of assets, confirm future operating criteria and contract measurement, staff recruitment, etc.												Mobilisation									
Disposal of sites	Consultation					Disposal																					
Long lease of sites	Consultation					Marketing & Lease Agreements																					

* The duration of this phase is difficult to estimate as it relies on finding a LA and/or private sector partner willing to form a JV. Both the process of finding a JV partner, and then negotiating the contract and operations model could be longer than shown, but are not expected to be shorter in duration.

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Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) – impact on residents, service users and wider community

Section 1: Introduction

Name of proposal	
For the purpose of this document, 'proposal' refers to a policy, function, strategy or project	
Leisure Recommissioning	Service area and Directorate responsible
Sport & Physical Activity – Children and Culture	
Name of completing officer	
Michael Coleman, Interim Leisure Programme Director	
Approved by (Corporate Director / Divisional Director/ Head of Service)	
James Thomas, Corporate Director of Children and Culture	
Date of approval	
14/07/2022	

Conclusion

Conclusion	Current decision rating (see Appendix A)
Based on the finding of the EIA, the proposal can proceed so long as mitigating actions are taken to ensure the existing engagement with residents and other stakeholders is ongoing through the development of the specification for the contract model. If it is decided not to use outsourcing as the delivery	

model for the Leisure Service from 1/5/2024 onwards, a formal consultation will be needed to gain views on the proposed use of an alternative.	
--	--

The Equality Act 2010 places a ‘General Duty’ on all public bodies to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between those with ‘protected characteristics’ and those without them
- Foster good relations between those with ‘protected characteristics’ and those without them

This Equality Impact Analysis provides evidence for meeting the Council’s commitment to equality and the responsibilities outlined above. For more information about the Council’s commitment to equality, please visit the Council’s [website](#).

Section 2: General information about the proposal

Describe the proposal including the relevance of proposal to the general equality duties and protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010
--

The Council is committed to meeting four physical activity and sports priorities, as set out in the Physical Activity and Sports Strategy 2019-24:

1. Developing young interest
2. Driving health change
3. Shaping places and communities
4. Physical activity and sport as a community engagement tool

These priorities are in part met through the physical assets that the Council owns – its leisure centres. The Council has 7 leisure centres ('the leisure estate') across the Borough, currently operated by GLL under a contract that expires in April 2024.

The recommendations set out in the report being presented to Cabinet on 1 August are for a new outsourced contract to be procured, which will contribute to delivering the priorities set out above.

Leisure Service Management Contract Model

The Council’s Leisure Service is currently run by GLL, as an outsourced contract. A number of options have been reviewed, as set out below, for the future management of the estate. These have been tested using a rigorous options appraisal process that has applied balanced criteria to test how well they would deliver in the context of Tower Hamlets, in

particular in meeting the Council's objectives, and the potential impact upon different users.

Option	Description
Outsourcing	The Council procures a third-party operator to manage the Leisure Service on a fixed term contract basis (currently assumed to be for 10 years).
Full insourcing	Bring the management of the Leisure Service contract under direct Council control as part of an existing directorate
Joint venture (JV)	Create a joint venture with a third party or parties, which could include other local authorities and/or one or more private sector providers
Trust (Non-Profit Distributing Organisation)	Set up an independent trust (e.g. a charitable trust, or potentially a Public Service Mutual) to run the estate at 'arm's length'
Local Authority Trading Company (LATC)	Set up a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council, delivering the Council's specification
Dispose of leisure centre sites	Remove the leisure centres and associated facilities from Council ownership by selling off the assets. The leisure offer would in effect cease.
Long-term lease	Enter into a long-term lease for the buildings in the estate, but without an overarching management operation contract in place. Again, the leisure offer would in effect stop.
Extend the existing contract with GLL	This is included as a 'do minimum' option although it may need to be considered if there is insufficient time to put a replacement management service in place before 30 April 2024.

These options were then assessed using the following methodology:

Category	Criteria	Weighting
Financial		
Cost	<i>Extent of Council responsibility for/exposure to:</i>	30%
	Income generation	
	Economies of scale for key costs, including utilities	
	Salary levels (not relating to LGPS)	
	Overhead management costs	
	Profit	
	VAT treatment	
	Non-National Domestic Rates (NNDR)	
	Pension liabilities	
Risk transfer (commercial)	<i>Extent to which the Council has ownership of or influence over key risks:</i>	10%
	Day-to-day operations (e.g. costs resulting from unavailability of areas of a building)	
	Change of customer demand	
	Local competition	
	Change in law affecting operation/cost/ facility specification	
	Utility cost (tariff) changes	
	Utility cost (consumption) changes	
	Uninsured risks	
	Non-Financial	

Service delivery	Relative ability of each model to:	30%
	Deliver the Council's current strategic objectives for next 10 years	
	Work with other Council departments, e.g. Public Health, Parks, etc.	
	Deliver excellent customer service	
	Meet the Council's net zero objectives	
	Increase participation in the most economically and sustainable way	
Operational flexibility (for Council)	Ability to adapt to changes to the service within the period	20%
	Opportunities for cross-Council initiatives, e.g. joined up IT solutions across leisure/IDEA stores	
	Extent to which arrangement protects service in long-term (10 years)	
Risk transfer (operational)	Extent to which the Council has ownership of and influence over key risks:	10%
	Health and safety	
	Managing, recruiting and retaining staff	
	Planned preventative maintenance, including compliance checks	
	Investment to improve the estate	

The full methodology is set out in Appendix 3a of the Cabinet Report - Leisure Recommissioning & Investment Strategy. The non-financial analysis specifically considers equalities implications under the Service Delivery criteria in particular, although the relative flexibility of each option is also relevant in ensuring that the Leisure Service continues to meet the Council's duty under the Equality Act (as set out below). The current recommendation is to procure a new outsourced contract that would be operational from 1 May 2024. This was the stated objective when the Council undertook its consultation on the future of the Leisure Service (please see section 3 for further details).

Duty under the Equality Act

We have a duty under the Equality Act to "Advance equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them". To that end, officers have engaged with groups of residents and relevant organisations and health professionals to understand what specific design and/or operational issues need to be considered to meet this duty. A number of those identified to date include (but not exclusively):

- Changing facilities – separate facilities for men and women should be available in every building for all activities.
- Women only sessions should be available for key activities, e.g. swimming. These should ideally be run/overseen by female staff.
- Women only gyms should be provided in more facilities.
- Female changing rooms should be as close as possible to the facilities that it is anticipated will be used once changed.

- Building design should limit the extent of overlooking into areas being used by women to exercise.
- Specific sessions (e.g. studio-based physical programmes) to be considered for older residents only to boost participation by reducing self-consciousness.
- Leisure centres should, where practicable, provide spaces for social engagement as well as physical activity, e.g. a café or seating area that allows users to interact away from the gym, pool, etc. This will assist to address social isolation, particularly when combined with other initiatives to increase use by older residents.
- Seek to increase youth participation by investigating how to make access affordable and include a range of suitable activities to boost interest.
- Work with local Primary Care Networks on a more hyperlocal basis to improve opportunities for social prescribing. This operates currently but in a less systematic way than all parties would prefer.
- Investigate, alongside NHS colleagues, whether it is possible to make greater use of leisure centres by staff for treatment, e.g. physiotherapists having access to fitness gym equipment to assist with rehabilitation regimes.

Officers will continue to engage with residents, community and sports organisations, Public Health and NHS colleagues, and any other groups that represent residents with specific interests in how the Leisure Service operates. This engagement will assist to inform the full specification and contract model for the future operation of the Service, and the development of design proposals for the estate itself.

Section 3: Evidence (consideration of data and information)

What evidence do we have which may help us think about the impacts or likely impacts on residents, service users and wider community?

Sufficiency of the current leisure estate

The Council commissioned a study in 2017, **Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy**, to assess how closely its current provision of leisure facilities met current and anticipated future demand for leisure activities in the Borough, to determine whether there was sufficient provision for each activity that requires a given facility (e.g. a pool or a sports hall) and, if not, what the additional capacity required is. This demonstrated an overall shortfall in all recommended levels of provision for different activities, so that increasing available facilities would provide real benefit by addressing this shortfall. The tables below from the report illustrates the anticipated gap between existing and required facilities:

Figure 3: Table showing supply and demand projections for sports halls in Tower Hamlets for 2016, 2026 and 2031 –

Facilities	2016			2026		2031	
	Supply	Demand	Over or (under) supply	Demand	Over or (under) supply	Demand	Over or (under) supply
Sports halls (badminton courts)	62.75 badminton courts Equivalent to 16 sports halls	99.08 badminton courts Equivalent to 25 sports halls	(36.33) badminton courts Equivalent to 9 sports halls	130.24 badminton courts Equivalent to 33 sports halls	(67.49) badminton courts Equivalent to 17 sports halls	132.14 badminton courts Equivalent to 33 sports halls	(69.39) badminton courts Equivalent to 17 sports halls

Figure 7: Table showing supply and demand projections for swimming pools in Tower Hamlets for 2016, 2026 and 2031

Facility Type	2016			2026		2031	
	Supply	Demand	Over / (under) supply	Demand	Over/ (under) supply	Demand	Over/ (under) supply
Swimming Pools	1,932m ² Equivalent to 5 pools	3,345m ² Equivalent to 10 pools	(1,413)m ² Equivalent to (5) pools	4,398m ² Equivalent to 13 pools	(2,466)m ² Equivalent to (8) pools	4,462m ² Equivalent to 13 pools	(2,530)m ² Equivalent to (8) pools

Figure 11: Table showing supply and demand projections for health and fitness gyms in Tower Hamlets for –2016, 2026 and 2031 (based on daytime population)

Facility Type	2016		2026		2031		
	Supply	Demand	Over/ (under) supply	Demand	Over/ (under) supply	Demand	Over/ (under) supply
Health and Fitness Gyms	2,228 fitness stations	2,699 fitness stations	(471) fitness stations	3,360 fitness stations	(1,132) fitness stations	3,400 fitness stations	(1,172) fitness stations

The gap between the supply and demand of facilities is typical of many inner London boroughs, where available suitable space and the availability of capital funding constrains what can be achieved. The analysis does, however, indicate a strong need for additional capacity in the borough, where practicable, to serve all residents including, of course, those with protected characteristics.

Levels of use pre-pandemic and post-lockdown

The Council has assessed data on pre and post-lockdown usage of the leisure estate, in particular St George's. This provides information on how many visits were made to each site, for what purpose, over time, as set out below:

Visits 2019/20	John Orwell	Mile End	Poplar	St George's	Tiller	WLC	York Hall	Total	% of total
Fitness (Gym)	50,595	101,695	34,304	8,370	23,972	36,697	42,418	298,051	15.5
Group Workout	5,341	24,609	4,374	213	1,477	6,006	12,627	54,647	2.8

Swimming lessons	n/a	100,688	60,546	75,955	25,256	n/a	70,188	332,634	17.3%
Swimming activities	4,677	86,586	41,301	52,095	20,512	10,788	83,097	299,056	15.5%
Sports Hall use (or studio as equivalent)	27,770	34,794	30,256	946	437	23,687	135	118,025	6.1%
Outdoor activities	7,667	230,184	4,369	102	1,756	35,483	852	280,413	14.6%
Other activities	56,042	182,353	71,447	13,675	10,150	11,660	197,026	542,353	28.2%
Total	152,092	760,909	246,597	151,356	83,560	124,322	406,343	1,925,179	100%
% of total	7.9%	39.5%	12.8%	7.9%	4.3%	6.5%	21.1%	100%	

All leisure centres were open until 23rd March 2020 in the year shown above. Example data for usage taken from one month (July 2021) in the period since the pandemic began, compared to the previous year, is shown in the table below:

Leisure Centre	Av. monthly use Apr-Jan 19/20 incl.	Av. monthly use July 2021	% Reduction
John Orwell	15399	5975	61.2
Mile End	78462	75698	3.5
Poplar Baths	26033	19568	24.8
St George's	15482	0	100.0
Tiller	8424	0	100.0
Whitechapel	12589	5768	54.2
York Hall	40738	3430	91.6
TOTAL (all LCs)	197127	110439	44.0
TOTAL (fully open LCs)	132483	107009	19.2

Please note that demand was reduced markedly in the final two months of the 2019/20 financial year due we believe to concerns about Covid-19, so that data has been excluded as it distorts the pre-pandemic average usage statistics. It should also be noted that Tiller and St George's were both fully closed in July 2021, and York Hall's pools were closed (its 'dry' facilities were open). Tiller has now reopened, and York Hall's pool is due to reopen in April 2022.

The table above demonstrates that demand continues to be depressed for all sites, with only Mile End approaching pre-Covid levels of use. Even taking into account the closures set out above, there was a 20% decrease in use pre-pandemic compared to July 2021.

Consultation

The Council has undertaken a consultation exercise to seek the views of residents on its proposals for the future provision of leisure services in the Borough. This included providing data on the existing leisure centres, in particular St George's, and access to the feasibility study undertaken to examine how either St George's or John Orwell sites could be used to provide additional facilities or an entirely new leisure centre.

This consultation began on November 15, 2021. It was originally due to end on 3 January 2022 but was extended, first to 9 January when the project team was advised that the Cabinet meeting its results were being reported to had been pushed back, and

then to 12 January due to the consultation portal being offline on 3/4 January 2022.

The consultation was advertised via the following means to seek to maximise its exposure within the borough:

- Posters in all open leisure centres, including a QR code and web address. Paper copies were provided in leisure centres from 21 December 2021.
- The Better webpages for each leisure centre included a link to the consultation at the head of the landing page for each centre.
- The Council's website included links via the Swimming webpage that provides updates on the provision of pools in the Borough and, of course, the consultation portal.
- The Council's social media accounts.
- Information on the consultation was included in the Council's Bengali language newsletter issued on 17 December 2021.
- All schools were contacted via the Headteachers' Bulletin on multiple occasions during the consultation period.
- Direct emails to sports clubs registered at the Council's leisure centres.
- Direct emails to registered leisure centre users.
- Article featured in December edition of Our East End, P41, which goes to every household in the borough
- Notifications via partners of the Council's, such as:
 - Housing associations, e.g. Poplar HARCA, One Housing
 - Tower Hamlets GP Care Group
 - Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Our Time SEND Youth Forum
- Publicised via articles submitted to e-newsletters to parents and carers and professionals working with families in Tower Hamlets
- Publicised via youth engagement team networks

In addition, the following events were organised:

- Three face-to-face events at venues around the borough, in Shadwell, Mile End and on the Isle of Dogs. These all complied with the prevailing Covid regulations at the relevant time. Attendance at these was 7, 25 and 1 respectively.
- Two public meetings on 15 November and 9 December 2021. The first was intended to be in person and online but the latter did not happen due to technical difficulties, hence the second online only meeting on 9th December being arranged. 13 people attended on each occasion.
- Member only meetings were held:
 - All Shadwell and St Katharine's & Wapping members were invited to an online briefing on 23 November 2021.
 - All Isle of Dogs members were invited to an online briefing on 6 December 2021.
 - All Council members were invited to a briefing on 6 January 2022.

Responses could be submitted online or in writing. A total of 331 were received. The full report is appended to the Leisure Investment Plan Cabinet report. The major themes are summarised below, with the Council's response at the end of each bullet point:

- Loss of pitches on John Orwell site, temporarily or permanently – a number of the hockey clubs that use the pitch at the John Orwell Sports Centre expressed concern that it might be out of use if that site was selected, citing its importance to their development programmes, and its use by the UK's largest LGBTQIA+ hockey club who would be significantly impacted by even its temporary loss. The Council does not intend to use the John Orwell site for a new leisure centre, so the hockey pitch on that site will not be affected.
- Rebuilding a pool on the John Orwell site would remove an important community asset from Shadwell, and would have a smaller catchment area by definition, given its proximity to the river border of the borough. The proposal to rebuild on the St George's site will maintain provision in Shadwell.
- The implications of the ongoing closure of St George's Leisure Centre were reported to include:
- Disruption to school swimming, with more teaching time lost due to the need for some schools to travel further than when St George's was open. The Council's response to this is set out above.
- Overall reduction in swimming capacity in the borough, with specific reference to mothers and babies, disabled people and those preferring female only sessions. Specific mother and baby sessions are provided at Mile End and Poplar as multiple sessions in a new programme called 'Swimbies' – these will be extended to Tiller shortly and York Hall when it has reopened. New SEN swimming lessons are now being provided at Mile End and Poplar and will be introduced at York Hall and Tiller in due course. Female only sessions are available at Poplar Baths and Mile End three times a week at both, and will be introduced at Tiller, now it has reopened. With regard to the permanent facility, the Council will engage with residents and users to ensure the needs of all these groups will be considered in its design and operational specification.
- Preference of some users for a longer pool than the modern standard. At present the Council intends to build to the 25m standard, as this is compliant with Sport England and Swim England requirements for all relevant sports.
- Other uses not being able to take place at this venue while it is closed, such as canoeing, life saving practice, diving groups (understood to be scuba not board diving), aqua aerobics, etc. The latter activity is available at the other open pools, and GLL will monitor demand going forwards. The Council will seek to engage with all organisations that have recently used St George's for water-based activities, to understand their requirements for the future design of a pool and/or to explore alternative arrangements should that offer a better option.
- Swimming clubs unable to agree with GLL acceptable access to other pools. The

Council will engage with any swimming clubs that used the facility previously to understand their requirements both in the immediate and longer term.

- Overcrowding elsewhere. At present, usage numbers at other facilities remain below pre-pandemic levels, but the Council will continue to monitor the usage levels closely. The option of a demountable pool has been explored and initially not thought to be required, but this is under ongoing review. The Council will monitor usage figures for the open pools against pre-pandemic levels (when 5 pools were open) to ascertain whether there is a need to provide more capacity due to reaching maximum safe usage at the 3 pools open at present, and York Hall when its pool reopens later this year.
- Some respondents advocated a lido on Shadwell Basin. The Council has considered this as one of the options for restoring swimming capacity in the borough. The Council is supportive of such an initiative being brought forward, but does not intend at present to pursue it as it would not be an appropriate replacement for indoor provision, given the seasonality of such a facility. It would not offer a suitable solution for all users with protected characteristics, in particular.
- Other responses have highlighted design features, at St George's or more generally, that are of particular interest:
- Individual changing cubicles are preferred, and mixed changing rooms should be avoided.
- The need to make any new swimming pools as accessible as possible.



Section 4: Assessing the impacts on different groups and service delivery

Groups	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Considering the above information and evidence, describe the impact this proposal will have on the following groups?
Protected				
Age (All age groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The new leisure contract will be structured to improve its flexibility to changing priorities and ensure that service quality can be both measured and improved as a result of applying more up to date key performance indicators (KPIs) than in the current contract. The contractor will also need to ensure that it offers classes that are tailored to the needs of different age groups, including sessions that are open only to a specified age range.
Disability (Physical, learning difficulties, mental health and medical conditions)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The new leisure contract will require the operator to take account of the different needs of users, existing and prospective, in structuring their leisure offer. This will relate both to customer service, in ensuring users receive a consistently appropriate and high standard of service regardless of background and needs, and ensuring that need-specific activities are part of the overall programme offered.
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The future provision of activities will allow single gender use, e.g. existing women's only gyms will be retained, and the contract will stipulate both that women only programming must be included, but that the operator should provide female staff to oversee such activities.



Gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff will be trained to ensure that users attending sites who are undergoing or have undertaken gender reassignment are respected and their specific needs understood and catered for in so far as possible.
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There is no anticipated impact in respect of residents who are or are not married or in a civil partnership.
Religion or philosophical belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The new contract will explicitly reference the need for the contractor to ensure all staff receive appropriate training to enable them to understand and respect specific cultural sensitivities. The operator will also be required to identify how it will manage its publicly available information to ensure that it is accessible in different languages at the point of access.
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The new contract will explicitly reference the need for the contractor to ensure all staff receive appropriate training to enable them to understand and respect specific cultural sensitivities. The operator will also be required to identify how it will manage its publicly available information to ensure that it is accessible in different languages at the point of access.
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Engagement will continue with local residents, community groups and religious communities to ensure that any specific design requirements on each relevant site are known and, where appropriate, included in the final build.
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Engagement will continue with medical practitioners, pregnant women, and mothers of young children to ensure that Leisure Service



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				facilities fulfil their specific needs, including changing room privacy, (where preferred) areas for private breastfeeding, and safe spaces to oversee children while they participate in activities, e.g. swimming or soft play.
Other				
Socio-economic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The new contract will seek to provide more jobs for residents within the existing estate. Future planned improvements to the estate will assist further in due course.
Parents/Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The future contract will build upon existing initiatives to ensure that there is a programme of holiday activities that children of different ages can participate in, as well as ways to increase the participation of families in health and wellbeing activities, possibly by providing dedicated activity times and/or subsidised access (this cannot be confirmed at this time but will be explored).
People with different Gender Identities e.g. Gender fluid, Non-Binary etc	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The future contract will require the operator to treat all users, prospective and existing, with appropriate respect. Staff should, therefore, be trained to understand how to assist people with different gender identities from accessing leisure facilities and activities in line with legal requirements and existing guidance.
Any other groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Section 5: Impact analysis and action plan

Recommendation	Key activity	Progress milestones including target dates for either completion or progress	Officer responsible	Update on progress
Engagement with existing and prospective service users to ensure proposed investment provides suitable, fit for purpose facilities that will enhance provision.	Ongoing formal engagement programme with users to inform aspects of the new operational specification. Approaches have been made to groups that represent residents and/or existing/ prospective users with protected characteristics, and engagement with those who have responded is ongoing	Commenced in April 2022 The specification for the future leisure service will be further developed through 2022	Michael Coleman	Meetings already held with a range of different representative groups, including those benefiting from social prescriptions, or groups that are currently not using centres (older age group, youth cohort, etc.)
Engagement with existing and prospective service users to ensure the service offer captured in the contract is fit for purpose	Ongoing formal engagement programme with users to inform aspects of the service offer that could be included in the final service specification.	Commenced in April 2022 and will continue through to December 2022 to inform the specification	Michael Coleman/ Lisa Pottinger	Meetings already held with a range of different representative groups, including those benefiting from social prescriptions, or groups that are currently not using centres (older age group, youth cohort, etc.)
Formal consultation if the Leisure Service operating model is any option other than outsourcing	A formal additional consultation process will be needed to consult residents on the proposed to change to an alternative operating model. This is not needed if the existing model is being used.	Anticipated that the consultation would last 4 to 6 weeks, both online and with face to face consultation events	Michael Coleman	N/a

Section 6: Monitoring

What monitoring processes have been put in place to check the delivery of the above action plan and impact on equality groups?

A Leisure Procurement Board has already been established, chaired by the Corporate Director of Children and Culture, and attended by senior officers, including the Corporate Director of Place, Director of Legal, etc.

The action plan above will be made a standing item on the agenda of its monthly meetings, so that progress can be reported on an ongoing basis.

The reported progress at each meeting will consist of a summary of activities against the progress milestones set out above, and the deliverables identified. The Board will assess how effectively the action plan is being adhered to and require mitigation measures to be put in place should there be evidence of slippage and/or deviation from the stated requirements of the plan.

Appendix A

EIA decision rating

Decision	Action	Risk
As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a Protected Characteristic under the Equality Act and appropriate mitigations cannot be put in place to mitigate against negative impact. It is recommended that this proposal be suspended until further work is undertaken.	Suspend – Further Work Required	Red 
As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is a genuine determining reason that could legitimise or justify the use of this policy.	Further (specialist) advice should be taken	Red Amber 
As a result of performing the EIA, it is evident that there is a risk that a disproportionately negatively impact (as described above) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, this risk may be removed or reduced by implementing the actions detailed within the <i>Impact analysis and action plan</i> section of this document.	Proceed pending agreement of mitigating action	Amber 

Appendix 4b Response to Public Consultation on Options for Leisure Services in Tower Hamlets

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Consultation responses

In total the council received **331** responses, the majority (316) via the online survey hosted by Let's Talk Tower Hamlets (LTH), including 5 paper surveys transcribed to the online portal. Seven free text responses were received by email, including 8 short *vox pop* style audio clips. Nine formal responses were received from schools, sports club and a community group.

1.2 Analysis headlines

Broadly 85% of online responses agree or strongly agree with most of the council's visions for future leisure facilities. However, there is much less consensus on closing centres deemed to be in a bad condition, not used enough or losing money (over half disagree strongly or somewhat disagree).

Over half of online responses disagree strongly or somewhat disagree that the facilities in the borough are meeting their needs

Refurbishment of existing facilities on the St George's site is the most popular option amongst online respondents (36% of those who responded to this question), followed by development of a new centre at this site (26% of those who responded to this question). Responses received via email also focused on refurbishment of St George's or redevelopment on the same site.

The number of online responses commenting on the proposals for St George's was greater than the number commenting on those for John Orwell. In both cases, those who did respond were largely positive about the proposals.

In response to question 10, almost 20% of online responses feature requests for urgent action to be taken to improve the swimming offer in the southwest of the borough, with an emphasis on the negative impact this is having on more deprived groups, children, and families, as well as schools struggling to provide statutory swimming lessons. This is reflected in greater support for the refurbishment or redevelopment of St George's in Shadwell over John Orwell in Wapping. Subsequent pressure on other pools is also referred to; 23 responses mention they have been discouraged from continuing to exercise or swim because of longer journey times. Answers repeatedly highlight children learning to swim as an essential safety requirement.

Many express fond attachment to St Georges and call for speedy refurbishment to preserve its beautiful architecture and ambiance, 30 responses particularly reference the *unique* length of the pool.

Negative impact on family swimming time and decreased general activity levels due to closure of St George's. Eleven responses specifically link maintenance of mental health with the need to re-open St George's pool.

Twenty-three online responses cite long-term neglect of St George's by the council, though a programme of inadequate funding and historical building surveys *commissioned and ignored*. This is also a theme reflected in feedback from some of the public meetings.

Individual responses on barriers to access to the existing Leisure service include:

- Cleanliness issues across centres.
- GLL's website and booking system deemed challenging to navigate.
- Lack of women only spaces and activities.
- Inconvenient scheduling.

Experiences of GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited) service delivery are mixed:

- GLL's track record on cleanliness and maintenance regularly highlighted as sub-standard, with some attributing the decline of usership at St Georges as linked to poor hygiene.

- Mixed views on value and affordability of current offer.
- Charitable social enterprise status valued by users.
- GLL's operation of leisure services in neighbouring boroughs is viewed as a *major advantage* as it allows members access to a wider range of centres across London.
- There are positive comments on the range and delivery of services: *Have moved in last 12 months from Redbridge - Tower Hamlets has markedly better provision.*

Importance of effective contractual monitoring as part of any new agreement highlighted

More all-female designated sessions and spaces; strategy for early engagement of girls in sport advocated.

Calls for more ambitious planning to match provision at well-regarded Britannia Leisure Centre in Hackney.

Negative impact of loss of hockey pitch access at John Orwell repeatedly highlighted, including detriment to participation, physical and mental health, as well as community cohesion.

Consultation process criticised for a perceived lack of accessibility for those less digitally confident or more vulnerable users, including a perception that the consultation is a *rubberstamping* exercise for a pre-determined decision on the future of St George's. Although responses did not always specify what these concerns were, examples include closing St George's and selling the site to housing developers and/or opening a pool at John Orwell Leisure Centre, with a general bias against the refurbishment of St George's.

Respondents call for better collaboration with local health services and improved join-up with existing green spaces as part of future planning.

1.3. Alternative suggestions

Twelve online responses suggested provision of a dockside lido in the Southwest of the borough, with one suggesting provision of a *pop-up pool*. The case for installation of a demountable pool is advocated as part of the formal response from Shadwell Responds, including detailed case study examples. Another response by email recommends a lido be situated at Brussels Wharf.

2. Introduction

The current contract delivered by Better (Greenwich Leisure Limited or 'GLL') for leisure centres ends in April 2024, and the council needs to decide upon any changes to the way that it provides leisure services for residents.

Tower Hamlets has seven leisure centres, the majority of which are over 40 years old, and there is a clear need to plan for both the short-term (five to ten-years) and long-term (ten years or more) investment in these buildings. This will ensure that high-quality facilities can be provided now and into the future.

On 15 November 2021, LBTH launched a public consultation exercise seeking the views of all interested parties on options for the future of leisure services in Tower Hamlets.

3. Consultation Period

The consultation ran from 15 November 2021 to 12 January 2022 (extended twice, from an original end date of 3 January, then 9 January 2022, and finally to 12 January 2022).

A survey was published on the Let's Talk Tower Hamlets (LTTH) online portal via the following link:

<https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure>. The webpage carried information on how to respond, the timetable for responses and made available the formal consultation document, supporting strategies and feasibility reports:
<https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure/widgets/37118/documents>)

People were invited to respond via the online survey, by email (sports@towerhamlets.gov.uk), by post and by email. Interested parties could also attend in person and virtual meetings, as well as requesting paper copies of the survey via the online mailbox or by post. Paper copies were placed in all leisure centres on 21st December 2021, given that the original consultation advised paper copies could be requested by post up to 17th December.

3.1. In person & virtual events - overview

- 15 November: In person public meeting at Town Hall – 13 attended (although it should be noted that the online streaming element of this meeting did not work, and the event was not recorded)
- 1 December: In person event at St George's Town Hall - 7 attended
- 4 December: In person event at Mile End Leisure Centre – 25 interacted with consultation
- 6 December: Online meeting with Isle of Dogs Councillors – 2 attended
- 8 December: Virtual meeting with Shadwell Responds attended by Cllr Akhtar and Michael Coleman
- 9 December: In person session at George Green's School - 1 attended
- 9 December: Online Public Consultation meeting with the Mayor which was recorded and available via LBTH portal - Approximately 13 attended
- 22 December – Mayor and Cllr Akhtar met with Shadwell Responds group.

3.2. Promotion

The consultation was initially publicised via the following channels:

- London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) Members and Managers internal newsletter
- Sport centre websites
- Social media – 36 posts across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn, reaching 626.2K people.
- LBTH Sports and Leisure email bulletin
- LBTH Communications Team Newsletter
- Posters at Leisure Centres – 54 scans of QR code from posters at GLL locations and Town Hall leading to <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure>

Promotion was adjusted throughout the consultation in response to interim demographic analysis:

- Emails sent by GLL to voluntary and community sector and sports and leisure groups affiliated with individual leisure centres
- Publicised via *Local Voices* – residents' group with disabilities or long-term health conditions
- Follow up email sent via sport and leisure mailbox
- Publicised via Poplar HARCA, and One Housing
- Publicised with members of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Publicised via Headteacher's Bulletin, with request for consultation link to feature on school websites
- Publicised via GP Care Group
- Publicised via Our Time SEND Youth Forum
- Publicised via articles submitted to e-newsletters to parents and carers and professionals working with families in Tower Hamlets
- Publicised with elected Members as part of meeting held on 6th January 2022
- Focussed press in Bengali newsletter published Fri 17 Dec 2021.
- Publicised via youth engagement team networks
- Article featured in December edition of Our East End, P41, which goes to every household in the borough
 -

4. Responses

In total the council received **331** responses

- 316 responses via online survey (including 5 paper surveys transcribed to online portal)
- 7 emails
- 8 audio files via email

4.1. Formal responses

Nine formal responses were received from the following organisations:

- o Harry Gosling Primary School (online survey)
- o Lawdale Junior School (online survey)
- o St Pauls Whitechapel CofE Primary School (online survey)
- o English Martyrs Roman Catholic Primary School (online survey)
- o Wapping High School (online survey)
- o Wapping Hockey Club – c/o Stuart Burnside (Honorary President) (online survey & email)
- o London Royals Hockey Club (online survey)
- o Tower Hamlets Trojans Basketball Club (online survey)
- o A collective response - *A community vision for St George's Leisure Centre* - submitted via email by Shadwell Responds, representing 10 faith organisations, schools, and community groups across Shadwell, supported by Create Streets Foundation

Issues raised by these organisations are reflected under central analysis where replies were received via the online survey. Analysis of formal responses received via email is provided under section 8.

Responses were also received from individuals affiliated with the following organisations:

- o St George in the East
- o Victoria Park Athletics Club
- o Turks Head Charity
- o Seven Mills Primary School
- o Oaklands Secondary School
- o Bigland Green Primary School
- o East London Hockey Club

Two responses were also received from councillors: Cllr Rabina Khan and Cllr Andrew Wood

5. Comments on the consultation methodology

Several comments were made, including:

- **Timing:** concerns were raised that the consultation took place at the end of the year and over the festive period. The consultation was subsequently extended twice.
- **Accessibility:** some respondents raised concerns that an online survey was not suitable for those who do not have digital access or skills. Hard copies were made available at leisure centres and a number of in-person events were held.
- **Access to supporting documents and information:** concerns were raised that historic building surveys were not available, and there should be more information about the comparative costs of refurbishing versus building a new centre.
- **Openness:** some respondents expressed a fear that the process was premeditated to remove St Georges and build housing on the site.

6. Demographic Profile of on-line questionnaire respondents

- The bulk of respondents are residents (89%) based in E1 and E1W postcodes (see table below), with almost a third of users citing St George's as their 'most used' leisure centre. Users of Mile End Park Leisure Centre and Stadium make up 21.8%, with users of John Orwell coming in third with 19.6%. The lowest response rate was from users of Whitechapel Sports Centre (1.6%).

Breakdown by resident location

Postcode	E1	E1W	E2	E3	E14	N/A	Blank	Total
No.	70	87	28	46	49	2	34	316

- Of those 188 respondents (out of 316) who agreed to answer equalities questions, most engagement has been from married heterosexual White British females in the 35-44 age bracket. The lowest response rates feature in the very high or very low age brackets. The 16-24 age range provided only 7 replies via the online survey, with zero received from the 0-15 age range. (However, it should be noted that additional replies were received via email from two 11-year-olds and one 7-year-old).
- Of this group 15% cite a long-term health problem or disability which limits day to day activities; the majority preferred to self-describe or not to say; 17.6% of this group cite a mental health condition (such as depression); 23.5% a long-standing illness (such as cancer); 8.8% cite a learning disability; 7.4% cite a sensory impairment; 7.4% cite a physical impairment.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents identified as *White: British*, *White: Irish* or *White: Any other background*, with *Other ethnic group: Any other background* and *Asian / British Asian Bangladeshi* voices currently forming the joint second most engaged groups (both 10%).
- Overall, responses from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities have been low - with zero responses received from *Asian / Asian British: Any other background*, *White & Black African*, *Vietnamese*, *White Traveller of Irish Heritage* and *White: Gypsy Roma* groups
- Most respondents (45.2%) identified as having no religion and over a quarter (26.9%) of responses were received from the Christian community, with 7% identifying as Agnostic, 7.5% identifying as Muslim and 8.1% preferring not to say. There has been a very low level of response from Hindu (0.5%), Jewish (1.1%), Buddhist (1.1%), Sikh (0.5%) and Humanist (1.1%) groups.
- Over three quarters identified as Heterosexual (77.4%), with a 10.8% response rate from the Gay / Lesbian community and 3.8% identifying as Bisexual. (Although it should be noted that 131 people skipped this question)

7. Analysis of online survey responses

7.1 Strategic questions

The survey asked respondents for their views on a number of issues related to the ambition and purpose of leisure services, levels of investment and whether leisure services currently meet the needs of residents. Respondents could choose from a number of options: strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither disagree nor agree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree; don't know. All 316 respondents answered these questions.

85% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the ambition for leisure services "to be sustainable & accessible to every resident & visitor and contribute to local health, wellbeing and the economy". 8% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the future vision for Tower Hamlets leisure facilities. 5% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the principle of having a network of leisure centre facilities within 20 minutes by public transport from where you live. 11% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all facilities, where possible, should support a healthy lifestyle targeted at a range of ages, abilities, individuals, and groups. 2% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that leisure centres should be affordable and attractive to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active. 2% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that if a centre is not used enough, is in a bad condition and/or it is losing money, we should consider closing it. 58% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that community groups, sports clubs and volunteers should be supported to use open spaces, playing fields, community centres, schools, and colleges to bring leisure opportunities to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active. 3% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should consider funding new services or facilities, such as a new leisure centre, if affordable. 6% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the council should plan for significant investment in our leisure centres. 2% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

37% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the current range of leisure centres in the borough meet their needs. 54% somewhat disagreed/disagreed strongly.

7.2. Open-ended questions

Respondents were also invited to give their views on a range of different topics, including on proposals for St George's Leisure Centre and John Orwell Sports Centre. Comments were coded, analysed and a summary of the responses is presented below.

General comments and use of leisure centres

Q10 Do you have any comments on our leisure centres, in general, or any individual centre? (261 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
All female provision and engagement Multiple calls for more women only sessions and expanded designated gym space , with female staff attending to negate <i>male attendees making women feel uncomfortable</i> in a perceived "male space". In addition, call to <i>ensure only women are monitoring CCTV cameras in female only section of gym</i> . Women only sessions at Whitechapel on Mondays praised. Strategy for early engagement of girls in sport advocated , with requirement for <i>safe spaces</i> underlined.	9
Refurbish St Georges to preserve unique architecture and ambiance Many users express fond attachment to St Georges , where they and their children learned to swim and strongly advocate for its speedy refurbishment. Negative impact on family swimming time and decreased general activity levels cited multiple times. The ambiance of St George's pool – a great space flooded by light – is frequently praised , along with the <i>unique length and depth of the pool</i> , described as a <i>real gem</i> . In comparison, Poplar Pool is described by one user as a <i>rather dismal dreary pool stuck in the basement</i> , with Mile End likened to <i>swimming in an overcrowded fish tank</i> .	19
Barriers to access: Users frequently bemoan Better's horrendous website , seen as difficult to navigate with a <i>woeful</i> and <i>Kafkaesque</i> booking system often requiring <i>many frustrating hours of communication with the centre staff (in person and online) to resolve ... issues</i> . One user suggests staff ethnicity should more closely resemble local demographics to ensure a <i>welcoming environment</i> and to negate <i>language and cultural differences</i> . Requests for broader range of classes suitable for disabled users and need for disability awareness training for staff, centres not Autism friendly, lack of accessible parking, increased journey times for those with mobility issues due to closures. A hearing aid user reported that refurbished facilities at John Orwell are <i>problematic ... the Sports Hall has a significant echo and the fitness studio was not fitted with any sound insulation</i> . Many praised the facilities at St George's pool as so valuable ... to disabled and special need users , another calls for a <i>commitment to invest planning gains from Wapping to ... running the swim ability club for disabled children and adults</i> . Many liked the privacy offered by individual changing cubicles at St Georges , with segregation also proving important: <i>For reasons of personal safety and hygiene, I do not feel comfortable / will not</i>	54

<p><i>use mixed changing rooms such as at Mile End swimming pool. I am currently swimming in Islington to avoid using mixed changing rooms, whilst St George's is shut. Security at York Hall is highlighted as lacking as it could be judged unsafe for children in the changing rooms at present.</i></p> <p>A high proportion bemoan inconvenient session timetabling, especially for those working full time, with caring responsibilities or requiring female only sessions. Praise for St George's pool which held a <i>huge range of levels of lessons at different times in the week to suit work and school schedules</i>. Many find that access to sessions is limited and has not increased to meet need. Another user in the higher covid risk category calls for Mile End to be open later to enable avoidance of children and larger groups.</p> <p>Many call for a broader programme of activities to engage older people. Some highlight that poor cleanliness in the light of Covid may discourage this group - <i>I think this puts off disadvantaged and older people from using the leisure centre, as they are more likely to experience severe symptoms—essentially they are seeing it as risky to attend the leisure centre and be active, when in fact it's necessary for good health.</i> Calls for fantastic 'Young at Heart' services to be resumed for the over 50's.</p>	
<p>Transport, travel, and location</p> <p>Some request for a distinction to be made between public transport vs walking for the proposed 20min journey time, preferring the latter. A high proportion are discouraged from exercising by longer journey times due to closures, especially those with mobility issues and caring responsibilities.</p> <p>School staff bemoan the closure of St George's and subsequent pressure on other pools, reducing available swimming lessons slots and the public transport element means that <i>swimming is no longer considered a local educational visit, and requires a large amount of paperwork to be completed ... to ensure the children's safety</i>, to the detriment of learning time and staff workload.</p> <p>Many praise St Georges' location as well connected for transport links, with a well-regarded Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6a versus a PTAL of 3 for John Orwell.</p> <p>One user highlights potential travel safety issues for some groups - access ... could be a little worrisome for some walking alone (walk from public transport for example and in particular John Orwell).</p>	38
<p>Social equity</p> <p>There is a broad and urgent plea for swimming provision in Shadwell to be preserved to cater to a more deprived demographic in this area: The ability to swim is not the preserve of the white middle class ... Young children of all backgrounds want to learn to swim and have been denied this opportunity by the indifference of the Local Authority. These respondents also expressed support for refurbishment or redevelopment of St George's in Shadwell over John Orwell in Wapping - a centre perceived by some as <i>nice, "White", middle class with a significantly wealthier usership</i>. Another respondent cautions against closing down loss-making facilities which <i>may be providing a valuable service to hard to reach segment of the borough</i>.</p> <p>In the light of potential pitch disruption at John Orwell, many hockey club members highlight the potential negative impact on very well attended volunteer led clubs ... essential for getting a diverse range of children (diverse by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and ability) into sport for the first time.</p>	24
<p>Experiences of GLL</p> <p>In general, the sentiment towards staff is mixed, many have good experiences to share – one user describes staff as <i>friendly, helpful and welcoming</i>, but those more negative focus on lack of training to support disabled users and activities, a need for more training on computer systems and increased awareness of leisure offer. Rudeness is mentioned on occasion, with one respondent suggesting smaller turnover of staff as beneficial. Positive user experience is often thwarted by staff without necessary authority or permission to rectify online problems.</p> <p>One user describes Better as not perfect ... but the best out there, adding <i>I was sorry to see that Westminster changed to Everyone Active which based on my research in Southwark and Westminster, is not as accessible as Better</i>. Another user describes the Mile End Centre as <i>fantastic ... I look forward to swimming in it every week</i>.</p> <p>A high proportion attribute the decline of usership at St Georges as linked to poor hygiene. The centre was often described as <i>dirty</i> with and left in a <i>disgusting, unhygienic mess</i> for the most part. Many users warn that other pool and changing room facilities across the borough show similar signs</p>	119

<p>of neglect - pools at Mile End, York Hall and Poplar are highlighted here - <i>Better do not seem to take care of any facility they become 'dirty' very quickly.</i></p> <p>Whilst some find Better excellent value for money, a similar proportion find the offer too expensive, calling for more generous subsidies and concessions to increase accessibility and engagement.</p> <p>Calls for more indoor sports provision (including racquet and team sports), combat sports, investment in fitness suites, and encouragement of <i>low impact exercise classes</i> (yoga, dance) viewed as <i>really accessible, good for health and building community</i> and an enhanced offer for older groups. Parents request more soft play availability and facilities as well as and rehab for new mums.</p> <p>Management is criticised for being out of step with fitness trends - <i>The range of classes ... are very old and always the same. The Group Co-ordinator at Better seems to be deliberately unaware that the fitness industry has evolved and moved on tenfold.</i></p> <p>Suggestions for revamped St George's to include additional facilities to enhance commercial viability, such as a <i>climbing wall, trampoline park, soft play area, area for children's birthday parties.</i></p> <p>Sports hall provision is criticised as lacking and not meeting current demand, whilst <i>Poplar rec</i> highlighted as non-inclusive and lacking basketball facilities.</p> <p>GLL's operation of leisure services in neighbouring boroughs is viewed as a major advantage, given members can access other centres across London, adding to <i>convenience and affordability</i> especially for residents living near borough borders.</p> <p>Access to their spa experience sister company and social enterprise status is also well received</p> <p>GLL's management of centres described as poor by some, with one user's attempt at being a <i>critical friend</i> regarding problems at York Hall <i>pushed back ... on nearly each occasion.</i></p> <p>Others found the breadth of current offer is badly advertised, and users suggest more local promotion, including the eastern part of the city.</p> <p>Other issues included low pool temperatures, problematic access to Mile End athletics track and a request to avoid re-contracting with a company operating zero hours contracts.</p>	
<p>Social, community and mental health impacts</p> <p>A large proportion inextricably link maintenance of their mental health with the need to re-open St George's pool, described by one as a <i>vital resource</i>.</p> <p>Many praise the social benefits of the clubs using the AstroTurf at John Orwell, one respondent highlighted <i>the benefits of the pitch to the mental well-being of so many residents and visitors in Tower Hamlets, as well as providing a sense of community – It has brought so many people together in the borough and provided great social outcomes for residents and visitors.</i></p> <p>In general centres are prized for their positive impact on physical and mental health - creating friendships between people of different ages, abilities and ethnicities - as well as reducing social isolation in older and retired generations.</p>	38
<p>Council Strategy</p> <p>Eighteen responses accuse the council of long-term neglect of St Georges, stating that there has been inadequate funding and historical building surveys have been <i>commissioned and ignored</i>. Users frequently accuse the council of using the pandemic as an excuse to permanently close St Georges. Additional council investment is a key theme throughout, notwithstanding the perceived help or hinderance of Better's management and maintenance.</p> <p>There are calls for planning to begin now for other more aged leisure centres to prolong life through effective long-term maintenance and for S106 Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus money to be used for improvements. Many urge the council not simply to close the centres deemed to be <i>failing</i>, but instead to find out why and then <i>invest in outreach and accessibility and rebuilds to increase usership instead</i>. Another two respondents suggest provision should be brought inhouse.</p> <p>Some users suggest a broader sports facility offer as an alternative approach to the perceived 'swimming focussed' future strategy - especially in a post covid world where people are rightly worried about personal health.</p> <p>Importance of effective contractual monitoring is noted multiple times as part of any new agreement, so that the service provider can be held to account.</p> <p>Council urged by one respondent to create a "culture of wellbeing", with a focus on what health means to each individual given the unique lives they are leading ... then facilitating this for each</p>	134

<p><i>individual.</i> Another called for more managerial imagination to offer lifelines to centres becoming challenging to operate through more creative thinking.</p> <p>Some responses focus on a narrative that the council's main aim is to build housing on the St George's or John Orwell site to developers for profit. In general, this is seen as the wrong course of action.</p> <p>Responses highlights the optimal location of St George's in terms of any planned redevelopment - <i>The components for revival are already here; the well-connected Shadwell Overground and DLR Station, Watney Market, the Vestry Hall, the route to Tobacco Dock, the St. George's Gardens, the Church and the St. George's Baths building and site.</i></p> <p>Facilities on the Isle of Dogs are highlighted multiple times as being out of step with the rising population in this area.</p> <p>The importance of engagement with sports clubs ahead of redevelopment is repeated, without effective consultation with people of groups that use them or want to use them any development will be wasted.</p>	
Consultation methodology <p>The consultation process was criticised for a perceived lack of accessibility for those less digitally confident or more vulnerable users - <i>how can people who have no access to social media, are too old or unable to read or comment actually make their views heard.</i></p> <p>Two responses express a perception that the consultation is a rubberstamping exercise for a pre-determined decision on the future of St George's, namely to sell off the land for profit to developer.</p>	8
Swimming provision <p>There is a broad plea from many respondents for urgent action to be taken to improve the swimming offer in the borough, with an emphasis on lack of provision in the Southwest and the negative impact this is having on children and families, as well as schools struggling to provide statutory swimming lessons.</p> <p>Subsequent pressure on other pools is keenly felt, discouraging some from continuing to swim.</p> <p>Responses include suggestions for a dockside lido, with Brussels Wharf as an option.</p> <p>Answers repeatedly highlight children learning to swim as an essential requirement, to enhance health and 'life chances', as well as the dangers of close proximity to various waterways and youngsters swimming in Shadwell Basin. One user cautions that the time required to build a new centre would mean that an entire generation of young children would lose the opportunity to learn to swim.</p>	52
Health and leisure collaboration <p>Joined-up thinking and closer, direct collaboration with the NHS and the wider "health industry" is advocated by one respondent, another suggests GP and physiotherapy referral activities as beneficial in local centres for those needing rehabilitation.</p>	6
Local footfall capital <p>Hockey club members particularly highlight closure of the pitch at John Orwell as a hammer blow to the local economy within Wapping, given the current patronage of members and opposing teams in local pubs, restaurants, and shops pre and post matches.</p>	5

Q11 Which of these leisure centres did you mostly use before the pandemic, use now, or are you are planning to use in the next 12 months? (316 responses – one choice allowed)

Summary of responses in numbers	Percentage (number)
St George's Leisure Centre	30% (96)
Mile End Leisure Centre	22% (69)
John Orwell Sports Centre	20% (62)
York Hall Leisure Centre	9% (30)
Poplar Leisure Centre	6% (20)
Tiller Leisure Centre	5% (16)
Whitechapel Sports Centre	2% (5)
None of the above / I do not use any leisure or sports centres	6% (18)
Total	316

Q12 Which of the following consultation options do you prefer? (316 responses – one choice allowed)

Summary of responses in numbers	Percentage (number)
Refurbish the existing St George's Leisure Centre	36% (114)
Build a new leisure centre on the site of St George's Leisure Centre with a swimming pool	26% (83)
Refurbish and extend the existing John Orwell Sports Centre to add a swimming pool	11% (35)
Invest in other sites, not St George's Leisure Centre or John Orwell Sports Centre	11% (34)
Build a new leisure centre, with a swimming pool, on the site of John Orwell Sports Centre	6% (19)
None of the above	10% (31)
Total	316

Specific proposals for St George's Leisure Centre and John Orwell Sports Centre

Q13 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing the existing St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future? (106 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses	Formatted Table
<p>Positive: Local women only sessions would be reinstated and preserved, providing <i>much-needed access to the pool for ... local women, many of whom can only attend a female only session.</i> Investment in this option would affirm the council's commitment to invest in Shadwell and more deprived communities as opposed to Wapping where the demographic is much wealthier and challenge the view of some of the project as a <i>money earner</i> for the council. The majority assert that housing on the site is not desirable, one user suggests spare space should be used to <i>extend the park instead</i>. It would not impact on a thriving hockey club (at John Orwell) Architecture and ambience of unique pool would be preserved. Seventeen responses expressed fond attachment and a desire to return to the <i>beautiful, light filled space with large windows and view of the sky from the pool</i>, where many learned to swim. St George's is described as a <i>much loved and once very successful leisure facility</i>, considered by some a <i>historic building which should be listed</i>. There is strong support for the preservation of the 30.4m long pool and an expectation that <i>spectator galleries would be able to re-open with borough galas and swimming and diving competitions resumed</i>. Others add that preservation of the existing pool size would <i>allow for many activities to take place in one centre simultaneously</i>, including reinstatement of Tower Hamlets swimming club activities. Usership would increase, providing it was supported by a proper maintenance programme. Centre would be reinstated as community hub helping to <i>build a bridge between Wapping and Shadwell</i>. Refurbishment of St George's would not disrupt John Orwell hockey club activities, highlighted by many as central to their sense of community. Pool could re-open sooner compared with new build option, with <i>Lower carbon impact than demolition</i>. Site already benefits from excellent access to public transport (DLR, Overground, bus) ... carparking and several Santander cycle docking stations nearby, including parking for disabled people. Local residents would benefit from reduced journey times and associated costs which have especially impacted more vulnerable, disabled and deprived groups, and those with caring responsibilities. Beneficial impact on children and family swimming time; <i>We really miss our mum and daughter bonding time at St George's</i>. All agree refurbishment and re-opening of the centre would be hugely beneficial to the children of Shadwell, including re-establishment of a local pool convenient for school swimming lessons and enabling children to learn a <i>necessary life skill</i>. This would also relieve pressure on other pools, with limited capacity currently a limiting factor for many that have to travel further due to closure.</p>	95	

Lapse in mental & physical health reversed. Many cite closure of the pool as negatively impacting health; <i>I was swimming 3-5 times a week before it was closed and successfully losing weight and getting fitter, to the point my diabetes was in remission. Since then I have been unable to access a swimming pool and my health will almost certainly be suffering.</i> Others attest to the pool as a lifeline for mental health, <i>swimming helped me reestablish my confidence after a relationship breakdown.</i>	
An opportunity to enhance the Southwest, given the sites proximity to the park and development of café facilities should be better developed and exploited to <i>revitalise this neglected part of the borough,</i> with one user recommending the increase of <i>positive through traffic to the St George's park.</i> Promotion is also highlighted including to <i>local more westerly office workers.</i>	
Negative: Development of facilities at John Orwell would be neglected; <i>option would only help one site in Wapping.</i> Refurbishment would further delay swimming access for local families.	2
None: Refurbishment would be more cost effective than demolishing and starting again <i>This option would make me feel like Tower Hamlets borough takes care of its residents needs.</i>	7
Other comments: Information on costs and specification of type of refurb versus rebuild missing.	2

Q14 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre on the site of St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future? (70 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
Positive: People more inclined to use a modern centre purpose-built for the needs of the community, especially with the addition of a <i>wider variety of studio, fitness and sports activities</i> and in place of previous offering described by one user as <i>filthy and poorly maintained, with unhelpful staff.</i> One user welcomed <i>getting rid of a dangerous eyesore.</i>	58
Opportunity to design more accessible layout, including a <i>pool ... accessible for disabled people with a moving floor like Mile End Leisure Centre</i> and ability to <i>adjust the temperature and floor depth for parent and baby, toddler and infant classes.</i> A hydro pool is also suggested to assist recovery from injury.	
No disruption to hockey club activities at John Orwell Beneficial impact on children and family swimming time, with swimming and diving lessons resumed and children able to learn an <i>essential life skill.</i>	
Local residents would benefit from reduced journey times and associated costs particularly affecting families and deprived groups.	
Benefits of central location and travel links advocated as equally accessible to very different communities on both side of the Highway, with certain groups <i>less willing to travel down into John Orwell.</i>	
Opportunity to enhance offer for competitive swimmers retaining the current length (at the least) or building a 50m pool to <i>open up the training potential for young and masters swimmers in TH.</i>	
Reinstate and enhance social aspects of centre as more attractive community centred space, which would <i>bring in a lot more people.</i>	
Lapse in mental & physical health (as a result of closure) reversed Better value to demolish and rebuild than to refurbish the degraded fabric of the building, with <i>greener and cheaper running costs</i> making long term maintenance more sustainable.	
Opportunity to reinvoke the wider area by building a new centre which <i>better interacts with the local space, including the park and local heritage context.</i> Investment would challenge the view that <i>people in Shadwell are not being invested in, while being surrounded by lots of development that doesn't serve their needs.</i>	
Negative: Investment in other centres neglected if no money is reserved to update ... in the next 3-5 years.	6

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Building a new centre may fail to preserve the unique character of the existing pools - the feasibility study has not explored this as fully as it could. Also risk of losing individual changing booths, which also support diversity, given different standards of modesty in our community, and encourage those with poor body self-images to exercise more. Redevelopment would further delay swimming access , with a complete rebuild deemed the longer option. The impact of having no interim swimming option is described as <i>devastating</i> by one, who advocates for a temporary swimming option such as a 'pop-up' pool.	
None:	7
Other comments: Low use previously impacted by poor management with restrictions on user numbers due to staff shortages and lack of lifeguards. Access to survey information hindered by broken document link , although this was not reported to officers. Council predetermination: One user stated: <i>The council seems intent on demolishing St. George's by making the only option as the John Orwell Sports Centre in Wapping better to include a pool.</i> Survey questions criticised as no provision given to state first or second choice options. Feasibility study criticised as un-ambitious in providing more options for facilities at St Georges.	7

Q15 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing and extending John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future? (30 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses	Formatted Table
Positive: Local swimming provision welcomed despite likely building disruption , with council urged to just do something quickly given the area's desperate need of a swimming pool. Scope for development of centre's social hub, with culture space and broader offer , including space for parties or gatherings and expanded sports sessions. Provision similar to York Hall spa suggested, along with an on-site café to extend duration of visits. Refurbishment of outside pitch beneficial to community in long run due to current age and condition – replacement with a <i>high standard multi-sport surface</i> suggested. Adding other outdoor facilities would expand range of activities available and <i>sustain or even increase ... frequency of visits and involvement in those activities and ... time spent in the surrounding businesses.</i> Centre is well located with access to Wapping Gardens , convenient for families that wish to play after swimming or training sessions. Adding facilities on this site would be a more efficient use of space , incorporating unused land around the existing site, while using the St George's site for housing.	18	
Negative: Temporary closure would limit access exercise options and a staged refurbishment is suggested to allow for the gym to remain open, even if equipment/machines needed to be moved around the centre during the process. Redevelopment could trigger price increases which might price out existing members. Disruption to or removal of AstroTurf would seriously jeopardise participation in hockey and other team sports. Hockey club members repeatedly emphasise the importance of club activities to their physical and mental health and sense of community and <i>dire</i> impact of loss of pitch due to limited facilities elsewhere. Redevelopment could result in loss of parking provision , particularly impacting access for disabled users and sports league clubs visiting from outside the borough.	9	
None	9	
Other comments: <i>St Georges will be expensive to refurbish and would be better being sold off and the profits put into other leisure services.</i>	1	

Q16 What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre with a swimming pool on the site of John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future? (12 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
Positive: Site considered to be more practical for development, with easy access from overground station and enough space to develop other sports and refreshment facilities. The potential for housing would significantly help borough funding for both JO development and other improvement and put to good use a piece of waste ground to the west considered an <i>unsightly blight on the locality for decades</i> . Beneficial impact on children and family swimming time , with one parent noting <i>It will probably mean the difference between my children becoming strong swimmers or not</i> . Building a larger complex would provide a more varied offer allowing families to participate in a range of activities simultaneously and allowing for historic ad-hoc structural changes described as very 'bity' and added at various periods – to be addressed. New centre would provide focal point for local community, with potential to address a growing anti-social behavioural problem in the area of Knighten Street/Vaughan Way due to the area's isolation (following the implementation of the Wapping bus gate).	10
Negative: Closure as part of rebuild project would limit access exercise options and increase journey times for users to alternative centres.	1
None	2

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Q17 Do you have any comments on the borough's leisure services? (232 responses)

Summary of comments	Number of responses
Calls for more all-female provision and engagement , including gym space, as well as a dedicated leisure centre with a female only staff and gym equipment designed specifically for women. The importance of separate women-only changing areas over a <i>changing village</i> is highlighted. In contrast, there are also pleas for separate classes for <i>minority groups</i> not to be held at busy times, citing <i>too much focus on political correctness with a direct negative impact on other users</i> .	12
Develop a broader borough-wide offer, with specific opportunity to increase variety of provision at St Georges through redevelopment.	20
Experience of GLL Charitable social enterprise status valued by users Mixed views on value and affordability of current offer ; some find membership <i>too expensive</i> , while others praise <i>very good value for money</i> compared with <i>very expensive private facilities</i> and given that a <i>membership with them gives me access to many leisure centres over London</i> and includes accessible options such as <i>basic type of pay and play to all inclusive</i> . However, one user notes that since the pandemic <i>GLL have put their prices up by more than 50% for clubs to rent pool/lanes</i> . Another user reports the discounted rate for TH staff is less favourable than expected. Experiences of staff are mixed , with some users reporting lack of flexibility, non-responsiveness and rudeness - although staff members <i>seem to try their best</i> - despite <i>many mistakes</i> being made. Others note that GLL staff succeed in providing <i>open, inviting leisure centres</i> . A high proportion are critical regarding GLL's perceived mismanagement and neglect of St George's : <i>It is scandalous that St Georges has been allowed to get into such a state of disrepair ... Better GLL have been not performed their most basic obligations</i> . Another respondent suggests that <i>a previous rolling programme of improvements whilst keeping the pool open could have prevented the current position</i> . GLL's track record on cleanliness and maintenance regularly highlighted as sub-standard , with pools described as <i>dirty, badly managed and unhygienic</i> . Other respondents complain of contracting fungal infections and finding excrement inside changing rooms at Mile End centre, whilst <i>Cleaning team throw some bleaching products on floor while people are still there which increases asthma attacks</i> . A user suggests that if <i>management keep the leisure services clean then this will encourage users to also respect the space</i> .	140

<p>Range of leisure centres and services valued, but users flag that many are in a poor condition with suboptimal maintenance, with a need for increased promotion: <i>I think there are a lot of excellent facilities in the borough and we're lucky to have them, but I think some of facilities and opportunities are poorly communicated and promoted so not best used.</i></p>	
<p>Barriers to access Many highlight class scheduling as a major barrier to access. Lack of provision for new mums to help women become pain free and confident with their new bodies. A high proportion berate GLL's booking system and online presence as difficult to navigate and inaccessible to those without smart phones or internet access, putting certain vulnerable groups at a disadvantage. Various calls for pool temperature to be more carefully considered, as colder water is considered to be a deterrent for learners, children and older people suffering from specific illnesses such as Raynaud's syndrome. Access issues specific to Mile End Stadium are reported as having been exacerbated during the pandemic, including overcrowding, an unreliable booking system, problematic access to the outdoor track via the main leisure centre requiring the intervention of staff. Where staff are new (and not yet understanding the apparent idiosyncrasies of Mile End), they can be very unhelpful. The same users states that <i>fines can often result ... but shouldn't be a normal and regular occurrence</i>. Also noted is irregular availability of Outdoor toilets, lack of access to the gym, toilets or changing facilities on the stadium side, creating access issues for disabled users and emergency services personnel. There is lack of access to a defibrillator located on the closed stadium side.</p>	42
<p>Transport and travel Redevelopment of leisure services in the Southwest would enable local residents to benefit from reduced journey times and associated costs which have especially impacted more vulnerable, disabled, and deprived groups, and those with caring responsibilities. Responses include requests for public transport not to be used as the measure for accessibility given that <i>public transport costs are significant</i> for some groups.</p>	9
<p>Collaboration and service join-up Respondents call for better collaboration with local health services, including physiotherapy, community dietician smoking cessation which could be delivered in Leisure Centres to improve health outcomes. In addition, one user suggests facilities with smaller, warmer pools should offer rehabilitation sessions. Disconnect between leisure planning and transport and streets strategies described as <i>shocking</i>. There are calls for increased provision and link up with active transport opportunities, such as <i>free-to-use cycle parking</i>, as well as more engagement with community health and fitness groups. Better link up between leisure services and green spaces, encouraging use of well-regarded outdoor gyms and access to running clubs. Mapping space available for provision across the borough, including classes held via Ideas Stores, school and community halls, and other providers and utilising effective booking software to manage access. Requesting access to leisure facilities in universities, corporate buildings is also suggested: <i>If working from home continues there will be lots of empty corporate gyms in Canary Wharf!</i></p>	20
<p>Council strategy Calls for more ambitious planning to match provision at well-regarded Britannia Leisure Centre in Hackney Eight respondents suggest that the council has neglected St George's Investing more evenly across the borough favoured by some, rather than focusing on rebuilding one closed centre. Another user suggests other council services suffering cuts should benefit from investment above leisure centres. Some call for less strategic focus on pools as a priority, with a preference for <i>a variety of accessible activities (particularly fitness/gyms, yoga and Pilates, dance and tennis) as opposed to swimming</i>. Specific investment to improve facilities at Mile End Stadium is highlighted, including indoor and outdoor toilets, resurfacing netball and tennis courts and fixing flood lights. The importance of monitoring any contractual leisure service agreement is repeatedly emphasised, including financial penalties for breach of agreed maintenance and hygiene standards. As well as</p>	123

<p>ensuring centre managers and deputies are actively responsible for keeping their centres in a good state.</p> <p>Many question why centres are conveniently not fit for purpose since the pandemic, amid concern that the council will use the pandemic as an excuse for cutting services, instead of fighting for the investment from government that our borough needs.</p> <p>Bringing leisure services inhouse is advocated by some, while others suggest incorporating commercial wellness provision to help fund running costs.</p> <p>Provision is flagged as being out of step with population growth, both across the borough and specifically in the Isle of Dogs.</p> <p>Affordable outdoor swimming options are recommended by many, with a dockside lido suggested to mitigate unauthorised and dangerous swimming each year. Although, Lidos are not good for school swimming for various reasons and school swimming needs to be accommodated in pools. Another respondent cautions against an expensive lido that only middle aged middle class people use.</p>	
<p>Swimming provision</p> <p>Urgent pleas from many for swimming provision to resume in the Southwest: Although St. Georges was in a poor state, it was better than nothing. A high proportion agree that current swimming provision is totally inadequate.</p> <p>Negative impact of St George's closure on school swimming lessons reiterated: schools in the SW of the borough will face a difficult choice if St George's pool is not re-opened - either cease providing swimming lessons or face significant disruption to children's learning.</p> <p>Ethnic minorities more at risk of drowning according to World Health Organisation data referenced by one user, who also highlights the low proportion of black children and adults who do not swim, recommending collaboration with the Black Swimming Association to increase the uptake of swimming by black and ethnic minority children, supported by a LBTH strategy.</p>	48
<p>Impact on community and mental health</p> <p>Negative impact of loss of hockey pitch access repeatedly highlighted, including detriment to physical and mental health, as well as community cohesion.</p> <p>Since the closure of St George's there has been a definite decline in the area and community feeling. Opportunity to invest in St George's to develop a community hub to unite multi faith, mixed income communities.</p>	17
<p>Consultation methodology</p> <p>Community engagement criticised as lacking, with timing of meetings and notice given ... minimal at times</p> <p>Consultation criticised as loaded ... with leading questions which strongly suggest that you are looking for a "rubber stamp" to justify decisions that have already been taken. Another respondent asserts extreme bias against the refurbishment of St George's Pool within the survey.</p> <p>In person events criticised for lacking hard copies of the survey for people to fill out.</p> <p>Consultation documentation lacking information on usage of individual centres and trends over time.</p>	7
<p>Offer for young people</p> <p>High level sports offer lacking in the borough, with some mention of gymnastics provision which used to be very good.</p> <p>Calls for more child-friendly climbing facilities and creches, with calls for children's activities to be better spread across centres.</p> <p>More leisure engagement with teenagers requested to improve mental health through physical activity, with combat sports suggested as effective way to engage older children.</p>	17
<p>Access to sports and clubs</p> <p>Negative impact on outdoor sports participation at John Orwell in event of potential redevelopment at this site, including disruption to hockey club league matches, volunteering programme, free provision for disadvantaged children and children's grassroots football club.</p> <p>Significant shortage of tennis courts highlighted driven by an increased up-take in tennis during and following the pandemic.</p> <p>Calls for the council to restore the basketball facilities in Wapping Gardens and increase basketball opportunities across the borough.</p>	28

8. Analysis of other responses

Summary of comments received via email	Number of responses
Summary of audio clips received Eight audio clips were sent to sports@towerhamlets.gov.uk , recorded by Caroline Morton on 4 December 2021 in Wapping. All those interviewed were discussing why they wanted St George's Pool to remain open. Two responses received from children, aged 11 and 7.	8
Majority in support of having a local facility that is easy to access , especially for those who are visually impaired, are reliant on public transport, or are too busy to spend lots of time going further afield. Several parents raised concerns about children learning to swim , and where schools would take children swimming Several respondents had a strong attachment and fond memories of the pool where they learned to swim	
Email correspondence with James Thomas (Corporate Director Children and Culture Directorate) St George's Steering Group Highlighted the convenience of savings made due to pool closure during lockdown and how this could be negatively perceived by the public, adding that <i>much-needed</i> maintenance work could have been undertaken during this period in line with government guidelines. Accused the council of <i>continual neglect to maintain St George's - as the conditions surveys of 2018 and 2019 testify</i> – and queried why the professional advice in the reports was not followed by the council. Highlighted the need for the 30.4m pool to be maintained to preserve current provision and queried why refurbishment and reopening of this facility was not included in the public consultation. Underlined the need for a <i>like-for-like</i> refurbishment proposal with costings to enable a transparent and fair consultation.	1
Formal response from Shadwell Responds Response provided analysis of a Google form survey conducted with Shadwell residents collecting 252 responses (copies have not been provided to council officers), supported by engagement with 6 local schools ¹ to create artwork and engagement through conversations in Shadwell Responds' 10 institutions ² . Preference for bolstering St George's pool redevelopment and refurbishment options , describing consultation's scope as <i>insufficient to capture local feeling</i> and <i>is difficult to complete</i> . Aim to provide economically viable solution to the lack of access to swimming pool provision during redevelopment works through provision of a temporary swimming pool in Shadwell. Emphasis on ensuring any new pool will help to improve the 'spaces in between' the buildings as part of a holistic vision to improve the area, including celebration of local heritage and by including community voice in redevelopment. Analysis of their survey revealed 89.3% wanted to see St George's Leisure Centre refurbished , with rebuilding on the same site the next most popular option and many highlighted the negative impact on children's swimming lessons. Many called for a temporary swimming pool in Shadwell and the	1

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¹ Bigland Green, Harry Gosling, English Martyrs, The Aldgate School, St Pauls, Whitechapel, St Mary's and St Michael's

² St George-in-the-East Church, Darul Ummah Mosque, E1 Community Gardeners, St Mary's Cable Street, Roman Catholic Church of St Mary & St Michael, Oblates Retreat Centre, St Paul's Shadwell Church, E1 Community Church, Centre for Theology and Community, St Paul's School, Whitechapel

response suggests possible locations, as well as examples of providing a demountable temporary swimming pool, with costings.	
<p>Formal response from Wapping Hockey Club Although the response commends the Council's Sport Development Team and supports the Council's efforts to improve leisure facilities in the borough, concerns are raised that potential redevelopment at the John Orwell site will disrupt use of the pitch, participation and facilities by Wapping HC and prejudice delivery of inclusive opportunities and health outcomes. Namely:</p> <p>Disruption to youth training, bursaries scheme, ability to store equipment on site</p> <p>Loss of social / community benefits and local economic footfall</p> <p>Increase in costs</p> <p>Loss of car parking – especially impacting visiting teams and disabled users</p> <p>Opportunity for closer engagement with club as part of planning process to ensure pitch fit for purpose.</p>	1
<p>Summary of other emails received:</p> <p>Query regarding survey accessibility for people who are not online or not digitally confident, with request for print ready paper format</p> <p>Response sets out benefits of considering an all-weather, retractable-roof lido in Brussels Wharf funded by associated housing development as an alternative to existing pool proposals.</p> <p>Request to confirm that the full set of technical survey reports have been made available to allow proper consultation.</p> <p>Query on lack of maintenance work carried out at St Georges in response to survey recommendations and why pandemic lock down was not used to carry out repair work.</p> <p>Query on depth of pool being considered for the main pool at St Georges in event of redevelopment. Highlights Sport England minimum guidelines as not ideal for swimming clubs and <i>means waterpolo and synchro can't be practiced</i>. Highlights opportunity for the council to install a pool that <i>can be realistically used by swimming, waterpolo and synchro clubs to increase participation and performance in the borough</i>.</p> <p>14-year-old resident highlights limited women's sessions and inconvenient timetabling which have discouraged activity, especially for those with <i>religious and cultural preferences</i>.</p> <p>Communication with GLL team described as difficult, via website and phone, further hindered by a confusing app.</p>	5

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Summary of verbal feedback received via virtual and in person meetings:	Number attending
<p>Mayor's Session (9 December 2021)</p> <p>Officers challenged on whether there has been due consideration given to a lido</p> <p>Negligence of St George's has caused decline in use – one attendee stated the centre has been <i>starved of money for decades</i>.</p> <p>Consultation accessibility criticised with background documents appearing online in an <i>ad-hoc</i> manner which appears <i>dishonest</i> and access to online survey difficult for users without access to the internet. Delay in providing access to paper copies also highlighted as a barrier to accessibility.</p> <p>Technical nature of feasibility study has also proved difficult for some to understand.</p> <p>St George's is an iconic building that should be saved. The addition of housing on the site rejected as the wrong course of action.</p> <p>Consultation process and manner that information is presented suggests decision is predetermined – <i>the survey does not bear any resemblance to what is being put forward</i>. The feasibility study for John Orwell gives the impression that the council's decision is predetermined, and consultation process is a formality.</p> <p>There are more available options than are being presented, but council lacks vision.</p> <p>Installation of a smaller, shallower 25m pool at St Georges would have a detrimental effect on range of activities able to be delivered.</p> <p>Not all users able to travel to the London Aquatics Centre in Stratford to dive whilst St George's closed.</p>	13

<p>Impact of increased travel time on schools for swimming lessons highlighted as an issue. Wapping Hockey Club raised concerns regarding disruption to the pitch at John Orwell as part of any development plans, potentially jeopardising regular tournaments, including provision for children and impacting a club of over 400 members.</p>	
<p>St George's Town Hall session on 1st December (7 attendees) Has the Council already decided which option to proceed with? Was a decision already made to use the John Orwell site? Negligence of St George's has caused decline in use – suggested that the Council had not invested in St George's, which caused the decline in use. Current pool length and ambience is 'iconic' – the existing building should be refurbished because St George's offers a bigger pool and the pool hall receives extensive natural light. John Orwell site has high levels of ground contamination so would be expensive to build on. Housing should not be built on the St George's site as so close to the Highway.</p>	
<p>Mile End Leisure Centre session on 4th December (25 attendees) Comments received about the management of Mile End Leisure Centre, access to the running track via the Leisure Centre in particular. Was it planned to invest in York Hall? Would Mile End Leisure Centre receive investment too, or was the consultation about the south-west?</p>	

9. Petition and online support

An e-petition has been collecting signatures at [Petition · For all options to be investigated to fully refurbish and update St George's Pools · Change.org](#). It had been signed by 3048 people at 12:46pm, 17 January 2022. The petition and open letter from the Turks Head Charity and St George's Pool Steering was discussed at the full council meeting dated 17 November 2021 following a special motion brought by Cllr Rabina Khan but was not debated fully.

A web page entitled [saveourpool.co.uk](#) sets out a *community campaign to reopen St Georges swimming pool*, which provides links to the above mentioned Change.org petition and the online council survey.

10. Background papers

Available via LTTH [Leisure Consultation](#) page:

- Consultation Document
- Feasibility study & summary
- Physical Activity and Sports Strategy (PASS)

11. Responses to online survey questions in numbers

No.	Question	Answered	Skipped	Don't know	Disagree strongly	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Some what agree	Strongly agree
Q1	How are you responding	316	0						
Q2	You are responding as a representative of an education setting, sports/leisure club, voluntary and community sector (CVS) or other. Please provide any additional detail about your interest in this consultation	35	281						
Q3	What is the name of your school, club or organisation	35	281						
Q4	Is your response a formal response on behalf of your school, club or organisation	35	281						
Q5	You are responding as a resident. Please tell us the postal code from your address in Tower Hamlets.	282	34						
<i>Strategic vision questions: Agree/disagree</i>									
Q6	We set out our ambition for leisure services to be sustainable & accessible to every resident & visitor and contribute to local health, wellbeing and the economy	316	0	7	9	16	16	59	209
Q7	The future vision for Tower Hamlets leisure facilities	316	0	1	10	7	18	99	181
Q8a	A network of leisure centre facilities within 20 minutes by public transport from where you live	316	0	2	15	19	19	70	191
Q8b	All facilities, where possible, to support a healthy lifestyle targeted at a range of ages, abilities, individuals and groups	316	0	3	2	4	10	59	238
Q8c	Leisure centres should be affordable and attractive to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active	316	0	1	3	3	10	65	234
Q8d	If a centre is not used enough, is in a bad condition and/or it is losing money, we should consider closing it	316	0	9	122	61	37	57	30

Q8e	Community groups, sports clubs and volunteers should be supported to use open spaces, playing fields, community centres, schools, and colleges to bring leisure opportunities to people of all backgrounds, especially the most disadvantaged and/or least active	316	0	2	1	7	21	82	203
Q8f	The Council should consider funding new services or facilities, such as a new leisure centre, if affordable	316	0	4	6	13	31	68	194
Q9a	The council should plan for significant investment in our leisure centres	316	0	2	3	2	12	53	244
Q9b	The current range of leisure centres I the borough meet my needs	316	0	2	90	80	26	68	50
Q10	Do you have any comments on our leisure centres, in general, or any individual centre?	261	55						
Q11	Which of these leisure centres did you mostly use before the pandemic, use now, or are you are planning to use in the next 12 months?	316	0						
Q12	Preferred consultation option (<i>See table on page 9 for further detail</i>)	316	0						
Q13	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing the existing St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future?	106	210						
Q14	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre on the site of St George's Leisure Centre have on you or your family now and/or in the future?	70	247						
Q15	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would refurbishing and extending John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future?	30	286						
Q16	What impacts (positive, negative or none) would building a new leisure centre with a swimming pool on	12	304						

	the site of John Orwell Sports Centre have on you and your family now and in the future?							
Q17	Do you have any comments on the borough's leisure services?	232	84					

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Appendix 5

Leisure Offer 2024

1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Leisure Management Contract was tendered in 2003 and was carried out as a continuing service which had been subject to Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) from the early 1990's. It replaced a previous contract which had been in force since 1996.
- 1.2 The provision of leisure services is a discretionary service but within the contract there are various statutory obligations which need to be met which relate to the delivery of these services.
- 1.3 The Leisure Management Contract was awarded to GLL on a 15-year contract in 2004, which originally included the management of the following leisure centres:
 - John Orwell Leisure Centre
 - Langdon Park Leisure Centre * (Closed in 2011 to make savings)
 - Mile End Park Leisure Centre
 - St. George's Leisure Centre
 - Tiller Leisure Centre
 - York Hall Leisure Centre
 - Whitechapel Sports Centre
- 1.4 Langdon Park Leisure Centre, a dual use school community leisure facility, was closed in 2011 due to the need to make savings from the leisure management contract. The additional management fee required for the PFI contract, coupled with the management fee paid to GLL at the time, made the centre uneconomical to operate and it was eventually closed to make savings in the leisure contract.
- 1.5 The contract operated a deficit for the first five years but went into surplus from year 6, which offered additional investment in leisure capital and revenue projects funded via the surplus share mechanism of the contract, which allowed for 50% of any surplus gained to be reinvested back into the service. This mechanism has funded a variety of capital projects and revenue programmes including the refurbishment of St. George's Leisure Centre in 2010-11 and Free Swim Friday for Tower Hamlets residents, Free swim Saturday for families, over 60's off peak swimming for £1 etc. Now that the contract is no longer in significant surplus, and GLL has a commitment to pay back the Council the £774k management fee agreed by Cabinet in 2020 to support the safe and viable reopening of the leisure centres, how these programmes will be re-introduced as part of the covid recovery will need to be determined.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT LEISURE CONTRACT OFFER

- 2.1 The current leisure management contract offers a core programme that concentrates on adult fitness / swimming direct debit memberships, events and outdoor pitch bookings for income generation. However, concessionary memberships (which significantly reduce costs for users) are available to people on benefits to provide affordable access to leisure centre provision.
- 2.2 Pre-Covid-19 there were a number of subsidised and free programmes that were funded by the contract surplus share development pot that enabled 50% of the operational financial surplus to be reinvested back in the service for either capital developments or revenue programmes. Community activities delivered by the surplus included Free Swim Fridays for Tower Hamlets Residents, Free Swim Saturday for families, subsidised off peak 60+ swimming, Women-only swimming, Kids Swim for a Quid and U.16's free swim before 10am during school holidays.
- 2.3 However, targeted community engagement provision, particularly for under-represented groups such as women and girls, SEND, older people, etc., were mainly delivered by the Council's Sport & Physical Activity Service. Examples of this provision included free inter-generational family events in Parks and open spaces, free SEND swimming, free disability equipment hire (e.g. sport wheelchairs, adapted sports equipment), free women only activities, inter-borough competitions, free leisure centre training time for London Youth Games and School games. However, the need to make significant savings have resulted in the service no longer being able to deliver such provision directly and community provision of this type needs to be provided by other means in the future. It is being proposed that this type of community provision is conducted via the leisure operator, not only in leisure centres but also in community settings, as part of the LMC. However, it should be noted that there is a considerable cost to this type of activity, which is usually a loss-leader and operators may be risk averse to this type of activity in a market still recovering from the significant impact of Covid-19 and more recently, the energy crisis, which has created significant utility cost budget pressures.

3. THE VISION FOR THE LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT (LMC) 2024

- 3.1 The Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031: Managing Growth and Sharing Benefits was adopted by Full Council on 15 January 2020. There is a suite of three strategy documents relating to leisure provision that inform the Local Plan: The Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy, The Open Spaces Strategy (including playing pitch needs assessment) and The Physical Activity & Sport Strategy (PASS) provide the vision and future direction of sport and leisure provision in the borough. It should also be noted that the cross-cutting nature of sport & physical activity means it also plays a significant role in delivering several Council objectives via other strategic documents such as the Transport Strategy & Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

- 3.2 The Physical Activity & Sport Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 18 December 2019. The vision of this document was to enable “Local people to live, healthier, happier lives by being more active and engaging with sport in the borough. We want every person in Tower Hamlets to feel that there are sport and physical activity opportunities available locally that work for them and they are supported to get involved in”
- 3.3 The proposed vision for the future leisure offer aligns with this overarching ambition which is to:
- “Enable and support local people to live healthier and physically active lives using leisure centres that provide affordable and accessible programmes, activities and events for under-represented groups that would benefit most from being physically active”**
- 3.4 The Marmot review, “Fair Society Healthy Lives,” stated that health inequalities result from social inequalities [which] require action across all social determinants of health. The review also stated that “to reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health, actions must be universal but with a scale that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage.” This is known as proportionate universalism.
- 3.5 The reimagining of the leisure management contract aims to focus on this concept by providing programmes, activities and events that focus on improving the health and wellbeing of Tower Hamlets residents identified as being the most inactive in the lowest socio-economic groups. This approach will assist in mitigating the borough’s health inequalities, creating a more physically active and healthier population, whilst ensuring the service provides a programme that meets the needs of the majority of residents and is financially viable.
- 3.6 A key element of the leisure offer is the provision of leisure facilities that create a positive customer experience thereby encouraging greater participation by residents.
- 3.7 Tower Hamlets is a wide and varied leisure landscape; it has more than 200 parks and open spaces of which more than 170 are publicly accessible and the majority are owned and managed by the council. Several of these parks include a variety of sports facilities (tennis and basketball courts, multi-use games areas, football and cricket pitches) that enhance leisure provision within the borough. For a detailed analysis of sports provision in parks please see the Open Spaces Strategy Playing Pitch Needs Assessment.
- 3.8 The borough has seven publicly owned leisure centres:
- John Orwell Sports Centre
 - Mile End Park Leisure Centre & Stadium
 - Poplar Baths Leisure Centre
 - St. George’s Leisure Centre
 - Tiller Leisure Centre

- York Hall Leisure Centre
 - Whitechapel Sports Centre
- 3.9 In addition to the public leisure centres, the Indoor Sports Facilities audit identified an additional 34 health and fitness sites within the borough, including four dual use facilities and 19 commercially operated clubs with the remaining sites being exclusively for private use. However, following the national lockdowns over the last year, an audit will need to be conducted to determine the impact of Covid-19 on current and future health and fitness provision in the private sector.
- 3.10 According to Sport England modelling, the borough has a deficiency in sports halls, swimming pools and outdoor pitches. This deficiency in provision will continue to increase as the borough's population continues to grow. Whilst there is insufficient land to increase the number of leisure facilities to keep up with population growth, the Council and its partners, can work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the leisure network by increasing community access to school sports facilities and enhancing existing provision.
- 3.11 At present there are a number of schools that have limited community use of their sports facilities due to PFI agreements. An important factor for future consideration is that community access to school sports facilities needs to be secured through robust community use agreements as part of planning obligations when further proposals for new schools are brought forward. This access will assist in reducing the existing deficiency and provide additional spaces for physical activity in the borough.
- 3.12 Including physical activity as a part of everyday life to improve health and wellbeing is a key factor in driving health change and the Council's Transport Strategy addresses this issue via the use of walking and cycling for active travel. In a borough known for its high car usage and air pollution concerns, promoting and encouraging active travel is a simple and easy way to improve the health of local residents. For more information on active travel, cycling and walking please see that attached Transport Strategy.

4. STRATEGIC AIMS OF THE LEISURE CONTRACT

- 4.1 The following key strategic aims were identified for the leisure management contract when the strategy was last revised:
- A contract that meets the strategic aims of the Council
 - A leisure contract that operates with a robust financial position, aligning services to increase the physical activity levels of those residents that would benefit most doing so.
 - A contract that is public health outcomes focused, with a holistic approach across the borough that is not specific to health interventions.

- A contract that ensures leisure centres are affordable and accessible to the residents that need them most.
 - A contract that enables the refurbishment and redevelopment of the borough's leisure assets ensuring that they are best in class.
- 4.2 The reimaging of the leisure contract aims to provide a strategic focus that enables the co-ordination of similar services with the aim of improving the health of borough residents by decreasing physical inactivity levels. The current landscape operates with many services working in isolation when the pooling of resources and contributing to specific outcomes in a joined up, holistic way would yield better outcomes.
- An opportunity exists to address the health improvement of residents at scale by integrating leisure centre provision with a wider community focus that addresses blockages to increased engagement, such as:
- Increased community use of school sites to provide local, affordable physical activities that complement leisure centre provision. The PFI contracts at many of the borough's secondary schools have prevented affordable community access these valuable assets and has been a major factor in preventing targeted community interventions to increase physical activity, not only in local areas, which do not have easy access to a leisure centre, but also wider under-represented community groups that are not comfortable using a leisure centre but would access opportunities in the familiar environment of a local school
 - A more co-ordinated approach to physical activity commissioning with CCG colleagues, which could explore a more longer-term approach to physical activity interventions via the leisure management contract delivering programmes at scale.
 - Better co-ordination of national campaigns such as the national child measurement programme with local interventions that address healthy weight / obesity in children
 - Co-ordination of Council services such as Active Travel, Healthy Schools
- These are just a few examples of where a holistic approach would deliver better outcomes. This approach will become more important as Council resources continue to diminish over time.
- 4.3 The high level of health inequalities in Tower Hamlets when compared to London and England averages is well known, so there is no need to go into detail here. However, what is clear is that physical inactivity is a major contributory factor in several underlying health conditions such as overweight/obesity, cardio-vascular disease and a plethora of other health conditions. The procurement of a new leisure contract is an ideal opportunity to tackle these issues head on, addressing some of the key factors that will improve the health & wellbeing of residents. This can be achieved by putting health improvement at the heart of the new leisure contract, which will be addressed later in this report.
- 4.4 The Physical Activity & Sport Strategy (PASS) was approved by Cabinet in December 2019 and articulates the strategic approach to the delivery of sport

& physical activity until 2024. The approach adopted in the strategy highlights four priority areas:

- 1) Developing Young Interest
- 2) Driving Health Change
- 3) Shaping Places & Communities
- 4) Physical Activity & Sport as a community engagement tool

- 4.5 The Council is under increasing financial pressure and non-statutory services, like Sport & Physical Activity are being squeezed with less resourcing (financial and human) available to deliver against the strategic aims of PASS. It is for this reason that the LMC has been placed front and centre as the key driver for delivering change against the borough's physical activity and sport agenda.

5. **DEVELOPING YOUNG INTEREST**

- 5.1 Developing Young Interest is priority 1 of PASS, that aims to deliver improved and enhanced physical activity outcomes for children & young people. The key outcomes of this priority are
- Children and young people are more physically active
 - Children and young people feel the benefits of increased physical activity and sport
 - Children & young people remain engaged with Sport and physical activity as they get older
- 5.2 The new contract can contribute to these outcomes by delivering a children & young people offer that encourages increased physical activity in younger residents. Examples of this programme could include:
- **An Active Schools Programme** – a programme that supports schools in getting pupils to be more active and support delivery of sport and physical activity related education, employment and training opportunities for young people. This could include provision of targeted activities for school age children at the borough's leisure centres, such as school competition and match play, a SEND programme of activities for special school students as well as dedicated twilight leisure centre time for young people. This may include a school based programme is community access to school facilities can be secured.
 - **An Aquatics Programme** that encompasses a varied programme of water-based activities and sports for primary and secondary aged school children including school swimming lessons, a learn to swim school, a free / subsidised swimming offer (e.g. Young people swim for free during school holiday periods before 12 noon. Competition opportunities via inter-borough competitions, London Youth Games, School Games etc)
 - **A Health & Wellbeing Programme** that provides health improvement programmes for young people at risk (see driving health change)

- **A concessionary pricing scheme** that targets young people in most need to access affordable sport & leisure activities and to improve their health & wellbeing (see Driving Health Change for more information)
- **A School Holiday Programme of Activities & Events for Young People** The leisure operator will deliver a school holiday programme that will enable young people to access affordable physical activity provision that annual Summer Programme which offers free activities including park-based events, sport focused initiatives and try new things
- **Subsidised facility access for Young People Programmes** – In addition to the concessionary pricing scheme, which make accessing the leisure centres more affordable for those individuals and families in receipt of benefits, the use of protected hours scheme (free leisure centres hours allocated to the Council's SPA service in the contract) provided by the Council's Sport & Physical could be used to facilitate specific young people projects in partnership with the third sector, health professionals and physical activity service providers.

6. **DRIVING HEALTH CHANGE** (especially in inactive residents, young people, older people and those with underlying health conditions)

- 6.1 Life expectancy in Tower Hamlets is in the bottom thirtieth in the country for both males and females and mirrors the level of social deprivation within the borough.
- 6.2 The borough has a lower proportion of older people. However, a greater number of older residents in Tower Hamlets have a long-term limiting illness than the national average.
- 6.3 More than a fifth of reception age children are obese with two-fifths of children considered overweight or obese by the end of primary school. The extent of childhood poverty is the most important determinant affecting the current and future health of the children and young people in Tower Hamlets. Furthermore, the covid-19 pandemic has created a mental health crisis amongst the nation's children and young people.
- 6.4 Through disproportionate impacts on major determinants of health such as employment, income, and housing, there is a risk of health inequalities increasing in Tower Hamlets.
- 6.5 The three major causes of premature death in Tower Hamlets (cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic lung disease) are strongly linked to socioeconomic deprivation as well as gender and ethnicity but all of these conditions can be improved or prevented entirely with increased levels of physical activity.
- 6.6 There is strong scientific evidence that being physically active can help with leading a healthier and happier life. People who exercise regularly have a

lower risk of developing many long-term (chronic) conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. Regular exercise also reduces the risk of early death by up to 30%.

- 6.7 Considering the positive impact of exercise on the health of residents, the contract procurement offers an ideal opportunity to embed improved health outcomes as a key performance requirement of the contract. It is envisioned that leisure centre provision under the 2024 leisure contract will target physical activity provision towards audiences that will benefit most from increasing physical activity levels to improve the health and wellbeing of service users. This approach would see the leisure operator being a key partner in delivering public health messages, supporting public health campaigns as well as providing physical activity programmes to encourage healthy lifestyles.
- 6.8 Consequently, it is being proposed that a public health outcomes framework (PHOF) will be an integral part of the performance management framework of the leisure contract. This framework will include a variety of key performance indicators against which the operator's performance will be measured. Consultation with Public Health & the health sector colleagues is currently taking place and feedback from these sessions will be incorporated within the updated briefing note. Examples of performance indicators for the outcomes framework could include addressing the following:
- 1) Child excess weight in 4-5- and 10–11-year-olds
 - 2) Children aged 5-16 years are sufficiently active for good health
 - 3) Excess weight in adults
 - 4) Physically active and inactive adults
 - 5) Self-reported wellbeing
- 6.9 The PHOF will deliver against 2 areas: a) improving wider determinants of health and b) Health improvement. The following programmes are examples of workstreams that could deliver against these outcomes.
- **Healthy Weight Management Provision (Young People & Adults)** The leisure operator will be expected to deliver a suite of health improvement programmes as part of its core offer. This programme may include healthy weight management programmes for children, young people and adults, such as Mind, Exercise, Nutrition (MEND) an education intervention designed to manage overweight and obesity in children aged 2-13 years and their families by improving health, fitness and self-esteem. Additional programmes may include nutrition workshops, food provision (as part of a borough-wide programme to feed children & young people in receipt of free school meals and those most in need).
 - **Children & Young People Offer** – An extensive and robust children and young people offer should be included within the new contract service specification. This may include dedicated leisure centre twilight time for children and young people, a holiday programme that will enable young people to access affordable, high quality physical activity provision, with a particular emphasis on a large-scale Summer Programme, in partnership

with the Council and the third sector, which offers subsidised and free activities including park based events, sport focused initiatives, family / inter-general activities coupled with nutritious meals for those children on free school meals.

- **Physical Activity Referral Programme (including social prescribing)** - A programme of physical activity targeted at non-traditional leisure audiences that are inactive and or have underlying health conditions. Participants to the programme can be referred via a partnership network of social prescribers, GPs and other health professionals, schools, parents/ guardians or via self-referral. Examples of activities in the programme could include cycling / spinning, walking / jogging and running, swimming, badminton, tennis, fitness classes.
- **Falls Prevention** - a programme of activities designed to improve the strength, flexibility and co-ordination of older people, 65 years plus, that reduces the risk of serious injuries such as broken hips from falls.

7. SHAPING PLACES & COMMUNITIES

- 7.1 This PASS priority should focus on the leisure operator improving the leisure centres as assets, encouraging greater access to the centres by non-traditional audiences. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for the operator to use its position in the community to assist, encourage and promote healthy and active travel choices and making physical activity an integral part of daily life for all. (This can be done through providing information, guidance and insight at health & wellbeing hubs located in the centres and staffed by Operator Health Champions)

8. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & SPORT AS A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOL

- 8.1 Using sport and physical activity as an engagement tool aims to achieve three outcomes:
- People appreciate that participation in physical activity and sport is open to all communities
 - People feel the benefits from major sporting events held in and around the borough
 - People feel part of a vibrant, inclusive community
- 8.2 It is expected that the operator will work in partnership with the Council, other statutory bodies, the third sector and other sport and health service providers, to not only provide inclusive physical activity opportunities for all the community, but also to be an active leader in encouraging community cohesion and using physical activity as a means of engaging with non-traditional leisure centre audiences, in community spaces if necessary.

9. LEISURE GUARANTEE

9.1 The Indicative service provision highlighted in this report could be articulated in a '**Leisure Guarantee**' that indicates the minimum level of service residents can expect from their leisure centres, including:

- **A Leisure Card for all residents** – to connect a variety of public services such as leisure centres, idea stores, community physical activity and sport provision and enable subsidised or free membership of the borough's leisure centres (depending on personal circumstances). This card would enable a participation based **Incentivisation Scheme** which rewards increasing levels of physical activity / engagement by using innovative digital solutions to drive health change. Incentives may include a free day pass for a leisure centre, or free activity sessions by the operator or other incentives provided by partners in the scheme (e.g. local suppliers / businesses) GLL has proposed the introduction within the current contract term and this will provide an ideal opportunity to pilot and test this concept, which has been successfully delivered within the London Borough of Barnet as part of its leisure contract procurement several years ago.
- **A Comprehensive Children & Young People Offer** (Outlined in section 5 above).
- **A comprehensive health improvement focused programme aimed at residents most likely to benefit from health interventions** (Outlined in section 6 above)
- **A comprehensive programme of interventions identified by an evidence base to address specific Council outcomes** (subject to further development)

The detail associated with each of these guarantees can be determined following consultation and finessed as part of a wider marketing and communications piece.

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