



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: Leisure Management Arrangements

Date: 13 January 2021

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors:

James Lee, Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure

Paul Moore, Interim Director of Regeneration, Regeneration and Place

Katharine Nidd, Strategic Procurement and Commercial Services and Manager

Outline and recommendations

This report seeks the approval of Mayor and Cabinet regarding the arrangements for the management of the Council's leisure facilities during the COVID pandemic and recovery phase.

It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet:

- Agree that Officers proceed with the approach to delivery of leisure facilities in the borough during the next period including phased approach to the centres as set out in the report namely:
 - Downham Health and Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Glass Mill Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Forest Hill Pools returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Wavelengths Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow apart from the leisure pool whose opening is reviewed in Spring 2021.
 - The Bellingham Leisure and Lifestyle Centre (Bellingham) returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow. In reality, given that a significant part of the centre's provision will be prohibited even under Tier 3, the centre will only reopen fully once restrictions in London are at below this level at least.
 - The Bridge Leisure Centre remains closed for a period.
- Agree that Officers proceed with an Expression of Interest process to gauge the appetite amongst third parties to take on a lease for Ladywell Arena and to operate the site as a publicly accessible facility.
- Agree that Officers work with the local community to develop a sustainable operating model for the Lewisham Indoor Bowls Centre while wider consideration of the Bridge Leisure Centre is ongoing.
- Agree that Officers undertake proactive work with schools and other institutions to increase community access to sports hall facilities and neighbouring leisure facilities to meet demand displaced from the Bridge Leisure Centre.
- Agree that Officers return to Mayor and Cabinet in mid 2021/22 with an update and proposals for the wider leisure facility offer in the borough and further consideration of The Bridge Leisure Centre.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

N/A

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

1. Summary

- 1.1 The leisure industry has been hit extremely hard by the COVID pandemic. All leisure facilities were closed completely during both lockdowns, and now under Tier 4 restrictions in London, and have operated severely restricted operating models at all other periods since 20 March 2020.
- 1.2 This has meant that the financial viability of leisure centres has been called into question with just 54% of centres not reopening as soon as they could at the end of the first lockdown with 29% of centres remained closed through to September 2020.
- 1.3 With the requirements to comply with a number of additional measures to ensure a COVID secure operation, the ability of Lewisham's leisure providers to improve income levels due to required reduced capacity in the short term is limited. Furthermore, the maintenance of COVID secure status incurs additional expenditure over and above pre-COVID operation of the facility. The downturn in attendances that has been evident at Downham Health & Leisure Centre, which reopened in July 2020 following the enforced closure of all of the leisure centre confirming the reluctance of many members of the public to return to use the Council's leisure centres. The reduced attendances is consistent with the regional and national landscape. All leisure centres in London were required to close again on Sunday 20th December under Tier 4 restrictions.
- 1.4 As such, a significant financial investment and subsidy will be required to enable the facilities to reopen and operate in any capacity.
- 1.5 This potential expenditure needs to be considered in the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), agreed by Mayor and Cabinet on the 7 October which identified an anticipated funding gap over the next three years of at least £40m with £24m for 2021/22 in addition to growing evidence that the base Budget retains a persistent £10m overspend in key service areas.
- 1.6 In order to inform the Council's approach to meeting these budget pressure whilst maintaining an attractive and equitable leisure offer a 10 year Physical Activity Strategy is being developed, which will consider how best to deliver the Borough's key strategic goals and the facilities required to do so.
- 1.7 In the meantime this paper recommends an approach to the management of the Council's leisure facilities for the period considered in this report to ensure a good geographical spread of provision whilst avoiding extremely high levels of short term expenditure.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet:
 - 2.1.1 Agree that Officers proceed with the approach to delivery of leisure facilities in the borough during the next period including phased approach to the centres as set out in the report namely:
 - Downham Health and Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Glass Mill Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Forest Hill Pools returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- Wavelengths Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow apart from the leisure pool whose opening is reviewed in Spring 2021.
 - The Bellingham Leisure and Lifestyle Centre (Bellingham) returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow. In reality, given that a significant part of the centre's provision will be prohibited even under Tier 3, the centre will only reopen fully once restrictions in London are at below this level at least.
 - The Bridge Leisure Centre remains closed for a period.
- 2.1.2 Agree that Officers proceed with an Expression of Interest process to gauge the appetite amongst third parties to take on a lease for Ladywell Arena and to operate the site as a publicly accessible facility.
- 2.1.3 Agree that Officers work with the local community to develop a sustainable operating model for the Lewisham Indoor Bowls Centre while wider consideration of the Bridge Leisure Centre is ongoing.
- 2.1.4 Agree that Officers undertake proactive work with schools and other institutions to increase community access to sports hall facilities and neighbouring leisure facilities to meet demand displaced from the Bridge Leisure Centre
- 2.1.5 Agree that Officers return to Mayor and Cabinet in mid 2021/22 with an update and proposals for the wider leisure facility offer in the borough and further consideration of The Bridge Leisure Centre.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. There are a number of existing strategies in which the Council's leisure facilities make a positive contribution to the Borough. In addition the Council is in the process of developing a 10-year Physical Activity Strategy with the aim of pulling together all the relevant strands and capturing them in one overarching strategy that puts the health and wellbeing of Lewisham residents at the forefront of provision.
- 3.2. The Strategy will be subject to stakeholder engagement in early 2021. Further information on the Strategy is set out in Section 6.
- 3.3. Corporate Strategy 2018–2022: The characteristics of the Borough are clearly set out with a growing and diverse population including some areas of very high deprivation and child poverty. Healthy lifestyles and the availability of local leisure centres are key to delivering three of the key priorities namely:
- i) Giving children and young people the best start in life;
 - ii) Building an inclusive local economy
 - iii) Delivering and defending: health, social care and support.
- 3.4 Furthermore there is opportunity within wider priorities to encourage physical activity in the active environment. Partnership working is a key tool identified to deliver against these priorities. It is clear that leisure services can play a major role in the delivery of the Corporate Strategy priorities.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 3.5 The Lewisham Local Plan – the Council is in the process of producing a new Local Plan that will help guide future growth and developments in the borough over the next 20 years (from 2020 to 2040). The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) forms part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan, and has been produced as an evidence based document to support the draft Lewisham Local Plan.
- 3.6 The London Plan includes requirements for boroughs to assess the capacity of physical, environmental and social infrastructure to support growth, and to plan for the necessary infrastructure and improvements to capacity in the borough’s infrastructure delivery plans and programmes. The IDP seeks to provide details on the key strategic infrastructure requirement identified for the new draft Local Plan. It does not capture all the infrastructure requirement over the plan period; rather it focuses on strategic matters that underpin the delivery of the Local Plan. The Council will be undertaking further infrastructure planning in relation to the spending of S106 and CIL, and will continue to work with residents, businesses, Neighbourhood Forums, and other community groups and associations, to plan for the delivery of other supporting infrastructure that is not been covered in this IDP.
- 3.7 Work on the Council’s infrastructure planning evidence took place between quarter four of 2018 and quarter four of 2019, and is informed by the latest available studies, Council service strategies, and feedback from infrastructure providers. This IDP is a ‘live document’, and as such captures the infrastructure need based on the best information available at the time of writing. As such, information included in this document, including assumptions on infrastructure requirement, may be subject to change. As strategic infrastructure priorities are likely to change over time, it is Council’s intention to provide annual updates to the IDP and considerations regarding the Bridge Leisure Centre will feed into that work.
- 3.8 Lewisham Whole Systems Obesity Action Plan 2019 – 21. The Council’s whole systems approach to obesity has three overarching aims:
- Promote an environment that supports healthy weight and wellbeing as the norm, making healthier options the easiest choice for our residents to eat well and have active lifestyles;
 - Supporting our communities and families to become healthier and more resilient, which will include addressing the wider determinants of health; and
 - Tackle the weight issues of those who are already overweight and obese.
- 3.8 Physical activity and the physical environment play key roles in the plan which is very positive and there are targets designed to assess progress linked to getting people more physically active, increasing active travel and using outdoor space for exercise.
- 3.9 Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient educational and recreational leisure time activities and facilities for young people aged 13 to 19, and those with learning difficulties to age 24, to improve their well-being, as defined in Subsection 13 of Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 (amended 2006). This is particularly important relating to the provision of swimming pools which are not readily provided via the private sector.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

4. Background

- 4.1 On 20 March 2020, the Government announced the temporary closure of all gyms and leisure centres as part of its COVID-19 response to stop the spread of infection. The risks arising from COVID-19 for leisure services providers are currently considerable for the reasons set out below. At the time of writing all leisure centres in London are closed under Tier 4 restrictions.
- 4.2 The Council's current providers GLL and 1Life are 'leisure trusts', as was the previous provider Fusion Lifestyle. Leisure trusts are charities, societies or community interest companies (with a public benefit asset lock) and as such do not distribute profits. Currently leisure providers are exempt from most COVID-19 emergency support funding, and are therefore substantially at risk in the current climate. That is because:
- The Government issued Procurement Policy Notes (PPN 02/20 and PPN04/20) on supplier relief in relation to COVID; those ceased to be applicable from the end of October 2020. In any event, they had little assistance regarding income arrangements between councils and providers
 - The position of leisure providers is such that they are unable to secure loan finance, either through the government backed scheme or commercially, due to judgement of viability being assessed and judged on historical profitable financial records rather than on future financial projections, tight contractual and operating margins and, for leisure trusts, their reinvestment of surpluses into the community model
 - the majority of leisure premises have a rateable value above £51,000 so are not eligible to receive the retail, hospitality and leisure grants
 - providers are not eligible for Sport England's emergency response funds which are targeted at grassroots community organisations and are unable to be used to address financial impact on council service provision trusts are not eligible for the Government's £750 million for frontline charities, as they are not deemed 'small' nor 'delivering frontline services'.
- 4.3 On the 25 July 2020, the Government permitted the re-opening of leisure centres that complied with the 'Guidance for people who work in grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities' therefore gaining COVID Secure status.
- 4.4 Due to the increased expenditure required to obtain and maintain COVID Secure status and the reduced income due to the same, the leisure sector re-opened slowly with only 46% of centres (just Downham Health and Leisure Centre in Lewisham – see section 7 below) reopening initially.
- 4.5 Those centres that were able to open in July saw incomes ranges between 50% and 70% of previous year performance building slowly over the first two months and then stalling in late September because of worries of a second wave of the virus. The costs of ensuring the facilities were COVID safe during this period were substantial and consequently all facilities operated at a significant financial loss during this period. A survey by Sport England in late September found that 29% of centres remained closed at that point.
- 4.6 All leisure centres were required to close completely again under the second national lockdown between 5th November and 2nd December 2020. This second lockdown is expected to set back confidence in the sector and wipe out initial income growth seen in late summer. London's move to a Tier 3 area from 16th December 2020 exacerbated this situation and since 20th December all leisure centres in the capital have required to close again due to Tier 4 restrictions.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 4.7 At the time of writing, Officers are in the process of applying to a £100m fund available via Sport England to support local authorities in covering the increased costs incurred in maintaining public leisure services and funding the net costs of leisure operators during the imminent remobilisation and business recovery phases.
- 4.8 While this relief fund is welcome it is important to note that it is acknowledged that this is nowhere near enough to bridge the financial impact experienced by the sector, with an original figure of between £500m - £750m estimated by Sport England to be required in support for the remainder of 2020/21 alone.
- 4.9 Even before Tier 4 restrictions were imposed operators were projecting average income levels of no more than c75% in financial year commencing April 2021, with optimistic hopes that this figure will reach c90% during the year commencing April 2022. In this context it is important to note that in 2019/20 leisure services in Lewisham operated at an operational deficit of c£1.5m.
- 4.10 Lewisham Council currently operates two contracts to deliver the borough's leisure facilities. One contract covers the Downham Health and Leisure Centre and the remaining facilities covered by a single contract.
- 4.11 Downham Health and Leisure Centre opened in March 2007, and is managed by 1Life (formerly Leisure Connection Ltd). 1Life have a 32 year contract through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). In addition to the leisure facilities the centre includes health care facilities, library, community hall and playing fields
- 4.12 The remaining facilities are as set out below. Fusion Lifestyle Limited previously operated seven facilities across the borough on a 15-year Leisure Management Agreement ("LMA") commencing October 2011; that arrangement ceased on 7 October 2020 and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL trading as Better) was appointed as from that date. The facilities are:
- Glass Mill Leisure Centre (Lewisham)
 - Forest Hill Pools (Forest Hill)
 - Wavelengths Leisure Centre (Deptford)
 - Ladywell Arena (Catford)
 - The Bellingham Leisure and Lifestyle Centre (Bellingham)
 - The Bridge Leisure Centre including the Lewisham Indoor Bowls Centre (Bellingham)
 - Warren Avenue Playing Fields (located in Bromley)
- 4.13 The contractual arrangement with Fusion ceased on 7 October 2020 and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL trading as Better) was appointed on a two year contract with a three year extension option, subject to the approval of the Council. For the first two years of the contract the Council is likely to incur significant costs for the operating the facilities across the borough. Warren Avenue Playing Fields was transferred to Glendale Managed Services (the Council's parks and open spaces contractor) on the expiry of the Fusion contract.

5. Overall financial position

- 5.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), agreed by Mayor and Cabinet on the 7 October as part of the financial stabilisation and budget update report, identified an anticipated funding gap over the next three years of at least £40m with £24m for 2021/22. Added to this there is growing evidence that the base Budget retains a persistent £10m overspend in key service areas.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 5.2 This leaves the Council, subject to the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) (expected week commencing 14 December 2020), preparing to identify and implement up to £34m of cuts in 2021/22 to be able to set a balanced budget. Not only is the Council obliged to set a balanced budget there is limited room for manoeuvre in terms of using reserves to do this. The Council's reserves will be needed to address the immediate impact of the COVID-19 health pandemic and potentially prolonged slow economic recovery on the Council's finances without further support from government, as well as any shocks arising from the exit from the EU.
- 5.3 Leisure services have been significantly affected by the COVID restrictions being closed during both lockdowns and with severely restricted operating environments when allowed to open, as detailed above. Requirements on how leisure facilities can operate in COVID-safe ways mean – regardless of Tier – that levels of use are going to be reduced, with consequent reductions in income from users. That means the uncertainty and impact is likely to continue as we navigate through the pandemic and the Tier system. Within Tier Three, for example, group exercise and other elements of the service will be unable to operate with users encouraged to work from home and reduce travel.
- 5.4 As highlighted in section 4 uncertainty due to COVID means that for the next 12-18 months (at least) income levels are likely to be significantly below those achieved prior to COVID with increased expenditure to maintain COVID compliance. This is within the context of the Council being required to make considerable budget savings over the coming three financial years at least due to the impact of COVID.
- 5.5 As highlighted at paragraph 4.11 the Council is liable for significant costs under the new GLL contract for the first 2 years of operation. It is important that these costs are considered in light of the Council's overall financial position and the approach to reopening facilities is considered within this context.
- 5.6 The performance of the centres, in terms of throughput and income generation within the GLL contract along with the Downham site, will continue to be monitored and reviewed to assess any trends in demand. The evidence from the initial two months of trading at Downham confirms the expectation that there is a reticence amongst a significant proportion of regular users to return to indoor exercise. This was likely to continue through a second phased easing of restrictions with the introduction of Tier 4 restrictions in London further worsening the picture. Furthermore, there is uncertainty ahead of the, hopefully successful, rollout of a vaccine in 2021, and it is likely to be late 2021 before the general population benefit from any national vaccination programme.
- 5.7 Whilst it is too early to assess the medium to long term effect on the whole sector, the early indications are that facilities which require large levels of financial support coupled with significant capital investment, should be assessed as to their financial viability, as financial pressures on Councils escalate and residents' appetite to attend leisure centres remains untested. The significance of this on the leisure facilities in the Borough is set out later in the report.

6. Physical Activity Strategy

- 6.1 The future of Council's leisure management arrangements form an important part of the ongoing development of a new 10 year Physical Activity Strategy for the borough.
- 6.2 The Strategy has been delayed due to COVID but work to date has included:
- Review of all strategic documentation

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- Development of insight analysis pulling together available sources on the people of Lewisham, their health, physical activity levels, key characteristics and challenges
- Internal consultation with key Council officers
- Residents surveys – 2 resident surveys (Adults and young people) with nearly 1500 responses overall
- Development of specialist insight –one to one interviews with a sample of BAME 12 – 16 year olds in order to understand attitudes to physical activity, and barriers to, and opportunities for, greater activity
- Sport England Facility Planning Model – supply and demand modelling for sports halls and swimming pools
- Supply and demand analysis – supply and demand modelling for all other types of indoor sport and leisure facilities.

6.3 The Strategy will set out the local landscape in Lewisham, the key challenges (health, inactivity, COVID and beyond) and set out the Council’s strategic aims and the vision for the strategy (including getting people active, making them healthy and happy and reducing health inequalities) and how we intend to deliver it (addressing the key challenges). The Strategy will include a draft action plan covering facilities, programmes, partnerships etc. There will be a number of appendices providing the evidence base (one of which will be the facilities strategy element).

6.4 The Strategy will be available in draft early in 2021 to enable a consultation to enable the development of a partnership action plan. The future of the Council’s built facilities will be considered within this context and the Council will work with residents and stakeholders to ensure that the facility mix in the Borough is able to meet the needs of a young, and growing and diverse population. Any proposals for the future leisure services will take into account the Council’s commitment to participative decision making, including the carrying out of consultation. For example, were there to be any proposal to permanently close a leisure centre, a full consultation process would be undertaken. No such proposal is currently being made.

7. Proposals regarding management of Leisure Centres

7.1 As set out above the reopening of the leisure centres in Lewisham is being planned in the context of huge financial pressure, a leisure industry under pressure, uncertainty demand for services and a strategic review of facilities for the medium to long term. Given that position it is recommended that not all of the Council’s facilities reopen fully at the moment, and that the Bridge Leisure Centre remains closed for the time being.

7.2 Due to these factors officers are recommending a cautious and phased approach to the reopening of the centres in the borough to limit the financial losses across the portfolio whilst allowing a positive programme of investment to ensure that, as centres reopen, they are fully COVID safe and building maintenance issues have been addressed. The approach to each facility is set out below. Obviously, to the extent that Tier constraints permit more or lesser provision than those set out below, amendments to these proposals will be put into place by officer decision whether immediately (in relation to Tier 4 position) or subsequently.

Downham Health and Leisure Centre

7.3 This large multi-purpose building was built on the site of a previous swimming pool in

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

2007. It is a local community hub which offers a wide range of services for people of all ages in the area. The project was financed through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Annual payments will be made through until 2036 at which point the Council assumes the freehold. These annual payments also capture the costs of the leisure management operator (1Life).

- 7.4 The leisure centre provides a 25m 6 lane main pool plus teaching pool, large 96 station gym, 2 studios, 1 badminton court sports hall and crèche. Within the building there is also a library and a number of GP surgeries. Downham Playing Fields is also managed through the contract. It is a linear green space following the course of a river and provides for 2 adult, 3 7-a-side and 1 9v9 football pitches alongside a changing room block and children's play area.
- 7.5 The financial structures of the PFI means that the centre is well resourced and in good condition. In January 2019 the gym was refurbished and the dryside changing rooms have just been refreshed.
- 7.6 The Council was able to provide financial support to 1 Life during the first lockdown to enable the centre to reopen partially on 27th July with the pool opening on 10th August. The centre closed during the second national lockdown but reopened again on 2nd December.
- 7.7 It is recommended that the centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.

Glass Mill Leisure Centre

- 7.8 Glass Mill opened in June 2013. It was built as part of the Lewisham town centre regeneration and replaced the Ladywell Leisure Centre. The centre contains a 25m 8 lane swimming pool, large teaching pool, spectator gallery, large gym, x2 studios, health suite, climbing wall, meeting room, therapy suite, creche, café, pay and display car park (55 spaces).
- 7.9 The gym was refurbished in December 2019. The two studios have a comprehensive programme. In non-COVID times there is an extensive wet side programme (club swimming, galas, school swimming, learn to swim lessons, target group sessions and fitness/lane swimming). The moveable floor helps with flexibility in operation.
- 7.10 Glass Mill has historically made a small operating surplus but recent growth of the budget gym sector in the area has significantly impacted on the performance of this site.
- 7.11 Glass Mill is the most centrally located facility in the borough and was consequently the first scheduled to reopen under the new GLL contract. A significant programme of refurbishment has been undertaken to address a backlog of works and to ensure that all mechanical plant and air handling units were fully operational in order to meet strict COVID compliance regulations.
- 7.12 Improvement works have included the full repair and sealing of plaster and flooring defects in the main foyer areas, full deep clean and repair of changing rooms and pool side furniture. Further work planned include an overhaul of the reception desk and turnstile areas to improve customer journey through reduced queuing time and increasing COVID compliance through the reduction in physical contact points.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

7.13 Glass Mill was originally scheduled for mid-November but this was delayed due to the second lockdown. The centre reopened on the 3rd December with the main pool, gym and one of the studios in operation. At the time of writing it is closed due to Tier 4 restrictions.

7.14 It is recommended that the centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.

Forest Hill Pools

7.15 Forest Hill Pools was essentially a new facility built in 2012 with only the facade of the former public baths building being retained. The centre contains a 25 metre 6 lane pool, teaching pool, gym and 2 studios as well as a community room and a café.

7.16 New gym equipment was installed in December 2019 and the 1st floor changing room, which were closed prior to lockdown due to leaks, have been completely repaired. Furthermore, a full programme of mechanical and electrical works has been undertaken along with an extensive programme of redecoration.

7.17 The site was scheduled to reopen on Monday 4th January but this date will now need to be reviewed in line with Tier 4 restrictions. As with all sites operation will be restricted due to COVID compliance measures initially but it is recommended that the centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.

Wavelengths Leisure Centre

7.18 Wavelengths Leisure Centre (Wavelengths) consists of a leisure pool (with wave machine and flumes), a standard 25 metre pool, gym, 3 studios, health suite, children's soft play area and a café. There was a significant refurbishment of the site in 2012/13. It introduced a wider range of activities and was jointly funded by Lewisham Council and Fusion Lifestyle.

7.19 During lockdown a significant schedule of redecoration and deep cleaning has taken place and the 25 metre pool was drained to allow for some minor tile repairs to be undertaken. Unfortunately, on draining the tiling defects have been identified as more serious than first thought and a major re-screeding and tiling exercise is currently underway to repair the pool. At the time of writing this report the works programme is unknown but it is likely the pool will not be operational until Spring 2021.

7.20 The dry facilities in the centre were due to open (with the exception of the soft play) on Monday 4th January alongside Forest Hill Pools but this date will now need to be reviewed in line with Tier 4 restrictions.

7.21 However, it is important to note that Wavelengths has long run at a significant operational deficit. This is primarily due to the operation of the leisure pool which has very high utility costs due to the large water area and high ceilings in the pool hall. Therefore it is recommended that the leisure pool does not reopen immediately with the situation reviewed in Spring 2021 once the pattern of use of leisure centres is clearer and the likely financial deficit on the overall contract is, hopefully, possible to estimate overall.

7.22 It is recommended that the rest of the centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

Ladywell Arena

- 7.23 Situated adjacent to Ladywell Fields this facility has a 400m athletics track and a long association with track and field athletics. The introduction of a gym, high lux level floodlights and marking of the infield for football has diversified the offer in recent years.
- 7.24 It is the home of Kent Athletics Club and S-Factor Athletics as well as 2 local non-league football teams. The football clubs have aspirations for further enhancement of the site and to support their desire to reach a higher standard of football.
- 7.25 The site has reopened for athletics club use only as the size of the gym, the relatively weak air handling system in the building and the limited staff presence means that it is very difficult to guarantee a COVID safe environment for public use. The facility has also made a financial loss for several years due to the high fixed costs and relatively low casual use.
- 7.26 Notwithstanding this the current clubs who use the site have expressed an interest in taking on more responsibility to the site with a view to opening it to public use. In order to consider the value of these discussions it is necessary for the Council to run a formal expression of interest process to ensure that all interested parties have the opportunity to consider whether they could take a role at the site.
- 7.27 It is therefore recommended that Officers proceed with an Expression of Interest process to gauge the appetite amongst third parties to take on a lease for the site to run as a publicly accessible facility.

Bellingham Leisure & Lifestyle Centre

- 7.28 Built in 2007, the site is owned by Bellingham Community Project (BCP) and through them the Trust for London. The facility is located adjacent to Bellingham railway station. The facilities include a large children's softplay facility, a small gym, studio, crèche, 3 grass pitches and $\frac{3}{4}$ size 3G pitch. There is an extensive car park supporting the venue. A pay and display system is in operation.
- 7.29 Ladywell Gymnastics Club are based at the site and have recently agreed a new lease for their element of the building.
- 7.30 The site has historically run a financial deficit but the Council recognises its importance to the local area and therefore is seeking to open the site as soon practicable under the tiering system and once a programme of redecoration and re-commissioning is completed.
- 7.31 It is recommended that the centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow. In reality, given that a significant part of the centre's provision will be prohibited even under Tier 3, the centre will only reopen fully once restrictions in London are at below this level at least.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

The Bridge Leisure Centre

- 7.32 The Bridge Leisure Centre (The Bridge) was originally a Sports and Social Club for employees of the energy company BP and was therefore not designed to be a public leisure centre. BP ceased using the centre many years ago and leased the site to the Council for use as a public leisure centre before selling it to the Authority in 2019 as it was surplus to their requirements.
- 7.33 The facility contains a non-standard 4 lane 25 metre pool, teaching pool, gym, 3 studios, 3 court sports hall, 4 squash courts (one currently operating as a Dojo), male and female saunas, community space, café and outdoors there are 2 football pitches/cricket pitch and a small multi use games area.
- 7.34 Even before the COVID pandemic The Bridge was operating at a significant financial deficit. Through the term of the Fusion Lifestyle leisure contract the site required an annual subsidy of nearly £600,000 per annum with significant investment required in the building's infrastructure.
- 7.35 In the three year period to 31 March 2020 during which The Bridge was operated by Fusion the financial performance worsened each year with falling income partially offset by cost savings but producing increased deficits annually as shown in Table 1 below :

Table 1: The Bridge - Financial Performance

£'000	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Total Income	£623	£787	£859
Total Expenditure	£1,216	£1,211	£1,273
Loss	£594	£424	£413

- 7.36 It is acknowledged that an element of the financial losses relate to the deterioration in the quality of the building and service standards in recent years but it is also clear that the site has been running at losses of over £400,000 for many years.
- 7.37 It is anticipated that to reopen the site in 2021 would require payment an annual subsidy payment of circa £750,000 in revenue and circa £450,000 essential capital works with a further c£600,000 of works that would be considered as necessary with the first few years of reopening. The revenue figure is derived from reviewing the financial performance of the centre over the past three years where annual losses averaging almost £500,000 have been recorded and projecting the negative effects of COVID upon attendance levels which would further reduce the level of income and increasing the operational deficit. It may be that following the second lockdown there is a further deterioration in public usage of leisure facilities that may further increase this sum.
- 7.38 Whilst the benefits to health and wellbeing of providing a service at The Bridge are considerable, it is important to recognise that there are five other leisure centres in the borough, and a number close by in neighbouring boroughs.
- 7.39 As such, given the current financial pressure on the Council it is recommended that The Bridge Leisure Centre remains closed while the new Physical Activity Strategy is developed (which will include as set out above the undertaking of consultation) and there is full consideration of the future of leisure facilities in the Borough taking into account that Strategy, as set out above. Officers will work to retain access to other services on the site i.e. the Indoor Bowls Centre and outdoor pitches as set out below.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

8. Meeting demand created by recommended approach

- 8.1 Clearly the proposals regarding reopening set out above will affect individuals and clubs using the Council's facilities. As set out in this report, the criteria used in coming to the recommendations have been the need to reopen as far as possible given COVID constraints and the Council's financial situation. It is acknowledged that there are in theory other options – to fully reopen the leisure centres, to reopen in a different configuration than that set out in this report, or to reopen none of them. However because of the considerations set out in this report, these are not considered to be realistic or optimum options and so they have not been considered further. Consideration has been given, and will be given as set out below, to the consequences of the proposals and how those consequences might be mitigated. As set out above the Council is currently developing a 10 year Physical Activity Strategy within which the future of the Borough's leisure facilities will be considered but it is recommended, due to financial considerations that the Bridge Leisure Centre remains closed until there is further clarity regarding the future profile of leisure facilities in the borough. This section sets out the work done so far and work to be done in the future. It is acknowledged that it is not possible to fully mitigate effects and that the position is not ideal; however, given the wider context as set out above the proposals (and the proposed future work) are recommended as the appropriate response.
- 8.2 As part of the development of the Strategy the Council commissioned a Sport England facility planning model (FPM) local assessment, to develop an evidence base and inform the Council's strategic planning for the future provision of swimming pools and sports halls within the Borough. Information relating to demand analysis in relation to The Bridge Leisure Centre has been extracted for use in this report.
- 8.3 In undertaking this analysis Sport England recognise that customers of leisure centres do not respect local authority boundaries. Whilst there are pricing incentives for residents to use the sports facilities within Lewisham, there are other influences which dictate the facilities that people will choose to use.
- 8.4 These include how close the venue is to where residents live, other facilities which may be on the same site such as a gym or studio, the programming of the activity spaces and the availability at times which fit with the lifestyle of residents, the age and condition of the facility and inherently its attractiveness. Increasingly, the quality of the facilities and leisure offer are of importance to leisure users.
- 8.5 Notwithstanding this the initial analysis suggests that based on Sport England benchmarks some level of swimming pool and dry side provision will continue to be justified in the South of the Borough in future years. This information will feed directly into the strategy for consideration alongside other factors to determine the proposed facility mix for the future of the Borough.
- 8.6 However, given that this work takes time and the assessment of Council Officers is that the current provision is unaffordable in the short term it is necessary to use some of this analysis to consider how the current actual and potential demand for the Bridge could be met. This consideration has been applied to the various provision at The Bridge Leisure Centre e.g. swimming, fitness and group exercise, squash and sports hall usage.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

Swimming

- 8.7 There are currently 6 swimming pool sites and 11 individual swimming pools located in Lewisham Borough. In addition to the two pools at The Bridge there are two pools at each of Downham Health and Leisure Centre; Forest Hill Pools; Glass Mill Leisure Centre and Wavelengths Leisure Centre (main pool and 25m x 15m leisure pool) as well as the main pool at the St Dunstan's College sports centre (which has limited public access for Swim School).
- 8.8 There is an even distribution of pool sites across the borough and there are a number of pool sites in the neighbouring local authorities, in particular, Bromley, Greenwich and Southwark that are close to the Lewisham Boundary. The area around the Bridge in lower Sydenham can be seen to be one of the lowest demand areas in the borough.
- 8.9 Regardless of this it is important to review the impact on the previous users of the site if the recommendation to keep the site closed is agreed. In terms of casual swimming, throughput was c 1,000 swims in the months before lockdown while the swim school programme at The Bridge had a total of c 306 participants per week. A number of schools also currently use the facility.
- 8.10 The assessment of whether this demand can be met is complicated by the COVID restrictions which limits the numbers in the pool as well as swim school class sizes.
- 8.11 It is not yet known what the take up will be of courses once the swimming course programme reopens in January 2021, however it is envisaged that around 35%-45% of children will not immediately return to their previous lessons which should create vacancies for a proportion of former participants at The Bridge to relocate their swimming lesson venue.
- 8.12 Despite the reduced numbers of available spaces, the lower take up of former participants should enable the majority of those seeking to take up places at Forest Hill Pools or Downham Health and Leisure Centre as the two closest alternative venues in the borough, or Glass Mill Leisure Centre (three stops on the Hayes line) to continue to participate in a structured wet course programme.
- 8.13 The restrictions placed upon bather loads and the requirement to pre book session places much greater demand on the capacity of swimming sessions than would normally be the case. Once Covid-19 restrictions are removed there should be adequate capacity at Downham Health and Leisure Centre, Forest Hill Pools or Glass Mill Leisure Centre to accommodate the displaced casual swimmers from The Bridge as well as for school use.
- 8.14 Furthermore, during the closure of the facility since March some of the clubs have made alternative arrangements to utilise other facilities. Saxon Crown are continuing to use Downham Health and Leisure Centre and will continue to use Glass Mill Leisure Centre and Forest Hill Pools. Bromley Sub aqua club have joined up with another club and are now using a pool in Bexley.
- 8.15 The Water Polo club who currently use the Bridge have identified that Glass Mill Leisure Centre would provide a suitable venue for their advanced squad sessions and the development squad could utilise either Glass Mill or Wavelengths. Officers are also working with GLL who manage Crystal Palace National Sport Centre to explore if the club could access the deep water at the centre.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 8.16 However, as noted above, it is important that overall pool coverage is considered across borough boundaries. As such the pools in the local area in order of distance from The Bridge are:
- Forest Hill Pools – 1.5 miles to the East
 - Beckenham Spa – 1.6 miles to the South
 - Crystal Palace National Sports Centre – 2 miles to the South East
 - Downham Health & Leisure Centre – 2.5 miles to the West
 - Glass Mill Leisure Centre – 3.2 miles to the North (although only three stops on the Hayes line)
- 8.17 In it also important to note that Crystal Palace National Sports Centres is one of the country's premier aquatic venues with a full Olympics sized 50 metre, 8 lane pool alongside a number of other pools and water facilities.
- 8.18 Consequently, the overall assessment is that there is sufficient water space in the locality to absorb the pre-COVID demand at the Bridge during a period of closure. Furthermore, the redistribution of customers to other Lewisham leisure centres will see increased participation at quality facilities, supporting the viability of the wider leisure offer and the sustainability of employment.

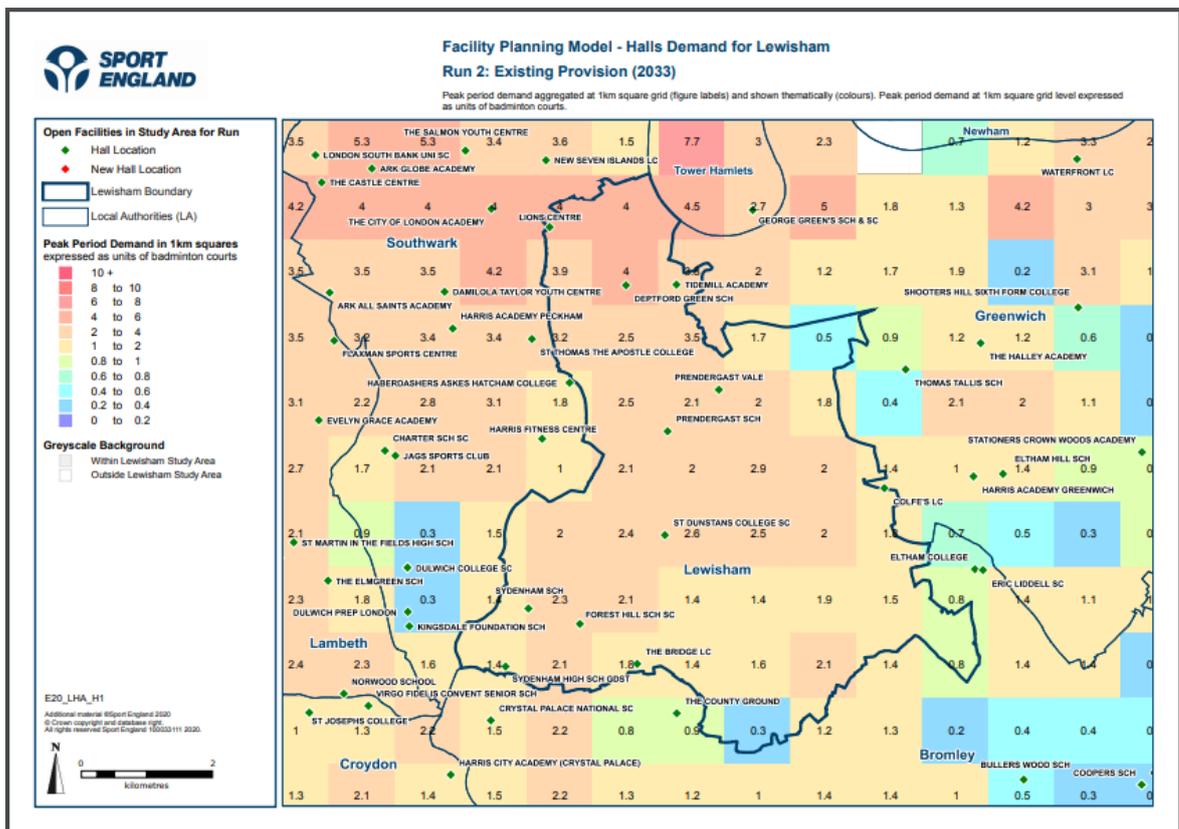
Sports Halls

- 8.19 The Bridge Leisure Centre provides a 3 court sports hall (non-standard size) which is used for sports such as badminton, trampolining and some team sports such as basketball.
- 8.20 There are 10 sports hall sites and 13 individual sports halls located in the Borough. The average age of all the sports hall sites in 2020 is 18 years, the oldest centre is Sydenham High School, which opened in 1993. The most recent sports hall to open is Sydenham School sports hall, which opened in 2015.
- 8.21 8 of the 13 individual sports halls have a four badminton court size sports hall. A 4 badminton court size sports hall can accommodate all the indoor hall sports at the community level of participation. There are also 3 sports halls that are three-court halls.
- 8.22 Sports Hall venues in Lewisham are represented in the map below extracted from the Sport England FPM report.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>



- 8.23 The FPM demonstrates that all available sports halls and as an authority wide average, are estimated to be full at peak times in 2020 and therefore above the Sport England recommended comfort level of 80% of capacity used at peak times.
- 8.24 The only other public leisure site in Lewisham which has a sports hall is Downham Heath and Leisure Centre. The sports hall only has one badminton court and demand is such that there is no capacity to relocate any of the displaced Bridge sports hall users particularly whilst COVID restrictions apply. Once COVID restrictions are removed the limitations for use at Downham are such that clubs, societies and casual users will need to locate alternative venues in order to continue their indoor dry side activities, either at school sites or at venues outside of the borough.
- 8.25 In this context it is important to note that access to sport hall provision in schools is inconsistent. This is particularly concerning due to the investment in schools in Lewisham and that the borough is heavily reliant on education sites which make a major contribution to the total amount of sports hall space within the authority area. A priority is to negotiate more access for community use at the existing education venues.
- 8.26 Officers have begun work to increase access to facilities near to The Bridge seeking to re-establish positive links with Forest Hill School Sports Centre, which until recently formed part of the Council's leisure contract and has some capacity with 15 hours a week of community use. Initial meetings with Sedgehill School have been positive and the school which is part of an academy chain has success providing community use elsewhere. Officers are currently in the process of agreeing an hourly hire rate for hire outside of their core hours although this work has been delayed by COVID restrictions.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

Finally, Bonus Pastor School is available for hire and initial conversations with the head teacher have been positive in terms of extending community use. Officers will also engage with current user to explore any barriers to using St Dunstan's College Sports Hall.

- 8.27 Notwithstanding these encouraging opportunities to relocate clubs and casual users, there may be a reticence to fully open the school facilities during the Covid-19 restrictions. As such there remains a need for Officers to work proactively with individuals and clubs to find alternative provision for their activities in the short term such the recommended closure be agreed.

Squash

- 8.28 The Bridge Leisure Centre offers the only squash courts within the Borough for utilisation on a casual pay and play basis.
- 8.29 With the closure of The Bridge Leisure Centre which has 3 squash courts, there would be no open access squash venues in Lewisham. By contrast in the neighbouring local authorities there is a very extensive number of squash venues, some of which are large scale – three courts or more.
- 8.30 Moreover England Squash has an excellent court finder facility on their website (www.englandsquash.com/finder) which shows 28 venues to play squash within 5 miles of The Bridge Leisure Centre. 14 of these sites offer pay and play whilst others are parts of sports clubs and community associations which can provide squash courts for those who will wish to continue to play.
- 8.31 As such it is assessed that there is sufficient squash provision within the local area to meet the demand that would be displaced from the Bridge should the recommendation to close be agreed.

Health and Fitness

- 8.32 There is a strong 'low cost' budget gym provision within in Borough and this often provides a larger, more attractive offer, at a lower price than the current facilities at The Bridge Leisure Centre.
- 8.33 There is a theoretical oversupply of fitness stations both in the Borough and in the catchment surrounding The Bridge Leisure Centre. There are currently 23 sites in Lewisham totalling 1,626 fitness stations.
- 8.34 There is a high number of pay and play facilities in The Bridge catchment area with the borough's own Bellingham, Downham Health and Leisure Centre and Forest Hill Pools all within 2.5 miles of the site.
- 8.35 In March 2020, when The Bridge Leisure Centre closed due to lockdown, it had a total membership of 793, of which 481 were on concessionary pricing. Should current users wish to transfer their membership to an alternative Lewisham Borough leisure facility, there is capacity across the other venues within the borough and GLL will work with members to assist their transfer.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 8.36 In addition to the availability of other local authority provision the nearest private competitor is the Metro Flex Gym with 58 stations offering low cost alternative provision within half a mile of The Bridge site. Alternative private provision is available at Pure Gym, London Sydenham (220 stations) which 1 mile to the East and Energie Fitness at Forest Hill which is 1.5 miles away to the North East.
- 8.37 Closure of the Bridge would mean residents would still have access to pay and play sites in the catchment with only those living less than half a mile from the Bridge having to travel any significant distance further than they currently do.

Ju Jitsu

- 8.38 Until lockdown Mandala Ju Jitsu Club utilised one of the Squash courts at the Bridge as a dedicated Dojo. However, since October the club has relocated to St Philip Neri Church Hall in Sydenham.
- 8.39 Should the closure be agreed Officers will work with the club to identify an alternative if their current location is not sufficient to meet their needs while the future of the Bridge is considered.

Indoor Bowls

- 8.40 In addition to the main Centre Lewisham Indoor Bowls Centre is operated as an ancillary site. The running costs of this facility are relatively low and it is not anticipated that there will be significant capital investment required to meet COVID restrictions or bring the Centre back into operation.
- 8.41 As such, it is not recommended that the Indoor Bowls Centre is closed during the forthcoming period and that Officers work with current users, and other interested parties, to develop a sustainable operating model while the work considering the future of the overall Centre is undertaken.

Outdoor Sports

- 8.42 Officers will work with GLL and the Council's wider Parks and Grounds maintenance contractor, Glendale, to maintain access to the outdoor pitches at the site during any closure period.

Summary of facility analysis

- 8.43 Following analysis of the pre-COVID use of the Bridge and the alternative available provision in the vicinity it has been assessed that the vast majority of the demand generated by only closure of the site could be met by existing facilities – particularly when COVID restrictions are eventually lifted.
- 8.44 The only area where there is a potential shortfall in alternatives is in the provision of sports hall facilities and it is important that officers work closely with schools and other institutions to ensure greater community access to existing infrastructure.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

9. Wider Context

- 9.1 This report considers all the Council's leisure centres. The direct focus of this report on the financial pressures facing leisure services, and the consequences of those; however, there are for all the centres wider considerations which will need to be taken into account in forming the future proposals - it is important to note that these considerations do not occur in a vacuum.
- 9.2 To take one example, the recommendation to not reopen the Bridge Leisure Centre. Note that this recommendation is only for the immediate period. The future proposals regarding the Bridge will need to take into account the wider considerations relevant to that facility. For example, for the Bell Green area there is potential, in the much longer term, for the Bakerloo Tube Line to be extended to Lower Sydenham Station which is in close proximity to the site.
- 9.3 As such Officers from the Community Services Department have undertaken initial work with Planning and Regeneration colleagues to assess whether the site could be considered alongside wider work to ensure that the whole area is considered holistically to the benefit of local residents.
- 9.4 This work suggests that this joined up approach is essential to deliver positive outcomes for the area but much more work is required to determine the future demand for leisure facilities and wider infrastructure before these discussion can be progressed further. However, further work would be needed to identify options and the extent to which any development schemes might support future leisure investment here or at other nearby locations.
- 9.5 Any such option appraisals would need resourcing within the 2021/22 Capital Programme and the broader Asset Strategy work that the Council is undertaking and the need to link investment to the broader Leisure Strategy highlighted above. Similar considerations will be applied in relation to the other facilities.

10. Conclusion and recommendations

- 10.1 The financial position relating to the leisure industry overall is very difficult to predict with any certainty at this stage due to the unprecedented nature and unknown impact of COVID-19 on leisure services, and the leisure market in general in both the short and medium term. Furthermore, with the wider economic impact of COVID-19 felt more acutely in boroughs like Lewisham encouraging use of our leisure centres will be challenging.
- 10.2. The evidence within the local authority leisure sector is that there is a reticence of users to return to the facilities despite assurances that they are being operated to COVID Secure standards. Membership rates are around 50% of those prior to the COVID-19 closure and the trend in early October is for further cancellations of memberships.
- 10.3 The effect of the move into Tier 4 is unknown but the timing is such that at the time of writing in late December 2020 facilities are all closed.
- 10.4 Given the uncertainty of income generation at all of the centres (once reopen) and the significant negative financial performance of The Bridge Leisure Centre over the last few years, the proposed closure of the facility whilst retaining the Indoor Bowls Hall, that can be operated independently, would realise significant revenue savings to the Council with the demand redirected to other nearby facilities.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 10.5 These are the issues behind the recommendations.
- 10.6 It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet:
- 10.6.1. Agree that Officers proceed with the approach to delivery of leisure facilities in the borough during the next period including phased approach to the centres as set out in the report namely:
- Downham Health and Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Glass Mill Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Forest Hill Pools returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow.
 - Wavelengths Leisure Centre returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow apart from the leisure pool whose opening is reviewed in Spring 2021.
 - The Bellingham Leisure and Lifestyle Centre (Bellingham) returns to full operating capacity as soon as COVID restrictions allow. In reality, given that a significant part of the centre's provision will be prohibited even under Tier 3, the centre will only reopen fully once restrictions in London are at below this level at least.
 - The Bridge Leisure Centre remains closed for a period.
- 10.6.2 Agree that Officers proceed with an Expression of Interest process to gauge the appetite amongst third parties to take on a lease for Ladywell Arena and to operate the site as a publicly accessible facility.
- 10.6.3 Agree that Officers work with the local community to develop a sustainable operating model for the Lewisham Indoor Bowls Centre while wider consideration of the Bridge Leisure Centre is ongoing.
- 10.6.4 Agree that Officers undertake proactive work with schools and other institutions to increase community access to sports hall facilities and neighbouring leisure facilities to meet demand displaced from the Bridge Leisure Centre
- 10.6.5 Agree that Officers return to Mayor and Cabinet in mid 2021/22 with an update and proposals for the wider leisure facility offer in the borough and further consideration of The Bridge Leisure Centre.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1. The October budget monitoring report is projecting an overall variance of £2m on the Leisure Management for 20-21 which reflects a combination of the termination of the Leisure management arrangement with Fusion Lifestyle, the overall costs of the new contractual arrangements with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) and the impact of COVID across all sites. The overall budget pressure of £2m includes significant costs incurred on the infrastructure of the centres to enable opening and full operation meeting COVID compliance regulations.
- 11.2 The overall projected cost for 20-21 currently includes contract costs with GLL of in the region of £750,000 - the final contract figure will be subject to the final opening dates for all centres and any further impact of COVID. This contract figure includes c£100,000 for The Bridge which only covers the costs of 'mothballing' the centre until March 21. Therefore current monitoring projections already assume limited financial expenditure at The Bridge in 20-21.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 11.3 The overall budget for Leisure Management will need to be rebuilt as part of the 21-22 budget process. It is currently estimated that a minimum of £1.7m budget pressures funding will be required for 21-22. As set out in the report if The Bridge were to be reopened it would require additional annual costs of up to £750,000 under the GLL contract plus capital investment of up to £600,000 to enable operational reopening of the centre. This would require an additional £1.3m in the 21-22 financial year.

12. Legal implications

- 12.1. The Council has a power to provide leisure services. This report sets out proposals for the operation of leisure services during the period covered by the report and the considerations applied when formulating the recommendations. It also sets out the steps which are to be taken in relation to the preparation of a leisure strategy which will inform proposals for the future operation of leisure services. The report notes that any proposals for the future leisure services will take into account the Council's commitment to participative decision making, including the carrying out of consultation were there to be a need arising from those future proposals for consultation (in particular, paragraph 6.4).
- 12.2 This is a key decision.
- 12.3 In taking this decision, the Council's public sector equality duty must be taken into account. It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.4 It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed above. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for Mayor and Cabinet, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. Mayor and Cabinet must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 12.5 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found on the EHRC website.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- 12.6 The EHRC has issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty. The 'Essential' guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice.

13. Equalities implications

- 13.1. Lewisham Council is current developing a new Physical Activity strategy. As part of the strategy development, a vision, priorities and key outcomes will be established to set the strategic direction for the service over the coming years. Whilst these have not yet been confirmed at this stage, they are likely to centre around increasing physical activity levels and reducing inactivity with the aim of reducing the burden on the NHS, particularly in deprived areas and within the BAME community while using physical activity to:

- promote health, wellbeing and happiness;
- tackle deprivation;
- reduce crime and anti-social behaviour;
- develop the economy, jobs and skills;
- support the voluntary & community sector.

- 13.2. A number of specific target outcomes and associated KPIs will be identified to establish how the strategy will be measured and monitored, with an action plan identifying specific actions for implementation.

- 13.3 The report sets out a range of alternative facilities and activities that will mitigate the equalities impact of the recommendations with the report with the development of the Physical Activity Strategy aimed at narrowing health inequalities.

14. Climate change and environmental implications

- 14.1. Leisure Centres, especially swimming pools, consume high levels of energy. The Bridge Leisure Centre is not energy efficient and whilst the costs of operation could be reduced by investment into the building, plant and electrical systems the current level of deficit to the Council would not make the necessary level of capital investment a viable solution to the significant ongoing costs.

- 14.2 Any and all new leisure provision has significantly improved energy efficiency when compared to buildings of the age of The Bridge.

15. Crime and disorder implications

- 15.1. Leisure Services play a significant role providing positive activities for young people, reducing the chances of them being involved in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity. They are a key provision in the Local Authorities Public Health Approach to violence reduction.

- 15.2 Whilst the potential closure of The Bridge would reduce the opportunities in the immediate area, development of the facilities at Bellingham could provide an alternative venue for displaced dry-side (i.e. not swimmers) users whilst the current capacity for swimming capacities would ensure the majority of customers could relocate to an alternative venues within the borough.

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

16. Health and wellbeing implications

- 16.1. There is a wealth of evidence to highlight that the benefits of an active lifestyle are far reaching and impact positively on people's lives across the life course. Those who play sport and are active are healthier, happier and more likely to be successful in academic and professional life.
- 16.2. We know that the benefits of an active lifestyle are far reaching and impact positively on people's lives. The weight of the national evidence base regarding the risks and costs of inactivity is compelling:
- Physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths in the UK, the same number as smoking;
 - Physical inactivity is the fourth largest cause of disease and disability in the UK;
 - Physical inactivity leads to around 37,000 premature deaths a year;
 - Evidence highlights that active people are less likely to suffer from heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and may consequently live 5 years longer.
- 16.3. Physical inactivity poses a serious and growing danger to society; it damages health, economy and the environment and limits the educational attainment and future lives of children.
- 16.4. It is estimated by Public Health England that the cost of physical inactivity is £7.4 billion per year.

17. Social Value implications

- 17.1. Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires that the council considers how wider social, economic and environmental benefits that may improve the wellbeing of the local area can be secured.
- 17.2. Leisure Centres are significant local employers and the potential closure of The Bridge would undoubtedly involve the redundancy of several local employees. Assurance has been received from GLL that wherever possible displaced staff will be given an opportunity to relocate to other leisure centres in the borough in order to minimise the number of enforced redundancies.

18. Background papers

19. Glossary

Term Definition

Report author and contact

James Lee, Director of Community, Partnerships and Leisure – james.lee@lewisham.gov.uk 020 8314 6548.

Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources

Chris Goddard, Principal Accountant - chris.goddard@lewisham.gov.uk

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR

Stephanie Fleck, Principal Lawyer –
Stephanie.fleck@lewisham.gov.uk Tel: 020 8314 9968

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>