

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 7 MARCH 2024** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) meeting held on 1st February 2024.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 9 - 24)

- a) The Panel are to receive the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme
- b) Members to discuss future planning of items for the Work Programme

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

4. PUBLIC ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STRATEGY (Pages 25 - 56)

The Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy is to be presented to the Panel for comments.

Executive Councillor: L Davenport-Ray

Contact Officer: G McDowell
01480 388386

5. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE LONG TERM OPERATING MODEL FOR ONE LEISURE (Pages 57 - 152)

The Independent Review of the Long Term Operating Model for One Leisure is to be presented to the Panel.

Executive Councillor: S Taylor

**Contact Officer: G Holland
07791 274315**

6. ONE LEISURE MEMBERSHIP ARCHITECTURE PROPOSAL (Pages 153 - 166)

To receive the One Leisure Membership Architecture Proposal Report.

Executive Councillor: S Taylor

**Contact Officer: G Holland
07791 274315**

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve:-

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

8. REVOCATION OF RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY (Pages 167 - 190)

The Revocation of Risk Based Verification Policy is to be presented to the Panel.

Executive Councillor: S Ferguson

**Contact Officer: K Kelly
01480 388151**

9. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK PROJECT UPDATE (Pages 191 - 212)

To receive an Update on the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Project.

Executive Councillor: S Taylor

**Contact Officer: N Massey
01480 388658**

10. RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve:

that the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

11. BIODIVERSITY 4 ALL - PROJECT UPDATE (Pages 213 - 256)

To receive an update on the BioDiversity 4 All Project.

Executive Councillors: L Davenport-Ray & S Taylor

**Contact Officer: N Massey
01480 388658**

12. HOUSEHOLD GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE - UPDATE (Pages 257 - 268)

To receive an update on the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service.

Executive Councillor: S Taylor

**Contact Officer: A Rogan
01480 388082**

28 day of February 2024

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

Please contact Mrs Beccy Buddle, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Tel No: 01480 388008/e-mail Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 1 February 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, M J Burke, S Bywater, J E Harvey, N J Hunt, M Kadewere, C Lowe, S R McAdam and G J Welton.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S J Criswell and D J Shaw.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson and B M Pitt.

45. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th January 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

46. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor J Kerr declared an Other Registerable Interest in Minute 23/49 as a member of the St Ives Flood Action Group.

Councillor M Burke declared an Other Registerable Interest in Minute 23/49 as a member of the St Ives Flood Action Group.

Councillor T Alban declared a Non-Registerable Interest in Minute 23/49 as a member of the same band as the Officer presenting the item.

47. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st February 2024 to 31st May 2024.

The Panel were advised that a request had been made to create a Working Group to investigate Disabled Facilities Grants. Councillors were invited to express their interest in partaking to Democratic Services.

48. THE GREAT FEN

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Officer was unable to attend the meeting and the item was deferred to a future meeting of the Panel.

49. FLOODING MANAGEMENT UPDATE

By means of a presentation by the Corporate Director (Place) and Cambridgeshire County Council's Flood Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), an update on Flooding Management was presented to the Panel.

Following an observation by Councillor Bywater, the Panel were assured that an updated Watercourse Policy had recently been introduced which allowed the County Council more rights when dealing with landowners.

The Panel were also advised, in response to a question from Councillor Lowe, that the Council could arrange street cleansing to be conducted following any culvert work to ensure that highways remain clear.

Following a question from Councillor Hunt, it was advised that dialogue was ongoing with local communities and Parish Councils to ensure that they were best prepared in the event of a flood.

In response to an observation from Councillor Lowe regarding the involvement of Drainage Boards in maintaining ditches and waterways, the Panel heard that a community newsletter was being introduced which would spotlight on organisations to better inform local residents of work being undertaken.

Further to an enquiry from Councillor Alban, regarding older estates where residents may have over time covered waterways, the Panel were advised to flag with the team if they became aware of any such scenarios to enable discourse in order to rectify.

50. BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

By means of a report by the Council Tax and Business Rates Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy was presented to the Panel.

Following a comprehensive introduction by the Officer and Executive Councillor, Councillor Kerr praised the new format of the report and stated that it was much easier to read, a sentiment which was echoed by the Panel.

There being no further questions, it was thereupon

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

51. UPDATE ON ALTERNATIVE LAND MANAGEMENT

By means of a presentation and report by the Operations Manager (Environmental Services) (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), an Update on the Alternative Land Management Scheme was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Bywater expressed surprise at the level of detail within the report and thanked the team for their work, a sentiment which was echoed by the Panel.

Councillor McAdam observed that education on the scheme was key to going forward in caring for the local environment and stated that he would pass on the detail to Huntingdon Town Council to allow them to better understand the scheme.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Hunt about the long term future for the scheme, the Panel heard that the short term plan is to implement and test the knowledge provided by the ecologists and improving communications with local organisations. The Panel heard that once the scheme is established, there are plans to work together with the BioDiversity team and local Councils to further roll out and develop the scheme across the district.

52. SUPPORT TO THE FINANCIALLY VULNERABLE

By means of a report by the Interim Corporate Director, (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), a report on Support to the Financially Vulnerable was presented to the Panel.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Alban, it was clarified to the Panel that some agencies such as Citizens Advice and Department of Work and Pensions were already based at Pathfinder House, in addition to this the report specifies opportunities to make agencies more accessible to communities across the district. Work was being undertaken to see which communities would benefit most from this outreach work and trials would begin once this had been established. It was acknowledged that there is a demand for appointments to be held via the telephone however, this work recognises that there is still a need for face to face appointments within the community.

Chair

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24

| Performance and Growth Agenda Items | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Meeting Date | Pre-Scrutiny | Scrutiny Review | Task and Finish Groups Working Groups |
| 6 th March 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Q3 • Corporate Plan Refresh • Fees and Charges Update | | |
| 3 rd April 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Infrastructure Levy Funding Allocation • UK Shared Prosperity Funding Update • Market Towns Programme – Spring Update | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntingdonshire Futures – Festival of Huntingdonshire | |
| 5 th June 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Report (2023/24) Quarter 4 • Finance Performance Report (2023/24) Quarter 4 • Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023/24 • CCTV Services – Shared Services Extension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntingdonshire Futures – Bi-annual update | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Towns Programme – Summer Update | | |
| Unscheduled/Pending Further Details | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntingdonshire Place Strategy • Market Towns Programme • Business Development |

Environment, Communities and Partnerships Agenda Items

| Meeting Date | Pre-Scrutiny | Scrutiny Review | Task and Finish Groups Working Groups |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 th March 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EV Charging Strategy • One Leisure Long Term Operating Model Report • One Leisure Membership Architecture Review Report • Revocation of the Risk Based Verification Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity for All Update • HCP Investment Project Update • Garden Waste Subscription Update | |
| 4 th April 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPE Agency Agreement • Material Recycling Facility Contract Renewal • Climate Emergency UK Report and Action Plan • Supporting Residents – Domestic Abuse Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Leisure Annual Performance Review | |
| 6 th June 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Climate Update | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Fen Update |
| Unscheduled/ Pending Further Details | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP Waiting Times • Issue of concrete affecting public buildings – specifically Hinchingsbrooke Hospital • Lack of NHS Dentists within the District • Corporate performance reports • Local Lettings Plan • SEUK Update | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with Parish Councils and development of relationship • Hydrogen Vehicles • Environmental impacts on planning – renewable energy, green spaces |

Task and Finish Groups

Performance and Growth

| Review of External Appointments to Outside Organisations |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Membership: Cllrs S Cawley, S J Corney, I D Gardener and S A Howell |
| Progress: Summer 2022: Terms of Reference have been established. Questionnaire has been sent to all relevant boards and organisations. Regular meetings are established from September. September 2022: Evidence and information gathering underway. November 2022: Information gathering completed. February 2023: Report presented to O&S Panel and Cabinet March 2023: Cabinet response to the report received by the Panel. July 2023: Communication to be sent to all Councillors who are representatives on outside organisations to advise the new reporting progress. January 2024: Group met to discuss progress and anticipated plan to move forward. Next steps: Plan to regularly review and monitor implementation of recommendations. |

Environment, Communities and Partnerships

| |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Climate Working Group |
| Members: Cllrs T D Alban, J Kerr, C Lowe and D Shaw Lead Officer: Neil Sloper |
| Progress: November 2022: Initial Meetings held to establish Terms of Reference for the group. April 2023: Regular meetings established. Evidence and information gathering to be progressed. Group to be involved in the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development. January 2024: Meetings held to discuss proposed work plan for the group and to discuss HVO Fuels project Next Steps: Meetings to be scheduled to allow involvement in proposed works. |
| Climate Sub Group Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy |
| Members: Cllrs T D Alban, J Kerr, C Lowe and D Shaw Lead Officer: George McDowell |
| Progress: February 2022: Initial meeting held May 2023: Regular meetings established. Residents survey agreed. July 2023: Meeting to review the outcome of the survey. September 2023: Meeting to review applications for the EV pilot scheme November 2023: Meeting to update on progress December 2023: Meeting to finalise report detail Next Steps: Final report anticipated for March 2024 cycle of meetings |
| Disabled Facilities Grants Group |
| Members: TBC Lead Officer: Claudia Deeth |
| Progress: February 2024: Councillors invited to express their interest in being involved with the project. Next Steps: Initial meeting to be scheduled to establish Terms of Reference for the group. |

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NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Prepared by: Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader of the Council
Date of Publication: 19 February 2024
For Period: 1 March 2024 to 30 June 2024

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

| Councillor Details | Councillor Contact Details |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Councillor S J Conboy Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Place | Cloudberry Cottage 9 Earning Street Godmanchester Huntingdon PE29 2JD Tel: 01480 414900 / 07831 807208 E-mail: Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |
| Councillor L Davenport-Ray Executive Councillor for Climate & Environment | 73 Hogsden Leys St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6AD E-mail: Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |
| Councillor S Ferguson Executive Councillor for Customer Services | 9 Anderson Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DN Tel: 07525 987460 E-mail: Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Councillor B Mickelburgh | Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources | <p>2 Grainger Avenue Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 2JT</p> <p>Tel: 07441 392492 E-mail: Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</p> |
| Councillor B Pitt | Executive Councillor for Community & Health | <p>17 Day Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DF</p> <p>Tel: 07703 169273 E-mail: Ben.Pitt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</p> |
| Councillor T Sanderson | Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning | <p>29 Burmoor Close Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 6GE</p> <p>Tel: 01480 436822 E-mail: Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</p> |
| Councillor S Taylor | Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste & Street Scene | <p>66 Wren Walk Eynesbury St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 2GE</p> <p>Tel: 07858 032076 E-mail: Simone.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</p> |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Councillor S Wakeford | Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing | 4 Croft Close Brampton Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 4TJ Tel: 07762 109210 E-mail: Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01480 388169 or E-mail Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.

Agendas may be accessed electronically at the [District Council's website](#).

Normal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)

4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
 - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

- Notes:-
- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated ***
 - (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

| Subject/Matter for Decision | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Corporate Plan Refresh | Cabinet | 19 Mar 2024 | | Dan Buckridge, Business Intelligence and Performance Manager Tel: 01480 388065 Email: dan.buckridge@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Leader, Chair of the Cabinet and Executive Councillor for Place | Performance & Growth |
| Biodiversity 4 All Project Update (SLT) *** | Cabinet | 19 Mar 2024 | | Nick Massey, Project Manager - Biodiversity for All and Open Spaces Tel: 01480388388 Email nick.massey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment | Environment, Communities and Partnerships |

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|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy | Cabinet | 19 Mar 2024 | | George McDowell, Parking Services Officer Tel: (01480) 388386 or Email: george.mcdowell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Climate & Environment | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |
| Evocation of the Risk Based Verification (RBV) Policy ## | Cabinet | 19 Mar 2024 | | Katie Kelly, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel No: (01480) 388151: Email: katie.kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | 3 | Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |
| One Leisure Membership Architecture Review Report | Cabinet | 19 Mar 2024 | | Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Services Gregg Holland: 01480 388157 Email gregg.holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |

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| Subject/Matter for Decision | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| One Leisure Long Term Operating Model Report | Cabinet | 19 Mar 2024 | | Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Services Gregg Holland: 01480 388157 Email gregg.holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |
| Material Recycling Facility (MRF) Contract Extension (part 2) ## | Cabinet | 16 Apr 2024 | | Andrew Rogan, Waste Operations Manager Tel No: 01480 388082 or email: Andrew.Rogan@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | 3 | Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |
| Supporting Residents - Domestic Abuse Policy | Cabinet | 16 Apr 2024 | | Jon Collen, Housing Needs + Resources Mgr Email: Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk Tel: 01480 388220 | | Executive Councillor for Customer Services | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |

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| Subject/Matter for Decision | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| UK Shared Prosperity Funding Update | Cabinet | 16 Apr 2024 | | Pamela Scott, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager Email: pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk Tel: 01480 388486 | | Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing | Performance & Growth |
| Market Towns Programme Spring Update | Cabinet | 16 Apr 2024 | | Pamela Scott, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager Tel: 01480 388486 Email: pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing | Performance & Growth |
| Community Infrastructure Levy Funding Allocation | Cabinet | 16 Apr 2024 | | Claire Burton, Implementation Team Leader Tel No: 01480 388274 or Email: Claire.Burton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning | Performance & Growth |

| Subject/Matter for Decision | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| CPE Agency Agreement | Cabinet | 16 Apr 2024 | | George McDowell, Parking Services Officer Tel No: 01480 388386 or Email: george.mcdowell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |
| Huntingdonshire Futures - Festival of Huntingdonshire | Cabinet | 16 Apr 2024 | | Paul Gibbons, Economic Development Officer Tel: 01480 388074 Email: paul.gibbons@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | | Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) |
| CCTV Operations - Shared Services Extension *** | Cabinet | 18 Jun 2024 | | Neil Howard, CCTV Operations Manager Tel: 01480 388381 Email: neil.howard@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Customer Services | Performance & Growth |

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| Subject/Matter for Decision | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Annual Climate Update*** | Cabinet | 18 Jun 2024 | | Helen Lack, Development Manager Tel: 01480 388658 Email: helen.lack@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | | Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |

**Public
Key Decision Yes***

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

Meeting/Date: 7th March 2024: Overview & Scrutiny
(Environment, Communities and Partnerships)

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray Executive District
Councillor for Climate & Environment

Report by: Operations Manager (GM)
Assistant Director Strategic Insight & Delivery
(NS)

Ward(s) affected: All

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to consider and comment on the recommendation to endorse the 'Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy' from Appendix A of the Cabinet report.

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Appendix A
Public
Key Decision Yes*

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

Meeting/Date: 19th March 2024: Cabinet

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray Executive District Councillor for Climate & Environment

Report by: Operations Manager (GM)
Assistant Director Strategic Insight & Delivery (NS)

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

In recent years there has been a significant growth in the number of electric vehicles (EV) seen on the roads in the UK with over 3,500 now registered in our District. This growth is anticipated to increase in line with restrictions on the sale and manufacture of vehicles.

Acknowledging this growth, the Council's Climate Action Plan approved February 2023 set out an action to 'Develop an EV Strategy for Huntingdonshire'.

The Council's Climate Working Group in collaboration with officers have developed a 'Public EV Charging' strategy that aims to identify and provide clarity on the role of Huntingdonshire District Council in public EV charging.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Adopt the proposed 'Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy' included with this report.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to request that the Cabinet adopt the proposed 'Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy' appended to this report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. In recent years there has been a significant growth in the number of electric vehicles seen on the roads in the UK with over 3,500 now registered in our District. This growth is anticipated to increase in line with restrictions on the sale and manufacture of vehicles.
- 2.2. Acknowledging this growth, the Council's Climate Action Plan approved February 2023 set out an action to 'Develop an EV Strategy for Huntingdonshire'. In addition, the Council's Corporate Plan prioritises creating a better Huntingdonshire by lowering our carbon emissions. The development of an EV strategy aims to support the growing EV use which will reduce the number of Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles in use.
- 2.3. The Council's Climate Working Group in collaboration with officers have developed a 'Public EV Charging' strategy that aims to identify and provide clarity on the role of Huntingdonshire District Council in public EV charging.
- 2.4. Recognising EV growth, funding opportunities have previously been made available to local authorities. It is noted that to access to these funds, there has been a requirement for the Local Authority to have an endorsed EV Strategy in place.
- 2.5. A Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) EV Infrastructure Strategy is currently under development. The aim of that document is to set out a high-level approach to EV Charging provision across our region and differs in scope to our own proposed strategy. Officers have had the opportunity to review and comment on the development of the CPCA document.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The options available to the Council are:

- a) Do Nothing
- b) Develop an EV Strategy

3.1. a) Do Nothing

- 3.1.1. Should the Council consider this option; it will not meet an objective set out in the Climate Action Plan. Failure to have an EV strategy in place may limit our ability to apply for external funding.

3.2. b) Develop an EV Strategy

3.2.1. This option will meet an objective set out in the Climate Action Plan.

3.2.2. This option provides additional benefits which include:

- Provision of a clear direction and remit for the Council in relation to Public EV Charge Points. The principles outlined in the strategy can be used to inform service plans and support the scoping of future projects.
- Based on previously observed funding opportunities, adoption will likely increase the Council's eligibility to future funds available.
- Recognition of local priorities that the Council can champion in collaborative works with other authorities (e.g. CPCA/CCC) seeking to make improvements in the area.

4. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

4.1. The methodology relating to the development of the strategy is detailed in section 3 of the strategy. This section provides details of areas that are out of scope.

4.2. The development of the strategy included:

- Public consultation through a survey which received over 400 responses.
- Assessment of local EV ownership
- Assessment of local public EV charging provision.

4.3. This strategy does not seek to amend the responsibility for on-street/Highways matters which remain with Cambridgeshire County Council. More information relating to CCC EV Charging can be found at the following address.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/electric-vehicle-charging-points#>

4.4. The CPCA EV Infrastructure Strategy is currently under development. The aim of that document is to set out a high-level approach to EV Charging provision across our region. The CPCA Strategy is distinct from the aim of this document, which focuses specifically in defining the role that Huntingdonshire District Council will play in supporting or funding public charging provision within our District.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The strategy does not ask for any additional financial provision at this time. The strategy does set out how we will look to fund enhanced provision in our off-street car parks.

5.2. The strategy confirms the principles we will apply when looking to utilise external funding sources. Based on previously observed funding opportunities, adoption of a strategy will likely increase the Council's eligibility for any future funds available.

- 5.3. The Council has been granted funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Rural Fund. This funding (~£265k) requires an output of an increased number of EV Charge points with an increased level of usage. We will progress the use of these funds in line with the constraints it was granted under, and the principles set out in our strategy.

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 6.1. This paper will be presented at Overview & Scrutiny on 7th March 2024. The comments of O&S will be included prior to the Cabinet meeting 19th March 2024.

7. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1. The Council's Corporate Plan prioritises 'Creating a better Huntingdonshire' by 'lowering our carbon emissions.'

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1. The strategy has been developed in accordance with the principles of the Corporate Plan. We have listened to feedback from local people and evaluated priorities to develop our role and objectives.

9. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The development of an EV strategy aims to support the growing EV use which will reduce the number of Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles in use which will help to reduce carbon emissions.

10. CLIMATE WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

- 10.1. The following Councillors form the membership of the Climate Working Group:
- Cllr Dave Shaw
 - Cllr Julie Kerr
 - Cllr Charlotte Lowe
 - Cllr Tim Alban
 - Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray

11. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1. The Council remains committed to delivery of the objectives of the Climate Action Plan.
- 11.2. The strategy aims to support the growing EV use which will reduce the number of Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles in use. This supports the Council's Corporate Plan priority of creating a better Huntingdonshire by lowering our carbon emissions.
- 11.3. The developed strategy provides a clear role and remit for the Council. Its development has been informed by public engagement and analysis of local information.

- 11.4. Previously available external funding has stipulated a requirement for the Local Authority to have an EV Strategy. Based on this observed criteria, adoption of a strategy will likely increase the Council's eligibility for future available funding.

12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1: Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Huntingdonshire District Council: Climate Strategy Council (22nd February 2023)

<https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s125879/Climate%20Strategy%20Report%20for%20Full%20Council.pdf>

Huntingdonshire District Council: Climate Strategy

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/6882/climate-strategy-appendix-1-climate-strategy.pdf>

Huntingdonshire District Council: Climate Action Plan adopted February 2023

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/6912/climate-strategy-action-plan.pdf>

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

Operations Manager (GM)

Assistant Director Strategic Insight & Delivery (NS)

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PUBLIC ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

**Our Role: A
Strategy for
Huntingdonshire
District Council**



Foreword

Our Corporate Plan to 2028 informs everything we do, including the priority **to create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.**¹ Recognising the threat of climate change, our Climate Strategy sets out an Action Plan to guide our work. This includes enabling and encouraging local people and businesses to reduce carbon emissions.

Huntingdonshire's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions is transportation. Our residents and businesses are keen to reduce their carbon footprint, changing behaviours and trying new technologies. Yet many do not have access to public transport. For those who may wish to use an electric vehicle, many do not have private off-street parking suitable for vehicle charging. Existing charge points are also unevenly distributed and concentrated around the settlements of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Buckden and Needingworth. Because of these challenges, achieving a just transition may require support from local government.

While recognising that Huntingdonshire District Council is not a transport authority, we aim to support and encourage residents by working in partnership with parishes, towns and community groups. To reach the national average, this strategy concludes that 70 additional public charge points would be required across our district, provided by a combination of local government and private businesses. We hope that adopting a Public EV Charging Strategy will unlock future funding sources that our Council can use to support local communities and businesses as they build our much needed EV charging infrastructure.

Guided by these principles and priorities, members of our cross-party Climate Working Group have worked with officers to develop a strategy that identifies the role our Council will play within the future public electric vehicle charging network of Huntingdonshire.

Lara Davenport-Ray

Executive Councillor for
Climate & Environment

In current times, when environmental issues are of paramount importance, it was an exciting opportunity for The Climate Working Group to participate in the entire project.

We met regularly and worked in collaboration with officers and Cllr Davenport-Ray to help develop the Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. It was constructive to work cross party and be involved with the proposal from conception; initially understanding the needs, expectations and issues faced by residents by developing, promoting and analysing the questionnaire/survey; including site visits to potential local rural parish; before eventually assisting with forming the strategy.

Julie Kerr

Chair of HDC's Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships)
On behalf of the Electric Vehicle Charging Point working group

¹HDC Corporate Plan, 2023-2028: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/vehhxpfr/corporate-plan.pdf>



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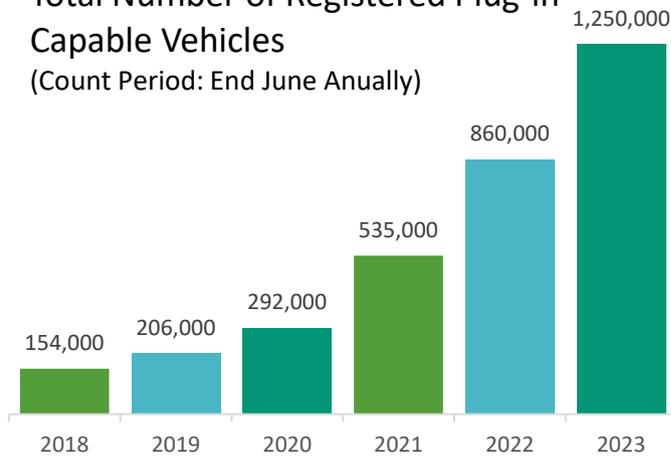


1. Introduction

Electric Vehicle use and charging is a subject at the forefront of Council agendas across the UK.

Total Number of Registered Plug-in Capable Vehicles

(Count Period: End June Anually)



In the UK, there are over 33 million cars currently on the road with an increasing number of electric vehicles every month.

At the end of June 2023, the number of vehicles registered with the ability to be plugged in was in excess of 1.25 million. This continues the upward trend observed over previous years.

The scale of growth is expected to increase based on restrictions that will be imposed on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles from 2035.

Where do we fit in?

Our Council adopted a Climate Strategy in February 2023 ² which recognises the theme of ‘Travel & Transport.’ Indeed, the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions across our district comes from transportation. ³ To address this challenge, the Climate Strategy sets out the Council’s role in reducing these emissions across Huntingdonshire.

Our Council aims to be:

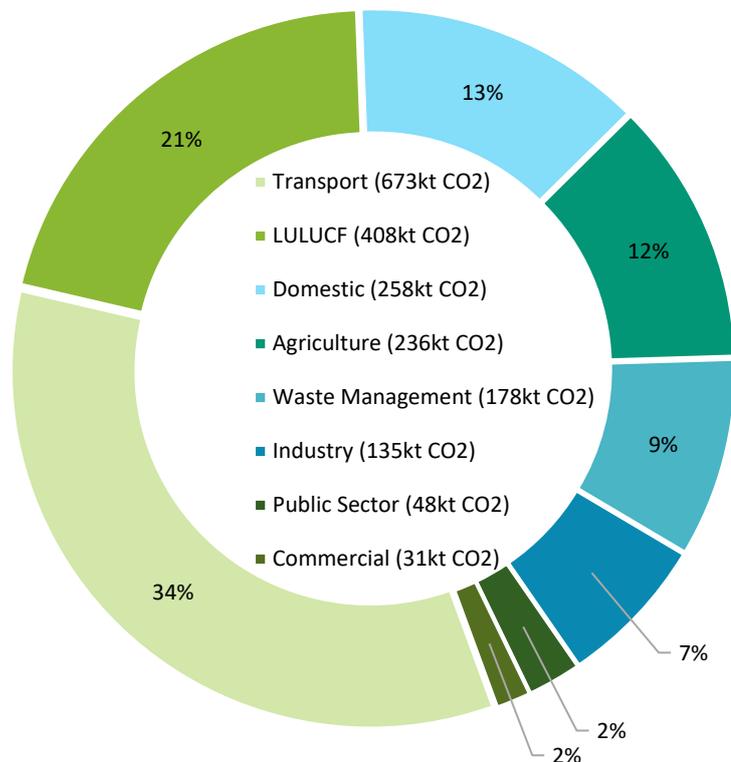
An Enabler:

- Seeking partnerships and funding to enhance our district’s electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Working with partners to expand the infrastructure for sustainable and low carbon travel.

An Encourager:

- Promoting the health benefits of active travel and alternative travel choices

What Causes Huntingdonshire's Greenhouse gas emissions of 1,966 kt CO2



²HDC Climate Strategy, February 2023: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/6882/climate-strategy-appendix-1-climate-strategy.pdf>

³ HDC Climate Strategy, February 2023, Page 6



Priority 2 - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations



Improving housing



Forward-thinking
economic growth



Lowering carbon
emissions

Our Climate Strategy sets out an Action Plan⁴ to guide our reduction of emissions. The Council’s cross-party Climate Working Group has undertaken the specific action to ‘develop an EV strategy for Huntingdonshire.’

An overarching Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) EV Infrastructure Strategy is currently under development. The aim of that document is to set out a high-level approach to EV Charging provision across our region. The CPCA Strategy is distinct from the aim of this document, which focuses specifically in defining the role that Huntingdonshire District Council will play in supporting or funding public charging provision within our District.

⁴ HDC Climate Action Plan, February 2023: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/6912/climate-strategy-action-plan.pdf>



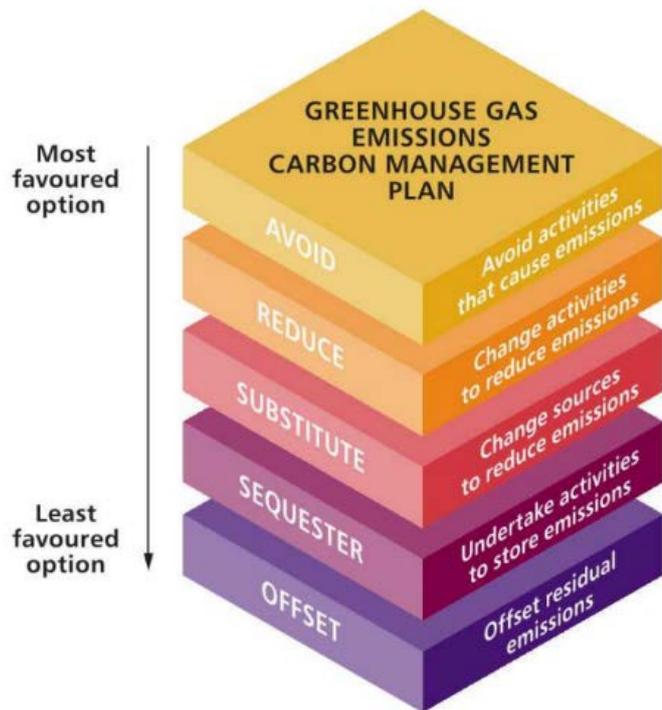
2. Defining & Scoping Our Strategy

Our Council’s Climate Strategy outlines our ‘hierarchy of action’ prioritising avoidance and reduction of emissions through changing activity and demand for energy and fossil fuels. Only after exhausting avoidance and reduction, will substitution of fossil fuels be investigated⁵.

The Climate Working Group (CWG) considered that a reduction of carbon emissions can be achieved through the adoption and transition towards the use of public transport and active travel. The Government’s Committee on Climate Change has calculated that the UK’s 2050 net zero target is only achievable if at least 10% of car miles can be shifted to walking, cycling and public transport.

However, there is also a recognition that some residents will continue to require private transport. Many residents and businesses in Huntingdonshire, especially in rural areas, do not have access to public transport and do not have private off-street parking suitable for charging.

For many residents the cost of acquiring an electric vehicle represents a significant challenge. Achieving a just transition for these residents, including a transition to the ‘substitute’ of electric vehicles, may require encouragement and support from local government. Non-EV owners will benefit indirectly through region wide reductions of emissions and improvement of air quality.



It is estimated that in Huntingdonshire there will be 34,300 electric vehicles on our roads by 2030 and 120,550 by 2050⁶. By supporting electric vehicle charging, we can encourage users of private transport who would like to take the next step to reduce their transport emissions.

⁵ HDC Climate Strategy, February 2023: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/6882/climate-strategy-appendix-1-climate-strategy.pdf>

⁶ The source for this information is Cenex; a programme run on behalf of Central and Local Government to help support and develop the UK supply chain of low emission vehicle technology.



3. Our Methodology

To understand our Council’s role in Huntingdonshire’s charging infrastructure we needed to collect data to understand:

- What our residents’ expectations are in relation to electric vehicles
- The current EV infrastructure in Huntingdonshire
- How we can support Towns, Parishes and Community Groups

From this, we would review our findings and begin the development of the strategy which defines the role and objectives for the Council.

We recognise that our role will be a mix of actions that our Council can take, whilst also looking at how we can enable and influence others.



The following areas are also under consideration in our Council’s Climate Action plan as they are also significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions. They have been excluded from the scope of this strategy as they will be given separate consideration.

These excluded areas are:

- HDC fleet and commercial opportunities
- HDC corporate buildings and estate



4. Discovery

As part of our discovery phase, we have undertaken:

- Public EV Survey
- Parish Sites: EV Capability Study
- Assessment of EV Ownership in Huntingdonshire (section 5)
- Assessment of Local EV public charging provision (section 6)

Key Findings: Public EV Survey

We undertook an online survey which ran for a period of 6 weeks (05/06/2023 - 17/07/2023). This gathered over 400 responses.

The aim of the survey was to understand:

- Where do electric vehicle users want to see charging points installed?
- The behavior of electric vehicle users
- Would residents be willing to pay for the electricity they use when charging?
- The barriers that prevent people making the switch to electric vehicles

The survey responses highlighted the following key findings:

- Access to charging points is a key barrier to EV ownership.
- Public charge points are not the main charging location for the majority of EV owners.
- The use of public charge points by EV Owners is primarily for *top up* or *partial* charging as opposed to fully charge a vehicle.
- Both EV and Non-EV owners agreed it is fair for EV users to pay to use public charge points.
- The greatest downfall of public charge points is that there are not enough of them.

The results of the survey will inform the role HDC will play in public EV charging infrastructure.

More information can be found in Appendix 1.

Key Findings: Parish Sites EV Capability Study

In August 2023, funds were made available to HDC from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

This funding was allocated for use in relation to Electric Vehicle charging. As works were underway to develop a Strategy for HDC that identified our role in EV, the funding was used to explore the feasibility of installation of charge points at non-HDC locations.

We were pleased to have the opportunity to work with a number of Parish Councils from across the district. As future funding becomes available, we look forward to continuing this in 2024/25.

More information can be found in Appendix 2.



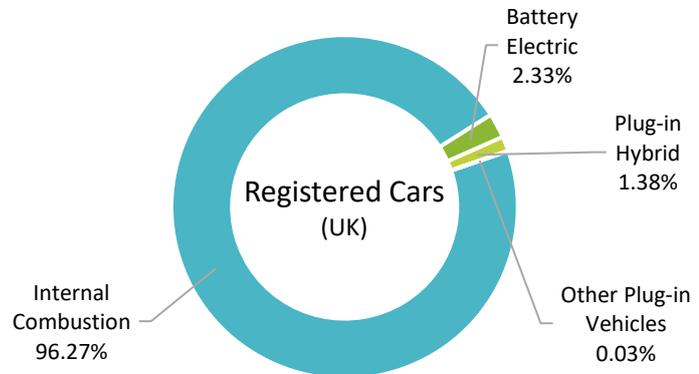
5. Review: EV Ownership in Huntingdonshire

Population estimates (mid 2021) published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)⁷ estimate the following populations:

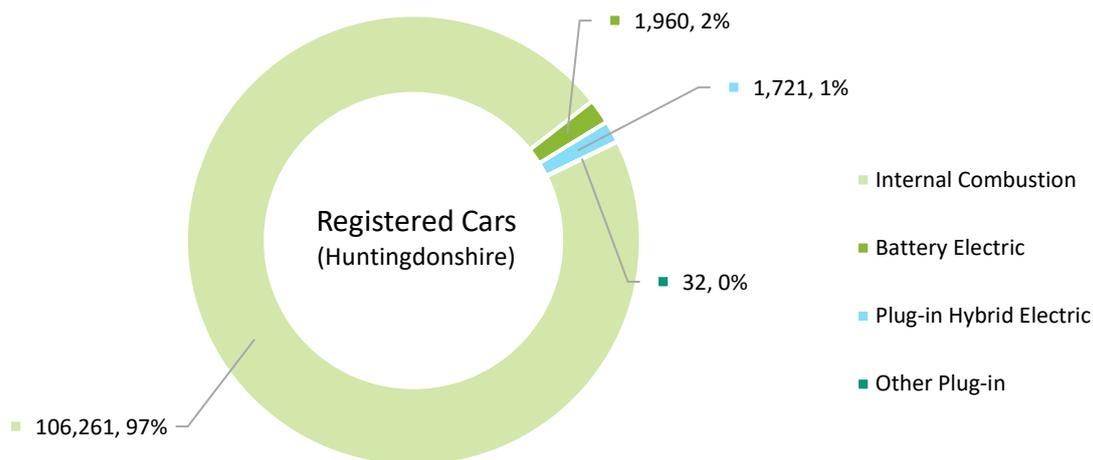
- UK (67,026,292)
- Huntingdonshire (181,800)

In the UK, the number of registered cars at the end of June 2023 was 33,488,236.

The breakdown of these vehicles by type is shown in the chart (right).



For Huntingdonshire the reported number of registered cars was 109,974. The breakdown of these vehicles by type is shown in the chart (below).



This data can be separated further to only include **privately registered cars** totaling 2,031 electric cars categorised as follows:

- Battery Electric (1,191)
- Plug-in Hybrid Electric (810)
- Other Plug-In Electric (30)

For Huntingdonshire, based on approximately 76,900 households per the 2021 Census, we can therefore estimate that there are:

- 1.43 cars per household
- 2.36 persons per household
- 1,420 homes with a **privately registered plug-in car**
- 3,351 residents with access to a **privately registered plug-in car** as a method of transport.

⁷ The sources for the information in Section 5 are reported information provided by the Department for Transport (DfT), specifically VEH0101, VEH0105, VEH0142 & VEH9901. The DfT identifies Plug-in vehicles as road using vehicles that use plug-in technology to connect to a source of electricity. Vehicles are allocated to a local authority according to the postcode of the registered keeper. The address does not necessarily reflect where the vehicle is located.



6. Review: Local Public EV Charging Provision

The Council operates publicly accessible charging points in 3 market towns. These were installed in 2020/21 as part of a Parking Strategy with a vision to 'promote environmental sustainability by supporting alternative fuel and travel methods'. HDC provides 27 publicly accessible charge points across these sites.

Table 1 – Location of HDC operated Public EV Charge Points

| St Neots | | St Ives | | Huntingdon | |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Tebbutts Road | 1* 7kW Twin | Cattle Market | 1* 7kW Twin | Princes Street | 2* 3kW Solo |
| Tan Yard | 1* 7kW Twin | Darwoods Pond | 1* 7kW Twin | Multi-Storey | 4* 7kW Solo |
| Riverside | 1* 7kW Twin | Globe Place | 1* 3kW Solo | Mill Common | 1* 3kW Twin |
| Priory Lane West | 1* 3kW Twin | | | Great Northern Street | 1* 3kW Twin |
| Brook Street | 1* 3kW Twin | | | Ingram Street | 1* 3kW Twin |

HDC are not the only contributor to publicly accessible charge points in the District. The below table compares publicly accessible charging points vs the number of plug-in cars. HDC provides approx. 35% of this provision.

Data available from the National Charge Point Registry⁸ shows that the location of publicly accessible EV charge points is focussed around Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Buckden & Needingworth. There is a notable lack of sites within other Parishes across the District.

Table 2 – Public Charge Points Vs Plug-In Cars

| | UK | Huntingdonshire |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Plug-In Cars (company and private owned) | 1,250,036 | 3,713 |
| Publicly available EV chargers (all speeds) | 49,220 | 76 |
| Publicly available EV chargers per Plug-In car | 0.04 | 0.02 |

The below table compares the total publicly accessible charging points per 100,000 residents.

Table 3 – Public Charge Points Vs Population

| | UK | Huntingdonshire |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| Publicly available electric vehicle charging devices at all speeds per 100,000 population | 73.4 | 41.8 |

⁸ The source for this information is reports provided by the Department for Transport (DfT), specifically VEH0142 & 'Electric vehicle charging device statistics: October 2023'



7. Summary & Analysis

In 2021, over half of our residents (51%) who travelled to a fixed place of work travelled more than 10km. Of all residents who travelled to work, the majority (79.5%) travelled as a driver or passenger in a car or van⁹.

The assessment of **EV Ownership in Huntingdonshire** illustrates the relationship between plug-in vehicles and population.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------|
| • UK plug in cars per person | 0.0186 |
| • Huntingdonshire plug-in cars per person | 0.0204 |

This shows slightly above average ownership of plug-in cars per person in Huntingdonshire.

The assessment of **local EV charging provision** highlights two conclusions regarding Huntingdonshire's shortfall in publicly accessible charge points.

- 70 additional charge points would be required in our district to reach the national average shown in table 2.
- 57.4 additional charge points would be required to reach the average population ratio set out in table 3.

The assessment of **local EV charging provision** also highlights a significant lack of publicly accessible EV charge points outside of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Buckden & Needingworth.

The **Public EV Survey** received responses from 406 persons. The results highlighted participants felt:

- Access to charge points is a key barrier to EV ownership. Respondents would like to see more public charge points across all locations. With primary charging taking place at homes, we can support concerns around range concerns by providing public points.
- The use of public charge points by EV Owners is primarily for *top up or partial* charging as opposed to fully charge a vehicle.
- Both EV and Non-EV owners agreed it is fair for EV users to pay to use public charge points.
- Participants felt the greatest downfall of public charge points is that there are not enough of them. We can therefore look to balance quantity of points over speed.

During the **Parish Sites: EV Capability Study** we observed challenges that would be faced in installation at these non-HDC locations. Most notably, this relates to the 'Local Council General Powers' under s.137 of the 1972 Act and the General Powers of Competence as EV Charge Point operation is categorised as 'energy trading'.

Should a Parish Council wish to operate EV Charge Points, they must have in place a General Power of Competence (GPC). A Parish with GPC in place may operate and charge for EV charge points. If a Parish Council does not have GPC, we are able to assist them in accordance with legislations to help them explore the operation of EV Charge Points on their land.

⁹ The source for this information the 2021 Census Office for National Statistics, 2022/23.



8. Our Role & Objectives

The Council's role in Public Electric Vehicle Charging will vary depending on the situation. We have the ability to take action ourselves as well as to enable and influence others. This strategy will act as a tool to attract external funding and set out our role and priorities.

As an **Enabler** we will:

- Support Towns, Parishes and Community Groups looking to pursue EV charging with advice and information about funding opportunities.
- We will support the emerging EV strategies from the CPCA and highways authority.

We will **Influence** local delivery of charge points by higher level authorities to:

- Fill the geographical shortfalls identified by our findings.
- Address the, often rural, Huntingdonshire locations currently not prioritised by private and commercial investment.

We will look to **influence** the expansion of electricity networks to ensure they are able to support the provision of EV infrastructure in Huntingdonshire.

In relation to what the Council will **Do**:

- Internal **HDC funds** will focus on **EV charging at our own car parks** offered as part of site facilities for our parking operations. We will look to support this with external funding where available.
- Where opportunities for **external funding** are available, we will look to obtain and utilise it to **prioritise support for rural off-street provision** in proximity to local amenities. We hope that these added facilities will also help to stimulate and support local businesses in the area.
- We will be **clear on the source of funding** of any charging provision installed, illustrating the minimal level of internal HDC funding available and significant dependence on external funding sources.
- If a Town or Parish wish to operate a EV charging but **lack the General Powers of Competence** to do so, we will look to support by acting as a 3rd party to **support their ambitions for EV installation**.
- Where the Council installs Charge Points, we will aim to keep these operable and accessible within the technology's life span.



9. Charge Point Installation

When considering **charging point type and operation** our Council will follow these **general principles**.

Charging point equipment:

- The quantity of *charge points and speed of charge will be carefully considered, taking into account the average dwell time of a site, and the average distance travelled by visitors. We will aim to achieve a minimum standard of 7kW charging capability unless prohibited by the constraints of a site.*
- The charging points installed across the District will look and feel the same, with consistent signage.

Charging point installation

- Installations will include the creation of charging bays with EV parking bay marking. These will be marked to ensure the use of the bay is apparent to all users.
- Signage will be installed with consistent signage information. It will be clear and concise, confirming that the use of bays is only for electric vehicles whilst charging.



Appendices

The following is a list of associated appendices:

1. Public EV Survey Findings
2. Parish Sites: EV Capability Study



Public EV Survey

We undertook an online survey which ran for a period of 6 weeks from 5th June to 17th July 2023. The survey had a total of 406 responses with 393 being residents in Huntingdonshire. We also collected feedback included as comments in social media adverts for the survey.

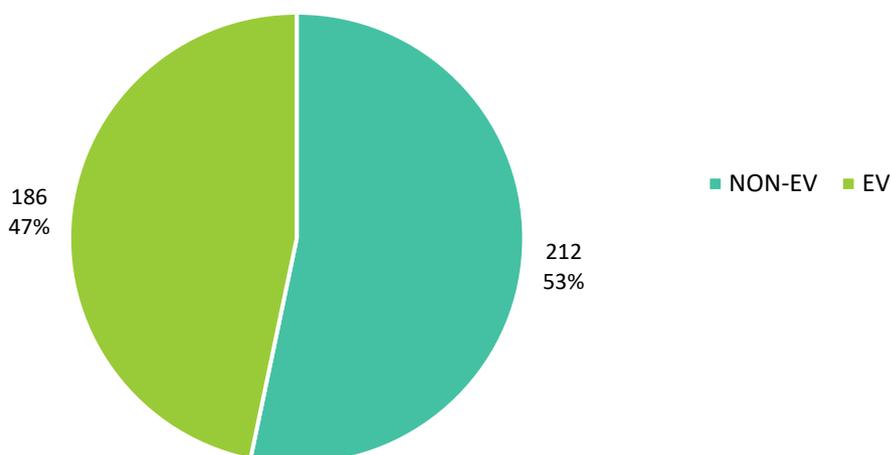
The survey responses highlighted the following key findings which will be incorporated into our outcomes of the strategy:

- Access to charging points is a key barrier to EV ownership.
- Public charge points are not the main charging location for the majority of EV owners.
- The use of public charge points by EV Owners is primarily for *top up* or *partial* charging as opposed to fully charge a vehicle.
- Both EV and Non-EV owners agreed it is fair for EV users to pay to use public charge points.
- The greatest downfall of public charge points is that there are not enough of them.

1. Vehicle Ownership

Survey participants were asked if they have access to at least one vehicle. Of the total 398 that do have access to a vehicle, we asked if at least one vehicle falls into an electric category.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS THAT HAVE ACCESS TO AT LEAST ONE VEHICLE (OF WHICH EV)



Of the 186 Electric Vehicle owners, 170 stated this was their main vehicle.

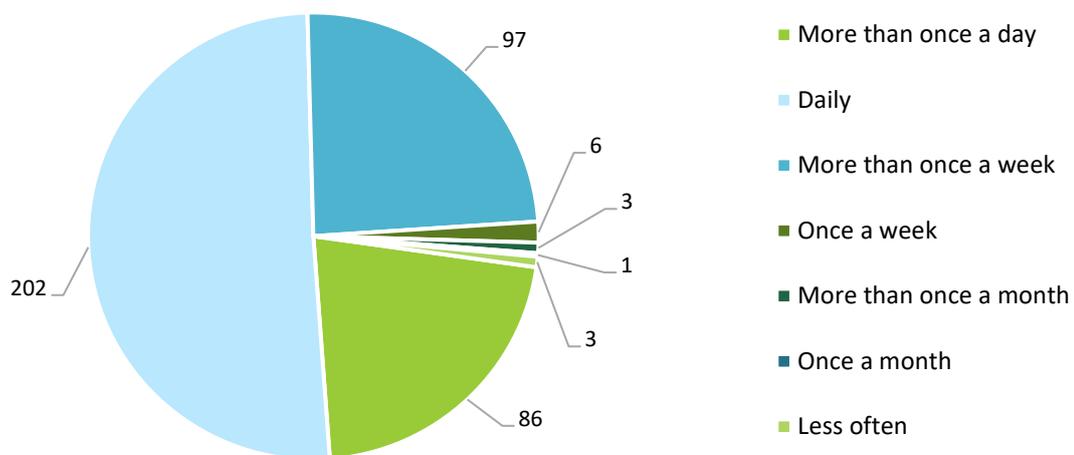
2. Vehicle Usage

Survey participants were asked about their vehicle usage.

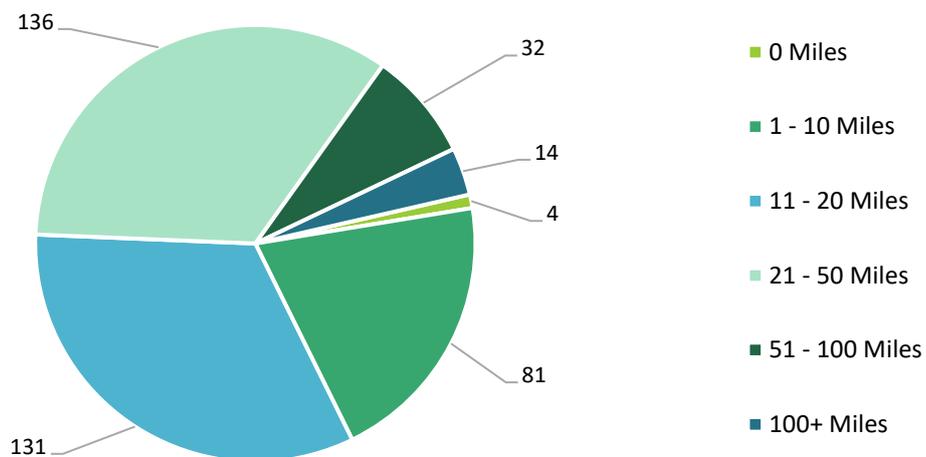
The results for EV and Non-EV owners were similar in both average miles, and frequency of use.

The most common use for both groups was daily, with the average miles being between 11 – 50 miles per day.

HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU USE YOUR MAIN VEHICLE
(BOTH EV & NON-EV USERS)



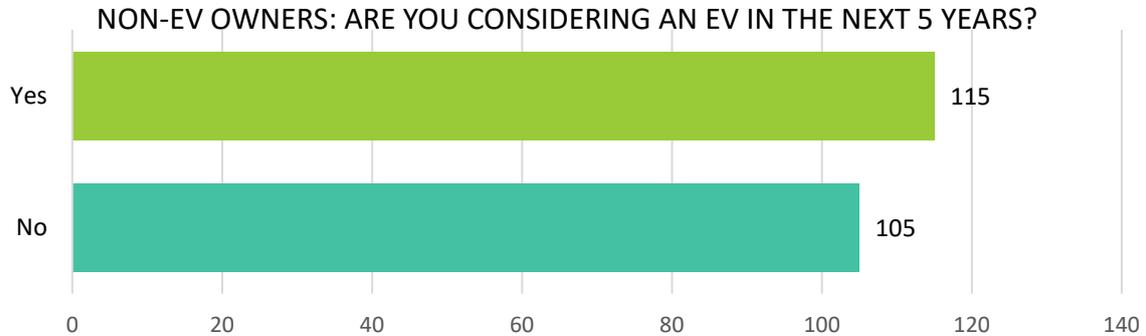
HOW MANY MILES A DAY DO YOU TRAVEL IN YOUR MAIN VEHICLE?
(BOTH EV & NON-EV USERS)



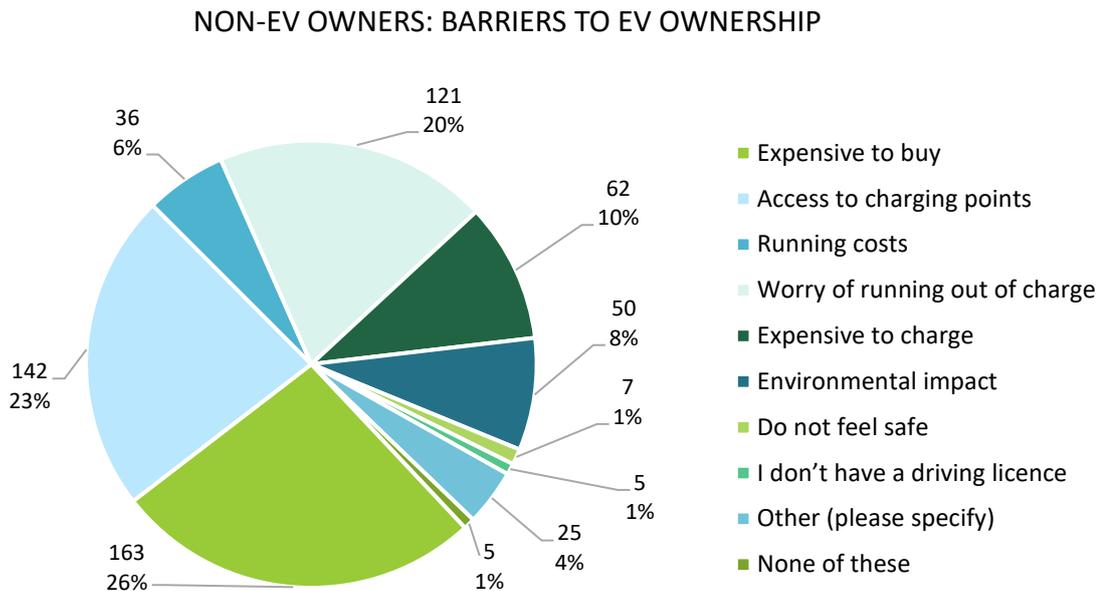
3. Barriers to EV Ownership

We asked Non-EV owners if they would consider buying an Electric Vehicle in the next 5 years.

The Majority indicated they would consider an Electric Vehicle in the next 5 years.



All current Non-EV owners were asked about the barriers they perceived to EV ownership. Respondents could select more than one barrier.

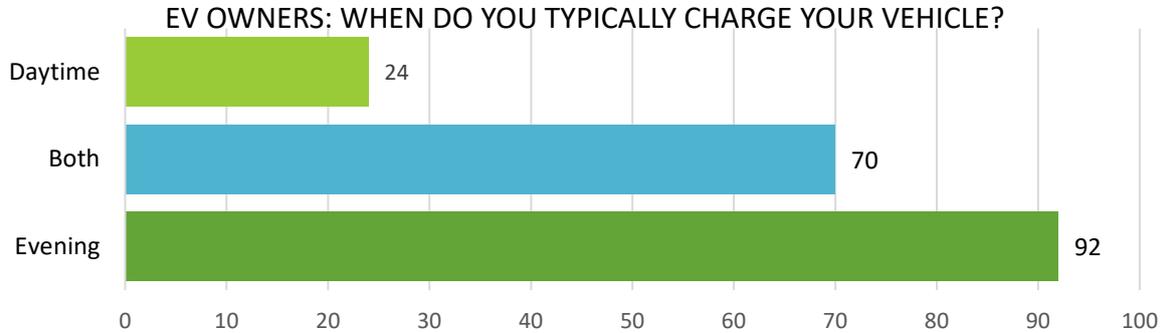


The responses highlight the greatest barriers as:

- The cost to buy an Electric Vehicle
- Access to charging points
- Concerns around charge capacity

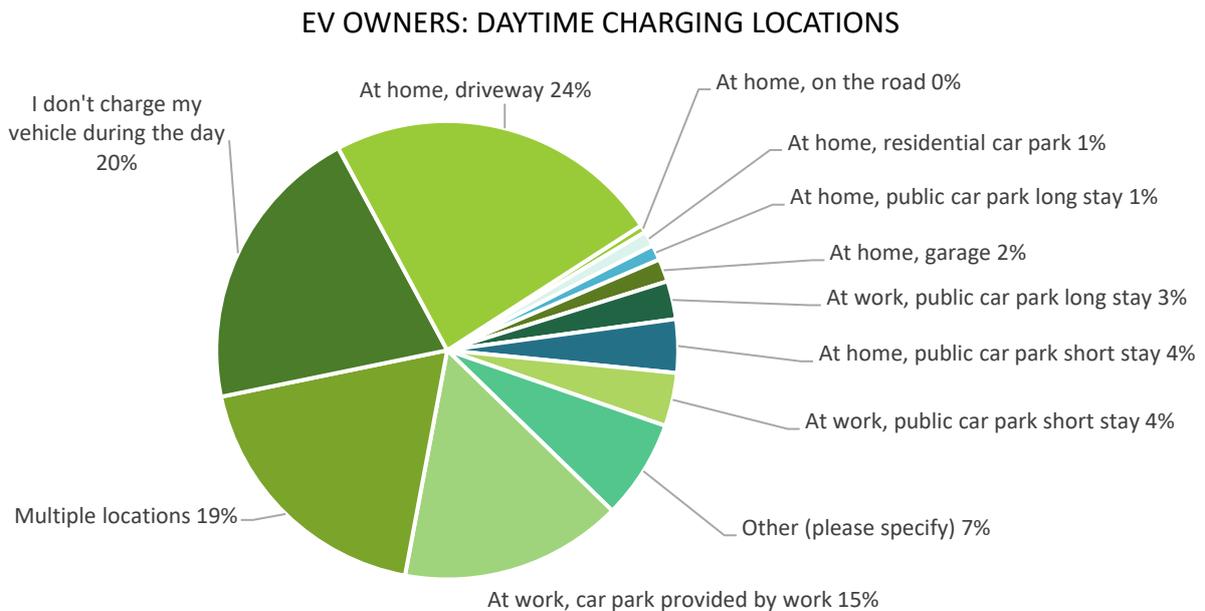
4. EV Owners: Charging Behaviour

Current EV owners were asked a series of questions relating to their charging behaviours to understand when they typically charged, and *how* they charged when using public charge points.

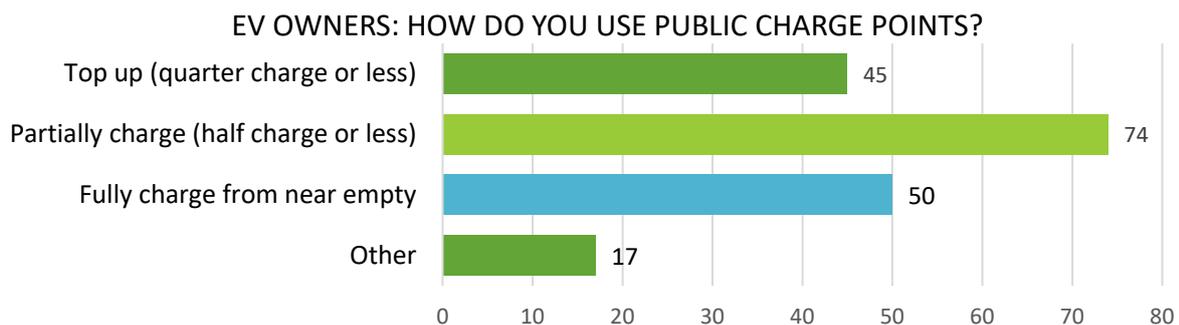


Overnight charging was typically done at home (driveway or garage) accounting for 73% of users.

Data obtained shows that public car parks are not a main charge location for EV users. The main reasons provided for lack of use link to the theme of the locations not being close enough.

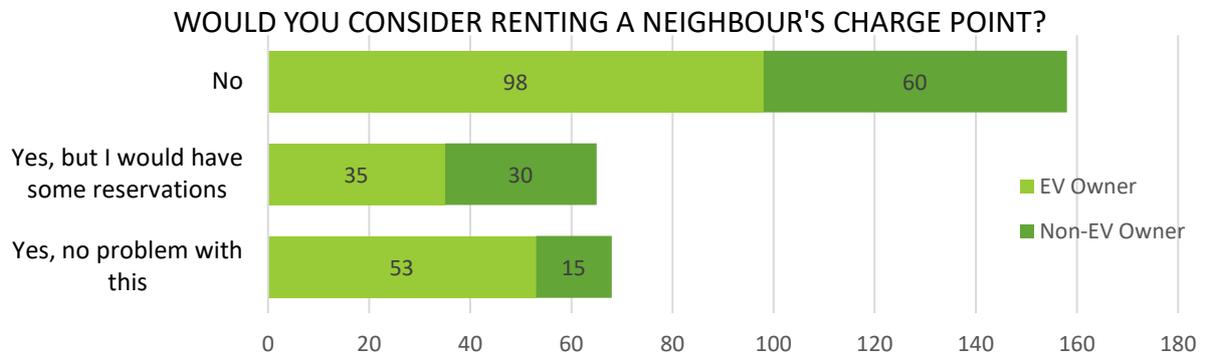


Data obtained shows that more EV Owners use public charge points for *top up* or *partial* charging that to fully charge a vehicle. *Other* was commented as partial up to 80%.



5. Charging Locations

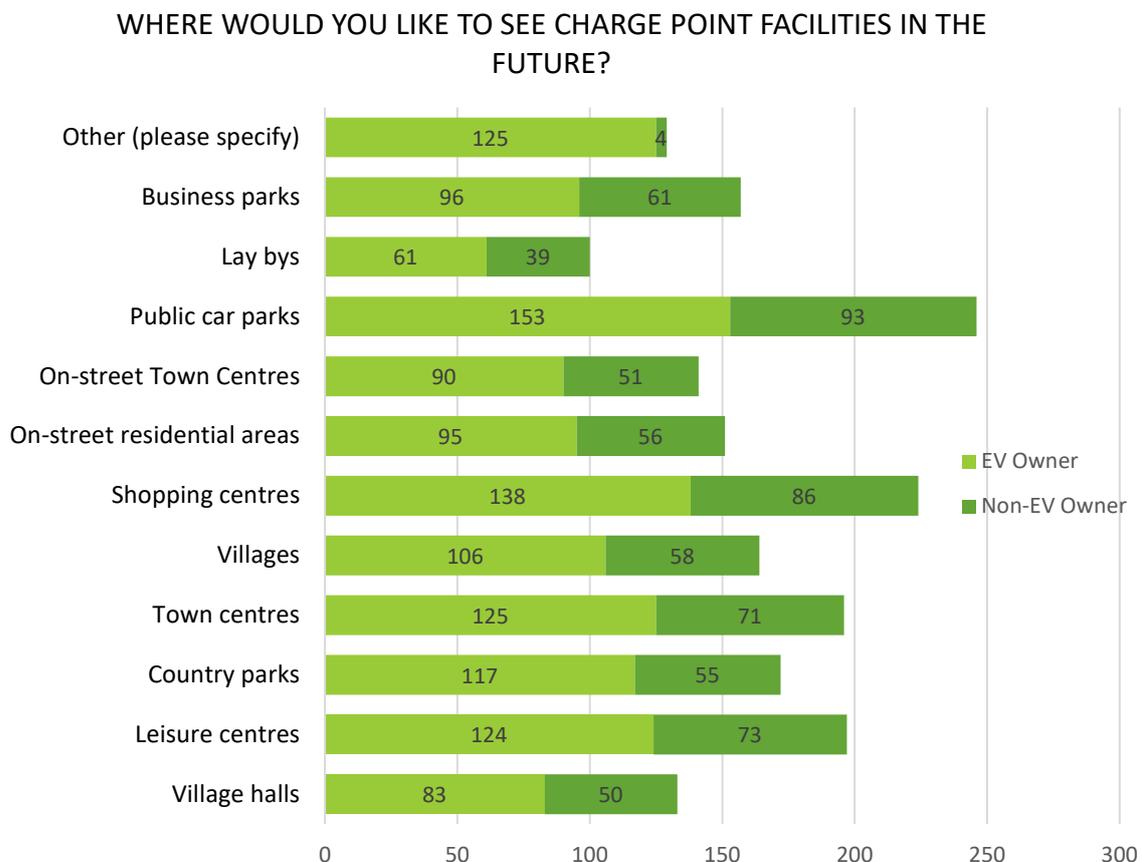
We asked all survey participants a series of questions relating to charge point locations.



A number of concerns were raised across both groups which included:

- Concerns over liability
- Inconvenience and access when needed
- Comfort with making the arrangement with a neighbour

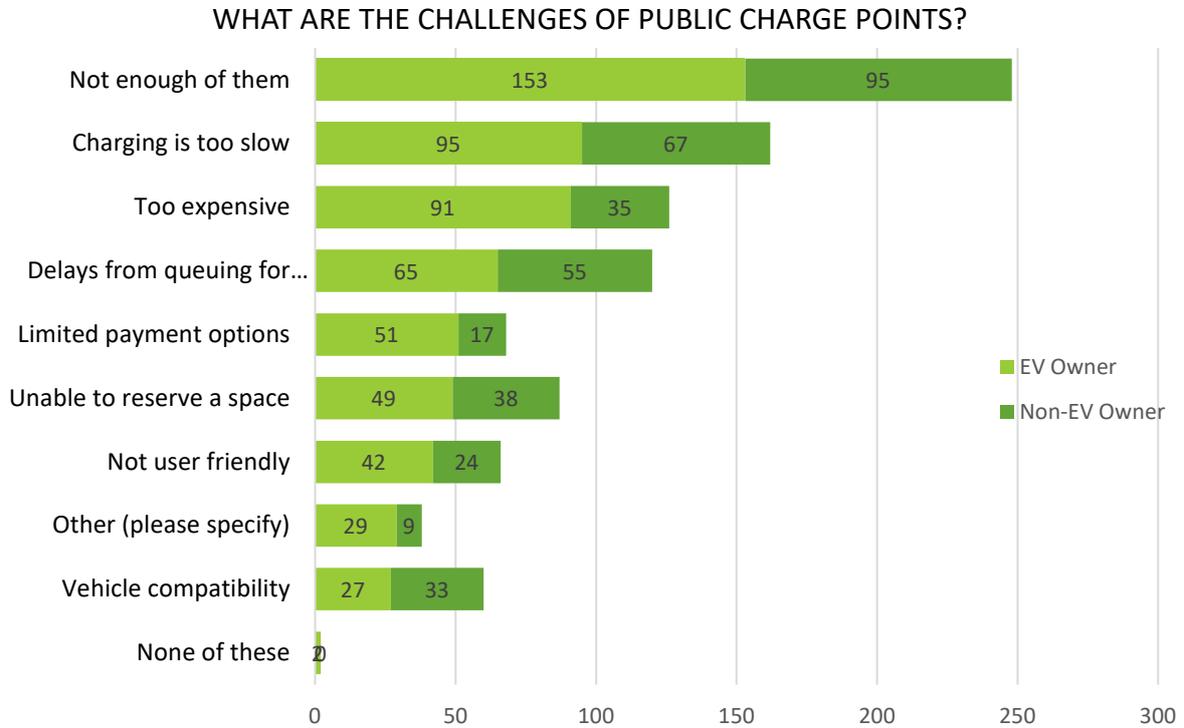
All participants were asked where they would like to see charge points located. The results show a desire for points in all locations.



Common answers for 'Other' locations included Public Transport Hubs (e.g. Rail/Park & Ride), Trunk Road & Motorway Services, and a general desire for 'all' locations cars frequently access or park at.

6. Public Charge Points

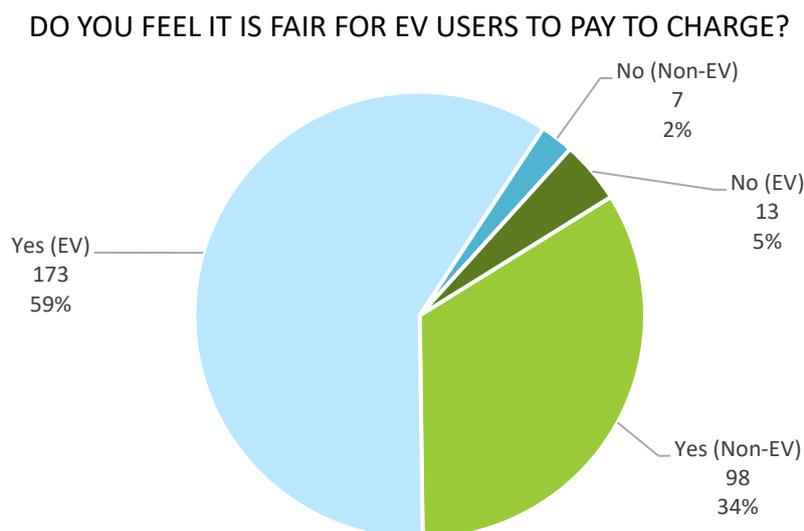
We asked all survey participants a series of questions relating specifically to public charge points.



The responses for *other* included:

- Abuse of charge point bays by persons not charging
- Reliability of the charge points.

Both EV and Non-EV owners agreed it is fair for EV users to pay to use public charge points.



Parish Sites: EV Charge Point Capability Study

In August 2023, funds were made available to HDC from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

This funding was allocated for use in relation to Electric Vehicle charging. As works were underway to develop a Strategy for HDC that identified our role in EV, the funding was used to explore the feasibility of installation of charge points at non-HDC locations. We contacted all Parish Councils in the District to give them the opportunity to be a part of this case study.

During this process, we noted key challenges that would be faced in installation at these non-HDC locations. Most notably, the challenges relate to the ‘Local Council General Powers’ under s.137 of the 1972 Act and the General Powers of Competence as EV Charge Point operation is categorised as ‘energy trading’.

In summary, should a Parish Council wish to operate EV Charge Points, they must have in place a General Power of Competence (GPC). A Parish with GPC in place may operate and charge for EV charge points.

If a Parish council does not have GPC, they may still be able to explore EV Charge Points on Parish land, the following options are available:

- a) Charge points may be installed by the Parish (subject to section 137 limits if funded by the Parish Council) and leased for operation by a 3rd party. A metered supply powering the charge points must be in place, separate from any supply to the Parish Council.
- b) Land may be leased to a 3rd party to install and operate charge points. A metered supply powering the charge points must be in place, separate from any supply to the Parish Council.
- c) A Parish Council may install charge points at a premises owned or operated by the Parish Council. This does not require any 3rd party involvement; however the Parish Council cannot charge for use of, or energy provided through the charge point.

In all of the above options, the 3rd party mentioned could be a District Council. This would be reflected in the Council’s Role and Objectives.

1. Case Study

Using available funding, the Council wished to explore the feasibility of installation of charge points at non-HDC locations. We contacted all Parish Councils in the District to give them the opportunity to be a part of this case study.

We received 18 expressions of interest from Parish Councils across the district. Of these, 16 Parish Councils continued discussion and applied for consideration:

- Bluntisham
- Elton
- Earith
- Sawtry
- Keyston
- Holywell-Cum-Needingworth
- Great Gransden
- Grafham
- Hail Weston
- Yelling
- Yaxley
- Sibson-Cum-Stibbington
- Great Staughton
- Glatton
- Fenstanton
- Hilton

2. Suitability Evaluation

The applications received were considered against the following elements to determine if they would be suitable to be further explored as part of this study:

- Ownership - Is the site owned by the Parish Council?
- Location – what is the proposed area serving? Would anyone be able to access and use?
- Footfall – would the points likely be used?
- Lighting & Security of the site
- Landscape and surface structure of the area (e.g. are tree root zones expected?)
- Accessibility – is this car park open 24/7?

Following a review, it was agreed to proceed with the following sites for further exploration into feasibility of EV charge point installation:

- Sawtry, The Old School Hall, Green End Road, Sawtry PE28 5UY
- Holywell-Cum-Needingworth, Millfield Car Park, Overcote Lane, PE27 4TU & Mill Way Car Park, PE27 4TF
- Grafham, Village Hall car park, Brampton Road, Grafham, PE28 0UR
- Yaxley, 48 Main Street, Amenity Car Park, Yaxley, PE7 3LU
- Fenstanton, Chequer Street Car Park, Fenstanton, PE29 9JQ

3. Site Surveys

In October, site surveys were undertaken to understand:

- The suitability of the existing electric supply or if a new supply would likely be needed
- Mapping to suggest route from electric supply to location for install
- Hardware options considering site constraints
- Initial estimates for installation. Where needed this would include electrical supply uplift.

A number of sites would be able to support EV charge point installation, however others would likely to have a new/additional incoming site power supply put in place as part of the EV works.

4. Parish Council Charge Point Operation & Legislation

Through discussion with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Councils Ltd (CAPALC) around the requirements for a Parish Council to charge for electricity, it was concluded that under s.137 of the 1972 Act of the 'Local Council General Powers' and the General Powers of Competence Order, EV Charge Point operation would be classified as 'energy trading'.

This splits Parish Councils into 2 categories:

- 1) Those who have General Power of Competence (GPC);
- 2) Those who do not have GPC

The eligibility for General Power of Competence (GPC) is that a Parish must satisfy both:

- The clerk (no one else) holding the 'Certificate in Local Council Administration' (CILCA)
- At least 2/3 of Cllrs must be elected (electoral mandate element)

Parish Councils that do not have General Power of Competence have the following options for installing Electric Vehicle Charge Points on Parish owned land:

Option A: The Parish Council install the equipment. This equipment is leased to 3rd party EV operator.

Option B: The Parish lease the land to 3rd Party to install & operate the charge point equipment.

In both these options, a separate energy meter is required for the charge point supply to ensure that it remains separate from energy used or provided to the Parish Council.

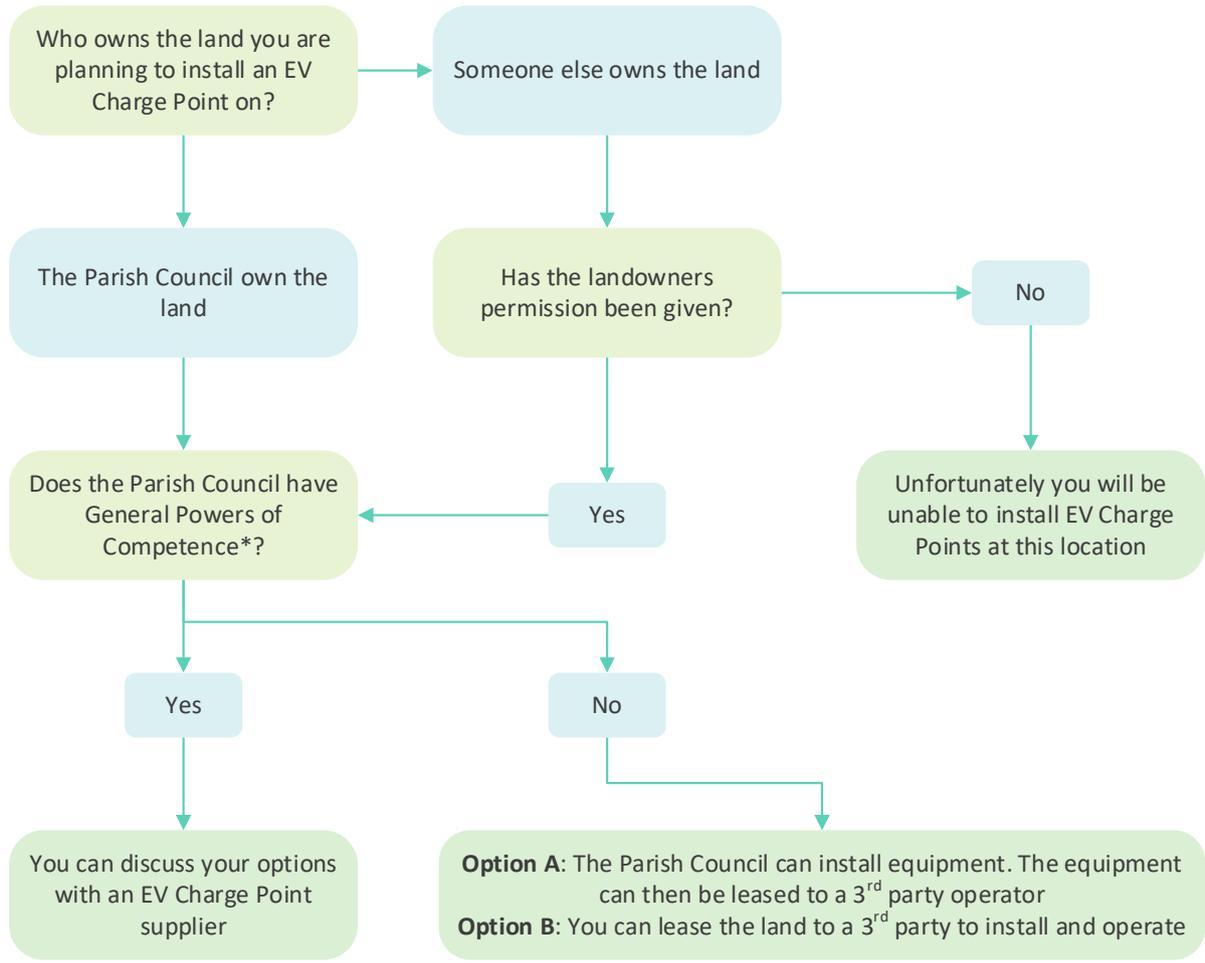
5. Summary

During this process we have noted issues that would likely be faced by Parish Councils when installing Electric Vehicle charge points. These issues are:

- Legislative restrictions
- Site constraints e.g. power supply or natural elements (likely tree root zones)

These issues have been noted by the Climate working group with options for how these may be overcome incorporated into the strategy where HDC's role in EV is identified.

Parish Council Decision Tree



*'The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012' provides details relating to the eligibility of a Parish to utilise the powers granted by the Order.

Both **Option A & B** will require the power supply to the charge points to be metered separately to Parish Council supply.

If you have any questions relating to the installation of EV Charge Points, please contact Huntingdonshire District Council at ParkingService@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

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Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 7th March 2024
Cabinet – 19th March 2024

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Simone Taylor – Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene (ST)

Report by: Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Services (GH)

Ward(s) affected: All

Recommendation(s):

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to comment on the attached report and its associated Appendices and the recommendations contained within.

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title/Subject Matter: | Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure |
| Meeting/Date: | Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 7 th March 2024 Cabinet – 19 th March 2024 |
| Executive Portfolio: | Cllr Simone Taylor – Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene (ST) |
| Report by: | Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Services (GH) |
| Ward(s) affected: | All |

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to brief and seek endorsement from Members on the work undertaken by independent advisors on the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure.

The Interim Head of Leisure Services when appointed in May 2022 had a remit that was centred around three key elements, and these were:

- A review of One Leisure’s commercial sustainability and operation.
- To implement a medium term financial and operational plan.
- To propose and implement a long-term operating model review for One Leisure.

Following a tender exercise, the Council commissioned First Point Management & Consultancy Limited (First Point) in September 2023 to undertake an independent review of its in-house leisure function, to consider initial transformation work undertaken, and to determine the most appropriate future operating model for One Leisure.

Following the completion of the independent review it has concluded that One Leisure should pursue a “Transformed In-House” operating model over the short-medium term.

The independent review (**Appendix 1**) was broken into three key areas:

1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
2. Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies

3. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

** A full tender scope of the key elements above can be found in (**Appendix 2**).

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is asked to approve the following recommendations:

- (a) that the Independent Review and its key recommendations be approved;
- (b) to approve the continuation of One Leisure with the recommended “Transformed In-House” operating model;
- (c) to commence the development of Outline Business Case’s (OBC’s) and feasibility studies on capital investment, subject to final Cabinet approval on any investment proposals that the feasibility studies recommend;
- (d) that the proposed medium to long term operating model for One Leisure be approved and agree it will be reviewed in 3 years in line with recommendations by the independent consultant within this report;
- (e) that an annual update on actions against all the recommendations made by the independent consultant be approved;
- (f) acceptance by Cabinet that the Interim Head of Leisure Service has discharged his original remit by proposing and seeking endorsement for a proposed long-term operating model for One Leisure;
- (g) to formalise the current leadership arrangements for One Leisure to ensure continuity and consistency be noted.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to brief and seek endorsement from Members on the work undertaken by independent advisors on the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure. The review had a series of outputs as part of its commission:
- a. To provide insight into the UK leisure market post COVID-19 and the subsequent challenges facing the leisure operating environment because of COVID-19. This can be seen in Appendix 1.
 - b. Provide an options appraisal on the different long term operating models best suited to One Leisure based upon the existing leisure market challenges.
 - c. The brief outlined an options appraisal which should include but not be limited to a review of the suitability of a series of operating models:
 - In-house management (Transformed In-House Model – One Leisure)
 - In-house management via a Council owned company (wholly owned company (LATCo) / Teckal company)
 - Tendering the leisure service as a commercial service or concession contract
 - Creation of a Trust or not-for-profit entity
 - d. To review and use the actions within the Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to inform this work, and to clearly identify a recommended priority list for capital investment.
 - e. To submit a proposed capital investment priority list to the Council with outline recommendations, illustrative costs and revenue benefits and proposed timelines.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council provides an in-house leisure offer through its 'One Leisure' brand that was established in 2010, the service has always been managed in-house and there is no history of it being operated by a third-party. The service comprises of:
- St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre
 - The Burgess Hall attached to the centre.
 - St Ives Outdoor Centre
 - St Neots Leisure Centre
 - Ramsey Leisure Centre
 - Huntingdon Leisure Centre
 - One Leisure Direct Call Centre (based at Huntingdon Leisure Centre)
- 2.2 The Council decided upon a move away from a traditional leisure services approach and undertook a thorough review of its assets, planning to invest c.£10m into its leisure facilities.

- 2.3 The capital investment and change in approach was based upon the premise of the service shifting from operating at a financial deficit to a commercially and financially sustainable position.
- 2.4 Following the completion of the capital investment and rebranding between 2015 – 2019 the Council commissioned an independent review (EELGA) of One Leisure with the aim of supporting its long-term goal of becoming a commercially sustainable business whilst supporting and providing the local communities it serves with affordable opportunities to be physically active.
- 2.5 The completion of the actions outlined within the independent review (EELGA) in 2019 were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic as leisure operators across the country faced a sudden and significant loss of income during the government-imposed closures and the subsequent restricted conditions placed upon re-opening facilities with reduced capacities and on-going business recovery.
- 2.6 An interim Head of Leisure Services was appointed in May 2022 with a clear remit to undertake:
- A review of One Leisure’s commercial sustainability and operation.
 - Implement a medium term financial and operational plan.
 - Propose and implement a long-term operating model for One Leisure.
- 2.7 The review of One Leisure’s commercial sustainability and the implementation of a medium term financial and operational plan have been completed, this report therefore focusses on the long-term operating models for One Leisure

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 As outlined within the “Executive Summary” of this report the independent review was broken into three key areas:
1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
 2. Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
 3. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)

- 3.2 The Council identified four key delivery options to consider what could potentially be deployed for the operation of the Council’s leisure facilities, these include:
1. Direct in-house delivery by One Leisure (the current model).
 2. Establishing a wholly owned and controlled council company.
 3. Commercial outsourcing to a third party.
 4. Creation of a trust or not for profit entity.

Further details on what these options involve can be found in Appendix 1, Core Options (page 21).

3.3 The in-house option is considered as the ‘Transformed In-House’ model, the transformation foundations of this have already been laid through the appointment of an Interim Head of Leisure Services, adopting a more commercial approach to the service, the commissioning of the Built Facility and Playing Pitch strategies in 2022 and developing a detailed staff review.

3.4 Failure to implement change would result in the ‘status quo’ being maintained and the operational deficit continuing unabated; encouragingly the initial stages of transformation have been supported by the Council therefore the ‘Transformed In-House’ is the model considered as the direct delivery option against the other core options listed above.

3.5 To determine the best operating model for One Leisure the Council requested an options appraisal and the principles for this were set out by officers in the project brief. The principles we asked the independent advisors to score against were:

- financial modelling and assessment of financial impact.
- balancing the level of risk, the Council would be exposed to.
- the commercial return the Council could secure or guarantee.
- the social and wellbeing benefits the Council could achieve.
- the environmental factors that the Council expect to achieve through its Climate Strategy.
- the level of control the Council would retain over both strategic and operational matters.

3.6 Each element below is RAG rated as illustrated below:

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------|
| | Most beneficial / advantageous to the Council |
| | Moderately beneficial / advantageous to the Council |
| | Least beneficial / advantageous to the Council |

3.7 The table below provides a summary of the criteria set by the Council, a weighting applied to the assessment and the outcome.

| | Set Up & Transitional Costs | Level of Operational Risk Transfer | Asset Mngt. Transfer | Level of Council Control | Scope for community Involvement | Potential to increase participation | Access to capital and investment funds |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Transformed In House | | | | | | | |
| LATC | | | | | | | |
| Market Solution (Outsourced) | | | | | | | |



3.8 It is important to note that whilst the “Transformed In-House” option has received two red inserts under “Level of Operational Risk” and “Asset Management Transfer” that this is not negative, but the least beneficial as the Council would simply continue to be responsible for risk and asset management under the proposed approach. Therefore, this is no change to the current position.

3.9 Following the options appraisal assessment on the short-term operating model the independent review concluded the following:

3.9a In consideration of both the current Market Assessment, the Options Appraisal, the Transformed In-House model is considered to provide the best solution for the Council in the immediate short-term. It also ensures Council control is maintained at a time when the need for control and ability to respond to opportunity is likely to be significant.

Appendix 1 discusses in more detail the considerations and rationale for this recommendation.

3.9b Both service and corporate capacity to implement an alternative delivery currently would be challenging and may severely stretch the organisation. However, reviewing market conditions through an Early Market Engagement exercise and reconsidering the LATC option within the next year is worthy of consideration. The set-up costs and timescales associated to implementing any of the other options is likely to take until early 2025 to result in a change of operating model even for a LATC, assuming a decision to select an alternative model is taken in early 2024.

3.9c If the **Transformed In-House model** is approved and resourced, the transformation journey will effectively have had a 12-month head start on any of the other options to implement the changes required.

3.9d In each of the other models the operator is an independent entity, although less so with the LATC as the Council would be its sole member and can determine the continuation of the company.

3.9e **Post COVID-19 Leisure Operating Assessment:** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and market recovery, the acute rise in utility costs and cost of living crisis have resulted in a more cautious market and operators becoming risk adverse, changing, and suppressing the appetite of operators to take commercial risks. The disruption of a service transfer for the short term is unlikely to be beneficial to the financial or operational position. In theory, it could be argued that the required service specification, and performance framework for the LATC model provides the Council with control in all options, however each of these would require an enhanced ‘client side’ to monitor the contract whilst the Transformed In-House provides direct control and influence.

- 3.9f The **Local Authority Trading Company (LATC)** is only an attractive option if there is a commitment to a contractual term that would provide sufficient time to implement and benefit from commercial changes, the costs of creating such a vehicle would necessitate this.
- 3.9g **Community involvement** - The Transformed In-House and LATC are most likely to provide opportunities for community involvement as they will have existing relationships and connections with the communities they serve, although it is possible over time that the other operating models could achieve similar levels as they develop their understanding of the locality. It is not considered that there is any material difference between the models in terms of increasing participation as all models will have a clear focus on delivering this.
- 3.9h **Capital investment** - Access to capital and investment funds for large capital schemes for local authorities is likely to come from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) as the Council are owners of the assets; interest rates are competitive and offer good value for money compared to market financing solutions. We will evaluate funding streams as a council once the OBC's and feasibility studies outlined within this report have been tabled for review and approval. Appendix 1 discusses in more detail the considerations and rationale for this recommendation.

Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies

- 3.10 The Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy (IBF) and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) 2022 - 2043 were commissioned in early 2022 with completion in November of that year and subsequently adopted by the Council in June 2023. The strategies are endorsed by Sport England insofar as they follow the accepted methodology in terms of an assessment of provision and projected need in line with population growth forecasts contained in the Local Plan over the next two decades.
- 3.11 A Sport England endorsed strategy is the 'gold standard' for the assessment of sports facilities; commissioning this work demonstrates a commitment to a robust evidence base to support and enable improved sporting facilities for Huntingdonshire residents. It is clear these strategies will help provide the evidence base to develop the right facility mix across Huntingdonshire; however, it does not resolve the issue of prioritisation or funding for One Leisure facility provision. These strategies will also support the updates to the Local Plan review and be considered as part of the Councils' Place Strategy and Climate Strategy.
- 3.12 Recent challenges across the leisure sector in terms of affordability of leisure provision and closures, should be taken into consideration when considering the district leisure requirements.
- 3.13 Both strategies for both indoor and outdoor sports facilities will support delivery at a local level and provide the needs assessments and strategic recommendations to act upon. These are strategies spanning some 20 years and relate to sport and leisure provision across the entire council

area. The scope of this review is focussed upon and limited to the One Leisure estate.

- 3.14 The independent review outlined that the immediate capital investment priority should be to adequately resource and commission the feasibility studies and the Outline Business Case (OBC) of each proposal. The review also stated that the OBC should only be commissioned if a scheme is technically possible to deliver and is geared towards supporting a bid to secure capital funding (internally/externally).
- 3.15 To support the work undertaken as part of the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies the consultant provided a proposed list of capital investment priorities for One Leisure to present as part of this report. These are included within **Appendix 3**.
- 3.16 In addition and within **Appendix 4** the consultant has provided a proposed capital investment programme which has been structured over the short, medium, and long term and thus supportive of the nature of this report and the future direction of One Leisure. This includes an indicative capital cost for the delivery of these items.
- 3.17 The timescales for delivery of capital schemes will be dependent on the following:
- Findings from the Feasibility Studies
 - Approval of the OBC
 - Securing capital funding and approval
 - Corporate capacity to deliver
- 3.18 Following the independent review of the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies the consultant concluded the following:
- The production of a financial appraisal as phase 2 of the Built and Playing Pitch Strategy work should be commissioned, as an understanding of the scale of the investment need may help to both influence and clarify potential funding sources, developer contributions and deliverability of schemes.
 - Addressing the identified shortfall in provision across the district, will require a focussed approach over a long period of time, it should be remembered that the Built and Playing Pitch Strategy span a period of two decades, delivery is a 'marathon not a sprint.'
 - The Council has a lead role in supporting the delivery of these strategies but should not be the sole owner or funder.
 - Where there are existing and future opportunities for both indoor and outdoor shared or dual use facilities, it will be important that community access agreements provide good public and/or club access.
 - A key element of this review has been to consider the operating model and sustainability on the current model, investment in the existing estate to refurbish or develop new facilities that enhance the offer will be essential to protect existing and increase revenues.

Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

- 3.19 The leisure sector and its long-established operating models has undergone significant change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges associated with the challenging market conditions now prevailing across the UK. Some external private operators have reduced in size and complexity to ensure business continuity. For One Leisure to provide a financially sustainable service offer it must operate as the Transformed In-House model, operating to optimum efficiency wherever possible, however that objective is reliant on adequate and continued investment in the facilities. The impact of Covid, has made the commercial sector more risk averse, while tax changes have reduced the advantages of a charitable or trust model. Given these factors, a transformed in-house model, as shown in the options appraisal above, offers the best balance of risk, control, and benefit.
- 3.20 Both the medium- and longer-term operating models should be determined by assessing the performance of One Leisure and how the transformation objectives have been delivered coupled with horizon scanning and testing the market through an Early Market Engagement exercise, and potentially leading to a full procurement event. Assessing market conditions in 2-3 years should also be sufficient time for the liability of the Terms & Conditions Audit to have been determined and resolved.
- 3.21 The operating model is only likely to be influenced by the capital investment plan if HDC has reached its borrowing capacity from the PWLB for a major capital scheme e.g., a new leisure centre, or in the unlikely event that market loan rates become lower than the PWLB. Operators that can potentially bring capital investment to facilities will seek to recover that investment over the contract term, which is highly likely to result in a higher cost of borrowing for the Council but spread over a long period. Capital investment and service delivery through a DBOM solution (a market solution to Design Build Operate and Maintain) is generally a long-term commitment of c.20 years or longer.
- 3.22 The real opportunity for One Leisure and the future leisure provision remains with developing partnerships with the health sector and in particular the relationship with a maturing ICB. That pivot to health requires and will allow the in-house team to develop a broader systems leadership role with partners and safeguard some of the financial risks of the leisure market. Securing long term investment in community outreach will also help deliver those outcomes linked to broader community targets contained in the new strategic plans recently endorsed.
- 3.23 An investment in feasibility studies and the OBC's that follow will determine what the capital investment priorities will and should be. The Built and Playing Pitch Strategies are long term strategies for the district not just One Leisure and identify projected needs over the next 20 years. The priorities and demand may change over time as activity trends can change too (the demise of squash and the rise in popularity of spin classes are examples of change over time); the anticipated pace of development may change too. Where some facilities may have reached the end of their

natural life, consideration may be around full re-provision rather than refurbishment. As outlined within the main independent review it is too early to project the revenue benefits of potential schemes this would be developed through from the OBC work once the technical feasibility study of a proposed scheme has been completed.

3.24 Following the independent review of the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies the consultant concluded the following:

- It would be prudent to review the operating model periodically, doing this on a 3–5-year cycle is reasonable approach and building this cost into the council’s long term MTFs would be advantageous.
- If it is agreed to continue with in-house provision in the form of One Leisure as the Transformed In-House model then a review in line with the suggested review cycle should be adhered to, this ensuring best value is being delivered.
- It is not considered that capital investment is a determining factor of the operating model of HDC’s leisure offer unless access to the relatively low cost of borrowing through the PWLB ceases to be available to the Council or a full funding partnership is developed with health.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

5. KEY RISKS

5.1 The table below illustrates the risks and possible impact of not adopting the outlined recommendations listed in **Appendix 5**.

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leisure provision not fit for future | Medium | Medium | These proposals, and the continued evolution of One Leisure to support financial sustainability. |
| Failure to respond to changing consumer behaviour leading to drop in usage and income. | High | High | Continuation of One Leisure performance reviews to allow for clear decision making and targeted interventions. |
| Inability to adapt to change and keep up with direct competitors | High | High | Continuation of One Leisure performance reviews to allow for clear decision making and targeted interventions. |
| Affordability challenges if One Leisure continue to operate with a | High | Medium | Review of wider One Leisure service as a non-statutory service and identification and |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| reliance on a financial subsidy | | | collaboration with external health partners. |
| Lack of provision for wider health and wellbeing benefits of physical activity to residents | High | Medium | Continuation and development of Built & Playing Pitch Strategy capital investment plans to ensure One Leisure provide provision based upon demand over coming years. |

5.2 The mitigation against all these risks will be the ongoing monitoring of performance of the Transformed In-House operating model.

6. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION & ACTION

6.1 The Built and Playing Strategies were presented to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in June 2023. The reports presented requested approval for three key actions, and these were:

1. The new strategies would be made available on the HDC website and used to support future negotiations with sports clubs, partners, and developers. – **Delivered**
2. HDC will review and utilise the actions within the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies to clearly identify a priority list for capital investment, either directly or by identification of external Capital pots that can be accessed. - **Delivered**
3. Finalise and present a capital investment plan for the development of existing facilities and creation of new assets to support physical activity and commercial revenue generation. – **Ongoing as part of the Long-Term Operating model activity**

6.2 In addition to this and as part of the original remit of the Interim Head of Leisure Services and within section 2.6 of this report it was to “Propose and implement long term operating models for One Leisure”. – **Discharged via this report.**

6.3 The Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure” enables the council to achieve two key priorities. Firstly, it allows the council to review what the best options for the short-, medium- and long-term operating model are and secondly through the strategic review (Built and Playing Pitch Strategies) of its existing leisure facilities what the district may require over the next 20 years. - **Delivered**

6.4 The completion and earlier endorsement by council of the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies allowed for an independent review of what capital investment would be recommended over the short, medium, and long term all of which is outlined in **Appendix 3 & 4**. This is extremely important, and it significantly influences the decision making surrounding the best suited operating model for One Leisure moving forward. **Delivered (June 2023) & capital investment plans discharged via this report.**

- 6.5 To allow for continued momentum and direction on the operating model and capital expenditure workstreams we would outline the key actions as follows:
1. That One Leisure are given approval to pursue and commence operation with the recommended short term “Transformed In-House” operating model.
 2. Approval to proceed and commence work on OBC’s and feasibility studies on capital investment identified within **Appendix 3 & 4**.
 3. Provide a commitment that One Leisure will come back to Members with OBC’s, and feasibility studies for final approval.
 4. Approve that the medium to long term operating model for One Leisure will be reviewed in 3 years in line with recommendations within this report and by the independent consultant.
 5. A further commitment that One Leisure will return to Members and update on actions against all the recommendations made by the independent consultant identified in **Appendix 5**.
 6. Acceptance by Members that the Interim Head of Leisure has concluded item 3 of his original remit by proposing and implementing a long-term operating model for One Leisure.
 7. Agreement from council that the capital expenditure plans identified by the independent consultant in **Appendix 3 & 4** satisfy the outstanding action (item 2 from 6.1 above) from the report tabled to council in June 2023.
 8. Approve also that item 3 in 6.1 can be delivered through actions 2 & 3 in section 6.5.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The work undertaken on the Built and Playing Strategies and the Independent Review both strongly support the council’s new corporate plan and its key priorities which are:
1. Improving quality of life for local people
 2. Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
 3. Delivering good quality, high value-for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations
- 7.2 The Built and Playing Pitch Strategies have allowed the council to evaluate its existing leisure facilities and that of the wider district to fully gauge how it should proceed, invest, and support other stakeholders with the information they need to gain funding to develop their own clubs and groups.
- 7.3 Wider than this it demonstrates a commitment from the council that it is prepared to review its existing stock of facilities and spaces and strategically identify what the district will require over the next 20 years to ensure it supports improving the happiness and wellbeing of its residents and thus their quality of life.
- 7.4 Through utilising the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies and reviewing the most suited short term operating model for One Leisure it has allowed

senior officers to prepare and submit as part of this report (Appendix 3 & 4) a suite of capital investment options that can be considered by the council. As part of this it has been identified and recommended that we should move forward with feasibility studies and in the short to medium term the decarbonisation of the rest of the One Leisure facilities. Ramsey Leisure Centre was fully decarbonised in 2021.

- 7.5 Decarbonising the rest of the leisure facilities would support the corporate plan priority of lowering carbon emissions and working towards its target of becoming net zero by 2040. This would have a significant impact on both the council and One Leisure. It would enable One Leisure to trade more efficiently and as evidenced within the council's Climate Strategy the leisure facilities as part of the council buildings contribute significantly to its ongoing carbon emissions.
- 7.6 The recommendation proposed as part of this report is for One Leisure to continue with a "Transformed In-House" operating model. This is the feedback from the independent consultant, and this is based upon the work that has already been completed by the Interim Head of Leisure. This approach was geared around One Leisure working towards a commercially sustainable operating model which would be at no cost to the council as a non-statutory service.
- 7.7 Therefore, in the short term as a "Transformed In-House" operating model One Leisure will continue to offer good quality, high value for money services and compliance with statutory obligations. Moving forward and as part of the submission of the proposed capital investment priorities in **Appendix 3 & 4** and the recommendation of the "Transformed In-House" operating model the council would maintain control and oversight of what is best for the residents and the services the council provide them. This approach will enhance the quality, value for money and opportunities for residents and create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 To ensure that a thorough and robust independent review of One Leisure could be undertaken the consultant met with several senior council officers and elected members. This is outlined within **Appendix 6**.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Interim Head of Leisure as stated earlier in this report was employed by the council in May 2022 and tasked with delivering three key priorities which centred around a review of One Leisure's commercial operation, implementation of a medium term financial and operational plan and lastly to propose and implement a long-term operating model for One Leisure.
- 9.2 Following the submission and approval by council of this report and its recommendations it would be requested that the council also note that the Leadership of the Leisure team will be moved onto a permanent basis which would allow continuity and consistency to proceed and implement

the short-term operating model and feasibility works for capital investment and commercial activities.

- 9.3 In addition and to assist the One Leisure team and to ensure that projects/recommendations outlined in the independent review are delivered a new 18-month fixed term position of Leisure Programme Manager was created, commencing on 1st February 2024.
- 9.4 The Leisure Programme Manager is funded from the central council transformation fund and will focus on proving support to plan, prepare, and submit all relevant proposals back to council to enable the delivery of these projects on time and on budget once the plans have been established and approved.
- 9.5 One Leisure commits to return to council when feasibility and investment strategies have been developed for approval.
- 9.6 This Leisure Programme Manager role is dedicated to supporting One Leisure on the delivery of this Long-Term Operating Model and other committed activity.

10. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The independent review acknowledged the work undertaken by the Active Health team by providing sport and health related activities to promote a healthy population across the district.
- 10.2 The review identified that the Active Health team works closely with several partners to help provide these activities, such as young people holiday programmes, disability sports clubs and health walks. Support is also offered to local sports clubs to help provide access to leisure. The review highlighted the wider contribution Active Health can make with partners across the wider health per se and it remains a key delivery component of the local service operating model proposed and as part of this is a key opportunity for One Leisure.
- 10.3 It stated also that the service should seek to develop this function across a wider partnership landscape and exploit the opportunity that currently exist within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System. The leverage of additional funds to support longer term health conditions across communities covering the district will require close collaboration and work at a senior executive level. This systems leadership function could help pivot One Leisure into a more coherent community focused service: moving away from leisure centre facility management into a greater integrated leisure service delivering tangible outcomes across communities.
- 10.4 Ensuring the service has the capacity and capability to develop these partnerships and access the funding that is available for preventative and recovery interventions will not only improve the health and wellbeing of residents, but it will also position One Leisure as the provider of choice for multiple partners.

11. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 A key priority for the council under its corporate plan and as stated previously within this report is its aim to lower carbon emissions.
- 11.2 The independent review and stemming from this the development of a capital investment programme has identified the possibility of decarbonising the remaining One Leisure sites. This would support the corporate plan and the council's climate strategy and enable the council to work towards its net zero target by 2040. Within the climate strategy one of the key priority actions is to "review councils' assets to understand opportunities to improve the building fabric, energy efficiency and carbon impact on our buildings".
- 11.3 By undertaking feasibility studies on the remaining One Leisure sites will enable the council to determine the positive impact this will have towards its priorities within the corporate plan and climate strategy but also support One Leisure to provide an efficient, value for money service that is sustainable for future generations.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 12.1 Accepting the independent review and its recommendations allows One Leisure to operate under a "Transformed In-House" model providing the team the opportunity to continue its journey towards a self-sustaining service.
- 12.2 Embracing the Transformed In-House model of operation will provide One Leisure continuity and consistency in service delivery and allow its wider teams to focus on operational compliance, programming, health and wellbeing and commercial activities.
- 12.3 The capital expenditure programme and priorities provide the council an independent strategic plan that supports the short, medium, and long term of One Leisure and allows the council to make important and measured decisions with its finances.
- 12.4 Adopting the Transformed In-House operating model allows the council to retain control of its assets and provides the residents of Huntingdonshire with first class leisure facilities.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix 1 – Independent Review – Full Report
- Appendix 2 – Full Tender Scope for Independent Review
- Appendix 3 – Capital Investment Priorities
- Appendix 4 – Capital Investment Programme
- Appendix 5 – List of Independent Review Recommendations
- Appendix 6 – Consultation List

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy - Cabinet – 20th June 2023

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Gregg Holland – Interim Head of Leisure Services
Tel No: 07791274315
Email: Gregg.holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Appendix 2 – Full Tender Scope for Independent Review

1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years):
 - a) An independent assessment of the UK leisure market post COVID-19
 - b) Outline of the subsequent challenges facing the leisure operating environment as a consequence of COVID-19, and based on this insight.
 - c) Provide an options appraisal on the different long term operating models best suited to One Leisure based upon the existing leisure market challenges. Risks and benefits should be clearly defined. The options appraisal should include, but not be limited to a review of:
 - i. Option 1 - In-house management (Current Model – One Leisure)
 - ii. Option 2 - In-house management via a Council owned company (wholly owned company (LATCo) / Teckal company)
 - iii. Option 3 - Tendering the leisure service as a service or concession contract.
 - iv. Option 4 - Creation of a Trust or not-for-profit entity
 - d) The options appraisal should be based upon the following principles:
 - i. financial modelling
 - ii. balancing the level of risk, the Council is willing to take
 - iii. the commercial return the Council wishes to secure or guarantee
 - iv. the social and wellbeing benefits the Council is seeking to achieve
 - v. the environmental factors that the Council expect to achieve through its Climate Strategy
 - vi. the level of control the Council would retain over both strategic and operational matters
 - e) In order to review the different options, the four options should be assessed across the following criteria (with the inclusion of any other factors you would recommend on agreement):
 - i. Set-up and transitional costs
 - ii. Level of operational risk transfer
 - iii. Asset management responsibility transfer
 - iv. Level of Council control
 - v. Scope for community involvement
 - vi. Potential to increase participation
 - vii. Access to capital and investment funds
 - f) The options should be quantified and evaluated against each other as follows:
 - i. Green: Most beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - ii. Amber: Moderately beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - iii. Red: Least beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - g) Provide a presentation with supporting evidence and analysis around decision making to the Council outlining key recommendations for short to medium term operating models for One Leisure based upon 1a – 1f
 - i. The consultant will be required to present the recommendations to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet meetings with support from the Interim Head of Leisure

2. Staff Review:
 - a) Complete an independent review of work undertaken to date on existing leisure centre workforce structures and payroll and provide assurance to the Council that the work undertaken supports a long-term operating model

3. Built Facility & Playing Pitch Strategies:
 - a) To review and utilise the actions within the Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to clearly identify a priority list for capital investment.
 - b) Complete and submit the capital investment priority list to the Council with outline recommendations, illustrative costs and revenue benefits and proposed timelines.
 - c) Identify and evidence potential opportunities for utilising external funding opportunities to deliver the capital investment programme

4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years):
 - a) Carry out a high-level review of the Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy and provide the Council with outline recommendations on the medium- and long-term operating models for One Leisure. This should be centred around the required capital investment into the Councils leisure facilities as outlined by the consultant and within section 3. This should also include illustrative costs and subsequent revenue projections.

Appendix 3 - Capital Investment Priorities

| Theme | Action | Outcome |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Decarbonisation | <p>Feasibility Study of Huntingdon Dry Side site.</p> <p>Feasibility of all other sites in line with investment strategy.</p> | <p>Implementation of decarbonisation plan at Huntingdon Dry Side site</p> <p>Implementation of decarbonisation works aligned to agreed investment strategy.</p> <p>Supports HDC Climate Strategy; and financial sustainability of One Leisure.</p> |
| Swimming Pools | <p>Commission the development of an Aquatics Strategy to set-out the long-term options for aquatics to inform the strategic investment and decisions re: new/replacement swimming pools.</p> <p>Explore the viability of an interim solution for retaining/increasing capacity and community access at Sawtry Swimming Pool.</p> <p>Commission a feasibility study to develop an agreed vision for a sports & health hub at Huntingdon with the Town and County Councils, health partners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Commission feasibility studies to upgrade swimming pools at St Neots and St. Ives to meet increased future demand. The study for St Neots to include feasibility of relocation of the leisure centre in consideration of the Local and Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>On completion of feasibility studies, commission OBC's as determined by feasibility findings; the indicative priority order would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Huntingdon 2.St Neots 3.St Ives | <p>Aquatic Strategy produced setting out a vision and long-term options for developing and sustaining aquatic activity in the HDC area.</p> <p>Interim arrangement agreed with CMAT to access & operate Sawtry Swimming Pool and meet demand and access targets.</p> <p>Vision agreed with stakeholders with potential disposal of old wet side facility and re-provision of new pools integrated with the dry side site that includes a community health offer.</p> <p>Replacement of ageing pools will ensure current and future demand is met by increasing capacity, improving the customer experience, protecting existing and growing revenues.</p> <p>Reprovision of the entire leisure centre at St Neots to a new site would provide a modern 'fit for future' centre with minimal disruption to service. HDC's capital capability would need to be assessed if this option was brought forward which then opens the potential for a DBOM solution and a review of the service operating model at that point.</p> |
| Sports Halls | <p>Explore the optimum location of an additional 4 court sports hall to address identified shortfall, potentially as part of the sports & health hub concept at Huntingdon.</p> | <p>Addresses identified shortfall and the creation of a multi-sport facility.</p> |
| Fitness Centre | <p>Develop a strategic plan to support growth and meet demand of 500 additional fitness stations across the district.</p> | <p>Addresses identified shortfall in provision.</p> |

| | | |
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| | <p>One Leisure to explore opportunities to distribute old fitness equipment to community facilities/hubs in more isolated communities.</p> <p>Review and audit current fitness equipment provision and highlight potential areas for growth to offset shortfall identified in the IBS.</p> <p>Benchmark current One Leisure fitness centres versus industry standards to ascertain utilisation and inform future provision.</p> | <p>Potential to create local access to fitness equipment in more isolated communities.</p> <p>Provides an evidence base for 'right sizing' provision.</p> <p>Provides an evidence base provision.</p> |
| Dance Studios | <p>Develop a short-term refurbishment/improvement programme for existing dance studios to address demand.</p> <p>Assess the viability of creating extra studio space at Huntingdon in current soft play area and transfer kit to St Ives Indoor.</p> <p>Explore options for creating new studio space to support increased levels of physical activity and to provide greater retention opportunities over medium to long term in line with emerging capital investment plans.</p> | <p>Refurbishment plan developed and implemented.</p> <p>Additional studio space created within existing facilities.</p> <p>Medium – long term plan developed for new studio space across the One Leisure estate with increased participation and customer retention levels.</p> |
| Football Pitches (3G -ATPs) | <p>Liaise with Football Foundation and other stakeholders to commission a feasibility study to develop a new 3G pitch at St Ives Outdoor as the preferred option.</p> <p>Liaise with Abbey College/Football Foundation re: operating agreement and refurbishment of small ATP at rear of the Ramsey Leisure Centre to create a small 3G pitch with community access.</p> <p>Submit a grant funding application to the Football Foundation for the construction of a new full size 3G pitch at St Ives and a small 3G at Ramsey.</p> | <p>Feasibility study completed for new 3G pitch at St Ives.</p> <p>New operating agreement in place for the small 3G pitch at Ramsey.</p> <p>Grant funding applications submitted and approved.</p> <p>Delivery of a new 3G pitches.</p> |
| Commercial Opportunities | <p>Commission design work for the refurbishment and re-modelling of the café/bar at St Ives Outdoor.</p> <p>Commission a feasibility study to explore other revenue generating activity related opportunities across the One Leisure estate and or HDC land e.g., Golf Driving Range or Adventure</p> | <p>Completion of re-modelling and design proposals of the café/bar at St Ives Outdoor.</p> <p>Feasibility study completed with options to move on to OBC phase.</p> |

| | | |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Golf at St Ives Outdoor; Laser Tag; High Ropes etc.</p> <p>Where financial viability is evident progress schemes to OBC stage.</p> | <p>Complete OBC's as determined from feasibility work and secure funding for full business case and delivery.</p> |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Appendix 4 – Facility Investment Programme Options

| Action | Short Term | Medium Term | Long Term | Indicative Capital Cost |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------|
| Decarbonisation Feasibility (x3 sites) | X | | | £400k |
| Deliver Decarbonisation Scheme (x3 sites) | X | X | | £10m |
| Produce an Aquatic Strategy | X | | | £10 - £12k |
| Digital Innovation | X | | | £20k |
| Sawtry Swimming Pool Interim Arrangement | X | X | | CMAT Investment |
| Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Feasibility | X | | | £25k |
| Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Delivery | | X | X | £6.7m ¹ - £11.56m ² |
| St Neots Leisure Centre Feasibility | X | | | £25k |
| St Neots Leisure Centre Delivery | | X | X | £12.36m ³ |
| St Ives Leisure Centre Pool Expansion Feasibility | X | | | £20-25k |
| St Ives Leisure Centre Pool Expansion Delivery | | X | X | £5.85m ⁴ - £7.5m ⁵ |
| Ramsey Leisure Centre Gym Expansion | X | | | £50k - £70k |
| Sports Halls Feasibility | X | | | £3k - £5k ⁶ |
| Sports Halls Delivery | | X | X | £2.86m ⁷ |
| Fitness – Additional Stations | X | X | X | £200k - £600k ⁸ |
| Dance Studios – Refurbishment Programme | X | X | | £23k - £28k |
| 3G Pitches Feasibility | X | | | £20k - £25k ⁹ |
| 3G Pitches Delivery | X | X | | £1.4m ¹⁰ |
| Commercial Opportunities | | | | |
| • Café Bar Refurbishment Design & Delivery | X | | | £35k - £40k |
| • Feasibility of Commercial Opportunities | X | X | | £10k - £15k |
| • Delivery of Commercial Project | | | X | £300k - £1m ¹¹ |

¹ 6-lane x25m pool plus secondary pool

² 4 court sports halls

³ New facility - 6-lane x25m pool plus leaner pool, 4 court sports hall, 100 station health & fitness gym, 2 studios.

⁴ Assumes a new 6-lane x25m pool and an allowance for retro-fit.

⁵ Allowance for retrofit construction & additional spectator seating.

⁶ If not feasible to provide at Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub

⁷ If not delivered at Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub

⁸ Cost variation determined by recipient of equipment i.e., private clubs etc.

⁹ Potential Football Foundation grant funded.

¹⁰ Potential Football Foundation grant funded.

¹¹ Cost determined by feasibility work, and Return on Investment potential.

Appendix 5 - List of Independent Review Recommendations

It should be noted that there are a number of variables that need to be progressed as highlighted within this review in order to determine the long-term operating model and take the service forward; a 3-year Action Plan of recommended actions is included as a timeline at Appendix 6.

Recommendations from this Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure are presented for consideration below; It is recommended that:

- The immediate short term operating model for the Council's leisure function should be an adequately resourced and empowered Transformed In-House service.
- Review the membership architecture to provide enhanced customer choice and invest in digital innovation to improve the customer journey.
- Determine the senior management arrangements within One Leisure, necessary to lead and drive service transformation.
- Establish a set of Transformation Design Principles and an Outcomes Framework for the service.
- Produce or commission a financial plan to accompany the Indoor Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to conclude that stage of work.
- An Early Market Engagement exercise should be undertaken in parallel to the commencement of the Transformed In-House service, to provide assurance to the Council as part of due diligence and help inform future arrangements.
- Conclude the Terms & Conditions Audit as soon as practically possible and assess the on-going implications for One Leisure.
- Upon the conclusion of the Early Market Engagement exercise and the Terms & Conditions Audit, re-evaluate the Local Authority Trading Company option and market solution.
- Implement the proposed staffing structure and the associated specific actions:
 - The proposed staff review should be progressed commencing with an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of staff potentially impacted by the review.
 - Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to support the review.
 - Establish a cohesive and resourced plan to deliver the staff review in conjunction with internal business partners.
 - Develop a key outcomes framework that provides clarity of task and targets for the service and staff.
 - Develop a Learning & Development Plan that supports career progression and delivery of service objectives.

- Develop a robust stakeholder communications plan that addresses both staff and customer communications on all relevant aspects on the change process to ensure business continuity.
 - Consider developing a set of design principles underpinning the staff review and any subsequent transformation phases.
 - Develop a contingency plan within the 2024/25 budget planning process to reflect any potential implementation delays and subsequent impact on delivering the projected efficiency target.
 - Undertake a post project implementation review to assess if the proposed change has met its objectives and produce a learned document to support on-going improvement.
- Develop a structured approach to effectively engaging with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System that creates opportunities for One Leisure to broaden its delivery of health improvement interventions.
 - Develop an Aquatic Strategy that sets the future direction of swimming and water-based activity.
 - Commission decarbonisation feasibility studies across the One Leisure estate.
 - Develop a programme of feasibility studies for potential capital investment schemes across the leisure estate aligned to the Indoor Built Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and commercial opportunity.
 - Review and manage the delivery of the proposed 3-year Action Plan.

Appendix 6 - Consultation List

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Elected Members | |
| Stephen Cawley | Councillor and Overview & Scrutiny Member |
| Lara Davenport-Ray | Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment |
| Brett Mickelburgh | Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources |
| Simone Taylor | Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene |
| | |
| Officers | |
| Leigh Allayer | Business & Operations Manager |
| Nicki Bane | Strategic Human Resources Manager |
| Paul Fox | Interim Corporate Director – People |
| Gregg Holland | Interim Head of Leisure Services |
| Clara Kerr | Chief Planning Officer |
| Oliver Morley | Corporate Director – People |
| Pam Scott | Regeneration and Housing Manager |
| Neil Sloper | Assistant Director – Strategic Insights and Delivery |
| Karen Sutton | Director of Finance and Corporate Services |
| John Taylor | Chief Operating Officer |
| Zoe Warren | Council Tax and Business Rates Manager |

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Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure



First Point Management & Consultancy Limited

December 2023



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| Version | Author | Date | Comments |
|-------------------|--------|----------|-------------------------------------------|
| Draft v0.1 | PA | 11/10/23 | Initial Draft |
| Draft v0.2 | PA | 14/10/23 | Section Additions |
| Draft v0.3 | PK | 18/10/23 | QA & Internal Challenge |
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| Draft v0.6 | PA | 29/10/23 | Section Additions |
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| Prelim Draft v1.0 | PA | 17/11/23 | Amends & Clarification – Issued to Client |
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Executive Summary

The leisure management function of Huntingdonshire District Council has historically been delivered as an in-house service and was re-branded in 2010 to operate as *One Leisure* as is the case currently. Following the appointment of the Interim Head of Leisure Services some 18-months ago, the service is in the early stages of transformation, taking a more commercial approach to service delivery and working towards post pandemic sustainability.

This review has explored delivery options open to the council over the short, medium and longer term. In addition, the recently adopted Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies provide an assessment of future need as the local population continues to grow. These strategies have been considered alongside how the potential capital investment priorities could be funded and help support the sustainability of One Leisure. However, it should be remembered that these strategies span two decades and are for the entire district not just the Councils' facilities and its leisure offer.

The maturing of the leisure market over the past 30 years has seen the marketplace shift from a near monopoly of local authority provision to a much more diverse delivery landscape across the country, with the emergence of charitable leisure trusts, hybrid trusts and the private sector. More recently, in-sourcing and the implementation of the Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) model have gained some popularity.

It is unquestionable that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the leisure sector has disrupted and changed what was, pre-pandemic, an established and a mature market. Business recovery has been further hampered by the spike in energy costs and inflation that has not only increased operational costs but pressurised income as the cost-of-living crisis has impacted customers disposable income choices. The combination of all these factors has resulted in operators becoming increasingly risk adverse and reduced the opportunities to transfer risk and liability to the operator. Consequently it is considered that there is unlikely to be sufficient market tension currently to secure a best value outcome in the short term.

Recent changes to the treatment of value added tax by HMRC for in-house leisure operations, has removed this advantage previously enjoyed by non-profit distributing organisations (such as charitable trusts) over the in-house service. However, Non-Profit Distributing Organisations such as charitable trusts or carefully established LATC's have the distinct advantage of being able to secure 80% rate relief; delivering the service through this model in Huntingdonshire has the potential to reduce the operational cost by c.£500k.

Despite the attraction of seeking a market solution and an operator that may be able to avail itself of the substantial rate relief the Council are in the midst of a Terms & Condition Audit where there is currently an unquantifiable and potentially significant financial liability that is likely to increase uncertainty amongst external operators that are already risk adverse. This current issue is particularly pertinent, as external operators will often be seeking to implement changes to employment terms over the medium to long term to provide greater flexibility and reduce operational costs. If a LATC model was deployed to simply take advantage of the potential without actually delivering the charitable objectives stated within its Articles of Association, it runs the risk of being challenged.

Establishing a local trust does not negate the need to undertake a procurement exercise. A charitable trust must be independent and not influenced by the Council. A newly established trust is unlikely to be able to compete successfully in a competitive process as it will not have the necessary infrastructure or financial standing to procure the necessary support and services required to bid for a large contract even before mobilisation issues are considered.

It may be possible to create a subsidiary of the Councils existing trading company. However, the trading company does not currently manage high volume transactions or deliver customer facing services, therefore all the infrastructure requirements would need to be established in a similar way to that of a local trust and it offers no distinct advantage over the short term. It is therefore recommended that if this was a delivery model

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the Council wished to deploy now or in the future a new LATC should be established; this would still negate the need for a procurement event.

A transformed in-house option is the recommended approach for the short term, this should allow sufficient time for the risk and uncertainty surrounding the Terms & Condition Audit to be resolved, and for the service to optimise the service before considering medium and long-term delivery options. It is unlikely that established operators would be interested in a short-term contract, as a 10-year term with a potential extension period is commonplace. Where capital investment is sought through the contract a term of 25-30 years may be expected.

For One Leisure to continue with and pursue a transformation agenda, it will be essential it is appropriately resourced and continues to be led and driven by its management team. The proposed staff review should be progressed as it is designed to make the service more effective, more commercially focussed and ultimately more financially sustainable that provides best value.

Proactively developing meaningful partnerships with the health sector and the regional Integrated Care Board is essential for both One Leisure and the Council per se. The importance of a close relationship between public leisure and public health is increasingly acknowledged as an important element of future service provision and will require a broadening of the leisure offer into community settings, which will in turn need One Leisure to utilise its expertise and think beyond the leisure centre.

The Transformed In-House model is heavily reliant on some key individuals to drive the service forward. This in itself creates a continuity risk, should these key roles be vacated; recruitment in local government is proving to be challenging currently across the country and recruiting to a position at this level is unlikely to be a quick process and risks momentum being lost. Additional capacity either internal or external will be needed to support the transformation and provide delivery assurance.

Undertaking an Early Market Engagement exercise will assess operators' growth appetite and stance on contract terms, risk transfer, investment and the probable financial returns or subsidy requirement and help inform the optimum approach for the future. This exercise should be considered to provide additional reassurance to the Council as part of its due diligence obligations, this could be done in parallel to the on-going Terms & Conditions Audit. It is good practice to periodically review the operating model.

The Council has a lead facilitation role to play in implementing and addressing the deficiencies in provision identified in the Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies as far as possible. However, clubs and other sport and leisure organisations must be proactive in fund raising and securing third party grant funding themselves also. These strategies span two decades, therefore there is a need to consider capital investment over the long term and be responsive to opportunities and changes in future demand projections and market trends.

It will be important to invest in existing facilities, refurbishing, re-configuring, expanding or replacing completely. The decarbonisation of One Leisure sites has commenced at Ramsey and should be a priority, continuing through the leisure estate at pace. Major refurbishment or new build schemes should consider adopting the most carbon efficient construction methods such as building to Passivhaus standards; where the potential net benefits of this approach can be assessed within the Outline Business Case.

Feasibility work on existing One Leisure facilities is required to determine what challenges and options exist, it is suggested this starts as soon as possible so the scale of investment is quantified, a project pipeline developed and capacity to deliver is in place and managed appropriately. Capital investment does not necessarily need to be conflated with decisions over the service delivery model. The assets will remain in the ownership of the Council under most circumstances and access to the preferential lending rates of the Public Works Loan Board will remain accessible to the Council.

It is not considered that capital investment is likely to be a determining factor of the operating model of HDC's leisure offer unless: access to the relatively low cost of borrowing through the PWLB ceases to be available to the Council or; a full capital funding partnership is developed with health or; a substantial scheme is proposed

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such as a new leisure centre where a Design Build Operate and Maintain solution become the preferable option.

The Transformed In-House model provides the Council with a realistic option for the immediate short-term, based on an assessment of market conditions, the unquantified risk and liabilities associated to the Terms & Conditions Audit, and in consideration of the service and corporate capacity to delivery change currently. Undertaking an Early Market Engagement exercise, without commitment to a procurement event will help inform future delivery arrangement whilst the transformation seeks to optimise the service, as the post pandemic leisure market recovery continues.

Background

Context

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) has commissioned First Point Management & Consultancy Limited (First Point) to undertake an independent review of its in-house leisure function operating under *One Leisure* to consider initial transformation work undertaken in the context of determining the most appropriate future operating model for One Leisure.

The review is broken into four key areas:

- Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
- Staff Review
- Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
- Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

The client requirements are included as Appendix 1.

Huntingdonshire District Council Headline Statistics

Huntingdonshire is a large (900 square kilometres) and predominantly rural area. However over 40% of the population live in the three largest market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon, and St Ives.

With an estimated 180,800 residents and 76,900 households in 2021, the population has grown significantly over recent decades (up by 47% since 1981). The district has an ageing population with 36,500 residents aged 65 plus, up by 33% since 2011 alone.

The latest estimates indicate that the number of residents in the district born outside the UK was 22,400 at March 2021 (12.4% of all residents). Poland is now ranked as the most common non-UK country of birth for the district's residents, followed by the United States and Romania.

Most people in the district identified their ethnic group within the 'White' category (92%) in 2021. Around 3% identified their ethnic group within the 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh' category, 2% within the "Mixed or Multiple" category, 2% within the 'Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African' category and the remaining 1% identified their ethnic group within 'other ethnic groups'.

In 2021, most of the district's residents described their health as at least 'good' (84%), around 12% self-reported their health as 'fair', with the remaining 4% of the population describing themselves as having 'bad' or 'very bad' health. An estimated 16% of the population were disabled in 2021, with 6% stating their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.

The majority of Huntingdonshire residents in 2021 travelling to a workplace or depot travelled more than 10 kilometres (51%) and just over half (52%) of those who travelled to work were drivers or passengers in a car or van. Just over 6,000 residents travelled to work on foot (7%).

There are pockets of higher deprivation within the district, but most areas have relatively low levels, as measured by the 2019 Indices of Deprivation. Economic activity (64% of those aged 16+) and employment rates (61.6% of those aged 16+) are both higher than the national average.

Corporate Plan 2023 - 2028

The Council has recently launched a new Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028, within the Plan it states:

This Corporate Plan to 2028 will inform everything we do as we refocus our vision, review our priorities and work with staff, residents, partners, communities, and businesses to lead Huntingdonshire into the future with confidence.

It will not always be easy. With a decreasing pot of government funding, rising costs and inflation and greater pressure on our services we will need to find ways to save money or generate income in order to continue providing high quality services.

We are also facing the threat of climate change. This requires decisive action and fundamental changes in how countries, cities and communities live and work. Our recently adopted Climate Strategy and action plan sets out how we can be better prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change at a more local level. We will apply a “green lens” to all our decision making – embedding the climate and green agenda into all we do and considering environmental impacts and opportunities to improve the environment

As we grapple with the real issues facing us, we must be bold and set aspirational targets that challenge us to make a difference, whether that is by doing things directly ourselves or trying to influence change on a wider scale. With that in mind, this Corporate Plan outlines our three key priorities:

Priority 1 - Improving quality of life for local people:

1. Improving the happiness and wellbeing of residents
2. Keeping people out of crisis
3. Helping people in crisis

Priority 2 - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations:

1. Improving housing
2. Forward thinking economic growth
3. Lower carbon emissions

Priority 3 - Delivering good quality, high value-for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations:

One Leisure

The Council provides an in-house leisure offer through its ‘One Leisure’ brand that was established in 2010, it is understood that the service has always been managed in-house and there is no history of it being operated by a third-party. The service comprises of:

- St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre
 - The Burgess Hall attached to the centre
- St Ives Outdoor Centre
- St Neots Leisure Centre
- Huntingdon Leisure Centre
- Ramsey Leisure Centre
- Active Health & Sport Development teams
- One Leisure Direct Call Centre (based at Huntingdon Leisure Centre)

The Council decided upon a move away from a traditional leisure services approach and undertook a thorough review of its assets, planning to invest c.£10m into its leisure facilities. The capital investment and change in approach was based upon the premise of the service shifting from operating at a financial deficit to a commercially and financially sustainable position. It has been suggested that some of the financial projections were overly ambitious and whether or not the return on investment was achieved as envisaged is unclear.

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Following the completion of the capital investment and rebranding 2015 – 2019 the Council commissioned an independent review of One Leisure with the aim of supporting its long-term goal of becoming a commercially sustainable business whilst supporting and providing the local communities it serves with affordable opportunities to be physically active.

The completion of the actions outlined within the independent review in 2019 were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic as leisure operators across the country faced a sudden and significant loss of income during the government-imposed closures, the subsequent restricted conditions placed upon re-opening facilities with reduced capacities and on-going business recovery.

An interim Head of Leisure Services was appointed in May 2022, now extended to March 2024 with a clear remit to undertake:

- A review of One Leisure's commercial sustainability and operation
- Implement a medium term financial and operational plan
- Propose and implement long term operating models for One Leisure

The review of One Leisure's commercial sustainability and the implementation of a medium term financial and operational plan have been completed, this report therefore focusses on the long-term operating models for One Leisure.

Review Methodology

First Point Management & Consultancy Limited

Established in 2006, First Point Management & Consultancy is a micro consultancy practice with over 30 years of public and private sector experience, providing a flexible interim management and consultancy service, utilising trusted professional and expert associates as necessary.

We have a refreshing and direct approach combining extensive senior management and consultancy experience across the leisure industry bringing together objective and analytical skills with operational expertise. We offer our clients, honest and pragmatic advice, providing professional opinion and solutions that can help influence and transform organisations in a positive and sustainable way.

Regardless of whether it is a discrete project, interim management or transformational support, we apply the most relevant best practice working within the context of existing and emerging policy combining this knowledge with our practical experience of what actually works.

We understand and appreciate that all our clients have different needs and challenges. Our extensive knowledge, expertise and understanding of the leisure sector within local government, not for profit and commercial context across the UK.

As a micro consultancy, we provide a bespoke and dedicated service to our clients, ensuring the named consultants are committed to working on the project, and will not use 'back-office' junior consultants. Collectively we have the skill sets and experience that will deliver the specific requirements of the Council and provide a quality assurance and sense check derived from our collective and extensive experience in the sector both at a strategic and operational level.

The Approach

Following the Inception Meeting in mid-September 2023, in order to develop and understand the existing service, facilities and proposals for the future a site visit was facilitated in early October 2023. The project was designed to be delivered in key stages for each key element of the client requirements as illustrated below.



In response to the detailed client requirements across the four areas for consideration the approach taken is summarised below. At the request of the client the assessment of the proposed Staff Review was advanced in the programme and was also completed in early October 23.

In addition, consultation with senior officers was undertaken to provide some different perspective on the future operational model for leisure, the challenges and opportunities, a list of consultees is contained at Appendix 2.

Short Term Operating Models (2-3 Years)

Through our network and connections with established leisure operators and based on recent experiences in a post pandemic environment, we will provide an assessment of the current market conditions and challenges facing the sector.

Delivery Options were considered as set out in the Client Specification, following dialogue with the client on the current operating model and an assessment of its performance in the current operating environment and as projected by the market over the next 2-3 years. The financial modelling will be based upon the current operation as a benchmark and assessed at a high level across other options based on opportunity/risk and our experience of other models. The collective experience of each of the delivery options described in the Client Specification, will be applied as part of the assessment including the in-house model, establishing a Local Authority Trading Company, the charitable trust model and outsourcing.

Staff Review

As referenced above this element of the project was advanced at the request of the client and undertaken by reviewing the proposals developed by the client and applying our practical and operational experience of implementation in a local authority and leisure management operations. We have also considered the challenges and complexities of transformation within the public sector.

Built Facility & Playing Pitch Strategy

The strategies commissioned by the Council were reviewed and considered in the context of latent demand, broader developments, population growth, observations from the site visits and engagement with key stakeholders. Recent experience suggests the current climate for capital projects is volatile, primarily associated to rising construction and labour costs; therefore, any illustrative provided can only be valid as 'a moment in time' and will need extensive and additional professional support to develop design concepts, financial appraisals and robust business cases to support each proposal.

The volatility of the construction sector is mirrored to some extent by the changing landscape of capital financing options and potential external funding opportunities for leisure schemes, therefore the 'moving feast' of opportunities will need to be kept under constant review as current funding streams close and new opportunities emerge that can support pipeline projects.

Medium (3-5 years) & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

The approach taken was to apply our experience of capital investment programmes and how this may influence medium- and long-term operating models given the timescales to bring projects to fruition given the complexities of procurement, planning and financing alongside the prevailing market conditions.

Summary of Technical Matters

Qualifications

At this stage, no decisions have been taken by the Council in terms of its future operating model over the short, medium or long. First Point have been commissioned to provide an independent review of the future delivery models available to the Council and make recommendations for the future delivery of its leisure function currently delivered directly by its in-house service (One Leisure).

It should be noted that First Point are not lawyers or VAT specialists, therefore the findings and recommendations of this review are based on our professional experience of the sector and are presented in good faith. We would always recommend that the Council consult with its own legal and VAT officers as part of its own due diligence taking expert external advice as deemed necessary.

Legislation, regulations and guidance from government departments and HMRC are always subject to change therefore it is important that the Council considers any amendments or fundamental change that may be made in the future.

HDC's leisure services have always been delivered in-house, albeit re-branded as One Leisure in 2010 and subject to realignment to capital investment through the subsequent decade. More recently the service has been responsive to a changing landscape within the sector as part of post pandemic recovery.

Like many local authorities, the Council has been experiencing increasing financial pressures on its revenue budgets and needs to reduce costs wherever possible. It has been widely reported that many public leisure facilities are at risk of closure, Gateshead being among one of the first authorities to close a facility due to the pressure on its finances.

The provision of leisure services is not a statutory requirement, and if the Council is to continue to provide the public services it needs to reduce costs to an affordable level.

Legal Considerations

Local authorities have to act within the powers granted to them by Parliament, failure to do so can result in their actions being deemed to be ultra vires and therefore at risk of challenge via Judicial Review. A contract or other arrangement such as issuing a lease or licence to operate that has been granted outside the Council's powers can be declared null and void.

The general power of competence by section 1 Localism Act 2011 is generally accepted as providing a direct power to enter into contracts and grant leases to third party operators of the type relevant to this exercise, including a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC).

Procurement

It is both prudent and good practice for local authorities to periodically assess service delivery options to ensure the duty of Best Value is maintained, reviewing options every 3-5 years is not uncommon giving due consideration of market conditions at the time and service performance. Decisions on delivery options do not need to be permanent, as circumstances may change over time.

Should the Council decide to opt for a market solution at some point, contract awards would need to adhere to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR). However, whilst PCR remains in place currently it is anticipated that primary legislation may be introduced in 2024 or later, therefore it is something to monitor on the horizon. Adopting a market solution through a procurement exercise would require the Council to follow a procedure for seeking market interest, develop a specification, evaluation criteria and award notification, all of which will need to be a transparent and competitive process unless the Teckal exception applies.

Teckal

The Teckal exemption provides for the Council to award a contract and lease to an entity that it owns and controls without any competition, subject to compliance with HDC's own Standing Orders. The Teckal exception could apply to the LATC option, where competition is then not required as the Teckal exemption acknowledges that if a contracting authority contracts with a company that it owns and controls, this is effectively no different from the services being provided in-house. The government's Procurement Green Paper did not propose changes to the Teckal exemption; therefore, it is likely that this remains an option to local authorities regardless of any reforms to the PCR in the immediate future.

Regulation 12(1) of the PCR states that a public contract falls outside the procurement rules where all of the following conditions are met:

- the contracting authority (e.g., the Council) exercises over the legal party concerned (e.g., a wholly owned subsidiary) a control which is similar to that which it exercises over its own departments;
- more than 80% of the activities of the controlled legal person are carried out in the performance of tasks entrusted to it by the controlling contracting authority;
- there is no direct private capital participation in the controlled legal person.

The PCR also confirm that contracts with a wholly owned subsidiary which is owned by more than one public authority are not subject to procurement rules, nor are contracts granted by the wholly owned subsidiary to the parent local authority (e.g., contracts for support services).

In-House Service

There are no specific implications under PCR, if the Council wish for the services to remain in-house, although the need to demonstrate value for money and the Duty of Best Value still apply.

Good practice would be for the Council to develop a detailed specification for the in-house service with key outcomes, this is not intended to be a micro-management tool but something that is transparent in terms of performance and accountability.

Transferring assets to the LATC

Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with the power to dispose of property including the license or leasehold interest in its leisure assets currently operated in-house. The Council will need to demonstrate that entering into a transaction will meet its obligations as below:

- Councils' duty to obtain value for money,
- Councils' statutory duty to achieve best consideration reasonably obtainable,
- Councils' standard procedures with respect to the disposal of land and
- Councils' statutory duty to deliver Best Value with regards to its functions.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

Historically the supply of sporting services was exempt from VAT if those services are provided by an eligible body (essentially a non-profit distributing body that is not subject to commercial influence). However, the UK made a distinction between a non-profit distributing organisation (NPDO - e.g., a charitable trust) and those governed by public law (e.g., a local authority). The UK's application of VAT regulations disadvantaged in-house provision to some extent.

In July 2017 Ealing Council won a case against HMRC at the European Court of Justice claiming that its supplies of sporting services should also be exempt from VAT, the court found in favour of the Council and that HMRC's differentiation between non-profit making bodies and public bodies was not compliant with EU VAT law.

A recent policy paper issued by HMRC, states that local authorities in the UK are no longer required to pay VAT on leisure services provided to members of the public. This change in VAT treatment was introduced in

March 2023 and is applicable to in-house leisure services for gym memberships, sporting activities, and other facility visits.

Previously, local authorities were required to treat these supplies as business activities for VAT purposes and either charge their customers VAT at the standard rate or apply the exemption. However, following the legal challenge by a number of local authorities (including Ealing), the courts have found that local authorities' leisure services are provided under a statutory framework and can be treated as non-business for VAT purposes.

As a result of this ruling, local authorities can review their position and apply the non-business treatment to their supplies of leisure services. Additionally, there is the potential for consideration of submitting claims to HMRC for overpaid output tax in previous years.

This change in the treatment of VAT between different providers has changed the landscape to some extent. By removing the net income benefit of different VAT treatment between in-house delivery compared to an external organisation has 'levelled the playing field' to some extent. However, this may also impact on the ability of local authorities to recover VAT on their expenditure and potential implications for capital expenditure will need to be carefully considered in the wider context of the local authority's VAT position.

It is recommended that the Council seek specialist VAT advice to determine the net benefit of a claim to HMRC for output VAT paid in previous years and any broader VAT implications.

NNDR (National Non-Domestic Rates)

The Council does not benefit from any relief on NNDR for its leisure facilities managed by One Leisure. Charitable organisations and other Non-Profit Distributing Organisations (NDPO) including carefully constituted LATCs with charitable objectives would be entitled to 80% rate relief, HDC's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy (2023-2026) states it can grant the additional 20% at its discretion, taking into consideration the following:

- The extent their activities meets the Councils' corporate objectives and a demonstrable impact to the local community.
- The extent to which the organisation is local to Huntingdonshire and the benefits of the Authorities residents.
- The financial position of the applicant.

Many of the major leisure operators have charitable status in order to access the 80% relief, a LATC would only be able to access the discretionary relief. However, under the Business Rates Retention Scheme (2013), the granting of discretionary relief effectively results in the Council funding all or some of the 20% relief itself and offers limited financial benefit to the Council.

Following a recent valuation, the NNDR for the leisure estate is currently £1,117,500 in total. Many leisure operators are established with charitable objectives so delivery via this model could potentially reduce the operational cost by a net sum of c.£536,000. The discretionary rates relief policy is capped at £51k; all of the leisure facilities are above this threshold and would therefore not qualify for consideration. The rateable value of each site is contained at Appendix 3.

Consultation Requirement

The need for public consultation is something for potential consideration particularly if it is proposed to change the delivery model or fundamentally change the service, given that leisure is a customer facing service. Although the core function is unlikely to change the customer experience to any significant extent a change in delivery model may warrant further consultation to establish the key priorities of the new operator, such as approach to and its policy on accessibility.

The Council's duty to undertake consultation is derived from:

- statute (section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999));
- a contractual commitment to do so;
- any policy or stated promise/representation that it would consult (in a council document, website, press notice or other public document) which will give rise to a potential legitimate expectation of consultation;
- Council policies.

Conclusion - Technical Matters

The delivery options available to the Council, are bound by legislation and directives as set out in this section (above). The recent change in the treatment of VAT by HMRC for in-house leisure operations, eliminates one of the advantages that NPDO operators have historically had over in-house provision. The complexity of legislation varies according to the selected delivery model; however, all are considerations of determining that model.

Post Pandemic Market Assessment

Post Pandemic Leisure Market

This section provides an assessment of the prevailing post pandemic market conditions as the sector continues on its recovery journey following the significant negative affect of the COVID-19 pandemic; seeking to inform recommendations for the short-term operating model.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this market assessment of business recovery:

- data collection on a macro scale takes time and is reliant on Sport England and/or industry bodies undertaking a comprehensive study of the market;
- a soft market testing exercise will consume additional resources to undertake and is unlikely to provide a guaranteed position as operators are likely only to respond in generalities in order to protect their commercial position;
- only by investing in a full procurement exercise will the market response be certain, procurement on this scale is a costly exercise and there is no guarantee that procurement will secure any significant benefits to Council in the current climate;
- the assessment of market conditions is based on the data available, informal dialogue with operators' observation of current trends and market activity.

Market Assessment

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the leisure market. Pre-pandemic the sector was buoyant across private and public organisations and both the private and public fitness market was booming.

This assessment focusses on the public sector, facilities provided by the local authority and operated by various organisational forms (in-house; arm's length Local Authority Trading Company (LATC), independent charitable trusts, social enterprises and the private sector).

Pre-pandemic many public sector contracts were seeing operational subsidies reduce as revenues grew and although not the norm, a number of contracts let to operators as a 'commission contract' whereby the operator paid the local authority a fee to operate its leisure facilities.

As Covid took a grip on the country, the government introduced a series of 'lockdowns'; from March 2020, these enforced closures of leisure facilities had a catastrophic impact on the sector. When facilities were permitted to re-open later in the year, strict operating restrictions were imposed, with significantly reduced capacities, social distancing, customers being required to pre-book sessions, and enhanced cleaning regimes being introduced were all factors that contributed to income being dramatically reduced as operating costs increased. These factors coupled with a change in customer behaviour, including the increase of outdoor activity and digital activity programmes, the loss of customer confidence, (particularly vulnerable users) resulted in a significant disruption to the market.

Government support schemes such as furlough, rate relief and other covid recovery schemes such as the National Leisure Recovery Fund and crucially in most instances the understanding and financial support of local authorities to protect these important local services allowed some hope that post pandemic recovery was realistic and a new priority.

Commentators in the sector at the time were predicting 2-3 years before it would return to 'business as usual'. Evidence from Sport England's *Moving Communities* report (April 2022) suggest that was not far from reality (see Appendix 3) as participation nationally, although recovering is still below pre-pandemic levels with outdoor activities (87%), swimming (83%), swimming lessons (74%), and gym activity (72%) this is broadly

reflective of the One Leisure position at the time, with the exception of swimming lessons that is performing exceptionally well.

Financial Impact

With the inevitable financial pressures that all leisure operators faced as a result of Covid, leisure provision became an increasingly prioritised conversation within many local authorities as the viability of provision under threat. Dialogue with third party operators became a 'live' issue as re-negotiating terms and/or the level of financial recovery support required put pressure on the already stretched public purse. The same pressures applied to directly delivered services or those delivered via an arm's length council-controlled company.

At the same time Covid made local authorities reconsider its leisure provision, operators were becoming increasingly risk adverse. This was then exaggerated further by the rapid spike in utility costs, unprecedented and sustained inflation and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, that was squeezing its revenue streams from the paying customer.

As contracts were being renegotiated or coming to a natural end, the risk appetite of the main operators in the sector was understandably changing to a considerably more cautious and risk adverse approach from that seen in previous years. Risk transfer was once a key attraction of outsourcing; however, operators have adopted a more cautious approach to risk and generally focussing on consolidation of market share rather than growth, this may include bidding for contracts as other are lost.

During the review, the consultants were made aware of a potentially significant operational and financial risk with regard to the Terms & Conditions Audit being undertaken by the Council.

The Audit has identified an unquantified risk (to date) re: departure from NJC 'Green Book' conditions for a significant number of One Leisure employees that may result in pay enhancements such as weekend and anti-social hours working having to be paid to employees stretching back for up to 5 years. As this is to date an unquantified risk, potential operators are likely to approach this matter with caution; even if the Council agreed to underwrite this cost it will undoubtedly be disruptive to the workforce and may hinder any future changes to terms and conditions that an operator may seek to introduce.

More recently there have been a number of authorities starting on the journey of insourcing including several London Boroughs, it is likely that this is due to a mix of political ideology, demands of third-party operators in contract renegotiation and changes to VAT regulations that is levelling up the playing field to some extent in terms of some historic outsourcing advantages.

Competitive Tension

Overall there currently appears to be little competitive tension in the market for leisure operators, except for the larger and potentially more lucrative contracts, although there are some early signs of the market revival. Covid recovery remains a key factor, however other challenges such as utility costs, inflation and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on disposable income of customers all are maintained as material risks to the sector.

Given that operators are currently risk averse and generally seeking terms that are less attractive than in the pre-pandemic period, a number of authorities are not prepared to make the considerable investment in a major procurement exercise, where the outcome is so uncertain and unlikely to offer any improvement on the current position in the short term. External providers are likely to seek a minimum term of 10 years with an option to extend, as reducing employee and other operational costs will take several years to execute.

Some operators may however consider strategic geographic growth, whereby they will seek to secure contracts in neighbouring authorities that would allow them to distribute their management overhead costs across a wider base and operate more efficiently and spreading their operational risk

- Considering strategic geographic growth around the HDC area, it is noted that: GLL are operating facilities for Cambridge City Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council;
- Trilog Active is a local trust operating facilities in Northampton

- Abbeycroft Leisure are a not-for-profit organisation, operating facilities for West Suffolk Council and Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Council;
- Freedom Leisure is operating facilities in Fenland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire Council.

Peterborough have moved its leisure facilities into its LATC that was established primarily for waste and recycling services, it remains unclear if this is a temporary move pending market recovery. Each operator will have its own business recovery and growth strategy, it's a case of opportunity, capacity and timing will be factors in determining operators' level of interest in a procurement opportunity alongside the financial viability of the contract and the associated risks.

Early Market Engagement

The market assessment has been undertaken without the benefit of an Early Market Engagement exercise; therefore, assumptions have been made based on experience and observations within the market. The Council may wish to consider undertaking an exercise to test the potential appetite of leisure operators, that will offer further reassurance as part of its own due diligence and may also help to better inform future decisions in the medium and longer term, even if not the short-term delivery model. An Early Market Engagement exercise typically takes 6-8 weeks to conclude.

The Case for Leisure Provision

Local sport & leisure facilities are unquestionably part of the social fabric and physical infrastructure of the communities they serve. However, the leisure provision is a non-statutory function, and there is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide these services.

The question of provision is valid particularly as authorities become under increasing financial pressure and it could be argued that there is an established private sector market. However, private sector provision tends to be biased towards gym/fitness facilities (swimming pool provision is predominantly within the public domain); even where there are multi-functional facilities, accessibility is a factor as memberships are not affordable for everyone, thus exaggerating the health inequalities of low-income individuals and families.

The government has an ambition to improve the health of the nation, reduce health inequalities and improve co-ordination across health and social care through:

- improving physical activity especially among the most deprived, should lead to a reduction in diseases (thus alleviating pressure on the healthcare system and reducing treatment costs);
- improved quality of life and the associated economic returns, and
- a reduction in health inequalities (by reducing the gap in healthy life expectancy between the lower and higher social economic group) also contributing to a reduction in NHS expenditure.

There is evidence of the growing importance for local health collaboration across the country. The Integrated Care Systems (ICS) brings together health and care organisations, local councils, and third sector organisations to make a difference locally, reducing health inequalities and supporting prevention. HDC is a partner authority of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICS and has received £249,600 to offer residents evidence-based interventions for those with mild to moderate frailty and those at risk of cardiovascular disease. One Leisure can play a key role in delivering these types of health interventions and other social prescribing initiatives; however it will need to broaden its horizons beyond the existing leisure centres and take activity into the community.

Sport England, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), Community Leisure UK (CLUK), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) all champion the need for public leisure facilities as a critical component of the community infrastructure supporting health and wellbeing, community cohesion, tackling inequalities, and creating a positive and active environment for local people.

The continued evolution of a financially sustainable public leisure offer is likely to be reliant and focussed on, active wellbeing, where commissioned public health programmes are integrated with traditional leisure activities and become a core component of the leisure offer.

Conclusion – Market Assessment

In summary, in the short term (2-3 years) it is considered unlikely that there will be sufficient market tension currently to secure a Best Value outcome from a competitive process currently, given the probable contract term sought by operators and the unquantified risk arising from the Terms & Conditions Audit. However, as referenced previously good practice would be to test this through an Early Market Engagement exercise and keep this under review as market conditions and circumstances may change.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented pressures and hardship across all aspects of society, public and commercial organisations. In terms of the leisure sector, what it did highlight very clearly is that regardless of how councils have decided to provide and manage its public leisure services, risk of failure cannot be divested away from council assets and the local authority is always likely to be the funder of last resort in contract renegotiations.

The opportunity for One Leisure to exploit and maximise the community benefits of its relationship with the ICB, if taken, can only strengthen the case for continuation of the in-house offer, although other providers can argue that they could fulfil community health and wellbeing interventions equally as well and some operators are adept in this area. The creation of LATC's to deliver leisure functions has increased in popularity more recently and if constituted correctly can secure NNDR relief.

Short Term Operating Models (2-3 yrs.)

Service Delivery Options

As commented on above, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed and disrupted the leisure market; this section will explore the potential delivery options available to the Council in the short term.

At this stage, it should be reiterated that no decisions have been taken by the Council in terms of its future operating model over the short, medium and long term. First Point have been commissioned to provide an independent review of the future delivery models available to the Council and its leisure function currently delivered directly by its in-house service (One Leisure).

Whilst the Medium-Term Financial Strategy sets out a fairly positive picture overall compared to a number of other authorities, in common with many across the country, the Council remains under sustained financial pressures on its revenue budgets and needs to deliver its services in the most cost-efficient way possible, this necessity is heightened for non-statutory services such as leisure.

Facilities

One Leisure is the trading name of the Council's in-house leisure service that fulfils the leisure function delivering services from five sites:

- Huntingdon Leisure Centre
- Ramsey Leisure Centre
- St. Ives Leisure (Outdoor)
- St. Ives Leisure Centre (Indoors)
- St. Neots Leisure Centre

From the site visits undertaken, it is clear that from a customer perspective the facilities appear well presented, and clean, although there is a need for refurbishment, modernisation, re-configuration and in most instances the opportunity for expansion.

Core Options

The Council have identified 4 key delivery options to consider that could potentially be deployed for the operation of the council's leisure facilities, these include:

- direct in-house delivery by One Leisure (the current model);
- establishing a wholly owned and controlled council company;
- outsourcing to a third party;
- creation of a trust or not for profit entity.

In discussion with the client, the in-house option is considered as the 'Transformed In-House', the transformation foundations of this have already been laid through the appointment of an Interim Head of Leisure Services, adopting a more commercial approach to the service, the commissioning of the Built Facility and Playing Pitch strategies in 2022 and developing a detailed staff review that has been considered as part of this report. Failure to implement change would result in the 'status quo' being maintained and the operational deficit continuing unabated; encouragingly the initial stages of transformation have been supported by the Council therefore the 'Transformed In-House' is the model considered as the direct delivery option against the other core options listed above.

However, there are other potentially other less prevalent options for service delivery as described below; these options can be more complex, consume more resources and take longer to establish and implement. Although we have summarised the basic purpose and arrangements of these options below, these are not considered in

further detail at this stage given current market conditions and their complexity to establish, although they may be a consideration for the medium/long-term.

Joint Venture Company (JVC)

A joint venture company is a business entity created by two or more organisations (in this case the Council and another organisation) the two parties pool resources, expertise, and capital to undertake a specific business project or objective. The organisations involved in the joint venture remain separate legal entities, but they work together to achieve a common objective.

In a joint venture, the responsibilities, risks, and profits are shared between the parties involved according to the terms of the agreement. Joint ventures can take various forms, such as equity joint ventures where both parties own a percentage of the joint venture company, or contractual joint ventures where the companies work together under a contractual agreement but do not form a new separate legal entity. The Council could consider seeking a partner to establish a JVC; however, the proposition will need to be at a scale and sufficiently commercially attractive to potential partners. The only known JVC in the UK public leisure market is between Sunderland City Council and SLM (trading as Everyone Active), established in 2015 when the market was buoyant.

Joint Delivery Area Model

Similar to the JVC the opportunity exists to create or join a consortium approach when considering the future operating structure of the service. This is more commonplace with the Local Authority sector often more widely seen in the Shared Service Models. As the leisure sector continues to evolve and alternative operating models are considered by neighbouring local authorities, the opportunity to consolidate services with likeminded partner authorities in Cambridgeshire provides a potential vehicle for change in the future; however, the complexity of contract alignment of existing arrangements and developing partnerships should not be underestimated.

Options Appraisal

Consideration of the four core delivery solutions is set out below.

Transformed In-House

This is potentially the easiest option for the short term. However, for this to be successful, transformation must be supported and resourced, with the initial service changes embedded and full transformation pursued with vigour. Tweaking the operations will not be enough, and it is likely that unless a transformation plan is developed and driven by service management, it will only ever result in a sub-optimum outcome.

In-house transformation can be developed on a sliding scale, determining the depth of transformation the Council requires and has both the appetite and capacity to achieve. The aim should be to operate as leanly as possible, adopting best practice from the sector (regardless of the delivery model) and the benefits of the local authority infrastructure, its wider connectivity and local focus. The service will need sufficient scope and leeway to operate with flexibility such as working within agreed parameters to change prices or apply promotional offers without recourse for additional approvals, thus being able to respond to the market in a more dynamic way, similar to its external competitors. It may also need support services to adapt and change the way they interact with the Transformed In-House model, which can be challenging when they are still providing support for the entire organisation.

It is acknowledged that the optimum operational position from a pure finance perspective is unlikely to be palatable or possible e.g., moving away from NJC terms & conditions and even the Local Government Pension Scheme (LPGS); indeed, as a good employer some of this may not be desirable at all and have a negative impact on recruitment and retention. However, changes to operational practice that enable the service to operate in the most efficient way possible in line with the sector 'norms' can be achieved. HDC has recently commenced work on its Workforce Strategy. It will be important for the service to engage with this initiative to ensure that it meets the needs of its transformation plan e.g., a reward and remuneration or commission

scheme for sales above target and flexibility within the workforce that is appropriate for a 7-day-a-week service. It is not possible for the directly delivered in-house model to access any NNDR relief.

Local Authority Trading Company (LATC)

The Localism Act gave local authorities new powers to trade, resulting in the increase in popularity of the LATC model and the creation of new companies, delivering a wide range of services including leisure. Whilst there are variants to this approach, in this instance the LATC is considered to be a wholly owned and controlled Council company. It is possible for the LATC to be part of a JVC or Joint Area Delivery Model at some point in the future. Current procurement regulations continue to provide the powers for public authorities to create LATC's and award contracts directly without competition.

The LATC is an arms-length incorporated company and potentially could benefit from increased flexibility in decision-making to the same extent or potentially beyond that of an optimised Transformed In-House model. This would provide the LATC with the capability to operate more commercially and the potential to generate trading surpluses that can be reinvested back into the service and local community in accordance with its Articles of Association. It is assumed that the LATC model will not be simply a 'lift and shift' of the current One Leisure model, but it will share the current and future transformation objectives of the Transformed In-House model, providing the LATC with the ability to operate freely will be a key determinant of its success.

However, establishing a LATC does require resourcing. It was discovered during the review that HDC already has a LATC, *Huntingdonshire District Council Ventures Limited*; although it is understood that the company does not fulfil any frontline delivery functions. It should be possible to establish a leisure subsidiary of Ventures Ltd, subject to a review of and possible amendment of its Articles of Association, although it may be preferable to create a new LATC. Reviewing the articles of the existing LATC is outside of the scope of this review.

Key to its success will be the relationship between the local authority and the LATC, company, and managing the potential conflicts of interest between the commercial interests of the company and the public interest of the local authority. The benefits of the LATC are generally predicated on taking a long-term view and the Council being supportive of potential changes to terms and conditions of employment such as weekend enhancements and alternative pension provision for new entrants, that could potentially make significant savings to employee costs. Despite being an arms-length organisation the LATC is wholly owned by the Council and that inevitably brings into question that this could be considered by the trade unions as creating a 'two-tier' workforce where changes are proposed and may be resisted by the trade unions. Given the recent spotlight on employment terms through the Terms & Conditions Audit, changes of this nature may be more difficult to achieve in the short term.

If constituted correctly as an NPDO with charitable objectives clearly stated in its Articles of Association it is possible for the LATC to secure the 80% NNDR relief afforded to NPDO's, however it is not and never can be a charity as governed by the Charities Commission.

There are multiple examples of LATC's across the country including: *Brio* (Chester and Chester West), *Lampton Leisure* (Hounslow), *Leisure SK* (South Kesteven), *Life Leisure* (Stockport), *Plymouth Active* (Plymouth), *Volair* (Knowsley).

Outsourcing to a Third-Party

There is a mature leisure market that has been established across the country for several decades. This commenced with the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) in 1998 and continued to develop with the Best Value regime that followed, providing a variety of outsourced models; the three main types are as below:

- Large NPDO's – these will have all been developed from local authorities and have grown considerably to successfully operate multiple contracts beyond their original 'home' authority and across the UK. Some of these operators such as Fusion, GLL (trading as 'Better') and Freedom manage both local and high-profile facilities such as the Olympic Legacy venues.

- Private operators such as Places for Leisure, Parkwood, Serco and SLM (Everyone Active) often deploy a 'hybrid trust' model, whereby they can distribute profit back to their controlling company.
- Smaller local NPDO's (Trusts) have usually emerged from their 'home' authority, generally with little ambition for growth beyond their own geographic area and wholly focussed on a contract with their host authority. Whilst providing a focussed local service, the vulnerability of a single contract is a risk, examples of this type of organisation can be found at Burnley, Harlow, Pendle and Warrington.

If this option was selected a full procurement exercise would be required, this includes the option of the Council establishing its own charitable trust, that by its very nature must be wholly independent from the Council who can have no controlling interest in the trust. The resources to undertake a procurement event should not be underestimated. The market assessment concludes that this is not recommended for the short-term solution, as the Council should be seeking to 'squeeze the value' out of the service before considering going to the market and should also keep the situation under review.

Trust or Not for Profit Entity

Many local authorities established charitable trusts or similar vehicles to deliver their leisure services from their own in-house service (as commented on above) from the inception of CCT in the late 1980's. This option was attractive to many authorities, as it effectively shielded the service from any form of robust or an open procurement process and created access to many charitable benefits; one of the key benefits being 80% NNDR relief and often the additional 20% discretionary relief afforded by some authorities. This option remained available to local authorities until 2016 when direct awards (without following a competitive process) became only permissible in very exceptional and strictly interpreted, circumstances set out in Regulation 32 of the PCR (2015).

An award of a contract under regulation 32(2)(c) allows the use of the negotiated procedure without prior publication for the award of service contracts *"insofar as is strictly necessary where, for reasons of extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by the contracting authority, the time limits for the open or restricted procedures or competitive procedures with negotiation cannot be complied with"*.

The circumstances invoked to justify extreme urgency must also not be attributable to the contracting authority. This means that direct awards have to be strictly necessary, the urgency of doing so must be extreme and the events giving rise to the urgency must have been unforeseeable by and not attributable to the Council and it must not be possible to procure the services using one of the accelerated tender processes under the PCR.

It should be noted that it is still possible to create a charity or not for profit organisation, however it will need to compete in a transparent procurement process. A new charity must be a wholly independent organisation, most will be a limited liability company incorporated under the Companies Act 2006. As such it has all the characteristics of a normal company, including legal personality and limited liability of members and must comply with all requirements set for companies, such as the requirement to file accounts, certain resolutions and regular returns with Companies House.

A new charity will have no financial or operational track record as such, Trustees will need to be recruited and a Board established, management and staff recruited, and back-office support services sourced and secured. The likelihood of a successful procurement outcome against established operators in a competitive environment is low. However, given the market is suppressed currently this may present an opportunity, although the risk of external competition cannot be ruled out. Given the uncertainty of the procurement outcome, staff may be resistant to commit to the move across to it and it may only technically become a TUPE situation when the charity has a contract award.

Additionally, the Council will not be able to control or unduly influence the operation and affairs of the charity as it must be an independent body to become a registered charity governed by the Charities Commission.

Another common form of a not-for-profit organisation is the Community Interest Company (CIC), an enterprise set up to benefit the community.

CICs have been set up to run community facilities such as swimming pools, community centres, and other assets that were being sold off by local authorities. There are thousands of CICs of all sizes across the UK, operating in a wide range of sectors, including health, the arts, media, education and social work. The basic legal structure of a CIC is similar to a charity insofar as it would be a limited liability company incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 and have the characteristics of a normal company as described above in relation to a charitable trust. A CIC is therefore not a separate form of company, but merely a company with certain characteristics.

What makes a CIC distinct is that it has a 'lock' on its assets and is limited to the profits it can distribute to shareholder/members, which in this instance would be the Council if established by HDC. All assets have to be used for the community purpose; if the assets are sold, the proceeds have to be used for the community purpose. If a CIC ceases trading, the assets have to be transferred to a similar asset-secured company.

It should be noted that the Council could establish a LATC that would be a not-for-profit entity, this can be incorporated in the form of a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) or a CIC and like any other company will be bound by company regulations.

The Community Interest Test

When applying to set up a CIC at Companies House, the Council would need to undertake the a 'community interest test'; demonstrating that there is a clear benefit to the wider community and not just to the Council. All the directors have to sign a community interest statement to this effect.

Differences Between CICs and Charities

One major difference is that directors of CICs can be paid a salary and retain control of the company whereas charities tend to be run by volunteer boards. The asset lock is also unique to CICs and thanks to the social-purpose of the enterprise, they can legitimately apply for grant-funding usually restricted to charities. Charities that operate trading arms could convert to the CIC model, although the CIC may not benefit from all the tax advantages as charitable organisations.

Analysis of Options

As commented on above, we have assumed the in-house option will be a Transformed In-House service, building on the initial work that has commenced over the past c.18 months.

The options appraisal is based on the principles set out by Council in the project brief, these have been considered as the underlying principles of each aspect commented on below. The principles are:

- financial modelling
- balancing the level of risk, the Council is willing to take
- the commercial return the Council wishes to secure or guarantee
- the social and wellbeing benefits the Council is seeking to achieve
- the environmental factors that the Council expect to achieve through its Climate Strategy
- the level of control the Council would retain over both strategic and operational matters

The assessment is based on the market assessment and our practical experience of each of the models. It is not possible to determine with total accuracy which model may actually be most advantageous to the Council without undertaking a soft market testing exercise and/or a full procurement exercise, where through dialogue with potential operators the proposal can be comprehensively considered. This may be something for consideration in the medium/long term options at the appropriate time.

Each element below is RAG rated as illustrated below:

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------|
| | Most beneficial / advantageous to the Council |
| | Moderately beneficial / advantageous to the Council |
| | Least beneficial / advantageous to the Council |

Set Up and Transitional Costs

The Transformed In-House model is likely to have the lowest cost to implement. However, there will be a need to invest in management and staff to ensure it has the capacity and capability to optimise performance.

The current Head of Service has been integral to initiating and driving service improvement over the past 18 months or so, it is understood that the postholder is only contracted to March 2024, this not only generates a delivery risk but potential recruitment cost. The Transformed In-House option could be implemented immediately; although external transformation support may be required if there is not sufficient internal capacity within the Council to affect the cultural shift required. The estimated cost of external support is c.£20k-35k depending on the depth of support required.

Establishing a leisure subsidiary of the Council's existing LATC or creating a new LATC, is likely to require external support, unless there is spare capacity within the Council to project manage its inception and mobilisation. Carefully establishing the LATC to be Teckal compliant and to secure NNDR relief may require additional external support. Although the transfer from in-house to LATC should be relatively seamless, it would be prudent not to underestimate the volume of work involved including some highlighted below:

- Articles of Association with charitable objectives.
- Producing a client service specification; Memorandum of Agreement/Funding Agreement, performance framework, operating leases/licences etc.
- Establishing new governance and oversight mechanisms (may be more involved for a customer facing service).
- Subsidiary or NewCo established and incorporated including; Articles of Association (or review and amendment to existing), VAT registration, producing a Business Plan for consideration by the Council and;
 - establishing its own banking and financial arrangements; regulatory procedures, appointment of an auditor;
 - support service requirements (buying back from the Council or sourcing externally);
 - comprehensive suite of policies and procedures (although these could potentially just be adopted from One Leisure initially);
 - payroll arrangements and compliance with HMRC requirements for an arms-length company;
 - internal and customer comms and re-branding;
 - ICT systems interface with the Council;
 - Board recruitment (although this could initially be existing Councillors and/or Senior Managers) of Company Directors with the requisite sector experience and skill sets required to control a leisure company;
 - Company Director training for the Board etc. (if new Directors are appointed);
 - HR support to manage the TUPE transfer, in accordance with legislation.

There is a potential reduction in demand for Council support services if the LATC source alternative providers that are more cost effective, however in most instances of LATC's being established there is a minimal impact on central support costs that are generally redistributed across the council.

Based on previous experience elsewhere, whilst creating the LATC as a 'shell' company or subsidiary is relatively straightforward and can be done in days, getting to 'go-live' for a customer facing service in readiness to trade could take anything from 6-12 months dependent on the speed of decision

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making/delegations for each aspect of establishment with an estimated cost of c.£75k - £125k (excluding re-branding costs, uniforms, signage etc.), depending on what internal capacity exists to support the implementation of this option.

Outsourcing to a third party would require a comprehensive procurement exercise in accordance with the Procurement Act (2023) that received Royal Assent on 26th October 2023. It is anticipated this new procurement legislation will 'go-live' in October 2024 following a minimum of 6-months advance notification. Local authorities have been asked to consider their procurement pipeline for the next 12 months in light of the Act being introduced, this would not restrict the Council undertaking an Early Market Engagement exercise. Procurement of leisure services can be a complex and lengthy process that is likely to need external support depending on internal capacity across most disciplines. Typically for the leisure contracts a minimum of 9-12 months should be allowed from the point the decision to outsource to award. Established operators will have their own back-office support functions therefore there would be in theory be a reduction in demand for corporate support services, however as the leisure function is often a small proportion of a particular activity, realisation of cost reduction in this regard is limited. The cost of procurement alone is estimated to be c. £100k- £150k.

The creation of a charitable trust or not for profit entity will still require a procurement exercise as described above and have a similar impact of Council support services. In addition, the trust will need to recruit a Board of Trustees, typically these consist of up to 12 independent Directors with the requisite skills to govern a charity (with a maximum of two local authority representatives under this format). The trust would need all the management and operational arrangements put in place as per the LATC option, which could be developed in tandem with the procurement exercise but as a NewCo it will need to establish and initiate all the business infrastructure unlike an existing operator. It should be noted that this option would all be undertaken 'at risk', as the outcome of a successful procurement exercise cannot be guaranteed.

The attraction of outsourcing to an organisation with charitable objectives including a correctly formed LATC with charitable objectives, is securing the 80% NNDR mandatory relief (net benefit 60% of this sum after accounting for loss on rates income to HDC). However in the short-term the cost of procurement, uncertainty of a beneficial outcome and other 'live' issues all detract from the potential NNDR advantage if seeking an external delivery solution; there would be no requirement for procurement with a LATC option.

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Transformed In House | Green |
| LATC | Yellow |
| Outsourced | Red |
| Trust or NPDO | Red |

Level of Operational Risk Transfer

The Transformed In-House model offers no change to the current position with One Leisure as the Council remain liable for all operational risk transfer. For the LATC model it could be argued that there is some risk transfer, but it is minimal as despite being a separate entity in theory, the Council are its sole Member, therefore it retains some liability albeit at arms-length

For both the outsourced and trust/NPDO option day to day operational risk would sit with the operator, however if either option went into financial crisis and/or liquidation the Council remains would be the funder of last resort, so are the risk transfer is not absolute.

The unquantified risk associated to the Terms and Condition Audit, can only really be mitigated for an alternative delivery model if the Council state at the outset that they will underwrite the liability. However, as the quantum is currently unknown and resolution is likely to take some considerable time, the financial impact to the current and future service offer is likely to create a significant non-transferrable risk. The uncertainty this creates amongst potential operators may result in them seeking full indemnity for this and other unforeseen historic liabilities regardless of their own due diligence.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Transformed In House | |
| LATC | |
| Outsourced | |
| Trust or NPDO | |

Asset Management Responsibility Transfer

The notion of ‘full repairing leases’ is a long way from reality in most leisure contracts. In all instances the Council is likely retain ownership and responsibility for the main structural elements of the facilities such as the roof, walls, drainage, major capital works etc. Even where a degree of asset management transfer was possible as determined by contract and/or negotiation, the Council would assume the ‘landlord’ responsibility under a typical ‘landlord and tenant’ lease arrangement.

As the Council will retain ownership of the facilities and be responsible for major capital works in each of the models considered, there will be no material difference in terms of carbon reduction schemes and access to grants as the Council is still likely to take the lead on these projects supported by the operator. Outsourcing to one of the larger operators is likely to bring some additional experience to carbon reduction schemes in leisure facilities; however, the Council has already successfully completed a project at Ramsey Leisure Centre, therefore this is not considered to offer any significant advantage.

Utility consumption for leisure facilities is a significant operational cost, particularly those with swimming pools; the recent spike in energy costs has highlighted this more widely. Pre-pandemic the operator was generally liable for utility costs, and generally accepted this level of risk, even if this was based on a ‘cap and collar’ arrangement. The recent spike in energy costs effectively triggered a renegotiation of contract terms between many operators and the local authorities, as this along with the loss of revenues due to the pandemic this threatened the viability of many contracts. Local authorities can often secure preferable unit costs and achieve economies of scale particularly if they are part of an energy consortium; some of the larger leisure operators can achieve similar rates where they operate multiple contracts. The newly established trust/NPDO would however be reliant on the Council continuing to provide utilities as it is unlikely to be able to secure the best unit costs as a new entity with a single contract.

Risk transfer on utilities alone is unlikely to be significantly different for any of the options currently. External operators will be reluctant to take on the utility risk, without ‘risk pricing’ in their commercial offer or negotiating shared risk.

One of the key determinants of whether this is advantageous to the Council or not will be the condition of facilities and the split of liabilities. In each of the models, it would be common for day-to-day repairs, and small capital work to fall to the operator who would factor this in the commercial offer based on recent condition surveys undertaken by the Council. Prospective operators will inevitably assess the risk and factor that into contract negotiations. Achieving any additional liability transfer maybe possible, however the cost of risk transfer in the commercial considerations may equate to or be higher than the risk of the Council retaining responsibility.

On the assumption that outsourcing the service to an established operator who has established relationships with contractors some aspects of asset management could be satisfactorily undertaken, however the Council may have established contractual relationships with local suppliers that supports the local economy. For a newly established trust or NPDO with no account history with contractors the advantages are likely to be marginally better than the Transformed In-House or LATC option but not as good as an established operator.

The Transformed In-House model offers no change to the current position with One Leisure as the Council remain liable for all operational risk transfer. For the LATC model it could be argued that there is some risk transfer to an arms-length company but in reality, the liability would not stray from its single member, the Council. In current market conditions where operators are risk adverse, transfer of liabilities may be possible but will come at a cost to the Council and may only offer a marginal advantage.

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Transformed In House | Red |
| LATC | Red |
| Outsourced | Yellow |
| Trust or NPDO | Yellow |

Level of Council Control

With the Transformed In-House model, the Council would maintain full control, albeit to maximise the advantages of this approach, freedom to operate and flexibilities need to be applied. The LATC will have its own company Board of Directors and must have the latitude to operate commercially, however ultimately the Council is its sole member and can decide to terminate the arrangement with the LATC as and when it chooses to do so, therefore the degree of control is considerable.

The Council's level on influence and control of both the outsourced and LATC/NPDO option is effectively governed by the contract and service specification it has in place with the service provide. Typically, the Council may have two representatives on a Board of twelve Directors for a locally established independent charitable trust. However, the Council nominees are Directors of the trust/NPDO and bound by the responsibilities and duties of a Director to entity and not the Council; as such the level of control is the same as the outsourced option.

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Transformed In House | Green |
| LATC | Green |
| Outsourced | Red |
| Trust or NPDO | Red |

Scope for Community Involvement

In theory there should be no discernible difference between the options if the requirement for community involvement is clearly specified in the client requirements, as each of the options could in theory work with the Council and community partners to engage with the community. However, in practice a Transformed In-House and LATC option is likely to have existing relationships across the Council and with community groups therefore would have a 'head start' on the outsourced and trust/NPDO option even if staff transfer across under TUPE. Local authorities are established organisations, embedded in the local community ad generally 'trusted' organisations, this does give the Transformed In-House and the LATC model a slight advantage in this area.

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Transformed In House | Green |
| LATC | Green |
| Outsourced | Yellow |
| Trust or NPDO | Yellow |

Potential to Increase Participation

The service specification and/or client requirements should include the need to increase participation. All of the delivery models will be focussed on increasing participation where it increases generated income and drives up community participation that delivers health and wellbeing outcomes, attracts third-party funding and delivers against the contractual performance targets. Retention of existing and new customer is equally important to maximising participation rates, investment in digital tools and targeted marketing will support this objective, alongside a membership architecture that provides options and choice for customers. Whilst the Transformed In House and LATC may appear best placed with existing connections and local intelligence, given TUPE applies it is not considered that this provides any distinctive difference between the delivery models.

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Transformed In House | Green |
| LATC | Green |
| Outsourced | Green |
| Trust or NPDO | Green |

Access to Capital and Investment Funds

Currently Prudential Borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) despite recent interest rate increases offers the most preferential lending rates compared to borrowing from the market. Even where leisure facilities are operated by a third-party organisation, the local authority often finance capital schemes through PWLB; project management responsibility can be led by the council or the operator depending on capacity and capability that would need to be agreed between the parties.

If HDC reached its borrowing capacity limits, an established operator could potentially borrow from the market to deliver a scheme on behalf of the council. However, this would need to be negotiated with the operator on the understanding that a management fee may be applied by the operator in addition to a higher rate of borrowing than the PWLB and the arrangement would be dependent on the length of the contract. A newly established trust/NPDO will have limited financial or credit history and may find it more difficult to secure capital funding than any of the other options.

Access to major sources of third-party funding e.g., Sport England, Football Foundation, National Governing Bodies is likely to be accessible regardless of the delivery model, although as asset owners, the Council is likely to be required to guarantee longevity of use. Access to some funding schemes is restricted to charitable organisations, providing some possible advantage for the trust/NPDO's although it should be noted that many of the major operators fulfil this criterion.

Given that the PWLB is likely to be the preferred source of financing capital schemes regardless of the service delivery option, then there is no difference in this regard. An established operator will potentially have the ability to secure funding from the market, if necessary, where this is less likely for a newly established trust/NPDO. Some funding streams will be restricted to organisations with charitable status, therefore overall, this provides a marginal favourable position to that of the Transformed In-House and LATC option.

It will be important that capital investment in leisure is fully immersed in the thinking and opportunities to finance or contribute to schemes from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and/or Section 106, creating a pipeline of potential investment aligned to development and regeneration schemes.

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Transformed In House | Yellow |
| LATC | Yellow |
| Outsourced | Green |
| Trust or NPDO | Green |

Options Summary

The tables below provide a summary of the criteria set by the Council, a weighting applied to the assessment and the outcome.

Table 1 - Criteria Assessment

| | Set Up & Transitional Costs | Level of Operational Risk Transfer | Asset Mngt. Transfer | Level of Council Control | Scope for community Involvement | Potential to increase participation | Access to capital and investment funds |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Transformed In House | Green | Red | Red | Green | Green | Green | Yellow |
| LATC | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Green | Green | Green | Yellow |
| Market Solution (Outsourced) | Red | Green | Yellow | Red | Yellow | Green | Green |
| Creation of a Trust or not-for-profit entity | Red | Green | Yellow | Red | Yellow | Green | Green |

Conclusions – Short Term Operating Model

In consideration of both the current Market Assessment, the Options Appraisal, and the recently identified risk associated to the Terms & Conditions Audit, the Transformed In-House model is considered to provide the best solution for the Council in the immediate short-term. Both service and corporate capacity to implement an alternative delivery currently would be challenging and may severely stretch the organisation. However, reviewing market conditions through an Early Market Engagement exercise and reconsidering the LATC option within the next year is worthy of consideration.

The set-up costs and timescales associated to implementing any of the other options is likely to take until early 2025 to result in a change of operating model even for a LATC, assuming a decision to select an alternative model is taken in early 2024. If the Transformed In-House model is approved and resourced, the transformation journey will effectively have had a 12-month head start on any of the other options to implement the changes required. Resolving the currently unquantified liability of the Terms & Conditions Audit is key as employee costs are the largest expenditure item for leisure and until this issue is resolved it would not be possible for the LATC to develop a Business Plan with any degree accuracy.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and market recovery, the acute rise in utility costs and cost of living crisis have resulted in a more cautious market and operators becoming risk adverse, significantly changing and suppressing the appetite of operators to take commercial risks.

Council control is maintained with the Transformed In-House model. In each of the other models the operator is an independent entity, although less so with the LATC as the Council would be its sole member and can determine the continuation of the company. The LATC is only an attractive option if there is a commitment to a term similar to that an external operator may seek, in order to implement change e.g., 10 years with an extension option. If an authority was only considering the LATC model as an interim position to secure NNDR benefits, then due regard should be given to the negative impacts of this approach. The disruption of a service transfer for the short term is unlikely to be beneficial to the financial or operational position. In theory, it could be argued that the required service specification, and performance framework for the LATC model provides the Council with control in all options, however each of these would require an enhanced ‘client side’ to monitor the contract whilst the Transformed In-House provides direct control and influence.

The Transformed In-House and LATC are most likely to provide opportunities for community involvement as they will have existing relationships and connections with the communities they serve, although it is possible over time that the other delivery models could achieve similar levels as they develop their understanding of the locality.

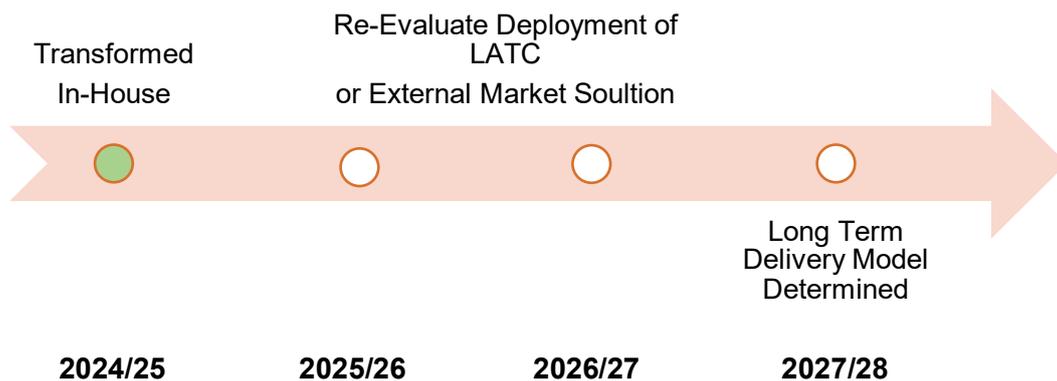
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It is not considered that there is any material difference between the models in terms of increasing participation as all models will have a clear focus on delivering this.

Access to capital and investment funds for large capital schemes is likely to come from Prudential Borrowing as the Council are owners of the assets; interest rates are competitive and offer good value for money compared to market financing solutions. If the Council reach capacity on its borrowing or have other priorities it would be possible for an established operator to secure capital financing from the market although this is not 'free money' and would and ultimately cost the Council more to repay.

However, if at some point in the future the Council considered a significant capital project to build a new leisure centre(s) that was upwards of c.£20m then a market solution to Design Build Operate and Maintain (DBOM) may be an attractive option if the Council had exhausted its capital borrowing limits. This however is not a scenario for the immediate future or the short-term, if this became a live option, the operating model should be reconsidered at this time.

Operators with charitable status may be eligible for some external funding streams which the local authority are excluded from although these are generally associated to programme delivery rather than infrastructure projects. A timeline summarising the proposed short-term delivery arrangement is illustrated below.



Proposed Staff Review

Introduction

This section provides a high-level diagnostic review of and provides comment on the preliminary work undertaken to date on the proposed staffing structure for HDC's Leisure Services.

The review critiques the recent paper presented to the Council's SLT and HR (September 2023) on the proposed staff review of One Leisure in conjunction with associated supporting documents provided by the client

The purpose of the review was to fulfil the following key objectives which are identified as:

- A structure that allows for a clear pathway to career progression and better training and development opportunities for staff
- Provide a staffing structure that supports financial efficiency and growth
- Improve financial performance of One Leisure

Limitations

The limitations of a high-level review mean that Job Descriptions and Person Specifications are not considered. Additionally, and possibly more crucially, the competence and capability of existing staff and any new appointments that are required to deliver any change in service delivery is unknown to the consultants and will only become evident after implementation. Comments on the proposed structure are therefore provided in the context of these limitations.

Huntingdonshire Built Sports Facility Strategy

In 2022 the council commissioned external support to produce an Indoor and Built Sports Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy for Huntingdonshire. Endorsed by Sport England, the strategies provide a comprehensive review and assessment of facilities and pitches and provide strategic recommendations in line with population growth forecasts contained in the Local Plan.

The strategies are key features of the wider One Leisure review and play a central part of the proposals emerging across this wide and expansive staff review.

Plans are in place that these strategies are to be utilised by partners and providers to benefit and enable the leisure and sporting landscape across Huntingdonshire as a whole.

The service vision expressed on HDC's website is:

To create and maintain high quality, sustainable leisure and sports facilities which meet community need, increase participation, help tackle health and age issues and provide accessible, inclusive activities for Huntingdonshire residents as part of an active lifestyle.

It is important that the proposed staff review is aligned to the development of these important strategies, supports financial imperatives and sustainability.

The key purpose of the overarching One Leisure staff review is to support the delivery of the new corporate plan priorities and aid full post pandemic business recovery whereby the service can eliminate the operating deficit, move to breakeven and ultimately to a position where it generates an operating surplus. The clear intent remains as reported on in the paper to SLT/HR, that the proposed staff changes will result in a more efficient and effective structure that is outcome focussed with improved staff retention, recruitment, and career pathways.

However, it is recommended that for the proposed structural changes to be effective a Learning & Development Plan is developed and adequately resourced to support individuals and the service to achieve its objectives. In addition, an objective post implementation review should be undertaken to determine if the changes have delivered the anticipated outcomes.

It is recognised that the work undertaken to date and phased approach to a new model of delivery has allowed a detailed review to take place on the joint outcomes that can be better delivered by a more purposeful and collaborative approach across all leisure sites within One Leisure.

National Context

HDC acknowledged that change was required across broad Leisure functions and the One Leisure Business model to reposition the traditional offer of public leisure into a more commercially viable offer in parallel to an active wellbeing service, doing more to create healthier and more active communities across HDC. The appointment of a more commercially focussed Interim Head of Leisure is testimony to the commitment to change.

Nationally Sport England have recently published *The Future of Public Leisure report*. The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, rising energy costs and cost of living crisis has accelerated the appetite for local authorities and their partners to review leisure services and more broadly re-examine the purpose of provision. This includes their alignment with broader strategic outcomes, particularly health. The report recommends expanding the traditional offer of public leisure into an Active Well-being service, doing more to create healthier and more active communities. It will be important that the proposed new structure has the roles and personnel with the capacity and capability to effectively engage with partners, particularly in health, where there are opportunities to secure funding to deliver community focussed services.

Leisure Operational Focus

Previous data analysed cited covering the last 5 years of actual staff and income information and the 2023-2024 budgeted position. One Leisure has typically operated at a financial deficit position with a staff to income ratio of between 60 – 65%.

Prior to Covid and the significant business disruption encountered across the leisure industry per se, it has widely been accepted that generally most commercial operators will aim to deliver a service at around 50-55% staff to income ratio. Although it should be noted this figure does vary considerably based on accuracy of data and local circumstances aligned to the delivery model (private/Trust/in house etc.), and the specific priorities and ambition of the service. The proposal is geared towards a leaner more efficient structure, with opportunity for growth.

Staffing is the single largest cost to operating leisure centres and the current structure within One Leisure (prior to any changes proposed) is delivering a high cost to income ratio. It is noted that feedback from staff engagement sessions facilitated by senior managers across One Leisure in May and June 2023 suggested there was no evidence of a progressive career pathway for staff. This positive engagement should continue to be an integral part of any change process and service restructuring.

One Leisure management have undertaken a review of current and proposed structures that has considered:

- Core operational hours of leisure centres
- Core customer opening hours
- Lifeguard operational review
- Fitness consultant appointment review
- One Leisure Direct telephone call review

The review of these operational elements is comprehensive and geared to delivering an efficient service that meets current service demands with flexibility to scale up for growth also. This work has made a valuable contribution in the design of the new delivery model for the service and its individual sites.

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It is clear the proposed changes represent a change of direction with a clear focus on a more commercial approach that is in keeping with industry 'norms' of the major service providers in the sector and overall, greater strategic alignment with council priorities. The introduction of 3 new posts:

- Activities Manager
- Events & Hospitality Manager
- Business Support & Compliance Manager

These roles are designed to support both the financial objectives of the service and deliver community outcomes; these new posts coupled with greater emphasis on revenue generation, service standards, and compliance are key features of a more dynamic leisure operator. Converting outcomes to deliverables will also be a key feature; it is recommended that the service should develop a Key Outcomes Framework that is integrated with individual and team target setting that supports this new focus

Data and insight will be key to supporting the services as it seeks to deliver its objectives and demonstrate how sport and leisure can play an integral role in delivering community outcomes. It is anticipated the new Business Support and Compliance Manager will provide the tools and analysis to all informed decisions to be taken.

It is noted that the proposed structure includes the deletion of the current Marketing and Communications Coordinator. The impact of this proposal is unclear from this desk-top review, it is however essential that the duties and capabilities are accommodated within the proposed structure. Effective marketing, communications and use of social media platforms are key to commercial success; therefore, assurance should be sought that these functions are adequately covered in the proposed structure.

The proposed staff re-structure compared against the current 2023-2024 budget indicates that overall, the staff weekly hours are maintained, however, the proposal can potentially reduce expenditure by £257k per annum. The cost efficiencies are considerable and support the move towards breakeven and ultimately an operational surplus and can be considered a commercially sound approach to pursue.

The restructure proposal presented to SLT/HR in September is focussed on providing added value to the service and supporting the delivery of local priorities as a strategic priority. However, the proposed changes will have varying degrees of impact on individuals across the service, therefore it will be important to assess potential impacts such as net loss/gain of posts and undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment.

The proposed changes to the Personnel Training (PT) model seek to address some purported weaknesses in process and historic poor management practice. The proposal may have an adverse effect on some existing staff, although this is considered necessary to re-set service delivery practice. Whilst the proposal of contracting PT provision to a third party is not unique and a perfectly valid approach, it will be important to ensure an effective communication plan is in place for both staff and customers to avoid any risk of confusion and loss of business. It is recommended that management should ensure measures are in place that do not jeopardise the commercial objectives of the service including the projected staff cost savings.

Based on experience from similar structural changes in local authorities, the timeline for implementation of the proposed changes is ambitious but not impossible. If approvals, consultation, and implementation do not encounter any significant delays then the full efficiencies savings can be secured in 2024/25, however it would be prudent to consider a contingency in budget planning in the event of any implementation delay.

Implementation will require a mobilisation plan to ensure smooth transition into the new ways of working and will need to be carefully managed to ensure the service quality and customer confidence is not adversely impacted, in what remains a highly competitive market and challenging trading conditions prevailing in the sector per se.

Establishing a set of design principles for the service is worthy of consideration, this will not only provide the foundation for structural review but the on-going service transformation. Some common themes and ambitions for the remodelling of One Leisure could include:

- Commerciality and Sustainability – to ensure the sustainability of services through growth of revenue/reduction of costs; waste minimisation and carbon reduction.
- Careers - career development and career pathways that any new model of delivery will help achieve.
- Adaptability - flexible and adaptable roles within any new alternate delivery model designed to meet the needs of the public. The intent to move to a more expansive and wide range of opening times across all areas of the service.
- Customer Centric – clear customer focus – maximising the opportunities to cross sell and grow revenue/income.
- Community - opportunities for the community to be involved and to co-deliver services in particular community health programmes.
- Synergy - service synergy where this makes sense – between sites and community outreach especially Public Health delivery.
- Resilience - ensuring long-term service resilience and post Covid recovery to deliver wider service outcomes.

The service has been progressing through a whole service transformation programme for c.18 months since the appointment of the Interim Head of Leisure, the direction of travel is clear and the foundations for success are in place.

Links to wider Public Health Initiatives

The One Leisure Active Lifestyles team offers a wide range of sport and health related activities to promote a healthy population within the district.

The team works closely with a number of partners to help provide these activities, such as young people's holiday programmes, disability sports clubs and health walks. Support is also offered to local sports clubs to help provide access to leisure. This team and the wider contribution it can make across wider Health partners remains a key delivery component of the local service delivery model proposed.

The service should seek to develop this function across a wider partnership landscape and exploit the opportunity that currently exist in particular within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System.

The leverage of additional funds to support longer term health conditions across communities covering the borough will require close collaboration and work at a senior executive level. That systems leadership function will help pivot One Leisure into a more coherent community focused service: moving away from leisure centre facility management into a greater integrated Leisure service delivering tangible outcomes across communities. Ensuring the service has the capacity and capability to develop these partnerships and access the funding that is available for preventative and recovery interventions will not only improve the health and wellbeing of residents, but it will also position One Leisure as the provider of choice for multiple partners.

Some broader community orientated interventions designed to tackle health inequalities are already in place across the council area; this should provide the foundation for increased partnership activity in this area (see link below).

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/news/grant-from-huntingdonshire-district-council-enables-community-groups-to-offer-health-activities-to-residents/>

Risks & Benefits

As with any change process there are a number of risks and benefits associated to both implementation and/or failure to implement the proposed changes.

The identified risks/benefits of the proposed staff review are highlighted below.

- **Failure to implement the proposed review in part or full;**
 - this would negatively impact on the projected efficiencies and is likely to result in One Leisure continuing to operate at a sub-optimum level with a financial deficit;
 - career progression opportunities may be stifled and consequently an increased risk of losing talent from the organisation;
 - the future of One Leisure to operate as a commercial entity and achieve financial sustainability would be jeopardised.

- **Implementation of the proposed staff review would:**
 - create the conditions for success and short-term sustainability of One Leisure;
 - support the efficient operation of leisure facilities;
 - provide operational flexibility and resilience;
 - provide career pathways and opportunities for existing staff to progress with appropriate reward/remuneration;
 - afford the opportunity to implement a learning & development plan for staff that supports career progression;
 - retain talent within the organisation;
 - potentially place some staff 'at risk' of redundancy if they were unable to secure alternative positions within One Leisure and/or the Council.

Conclusions - Staff Review

It is acknowledged that the current service configuration across One Leisure is fragmented and not coherent. Identifying some practical steps to reduce costs, improve efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of local services and support for local systems through greater collaboration is a key ingredient of the proposals emerging on the staff realignment.

The proposed restructure has been carefully considered by the senior management of One Leisure, with detailed reviews of site-specific role and resource allocations. It is evident from the work conducted to date that the proposal is designed to provide a more commercially orientated cost-effective service that is customer led and responsive to demand, with closer alignment to the new Corporate Plan.

A genuine opportunity now exists under the leadership of the Interim Head of Leisure Services to change the service configuration alongside the staffing model; with a sustained focus on the end user and wider communities across HDC.

It remains important this service review is aligned to a wider place-based community interventions and ambitions in order to maximise opportunity and impact.

A new target operating model aligned to this review will need a detailed financial analysis in parallel to the stated outcomes that the change could help deliver. The cost benefits associated with the proposed staff review are clear, however the outcomes have scope for further development and greater clarity.

Consideration should be given to producing a set of overarching design principles to underpin the new structure and applied to subsequent phases of service transformation.

The proposals set out for the service provides the opportunity to significantly reduce staff costs and become a leaner operation that is more commercially focused applying the simple principle of reducing costs and increasing revenue generation.

The proposals are generally consistent with the approach taken by commercial operators in the sector and seek to achieve current industry standards and 'norms' i.e., the staff to income ratio.

The proposal also affords the opportunity to reach out to the hard-to-reach communities to ensure equity of access and inclusion, remaining agile, flexible, and responsive to demand and ultimately more sustainable.

Recommendations

- The proposed staff review should be progressed commencing with an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of staff potentially impacted by the review.
- Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to support the review.
- Establish a cohesive and resourced plan to deliver the staff review in conjunction with internal business partners.
- Develop a key outcomes framework that provides clarity of task and targets for the service and staff.
- Develop a Learning & Development Plan that supports career progression and delivery of service objectives.
- Develop a robust stakeholder communications plan that addresses both staff and customer communications on all relevant aspects on the change process to ensure business continuity.
- Consider developing a set of design principles underpinning the staff review and any subsequent transformation phases.
- Develop a contingency plan within the 2024/25 budget planning process to reflect any potential implementation delays and subsequent impact on delivering the projected efficiency target.
- Undertake a post project implementation review to assess if the proposed change has met its objectives and produce a learned document to support on-going improvement.

Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies

Strategy Overview

The Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy (IBF) and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) 2022 - 2043 were commissioned in early 2022 with completion in November of that year and subsequently adopted by the Council in June 2023.

The strategies are endorsed by Sport England insofar as they follow the accepted methodology in terms of an assessment of provision and projected need in line with population growth forecasts contained in the Local Plan over the next two decades. A Sport England endorsed strategy is the 'gold standard' for the assessment of sports facilities; commissioning this work demonstrates a commitment to a robust evidence base to support and enable improved sporting facilities for Huntingdonshire residents.

It is clear these strategies will help provide the evidence base to develop the right facility mix across Huntingdonshire; however, it does not resolve the issue of prioritisation or funding for One Leisure facility provision.

These strategies will also support the updates to the Local Plan review and be considered as part of the Councils' Place Strategy and Climate Strategy.

However, there is no financial plan that supports any proposed development, the omission of any form of financial assessment, makes it difficult to assess future need, therefore the suggestions put forward are based on observation, dialogue with the client and a degree of speculation. It is understood that the financial plan that would normally accompany the IBF and PPOSS to help inform options for future development was to be a phase 2 consideration. To date this work has not been commissioned.

The PPOSS should be a supporting document to the Local Plan Update. Any action plan arising from the strategy should be flexible; and be regularly reviewed in order to ensure it will continue to be a deliverable plan and one that fits the emerging/expanding communities across the HDC area.

Recent challenges across the leisure sector in terms of affordability of leisure provision and closures, should be taken into consideration when considering the district leisure requirements.

Both strategies for both indoor and outdoor sports facilities will support delivery at a local level and provide the needs assessments and strategic recommendations to act upon.

However, it should be reiterated that these are strategies spanning some 20 years and relate to sport and leisure provision across the entire council area. The scope of this review is focussed upon and limited to the One Leisure estate.

Investment Priorities

The immediate capital investment priority should be to adequately resource and commission the feasibility studies and the Outline Business Case (OBC) of each proposal.

The feasibility study should consider:

- if the scheme objective is technically possible to deliver
- design issues and options
- land and property related matters
- high level cost projections

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The OBC should only be commissioned if a scheme is technically possible to deliver and is geared towards supporting a bid to secure capital funding (internally or externally). The OBC should address the following:

- the strategic context and rationale
- option variants
- economic appraisal and value for money
- non-monetary benefits
- risk appraisal
- procurement options
- project outcomes
- affordability
 - capital cost
 - financial modelling & appraisal
 - potential funding partners
- project management
- timeline
- risk management plan

The potential to capitalise this essential preliminary work and potentially the project management element of these actions should be explored.

The Council has already completed the de-carbonisation of Ramsey Leisure Centre and should progress feasibility studies of carbon reduction solutions across the One Leisure estate, in line with the suggested facility investment priorities.

Facility development costs are difficult to predict, as local complications such as land ownership, ground conditions and development constraints are variable. Where consideration is given within the feasibility study to relocating facilities, land valuations and future use of a 'disposed' site are all factors to assess.

Within Sport England's Design and Cost Guidance, they produce quarterly facility cost updates which provide a good indicative cost of new facilities (see Appendix 5). These costs should be applied to as an initial guide to capital costs, although some facility refurbishments, expansions and 'retrofits' can often generate design complications and cost implications, all of which should be identified in the initial feasibility study work.

The complexity of meaningfully projecting revenue benefits at this 'blue sky' stage is not really possible, with return-on-investment considerations being determined by the nature of the scheme e.g., there is unlikely ever to be a financial return on installing an athletics track, whilst a 3G pitch or upgrading a fitness suite is likely to be more financially successful. This will be better determined once the feasibility studies have been completed. Net benefit will need to consider not only generated revenue from service users, but the level of capital investment, the nature of the development, and the potential cost saving on utility costs by putting carbon reduction at the forefront of design principles such as adopting Passivhaus standards across the estate where possible.

Post pandemic, swimming has become an increasingly popular activity across the country and the demand for swimming lessons is stretching pool time capacity. HDC does not have a competition swimming pool, all the Council pools are only 4 lanes x 25m, a competition pool needs to be at least 6 lanes, with an appropriately sized spectator gallery to facilitate competition galas. Although there are some other school pools in the area, community and club access is limited. Local authorities are always likely to be the main provider of swimming pools for public access; they are also the costliest element of provision.

There are some discrepancies between Sport England's estimate of a shortfall of pools and that of Swim England due to different methods of calculating deficiency of supply. Unmet demand is focused in the south and southeast of the district (Huntingdon, St Ives, and St Neots).

The IBF highlights that pools on One Leisure sites are approaching the end of their life cycle and will need refurbishment or replacement in the short term. Whilst suggestions are made re: future pool space, these are made in the absence of a specific Aquatic Strategy and based on the IBF strategy report, demand, and observation. Therefore, it is suggested that future provision should be based on a 6-lane x 25m pool, with a separate teaching pool; the viability of a moveable floor should be explored at feasibility and OBC stage as this would provide optimum pool flexibility and increase swim school capacity. If the 6-lane pool was the standard specification for refurbishment or replacement of existing pools at the three sites where there is unmet demand (as above) this would exceed the provision shortfall based on the Sport England Facility Calculator 0.7 of a pool (3 lanes) but meet the higher Swim England needs estimate.

Huntingdon Leisure Centre is split over two separate site, dry side provision is within HDC ownership and is new, compared to the aging wet side provision that c. 200m away and accessed via an external pathway. The sports and leisure footprint at Huntingdon has Town, District and County Council land ownership including Tennis and Bowls facilities leases to clubs by the Town Council and a cricket field that is infrequently used (possibly due to dilapidated condition of the pavilion) that is also in the ownership of the Town Council. If a shared vision for the entire site could be developed and agreed with stakeholders, there is genuine potential to create a sports hub at this site.

One Leisure have previously operated the pool and leisure facilities at Sawtry on behalf of the Cambridge Meridian Academy Trust (CMAT). The pool, like HDC's pool stock will be in the need of investment in the short to medium term and has been under the threat of closure for some time and was closed by CMAT in December 2022. If HDC were to progress the redevelopment of its own pools, gaining access to operate the Sawtry site on a fixed term arrangement could mitigate the displacement of swimming lessons and keep the pool open for community use in the short term.

The IBF and PPOSS highlight deficiencies in supply in a number of other activities, there is a shortfall of three 3G pitches across the district, c. 500 fitness stations, dance studios and a 4-court sports hall, for One Leisure these are core activities and should be considered as investment priorities too.

The Football Foundation could potentially provide a high % of the capex required to install a new 3G fenced and floodlit pitch, which are normally positive revenue generators. Locating a new 3G pitch at the St Ives Outdoor site could help expand the sports hub concept; whilst the poor condition of a small sand filled Artificial Turf Pitch at Ramsey could potentially be converted into a small 3G pitch or small sided junior games or training.

In consideration of generating revenues at this site, and the sustainability of One Leisure per se, the 'blue sky' thinking should not be bounded by the IBF and PPOSS; the café/bar is looking tired and unappealing, the scope of feasibility work should therefore consider secondary income opportunities such as refurbishing the bar area that could become the focal point of the sport hub, scoping the viability of installing a golf driving range, adventure golf or high ropes course to generate revenue and support the café/bar are all potential options that will also create a different offer and broaden the appeal and customer base.

The Council is likely to be the principal funder of One Leisure facilities, with the Council's own capital programme and the PWLB being the most likely primary source of funding for most schemes. Sport England are no longer a major funder of capital schemes but may be a potential contributor along with some sport specific National Governing Bodies (NGB). The Football Foundation have been known to contribute 90%+ of funding for new 3G pitches and pitch development. The government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme continues to offer a potential funding stream to support the decarbonisation programme across the leisure estate, as it has already done so at Ramsey Leisure Centre. Although the Levelling Up Fund administered by the Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities has not directly allocated funds to leisure, as Huntingdonshire continues to grow, developer contributions through s106, or CIL funding and future government regeneration programmes could become a possibility for sport and leisure schemes. If the Council were to implement a NDPO solution either with a third-party or a LATC, then consideration could be given to

the reinvestment of some of the NNDR efficiencies back into the service, this would clearly require negotiation with the operator and subject to the financial position of the Council.

The health sector through the ICS and regional ICB could also be potential funding partners for integrated facilities and the co-location of services where there are opportunities to bring public leisure and public health closer together under the principles of the One Public Estate approach.

It should be remembered that the IBF and PPOSS are district wide strategies, aside from the Council's own facilities, it should be an advocate and facilitator for specialist or one sport clubs and other organisations to develop and provide new or better facilities. However, this does not automatically translate to the Council becoming the principal funder, as the Council cannot provide facilities for every sport; clubs and organisations should be encouraged to fund raise and seek grant funding as widely as possible.

Realisation of significant investment will take several years to bring to fruition, feasibility studies, OBC's and securing funding to deliver schemes is likely to result in delivery as medium to long term objectives. The immediate investment priorities are indicated in the table below.

Table 1 Investment Priorities

| Theme | Action | Outcome |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Decarbonisation | <p>Feasibility Study of Huntingdon Dry Side site.</p> <p>Feasibility of all other sites in line with investment strategy.</p> | <p>Implementation of decarbonisation plan at Huntingdon Dry Side site</p> <p>Implementation of decarbonisation works aligned to agreed investment strategy.</p> <p>Supports HDC Climate Strategy; and financial sustainability of One Leisure.</p> |
| Swimming Pools | <p>Commission the development of an Aquatics Strategy to set-out the long-term options for aquatics to inform the strategic investment and decisions re: new/replacement swimming pools</p> <p>Explore the viability of an interim solution for retaining/increasing capacity and community access at Sawtry Swimming Pool.</p> <p>Commission a feasibility study to develop an agreed vision for a sports & health hub at Huntingdon with the Town and County Councils, health partners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Commission feasibility studies to upgrade swimming pools at St Neots and St. Ives to meet increased future demand. The study for St Neots to include feasibility of relocation of the leisure centre in consideration of the Local and Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>On completion of feasibility studies, commission OBC's as determined by</p> | <p>Aquatic Strategy produced setting out a vision and long-term options for developing and sustaining aquatic activity in the HDC area.</p> <p>Interim arrangement agreed with CMAT to access & operate Sawtry Swimming Pool and meet demand and access targets.</p> <p>Vision agreed with stakeholders with potential disposal of old wet side facility and re-provision of new pools integrated with the dry side site that includes a community health offer.</p> <p>Replacement of ageing pools will ensure current and future demand is met by increasing capacity, improving the customer experience, protecting existing and growing revenues.</p> <p>Reprovision of the entire leisure centre at St Neots to a new site would provide a</p> |

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>feasibility findings; the indicative priority order would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Huntingdon 2.St Neots 3.St Ives | <p>modern 'fit for future' centre with minimal disruption to service. HDC's capital capability would need to be assessed if this option was brought forward which then opens the potential for a DBOM solution and a review of the service delivery model at that point.</p> |
| Sports Halls | <p>Explore the optimum location of an additional 4 court sports hall to address identified shortfall, potentially as part of the sports & health hub concept at Huntingdon.</p> | <p>Addresses identified shortfall and the creation of a multi-sport facility.</p> |
| Fitness Centre | <p>Develop a strategic plan to support growth and meet demand of 500 additional fitness stations across the district.</p> <p>One Leisure to explore opportunities to distribute old fitness equipment to community facilities/hubs in more isolated communities.</p> <p>Review and audit current fitness equipment provision and highlight potential areas for growth to offset shortfall identified in the IBS.</p> <p>Benchmark current One Leisure fitness centres versus industry standards to ascertain utilisation and inform future provision.</p> | <p>Addresses identified shortfall in provision.</p> <p>Potential to create local access to fitness equipment in more isolated communities.</p> <p>Provides an evidence base for 'right sizing' provision.</p> <p>Provides an evidence base provision.</p> |
| Dance Studios | <p>Develop a short-term refurbishment/improvement programme for existing dance studios to address demand.</p> <p>Assess the viability of creating extra studio space at Huntingdon in current soft play area and transfer kit to St Ives Indoor.</p> <p>Explore options for creating new studio space to support increased levels of physical activity and to provide greater retention opportunities over medium to long term in line with emerging capital investment plans.</p> | <p>Refurbishment plan developed and implemented.</p> <p>Additional studio space created within existing facilities.</p> <p>Medium – long term plan developed for new studio space across the One Leisure estate with increased participation and customer retention levels.</p> |
| Football Pitches (3G -ATPs) | <p>Liaise with Football Foundation and other stakeholders to commission a feasibility study to develop a new 3G pitch at St Ives Outdoor as the preferred option.</p> <p>Liaise with Abbey College/Football Foundation re: operating agreement and refurbishment of small ATP at rear of the</p> | <p>Feasibility study completed for new 3G pitch at St Ives.</p> <p>New operating agreement in place for the small 3G pitch at Ramsey.</p> |

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|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Ramsey Leisure Centre to create a small 3G pitch with community access.</p> <p>Submit a grant funding application to the Football Foundation for the construction of a new full size 3G pitch at St Ives and a small 3G at Ramsey.</p> | <p>Grant funding applications submitted and approved.</p> <p>Delivery of a new 3G pitches.</p> |
| Commercial Opportunities | <p>Commission design work for the refurbishment and re-modelling of the café/bar at St Ives Outdoor.</p> <p>Commission a feasibility study to explore other revenue generating activity related opportunities across the One Leisure estate and or HDC land e.g., Golf Driving Range or Adventure Golf at St Ives Outdoor; Laser Tag; High Ropes etc.</p> <p>Where financial viability is evident progress schemes to OBC stage.</p> | <p>Completion of re-modelling and design proposals of the café/bar at St Ives Outdoor.</p> <p>Feasibility study completed with options to move on to OBC phase.</p> <p>Complete OBC's as determined from feasibility work and secure funding for full business case and delivery.</p> |

The indicative costs of scheme delivery are illustrated in Appendix 5 (Sport England – Design and Cost Guidance); however, before delivery can be contemplated there is the feasibility and business case stages to undertake. Table 2 (below) provides an estimate of resources required to deliver the immediate facility and service investment priorities included proposals as highlighted in Table 1 (above).

Table 2 Preliminary Investment Priority Costs

| Action | Indicative Cost |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Decarbonisation Feasibility | £8k - £10k per site* |
| Deliver Decarbonisation Scheme | Variable - determined by Feasibility Study* |
| Produce an Aquatic Strategy | £10k - £12k |
| Digital Innovation | £20k |
| Sawtry Swimming Pool Interim Access Arrangement ** | HDC Officer Time (c.£5k-£8k) Leisure/Legal/Finance etc. |
| Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Feasibility & Master Plan | £15k + Officer Time (c. £5k) |
| St Neots Leisure Centre Feasibility (including re-provision options) | £15k + Officer Time (c. £5k) |
| St Ives Leisure Centre (Indoor) Pool Expansion Feasibility | £12k -15k + Officer Time (c. £5k) |
| Ramsey Leisure Centre Gym Expansion | £50k – 70k |
| Sports Halls Feasibility | Included within Huntingdon Feasibility (c.£3k - £5k if not viable at Huntingdon) |
| Fitness – Additional Stations | HDC Officer Time (c. £5k) |
| Dance Studios – Refurbishment Programme and Relocation | HDC Officer Time for options(c.£3k); c. £20k - £25k for delivery. |
| 3G Pitches Feasibility & Delivery at St Ives (Outdoor) and small 3G at Ramsey | £1.4m*** |
| Commercial Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Café Bar Refurbishment Design & Delivery • Feasibility of Commercial Opportunities • Delivery of Commercial Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £5k (Design) £30k - £35k (Delivery) • £10k - £15k • Delivery costs determined by feasibility £300k - £1m |

*Costs at Ramsey should be used as a guide (potential funding from Government Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund)

**Action linked to pool refurbishment/replacement

***Football Foundation could potentially grant fund a high % of capex

The timescales for delivery of capital schemes will be dependent on the following:

- Findings from the Feasibility Studies
- Approval of the OBC
- Securing capital funding
- Corporate capacity to deliver

Notwithstanding the above, an indicative facility and service capital investment programme is illustrated below in Table 3 and reflected in the 3-Year Action Plan at Appendix 6. The indicative capital costs are derived from the Sport England Design and Cost Guidance (2023 Quarter 2) as appropriate. It should be noted that the indicative costs are for new provision, the guidance is included at Appendix 5, it will also be important to acknowledge the caveats applied by Sport England to these costs.

At this stage it is not possible to provide a cost vs benefit analysis for the proposed schemes, only once the Feasibility Studies have determined what is possible and what the variant options may be can the detailed analysis and various options be developed as part of the Outline Business Case(s) work to provide a firmer indication of the expenditure (capital and revenue) and the projected financial returns and other non-financial benefits of the scheme. At this stage, it is suggested that a capital requirement is 'earmarked' within the capital programme pending the above activities.

Final Report

There are some benefits to commissioning the various elements of the feasibility studies of a similar nature at the same time e.g. the Decarbonisation Feasibility Studies across the 3 remaining sites (Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots); likewise grouping the Facility Development Feasibility Studies for these sites may not only secure some economies of scale but will also help determine 'right sizing' the Council's leisure estate and any land assembly, ownership and construction, challenges that may change the suggested programming of the procurement and physical works.

Table 3 Indicative Capital Investment Programme

| Action | Short Term | Medium Term | Long Term | Indicative Capital Cost |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------|
| Decarbonisation Feasibility (x3 sites) | X | | | £400k |
| Deliver Decarbonisation Scheme (x3 sites) | X | X | | £10m |
| Produce an Aquatic Strategy | X | | | £10 - £12k |
| Digital Innovation | X | | | £20k |
| Sawtry Swimming Pool Interim Arrangement | X | X | | CMAT Investment |
| Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Feasibility | X | | | £25k |
| Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Delivery | | X | X | £6.7m ¹ - £11.56m ² |
| St Neots Leisure Centre Feasibility | X | | | £25k |
| St Neots Leisure Centre Delivery | | X | X | £12.36m ³ |
| St Ives Leisure Centre Pool Expansion Feasibility | X | | | £20-25k |
| St Ives Leisure Centre Pool Expansion Delivery | | X | X | £5.85m ⁴ - £7.5m ⁵ |
| Ramsey Leisure Centre Gym Expansion | X | | | £50k - £70k |
| Sports Halls Feasibility | X | | | £3k - £5k ⁶ |
| Sports Halls Delivery | | X | X | £2.86m ⁷ |
| Fitness – Additional Stations | X | X | X | £200k - £600k ⁸ |
| Dance Studios – Refurbishment Programme | X | X | | £23k - £28k |
| 3G Pitches Feasibility | X | | | £20k - £25k ⁹ |
| 3G Pitches Delivery | X | X | | £1.4m ¹⁰ |
| Commercial Opportunities | | | | |
| • Café Bar Refurbishment Design & Delivery | X | | | £35k - £40k |
| • Feasibility of Commercial Opportunities | X | X | | £10k - £15k |
| • Delivery of Commercial Project | | | X | £300k - £1m ¹¹ |

¹ 6-lane x25m pool plus secondary pool

² 4 court sports hall

³ New facility - 6-lane x25m pool plus leaner pool, 4 court sports hall, 100 station health & fitness gym, 2 studios

⁴ Assumes a new 6-lane x25m pool and an allowance for retro-fit

⁵ Allowance for retrofit construction & additional spectator seating

⁶ If not feasible to provide at Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub

⁷ If not delivered at Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub

⁸ Cost variation determined by recipient of equipment i.e. private clubs etc

⁹ Potential Football Foundation grant funded

¹⁰ Potential Football Foundation grant funded

¹¹ Cost determined by feasibility work, and Return on Investment potential

Conclusions – Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies

The production of a financial appraisal as phase 2 of the IBF and PPOSS work should be commissioned, as an understanding of the scale of the investment need may help to both influence and clarify potential funding sources, developer contributions and deliverability of schemes.

Addressing the identified shortfall in provision across the district, will require a focussed approach over a long period of time, it should be remembered that the IBF and PPOSS span a period of two decades, delivery is a 'marathon not a sprint'. The Council has a lead role in supporting the delivery of these strategies but should not be the sole owner or funder.

Where there are existing and future opportunities for both indoor and outdoor shared or dual use facilities, it will be important that community access agreements provide good public and/or club access.

A key element of this review has been to consider the delivery model and sustainability on the current operating model, investment in the existing estate to refurbish or develop new facilities that enhance the offer will be essential to protect existing and increase revenues.

Medium (3-5 yrs.) & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ yrs.)

Future Operating Models

As commented on previously it is clear that the leisure sector and its long-established delivery models has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges associated with the challenging market conditions now prevailing across the UK. Some external private operators have reduced in size and complexity to ensure business continuity.

For One Leisure to provide a financially sustainable service offer it must operate as the Transformed In-House model, operating to optimum efficiency wherever possible, however that objective is reliant on adequate and continued investment in the facilities.

Both the medium- and longer-term operating models should be determined by assessing the performance of One Leisure and how the transformation objectives have been delivered coupled with horizon scanning and testing the market through an Early Market Engagement exercise, and potentially leading to a full procurement event. Assessing market conditions in 2-3 years should also be sufficient time for the liability of the Terms & Conditions Audit to have been determined and resolved.

The potential for a Cambridgeshire Joint Area Delivery Model exists as a medium- and long-term option, however it is a complex arrangement and would require coordinating, possibly initiated by the Combined Authority, subsequently led by the local authorities involved in it and the close alignment of contract terms.

The delivery model is only likely to be influenced by the capital investment plan if HDC has reached its borrowing capacity from the PWLB for a major capital scheme e.g. a new leisure centre, or in the unlikely event that market loan rates become lower than the PWLB. Operators that can potentially bring capital investment to facilities will seek to recover that investment over the contract term, which in is highly likely to result in a higher cost of borrowing for the Council but spread over a long period. Capital investment and service delivery through a DBOM solution is generally a long-term commitment of c.20 years or longer.

The real opportunity for One Leisure and the future leisure provision remains with developing partnerships with the health sector and in particular the relationship with a maturing ICB. That pivot to health requires and will allow the in-house team to develop a broader systems leadership role with partners and safeguard some of the financial risks of the leisure market. Securing long term investment in community outreach will also help deliver those outcomes linked to broader community targets contained in the new strategic plans recently endorsed.

An investment in feasibility studies and the OBC's that follow will determine what the capital investment priorities will and should be. The IBF and PPOSS are long term strategies for the district not just One Leisure and identify projected needs over the next 20 years. The priorities and demand may change over time as activity trends can change too (the demise of squash and the rise in popularity of spin classes are examples of change over time); the anticipated pace of development may change too.

Where some facilities may have reached the end of their natural life, consideration may be around full re-provision rather than refurbishment.

As commented on above it is too early to project the revenue benefits of potential schemes this would be developed through from the OBC work once the technical feasibility study of a proposed scheme has been completed.

Conclusions – Medium & Long-Term Operating Models

It would be prudent to review the operating model periodically, doing this on a 3–5-year cycle is considered to be reasonable approach. If it is agreed to continue with in-house provision in the form of One Leisure as the Transformed In-House model then a review in line with the suggested review cycle should be adhered to, this ensuring best value is being delivered.

It is not considered that capital investment is a determining factor of the operating model of HDC's leisure offer unless access to the relatively low cost of borrowing through the PWLB ceases to be available to the Council or a full funding partnership is developed with health.

Recommendations

It should be noted that there are a number of variables that need to be progressed as highlighted within this review in order to determine the long-term operating model and take the service forward; a 3-year Action Plan of recommended actions is included as a timeline at Appendix 6.

Recommendations from this Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure are presented for consideration below; It is recommended that:

- The immediate short term delivery model for the Council's leisure function should be an adequately resourced and empowered Transformed In-House service.
- Review the membership architecture to provide enhanced customer choice and invest in digital innovation to improve the customer journey.
- Determine the senior management arrangements within One Leisure, necessary to lead and drive service transformation.
- Establish a set of Transformation Design Principles and an Outcomes Framework for the service.
- Produce or commission a financial plan to accompany the Indoor Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to conclude that stage of work.
- An Early Market Engagement exercise should be undertaken in parallel to the commencement of the Transformed In-House service, to provide assurance to the Council as part of due diligence and help inform future arrangements.
- Conclude the Terms & Conditions Audit as soon as practically possible and assess the on-going implications for One Leisure.
- Upon the conclusion of the Early Market Engagement exercise and the Terms & Conditions Audit, re-evaluate the Local Authority Trading Company option and market solution.
- Implement the proposed staffing structure and the associated specific actions:
 - The proposed staff review should be progressed commencing with an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of staff potentially impacted by the review.
 - Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to support the review.
 - Establish a cohesive and resourced plan to deliver the staff review in conjunction with internal business partners.
 - Develop a key outcomes framework that provides clarity of task and targets for the service and staff.
 - Develop a Learning & Development Plan that supports career progression and delivery of service objectives.
 - Develop a robust stakeholder communications plan that addresses both staff and customer communications on all relevant aspects on the change process to ensure business continuity.

Final Report

- Consider developing a set of design principles underpinning the staff review and any subsequent transformation phases.
- Develop a contingency plan within the 2024/25 budget planning process to reflect any potential implementation delays and subsequent impact on delivering the projected efficiency target.
- Undertake a post project implementation review to assess if the proposed change has met its objectives and produce a learned document to support on-going improvement.
- Develop a structured approach to effectively engaging with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System that creates opportunities for One Leisure to broaden its delivery of health improvement interventions.
- Develop an Aquatic Strategy that sets the future direction of swimming and water-based activity.
- Commission decarbonisation feasibility studies across the One Leisure estate.
- Develop a programme of feasibility studies for potential capital investment schemes across the leisure estate aligned to the Indoor Built Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and commercial opportunity.
- Review and manage the delivery of the proposed 3-year Action Plan.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Client Specification

1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years):
 - a) An independent assessment of the UK leisure market post COVID-19
 - b) Outline of the subsequent challenges facing the leisure operating environment as a consequence of COVID-19, and based on this insight
 - c) Provide an options appraisal on the different long term operating models best suited to One Leisure based upon the existing leisure market challenges. Risks and benefits should be clearly defined. The options appraisal should include, but not be limited to a review of:
 - i. Option 1 - In-house management (Current Model – One Leisure)
 - ii. Option 2 - In-house management via a Council owned company (wholly owned company (LATCo) / Teckal company)
 - iii. Option 3 - Tendering the leisure service as a service or concession contract
 - iv. Option 4 - Creation of a Trust or not-for-profit entity
 - d) The options appraisal should be based upon the following principles:
 - i. financial modelling
 - ii. balancing the level of risk, the Council is willing to take
 - iii. the commercial return the Council wishes to secure or guarantee
 - iv. the social and wellbeing benefits the Council is seeking to achieve
 - v. the environmental factors that the Council expect to achieve through its Climate Strategy
 - vi. the level of control the Council would retain over both strategic and operational matters
 - e) In order to review the different options, the four options should be assessed across the following criteria (with the inclusion of any other factors you would recommend on agreement):
 - i. Set-up and transitional costs
 - ii. Level of operational risk transfer
 - iii. Asset management responsibility transfer
 - iv. Level of Council control
 - v. Scope for community involvement
 - vi. Potential to increase participation
 - vii. Access to capital and investment funds
 - f) The options should be quantified and evaluated against each other as follows:
 - i. Green: Most beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - ii. Amber: Moderately beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - iii. Red: Least beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - g) Provide a presentation with supporting evidence and analysis around decision making to the Council outlining key recommendations for short to medium term operating models for One Leisure based upon 1a – 1f
 - i. The consultant will be required to present the recommendations to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet meetings with support from the Interim Head of Leisure
2. Staff Review:
 - a) Complete an independent review of work undertaken to date on existing leisure centre workforce structures and payroll and provide assurance to the Council that the work undertaken supports a long-term operating model
3. Built Facility & Playing Pitch Strategies:
 - a) To review and utilise the actions within the Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to clearly identify a priority list for capital investment.
 - b) Complete and submit the capital investment priority list to the Council with outline recommendations, illustrative costs and revenue benefits and proposed timelines.

- c) Identify and evidence potential opportunities for utilising external funding opportunities to deliver the capital investment programme
4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years):
- a) Carry out a high-level review of the Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy and provide the Council with outline recommendations on the medium- and long-term operating models for One Leisure. This should be centred around the required capital investment into the Councils leisure facilities as outlined by the consultant and within section 3. This should also include illustrative costs and subsequent revenue projections.

Appendix 2 – Consultees

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Elected Members | |
| Stephan Cawley | Councillor and Overview & Scrutiny Member |
| Lara Davenport-Ray | Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment |
| Brett Mickelburgh | Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources |
| Simone Taylor | Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene |
| | |
| Officers | |
| Leigh Allayer | Business & Operations Manager |
| Nicki Bane | Strategic Human Resources Manager |
| Paul Fox | Interim Corporate Director – People |
| Gregg Holland | Interim Head of Leisure Services |
| Clara Kerr | Chief Planning Officer |
| Oliver Morley | Corporate Director – People |
| Pam Scott | Regeneration and Housing Manager |
| Neil Sloper | Assistant Director – Strategic Insights and Delivery |
| Karen Sutton | Director of Finance and Corporate Services |
| John Taylor | Chief Operating Officer |
| Zoe Warren | Council Tax and Business Rates Manager |

Appendix 3 –NNDR Site Cost

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| Huntingdon Leisure Centre | £181,000 |
| St Ives Leisure Centre (inc. Burgess Hall) | £290,000 |
| St Ives Outdoor Centre | £164,000 |
| St. Neots Leisure Centre | £155,000 |
| Ramsey Leisure Centre | £327,500 |

NB: The discretionary rates relief policy is capped at £51,000.

The 80% NNDR relief afforded to charities and other NPDO forms would result in the Council not receiving 40% of this sum and be illegible to receive any reimbursement (via Section 31) grant on this 80% relief.

The charity or NPDO would still be liable for the remaining 20% of which the Council would receive 40% of this sum.

Appendix 4 – Leisure Covid Recovery

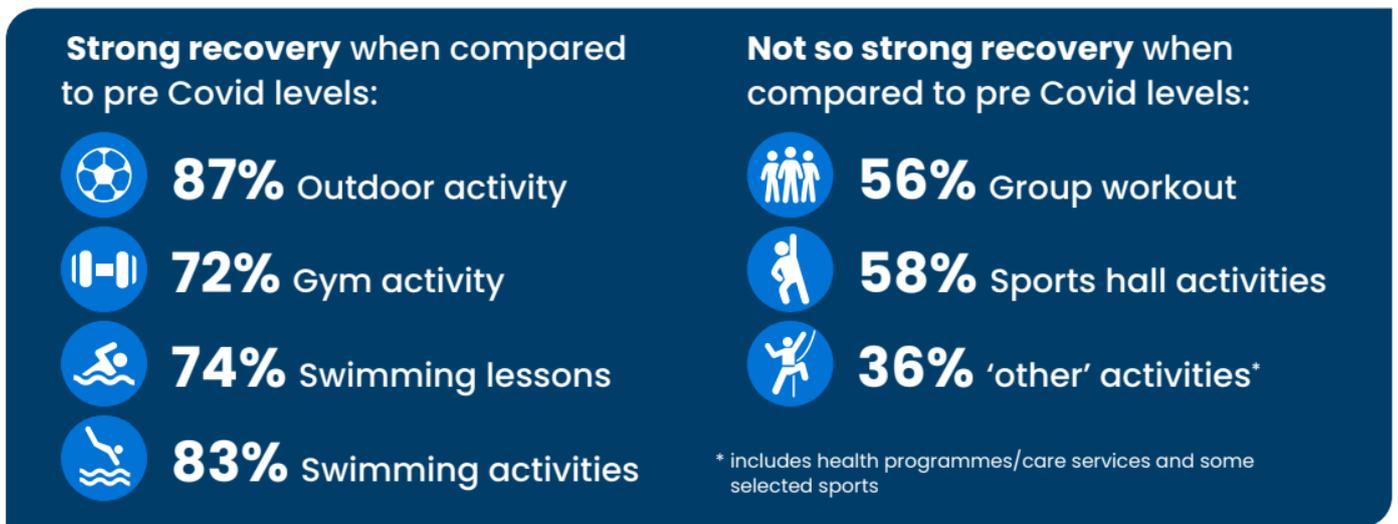
Extracts from Sport England’s *Moving Communities* report April 2022

Whilst participation levels across all activities have recovered to 65% of pre Covid levels, this recovery has not been consistent between different types of activities (see Graphic 1).

Outdoor activity not unsurprisingly became more popular during the pandemic and has led the way with post Covid recovery closed followed by swimming and the appetite for swimming lessons remains positive (see Graphic 2).

Graphic 3 illustrates the different rates of recovery across the country

Graphic 1



Graphic 2



Empowering decision makers... meeting needs...
improving standards... moving communities

Group workout classes continue to be 80% female in terms of participant breakdown and outdoor activities have been attended by just over 10% more women in 2021/22 than pre pandemic.

The strong recovery in swimming lessons is being driven significantly by children and young people, with 93% of attendees aged 15 or under. There’s been a gradual monthly increase in pool use over the April 2021 – Jan 2022 period to where in January as a stand alone month, both swimming activities and swimming lessons were over 100% of their pre Covid levels. The impact of rising energy prices will be significant on whether pools continue to open and provide participation opportunities.



| 2021/22 | Swimming Activities | Swimming Lessons |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------|
| April | 60.7% | 67.2% |
| May | 86.3% | 77.9% |
| June | 94.1% | 84.2% |
| July | 98.2% | 84.2% |
| August | 117.3% | 90.9% |
| September | 112.6% | 94.1% |
| October | 116.1% | 94.5% |
| November | 113.3% | 95.7% |
| December | 110.9% | 96.3% |
| January | 114.5% | 101.8% |

Graphc 3

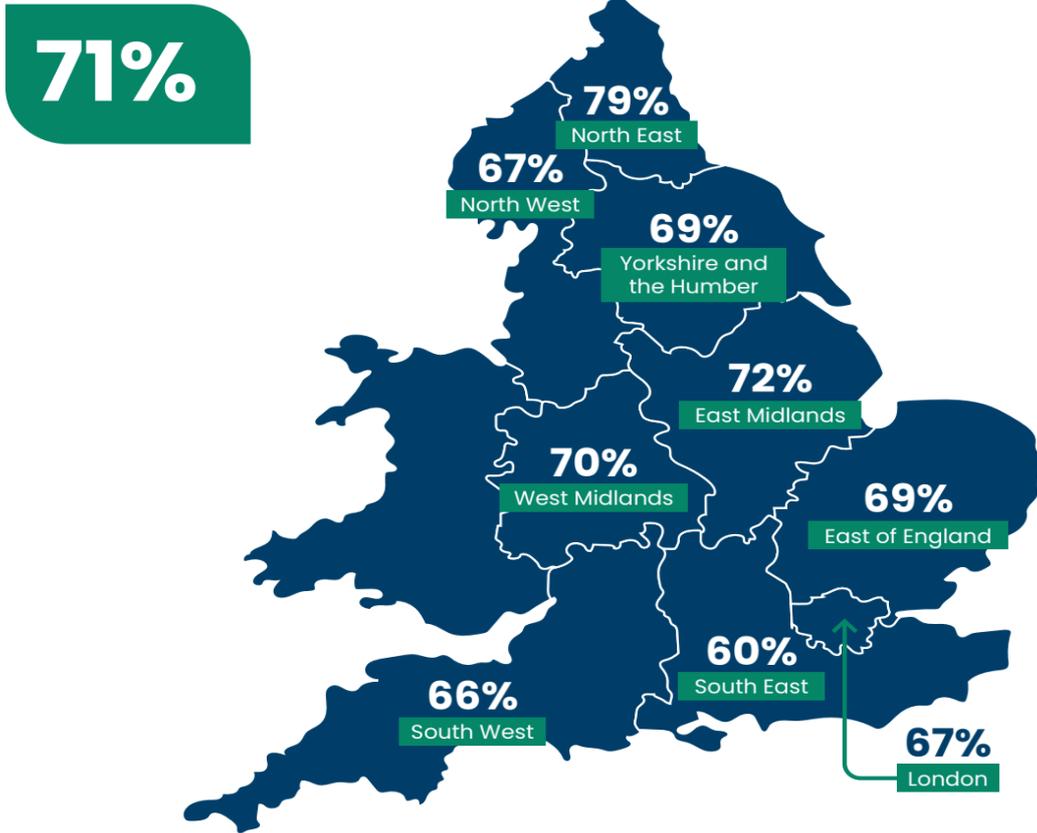


Regional Analysis

This map shows the recovery rates of visits across different regions in England across 793 sites between April 2021 – Jan 2022, compared to the same period in 2019/20.

Visits to leisure centres located in minor urban areas recovered at a higher rate (71%) compared to visits to centres located in urban cities or towns (66%), or rural areas and major urban areas (67%).

National Average



Appendix 5 – Sport England Design & Cost Guidance

2nd quarter 2023 facility cost updates

The following costs are for the development of good quality community sports facilities at 2Q2023. These rounded costs are based on typical schemes funded through the Lottery and where applicable, based on pdf layouts developed in accordance with Sport England design guidance.

Tender prices are forecast to have increased by 5% in the 12 months to 2Q2023.

Labour site rates continue to rise faster than wage awards and are expected to be the main driver of growth in overall costs in the second half of 2023. There is a shortage of construction labour which is expected to push up wages over the next two years.

The rate of materials cost inflation has been easing and many supply chain issues have been resolved. Prices for concrete, cement, bricks and tiles continue to rise, whereas the prices of, for example steelwork and reinforcement has reduced. Overall availability seems to be close to pre-covid levels.

New work output is forecast to contract in 2023 and 2024, returning to slow growth thereafter.

Climate goals may help support the infrastructure sector, but other sectors should benefit as retrofitting becomes more attractive.

Tender prices are forecast to rise by approximately 3% per annum in 2023, 2024 and 2025 with variation due to procurement and project type, and regional factors.

Facility Costs 2Q2023 (Revision 1)

| Facility type/ details | Area (m ²) | Capital cost (£) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Indoor facilities | | |
| Affordable Sports Halls | | |
| • 1-court hall (18 x 10 m) | 382 | 860,000 |
| • 2-court hall (18 x 17 m) | 515 | 980,000 |
| • 4-court hall (34.5 x 20 m) | 1,532 | 2,860,000 |
| • 5-court hall (40.6 x 21.35 m) | 1,722 | 3,095,000 |
| • 6-court hall (34.5 x 27 m) | 1,773 | 3,135,000 |
| • 8-court hall (40 x 34.5 m) | 2,240 | 3,920,000 |
| • 10-court hall (40.6 x 42.7 m) | 2,725 | 4,715,000 |
| • 12-court hall (60 x 34.5 m) | 3,064 | 5,195,000 |
| Affordable Community Swimming Pools | | |
| • 4-lane 25 m pool (25 x 8.5 m) | 1,084 | 4,450,000 |
| • 5-lane 25 m pool (25 x 10.5 m) | 1,344 | 5,390,000 |
| • 6-lane 25 m pool (25 x 12.5 m) | 1,543 | 5,850,000 |
| • 6-lane 25 m pool (25 x 12.5 m) plus secondary pool (13 x 7 m) | 1,850 | 6,970,000 |
| • 8-lane 25 m pool (25 x 17 m) | 1,878 | 7,050,000 |
| • 8-lane 25 m pool (25 x 17 m) plus secondary pool (17 x 7 m) | 2,226 | 8,090,000 |
| Affordable Sports Centres with Community 25m Pool Options | | |
| • 4-lane 25 m pool, 4-court hall, 50-station health and fitness gym plus studio | 2,879 | 9,560,000 |
| • 6-lane 25 m pool, 4-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios | 3,553 | 11,220,000 |
| • 6-lane 25 m pool plus learner pool, 4-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios | 3,906 | 12,360,000 |
| • 8-lane 25 m pool plus learner pool, 5-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios | 4,509 | 13,685,000 |
| Affordable Sports Centres with Community 50 m Pool Options | | |
| • 8-lane 50 m pool with boom and 23.5 m-long movable floor, 5-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios | 5,592 | 19,970,000 |
| • 8-lane 50 m pool plus learner pool, 5-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios | 6,115 | 20,230,000 |
| • 8-lane 50 m pool plus learner pool, 5-court hall, 150-station health and fitness gym plus 3 studios | 6,499 | 20,915,000 |

| Facility type/ details | Area (m ²) | Capital cost (£) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Indoor facilities continued | | |
| Bowls centres (indoor) | | |
| • 6 rinks (excludes club/ function room) | 1,914 | 2,595,000 |
| • 8 rinks (includes club/ function room) | 2,500 | 3,390,000 |
| Changing rooms/ clubhouses (traditional construction) | | |
| • 2 team changing rooms plus officials | 75 | 300,000 |
| • 4 team changing rooms plus club room | 245 | 785,000 |
| Tennis centre (indoor) | | |
| • 3-court centre | 2,138 | 2,930,000 |
| • Extra court | | 955,000 |
| Outdoor facilities | | |
| Cricket pitch | | |
| • 1-bay practice cage on macadam base (32 x 3 m) | 96 | 40,000 |
| • Match pitch on macadam base (32 x 3 m) | 96 | 25,000 |
| Grandstand | | |
| • 500 seats, no undercroft | | 805,000 |
| Skate park | | |
| • 40 x 18 m, fenced, sports lighting | 720 | 185,000 |
| Artificial grass pitches (AGPs) | | |
| Football AGP | | |
| • U9/ U10/ training 23 mm sand-filled pitch, fenced, sports lighting (61 x 43 m) | 2,623 | 440,000 |
| • U9/ U10/ training 40–50 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (61 x 43 m) | 2,623 | 485,000 |
| • U9/ U10/ training 60–65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (61 x 43 m) | 2,623 | 510,000 |
| • Senior 23 mm sand-filled pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m) | 7,420 | 1,030,000 |
| • Senior 40 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m) | 7,420 | 1,115,000 |
| • Senior 50 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m) | 7,420 | 1,120,000 |
| • Senior 60 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m) | 7,420 | 1,140,000 |
| • Senior 65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m) | 7,420 | 1,170,000 |

| Facility type/ details | Area (m ²) | Capital cost (£) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Artificial grass pitches (AGPs) continued | | |
| Hockey AGP | | |
| • 18 mm sand-dressed pitch, fenced, sports lighting (101.4 x 63.0 m) | 6,388 | 950,000 |
| • 23 mm sand-filled pitch, fenced, sports lighting (101.4 x 63.0 m) | 6,388 | 890,000 |
| • Water-based pitch, fenced, sports lighting (101.4 x 63.0 m) | 6,388 | 1,060,000 |
| Rugby League AGP | | |
| • Senior 65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (122 x 74 m) | 9,028 | 1,440,000 |
| Rugby Union AGP | | |
| • Senior 65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (130 x 80 m) | 10,400 | 1,550,000 |
| Macadam surfaces | | |
| Athletics track | | |
| • 6-lane track with 110 m straight both sides, grass infield, artificial-surfaced throws, jumps and end fans, sports lighting | | 1,705,000 |
| • 8-lane track with 110 m straight both sides, grass infield, artificial-surfaced throws, jumps and end fans, sports lighting | | 1,855,000 |
| Multi use games area | | |
| • Macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.60 x 21.35 m) | 782 | 180,000 |
| Tennis courts (outdoor) | | |
| • 2 courts, macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.58 x 33.53 m) | 1,227 | 245,000 |
| • 4 courts, macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.58 x 64.01 m) | 2,342 | 435,000 |
| • 6 courts, macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.58 x 94.49 m) | 3,456 | 570,000 |

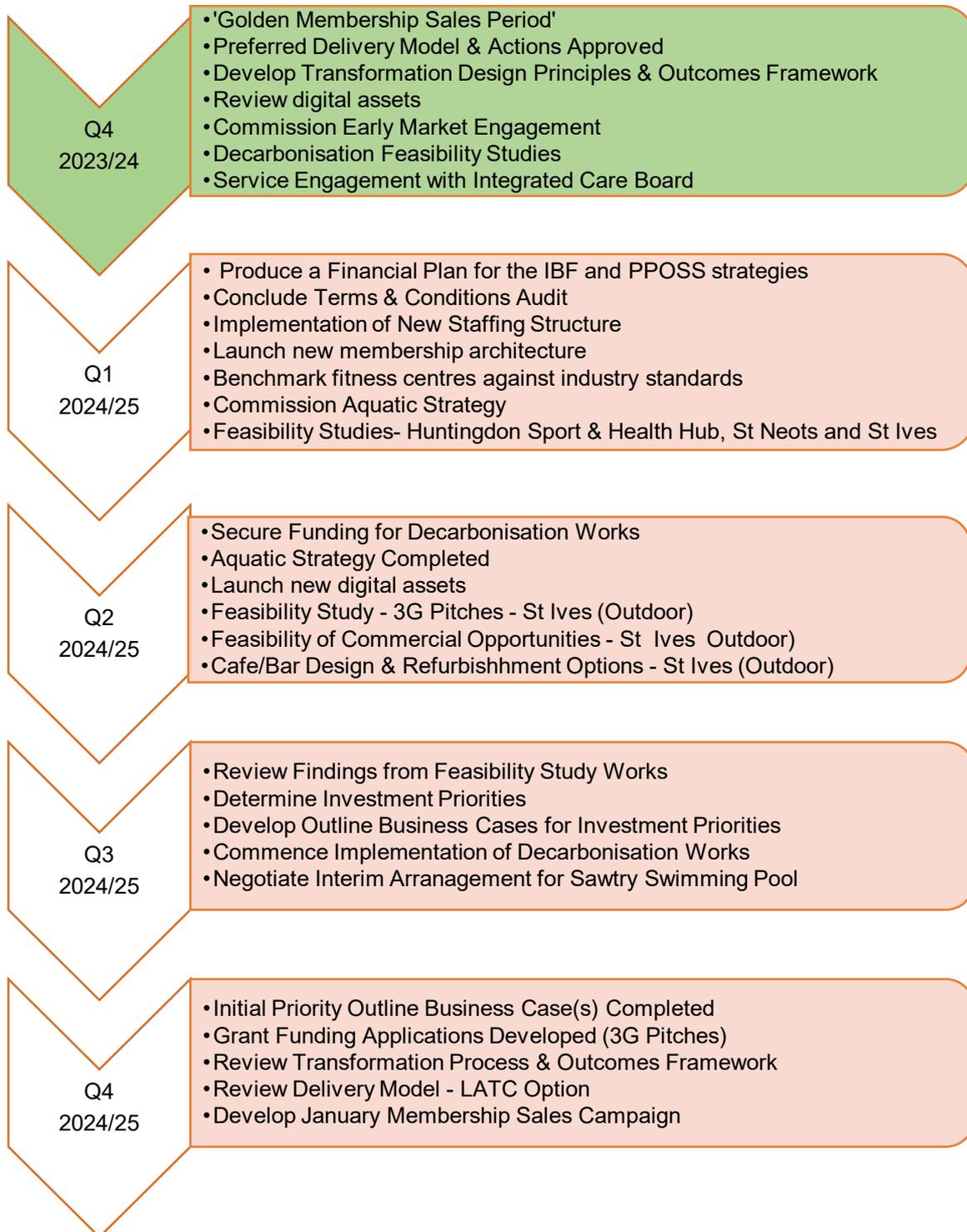
| Facility type/ details | Area (m ²) | Capital cost (£) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Natural turf surfaces | | |
| Bowling natural turf green | | |
| • Flat or crown green (40 x 40 m) | 1,600 | 170,000 |
| Cricket natural turf pitch | | |
| • Cricket pitch with 8-pitch square and 2 winter sport pitches(125.6 x 164.4 m) | 20,649 | 345,000 |
| Football natural turf pitches | | |
| • U8/ U7 mini pitch (43 x 33 m) | 1,419 | 30,000 |
| • U16/ U15 youth pitch (97 x 61 m) | 5,917 | 90,000 |
| • Senior pitch (106 x 70 m) | 7,420 | 110,000 |
| Rugby League natural turf pitch | | |
| • Senior pitch (122 x 74 m) | 9,028 | 145,000 |
| Rugby Union natural turf pitch | | |
| • Senior pitch (130 x 80 m) | 10,400 | 165,000 |
| Carpet-hybrid surfaces for community use | | |
| Football carpet-hybrid pitches | | |
| • U8/ U7 mini pitch (43 x 33 m) | 1,419 | 95,000 |
| • U16/ U15 youth pitch (97 x 61 m) | 5,917 | 370,000 |
| • Senior pitch (106 x 70 m) | 7,420 | 460,000 |
| Rugby League carpet-hybrid pitch | | |
| • Senior pitch (122 x 74 m) | 9,028 | 555,000 |
| Rugby Union carpet-hybrid pitch | | |
| • Senior pitch (130 x 80 m) | 10,400 | 650,000 |

Notes

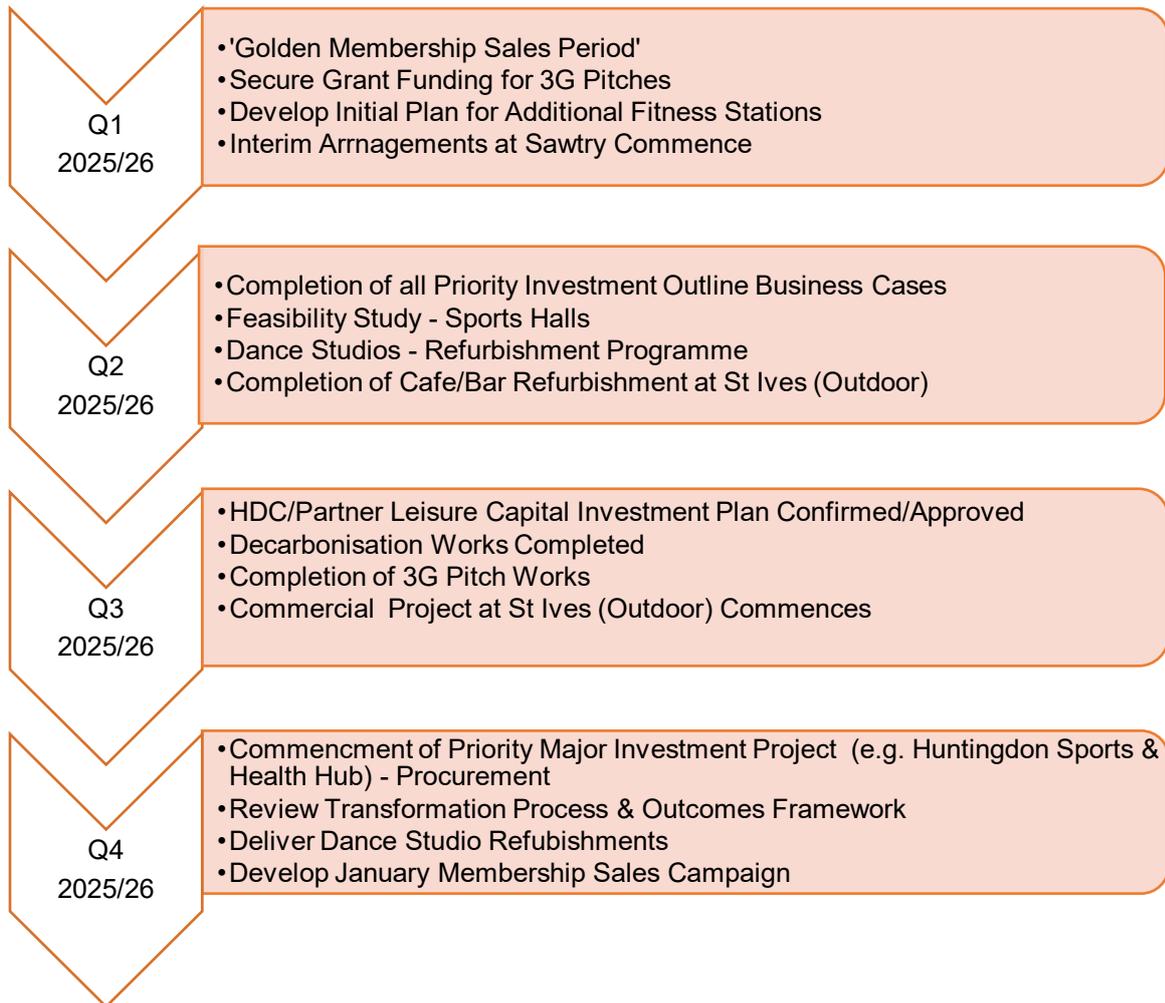
1. The area for buildings is the gross internal floor area (GIFA).
2. The area for pitches typically includes safety run-offs.
3. The sizes for artificial, natural turf and carpet-hybrid pitches reflect current or developing best practice or NGB recommendations.
4. The costs for:
 - Affordable Sports Halls;
 - Affordable Community Swimming Pools;
 - Affordable Sports Centres with Community 25 m Pool Options;
 - Affordable Sports Centres with Community 50 m Pool Options;align with the costs included in the Sport England publications of the same name updated to 2Q2023. The reader is referred to these documents and their appendices for further information on sizes and general arrangement layouts.
5. The costs include the following:
 - External works allowance (car parks, roads, paths, services connections etc) averaged at 12% of the sports facility costs;
 - 12 months maintenance/grow-in costs for natural turf and carpet-hybrid pitches;
 - Allowance for fees inclusive of project management (PM), site investigation (SI), planning and associated fees.
6. The fees for:
 - Artificial grass pitches;
 - Macadam outdoor surfaces;
 - Natural turf pitches;
 - Carpet-hybrid pitches;are included at 6% (inclusive of PM, SI, planning and associated fees).
7. The costs exclude the following:
 - Project specific details/ information, poor ground conditions, difficult access, long service connections;
 - Site remodelling, pump and sump systems and SuDS attenuation for natural turf and carpet-hybrid pitches;
 - Inflation beyond 2Q2023;
 - VAT;
 - Land acquisition costs;
 - Regional cost variations in materials and labour.

Appendix 6 – 3-year Action Plan

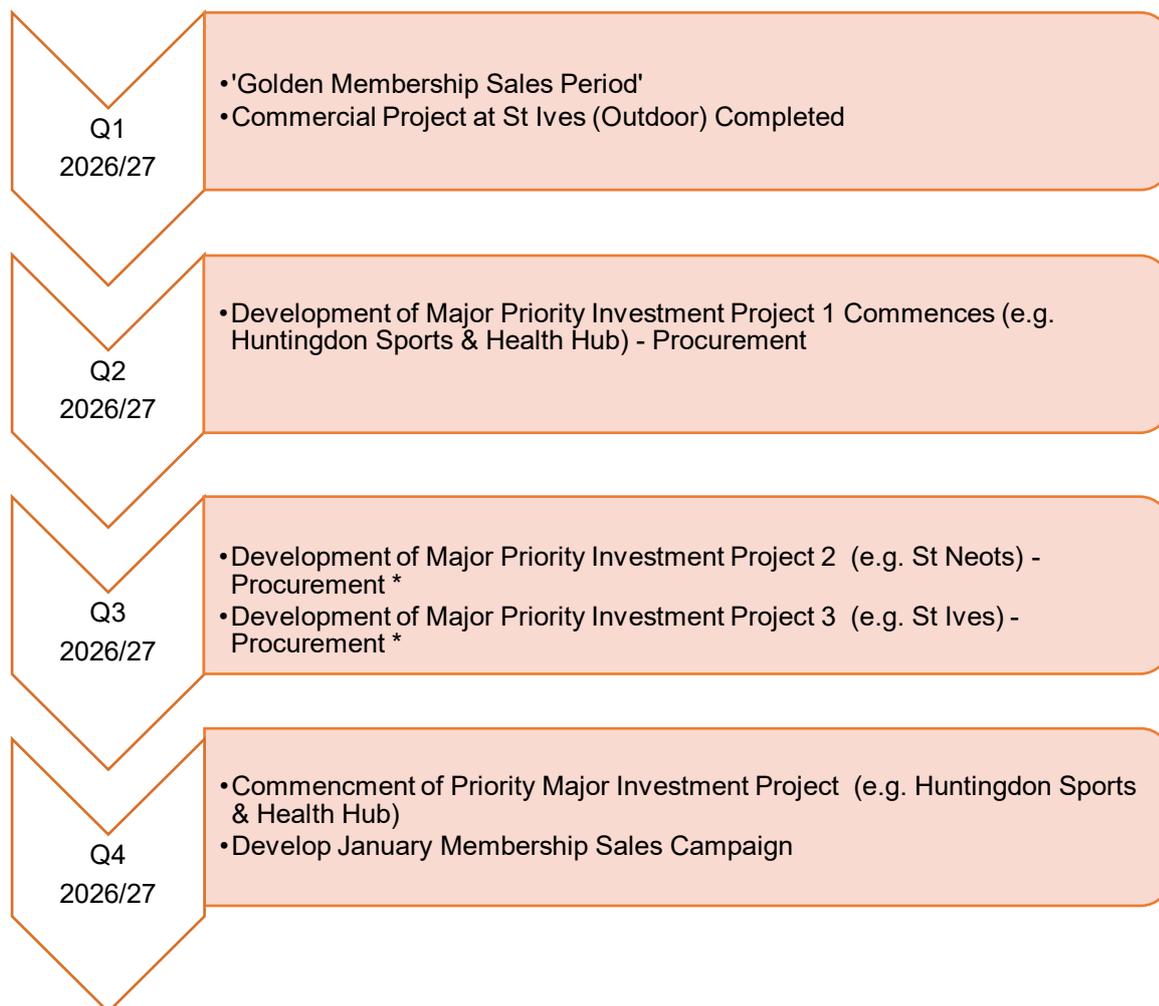
Year 1



Year 2



Year 3



*Review progress of capital schemes to determine capacity and service delivery issues and update Action Plan accordingly.

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Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: One Leisure Membership Architecture Proposal

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 7th March 2024
Cabinet – 19th March 2024

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Simone Taylor, Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene (ST)

Report by: Interim Head of Leisure Services (GH)

Ward(s) affected: All

Recommendation(s):

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to comment on the attached report and the recommendations contained within.

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: One Leisure Membership Architecture Proposal

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 7th March 2024
Cabinet – 19th March 2024

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Simone Taylor, Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene (ST)

Report by: Interim Head of Leisure Services (GH)

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This report sets out the One Leisure proposal to re-brand, re-align and modernise the membership architecture and pricing across all its sites. This will carry the One Leisure brand through and into the existing membership suite of options available to residents. The associated benefits attached to this proposal are set out within the wider body of this report.

This change is important because it will allow One Leisure to be more competitive in the local health and wellbeing marketplace. It will support the recent change to an improved online joining platform which is aimed at increasing the membership base but most importantly improving the customer journey and experience versus our competitors.

The introduction of new membership architecture will also provide One Leisure an opportunity to re-align its brand identity and extend its existing membership offer providing greater value for money aimed at increasing annual admissions, improving membership yield, and increasing overall revenue for One Leisure. Part of this is aimed at simplifying the customer journey and ensuring the compatibility of the products sold online are easier to administer and navigate.

The final ambition of proposing these changes is to support the long-term commercial sustainability of One Leisure. By re-defining the brand and introducing new membership packages and additional price points with added value, responding to customer feedback, which will allow One Leisure to respond to commercial and market trends and thus support the wider long term operating model of the leisure services and its move away from a financial subsidy.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is asked to approve and endorse the following recommendations:

1. the re-brand of One Leisure's existing membership architecture to support compatibility with its new online joining platform and to support wider improvements to customer service delivery;
2. that One Leisure can re-align and modernise the membership architecture and pricing across all One Leisure sites;
3. that One Leisure can implement three new membership options to support the sustainable operation of facilities, maximising access and supporting the wider commercial sustainability of One Leisure;
4. that this proposal forms a significant part of the process and journey of returning One Leisure back to its pre-pandemic membership base and thus strengthening its financial resilience as a non-statutory service, whilst contributing significantly to the council's corporate plan objectives around resident outcomes.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to re-brand, re-align and modernise the membership architecture and pricing across all One Leisure sites.
- 1.2. The membership architecture proposal will carry the One Leisure brand through and into the existing membership suite of options available to residents.
- 1.3. To outline how One Leisure will redefine its existing memberships and introduce new packages with added value to support its long-term financial sustainability and to make One Leisure commercially competitive within the local area.
- 1.4. Allowing One Leisure to modify its membership options and pricing will support its compatibility with its new online joining process and thus improve the customer experience.
- 1.5. This proposal forms a significant part of the process of returning One Leisure back to its pre-pandemic membership base and thus strengthening its financial resilience.

2. BACKGROUND

The commercial health and fitness sales market is now more competitive than ever following the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- 2.1 To support this the number of gyms nationally has fallen from 7,239 (2019) pre-COVID to 6,998 (2023) post-COVID.
- 2.2 The total amount of health and fitness members across the country has also fallen with 10.4m in 2019 and 10.3m in 2022. This has increased by 3.9% from 2022 (9.9m).
- 2.3 There were 2,607 public gyms (2022) and this has dropped to 2,538 (2023) and compared to 2019 the number of public gyms was 2,729.
- 2.4 In context from a One Leisure perspective in February 2020 prior to COVID-19 there were 8,428 health and fitness members and of these 7,164 were on monthly direct debits and 1,265 were annual members.
- 2.5 In December 2023 the total health and fitness members for One Leisure were 7,355 and of these 6,147 were direct debit members and 1,208 were annual members.
- 2.6 Our ambition as a team is to recover our pre-pandemic status of health and fitness members to help support our commercial sustainability as a business and to continue to offer fantastic leisure facilities to our local communities.
- 2.7 The value of recovering these members to our business cannot be underestimated for several reasons which are:
 - A larger number of residents accessing One Leisure's facilities and improving their health and wellbeing.
 - The overall monetary value this will create for One Leisure.
 - The increase in yield (average price of membership for a direct debit); and to:
 - Assist with our journey towards financial sustainability as a non-statutory service.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 The table below illustrates the existing membership architecture available and the proposed re-branding across One Leisure sites:

| Existing Branding | New 2024 Branding | Rationale for Change |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Badminton/Squash/Table Tennis | One Raquets | Stronger branding Marketing uniformity |
| Roller Skating/ Soft Play / Kids | One Kids | |
| Fitness classes Pay-as-you-go | One Group Exercise | |
| Cyclone | To be removed , included in Platinum | Transparency of product offering with simple to understand titles |
| Solo | One Gym (Replace 'Impressions' branding) | Streamlining of offering. Removal of minimal use membership |
| Aqua | One Swim | |
| Platinum | One Platinum | Clear KPI areas |
| | One Diamond | Premium higher tier branding |
| | One Diamond Plus | |

3.2 Essentially all products and services that One Leisure currently offer will remain the same albeit the name will change from “Impressions” and a singular activity like Badminton or Squash and be re-named under a category like “One Racquets” or “One Platinum”.

3.3 In addition, we are proposing to add three new memberships to the overarching membership package. These are “One Diamond”, “One Diamond Plus” and Junior Membership. These memberships will feature additional benefits, and be priced accordingly offering choice for customers, and reinforcing the long-term commercial sustainability of One Leisure. The pricing of these memberships will be subject to ongoing review.

3.4 The table below breaks down what is included within the existing packages and what is being proposed as part of the three new memberships’:

| Diamond Plus £65 / couple £120 (Annual £650) | Diamond £55 / couple £100 (Annual £550) | Platinum £42 / couple £74 (Annual £420) | Junior (11-15yr) £20 (Annual £200) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gym Swimming pool Fitness Class Multi site usage 14 day advanced class bookings 2 X 1 hour Anytime Racquets Vouchers Off Peak Racquets Pure Spa Free family child swim (up to four) Free Soft Play Free monthly guest pass Free monthly One Bowl (1 game) 10% discounted Creche bookings 10% discounted Swim lessons 10% discounted Kids Club Activities 10% kids party discount 10% discount at Zest (St Ives) 10% off pitch hire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gym Swimming pool Fitness Class Multi site usage 8 day advanced class bookings Off Peak Racquets Pure Spa Free family child swim (up to four) <p>Not Included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 X 1 hour Anytime Racquets Vouchers Free Soft Play Free monthly guest pass Free monthly One Bowl (1 game) 10% discounted Creche bookings 10% discounted Swim lessons 10% discounted Kids Club Activities 10% kids party discount 10% discount at Zest (St Ives) 10% off pitch hire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gym Swimming pool Fitness Class Multi site usage 7 day advanced class bookings Off Peak Racquets <p>Not Included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pure Spa Free family child swim (up to four) 2 X 1 hour Anytime Racquets Vouchers Free Soft Play Free monthly guest pass Free monthly One Bowl (1 game) 10% discounted Creche bookings 10% discounted Swim lessons 10% discounted Kids Club Activities 10% kids party discount 10% discount at Zest (St Ives) 10% off pitch hire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimming Off Peak Courts Jnr Gym Junior related group exercise sessions Multi site usage <p>Not Included</p> <p>As per Platinum</p> |

3.5 The detail of introducing the three new membership packages is listed below:

3.6 **Diamond membership** (£55 per month) and this package will provide a new member:

- Inclusive access of the Pure Spa
- Pilot and if successful permanently implement 8-day advanced bookings rights (currently 7 days for Platinum members (group exercise)
- Free unlimited family swimming
- Access to all One Leisure sites
- Partner memberships are available for £100 per month and an annual is £550 (12 months for the price of 10 months)
- **This will be launched from April 2024**

3.7 **Diamond Plus membership** (£65 per month) package will provide a new member:

- Inclusive access of the Pure Spa
- Pilot and if successful permanently implement 14-day advanced bookings (currently 7 days for Platinum members (group exercise)
- 2-hour peak time racquets
- Free Soft Play
- 1 x Free Ten Pin Bowling (St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre)
- Free monthly guest pass for friends or family (limited to 4 per month)
- Multi discounts on product offerings across One Leisure
- Partner memberships are available for £120 per month and an annual is £650 (12 months for the price of 10 months)
- **We are seeking approval of this membership package in principle but reserve the right to implement it upon successful evaluation of the Diamond membership sales and take up post April 2024**

3.8 **Junior membership** is aimed at 11 – 15 years olds (£20 per month) package will provide a new member:

- Unlimited Swimming (at all One Leisure sites)
- Off peak court usage
- Junior Gym access
- Junior group exercise classes (to be launched from April 2024)
- Free access to Roller Skating (at all One Leisure sites)
- Full access to all One Leisure sites
- Annual memberships are available at £200 per annum (12 months for the price of 10 months)
- **This will be launched from April 2024**

- 3.9 In addition to the new memberships being proposed any existing pre- paid or annual members will have their terms and conditions protected and these will be ring fenced so they can continue to enjoy their existing benefits from 1st April 2024.
- 3.10 Any current pre-paid or annual member that wishes to cancel their membership with One Leisure post 1st April 2024 and then wants to re- join after this point will not re-join on their previous membership benefits.
- 3.11 A similar approach will be taken with all annual (12-month membership rolling renewals) whereby if they renew their membership at their allotted date they will continue to benefit of their existing privileges. This will only change if they delay or do not renew in its entirety their membership with One Leisure.
- 3.12 Existing Platinum members currently have “family swimming” included in their membership. It is One Leisure’s intention that from 1st April 2024 that this benefit be removed for any new member joining. (All existing Platinum members who do not cancel after 1st April 2024 will continue to benefit from this privilege).
- 3.13 The key reason we are proposing this change is part of the restructuring of the membership architecture but also to help support the increase in average yield of the new membership and showcase their added value.
- 3.14 Following the internal review and the wider competitive analysis we noticed that some of our direct competitors didn’t particularly cater for young people other than a standard gym membership. Therefore, we feel by launching a new Junior membership it will potentially allow more young people to use our facilities and partake in physical activity as we have tried to package several well used activities together to ensure this is value for money, it doesn’t act as a barrier to participation and helps support the corporate plan by creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.
- 3.15 As an example of service demand within the local community and to support the business operation One Leisure re-opened the Pure Spa facilities at St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre and St Neots Leisure Centre. The impact of doing this has generated:
- a. 135 new Platinum memberships and if these new members stayed for 12 months would equate to additional revenue of £50,000 per annum.
 - b. 29 membership upgrades to a Platinum membership.
 - c. New revenue of £3,000 in January 2024 for Pure Spa pay and play income.

4. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The options and reasoning behind our proposals have been considered by One Leisure and are outlined within section 3 of this report.
- 4.2 The changes to the existing membership architecture and the proposal of three new membership packages were brought forward following an internal review and a wider competitor analysis of the health and fitness market. This can be seen in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 These schemes are being proposed to help support improvements in customer navigation and service delivery but also to enable us to remain competitive across the district.

5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 5.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

6. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 6.1 The table below illustrates the key risks and impacts if the proposed changes to the One Leisure membership architecture are not facilitated:

| Risk | Impact | Likelihood | Mitigation |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Uncompetitive within local health & fitness market | High | Medium | Continuation of One Leisure performance reviews inclusive of pre-paid memberships, admissions & revenue with targeted interventions. |
| Digital journey | High | Medium | Explore wider use of existing platforms & potential to improve current website. |
| Commercial sustainability | High | High | Ensure existing products remain as competitive as possible and develop and submit capital investment proposals for gym refurbishments to protect existing membership base and revenues. |

7. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 It is One Leisure's plan that subject to full approval that all proposed changes to its existing membership packages and the implementation of its new offerings will be fully implemented and embedded into its operation by April 2024.
- 7.2 The following high-level timeline has been used as an indicative measure towards the approval and implementation of the proposed recommendations:
- December 2023/January 2024
 - a. Develop proposals and complete overarching report.
 - February 2024
 - a. Seek internal approvals.
 - b. Commence back of house configuration.
 - c. Develop and finalise marketing and communications collateral.
 - d. Submit draft report for internal approval.
 - March 2024
 - a. Present report for approvals.
 - b. Finalise configuration and implement changes.
 - c. Final marketing and communication messages to existing/new members.
 - April 2024
 - a. Implement all proposed changes from 1st April 2024.

8. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

8.1 The work undertaken on the One Leisure Membership Architecture Proposal strongly supports the council's new corporate plan and its key priorities which are:

1. Improving quality of life for local people
2. Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
3. Delivering good quality, high value-for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations

8.2 As part of this report, we are proposing to implement three new membership packages. These are the Diamond, Diamond Plus and Junior memberships.

8.3 The implementation of these new membership options gives One Leisure greater flexibility and allows the council to offer its residents greater access to its facilities with new modern and innovative options supporting the wider commercial sustainability of One Leisure and achieving the corporate aim of delivering good quality, high value for money services.

8.4 Through this approach we expect to be able to increase annual attendances across One Leisure which in turn will optimise our ability to improve quality of life for local people by opening more opportunities to join our facilities, but it will also generate more revenue through increased membership sales and indirect revenue through secondary spend i.e., cafes, events and good for resale (goggles, swimming costumes etc).

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 We would like to be explicit in terms of enforcing the existing terms and condition of cancellation, that is currently not requested of customers wishing to cancel at present. Section 15 of the terms and conditions states:

15. Termination of Direct Debit membership

1. We require one calendar month notice in writing for termination of membership.
2. A cancellation reason will be requested to monitor our performance.

9.2 We have no authority to chase debt or customers that chose to cancel directly at the bank. What this will do, for those members who adhere to the T&C's, is ensure One Leisure retains 1 month's payment which will reduce the level of returns following direct debit collection and enable us to keep better data of our attrition pipeline that in turn will better inform monthly financial forecasting.

10.RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Whilst One Leisure have the internal resource to deliver this project, we would expect to require additional resource in the sense of:
- Physical centre internal/external branding.
 - Centre re-decoration to key areas to align the online offering and identity to in-centre conceptual delivery.
 - We believe that collectively this will cost One Leisure approximately £50,000.
 - This is a cost that will be able to be supported and facilitated from existing funds within the 2024-2025 revenue budget.

11.HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Following the approval of the new proposals it will allow One Leisure to provide greater access to its facilities and thus look at increasing year on year attendances across its centres.
- 11.2 As can be seen earlier within this report it has also allowed the re-opening of the Pure Spa's at St Ives Indoor and St Neots Leisure Centre. This is an example of the wider benefits that we feel can be made by undertaking the changes and recommendations set out in this report.
- 11.3 As part of the process, we feel we are providing a great opportunity for local people to access our facilities and as part of this provide the wider residents value for money services which will increase the benefits to their health by being able to use a service that has not been open since pre-COVID.

12.REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 12.1 Implementing the re-brand of existing One Leisure membership packages will allow for greater identity of the activities it offers, improve compatibility on the new online joining platform but most importantly will allow customers to navigate our membership options more easily leading to improved feedback and membership sales.
- 12.2 As part of the wider re-brand, it ensures One Leisure remains competitive within the local leisure market and supports the commercial sustainability journey by working towards a net cost service for the council as a non-statutory service.
- 12.3 This proposal will provide One Leisure brand new membership options as part of the introduction of the new Diamond, Diamond Plus and Junior membership option of which One Leisure have never had and provides greater access to its facilities to existing and new members of the local communities it serves.
- 12.4 The introduction of new membership options will allow One Leisure greater commercial flexibility and will contribute to the longer-term financial sustainability of One Leisure and work towards achieving pre-pandemic levels.

- 12.5 By increasing the financial sustainability, it achieves two things, and these are:
1. It offsets the gap in membership heads/numbers lost through COVID-19 and the increase of low-cost operators.
 2. It protects One Leisure financially against any future low-cost operators entering the market as any loss of members would be offset by the increase in yield.
- 12.6 Allows One Leisure to re-open important health and wellbeing facilities to the wider local communities which haven't been open since COVID-19.
- 12.7 Provides an opportunity for One Leisure to review how it can collaborate with wider health partners to identify ways to re-purpose existing facilities or even activity offering to better suit the needs of its residents.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Appendix 1 – Competitor Analysis

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Gregg Holland – Interim Head of Leisure Services
Tel No: 07791274315
Email: gregg.holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Competitor Analysis:

A summary of the local competition by leisure centre is outlined below.

Huntingdon Leisure Centre:

- Overall, there are 9 other fitness gyms within a 12-minute drive time of One Leisure Huntingdon. Of these 6 gyms are within a mile and the most significant of these is the newest entrant to the Huntingdon market
- The Gym Group, which opened in May 2022. Open 24/7 and has standard monthly membership costs of £21.99.
- Anytime Fitness offers a small (30-station) gym and studio. The club is open 24/7 and monthly membership cost of £33.

Ramsey Leisure Centre:

- There are no other fitness gyms within the 15-minute drive time of One Leisure Ramsey.
- The closest fitness gym is Quo Vadis, just over 6-miles to the south-west of Ramsey. This is an independent club which offers a c. 30-station gym.
- Just over 6-miles to the east is Chatteris Leisure Centre, a Fenland District Council facility managed by Freedom Leisure. It offers a c. 40-station gym and studio for £43 per month.
- Academy Leisure Sawtry is almost 8-miles away and is managed by the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust, it offers a c. 35 station gym, sports hall, and studio. Monthly membership costs £36.

St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre:

- There are 4 other fitness gyms within the adjusted 12-minute drive time of One Leisure St Ives.
- There is also Unit Fitness, part of the same chain as the club in Alconbury Weald. It offers small group training but there is also an open gym membership for £36 per month.
- Close to The Unit Fitness is Old School Strength & Conditioning, a small club which opened in 2019. It markets itself as a 'specialist strength and mobility gym' and has a second site in St Neots. They run small group training sessions but also an open gym.

St Neots Leisure Centre:

- There are 5 other fitness gyms within the 10-minute drive time of One Leisure St Neots.
- The closest is Old School Strength and Conditioning, part of the same chain that has a club in St Ives. This is the 'specialist strength & mobility gym' where monthly membership costs £29.
- Less than a mile to the north is Snap Fitness which opened in 2016. Facilities include a c. 35-station gym and studio for £34.99 per month. The club is open 24/7.
- Close to Snap Fitness is Gainz Fitness and Strength which has a c. 50-station gym. It is also open 24/7 and monthly membership costs £37.50. The small chain has a second club in Bedford, to the southwest.
- Just over a mile to the southwest is Wyboston Lakes Health & Fitness Club, the only other site in the area to offer a swimming pool. Managed by 1Life, the club offers a c. 60-station gym, 12m pool, studio, sauna, and steam room. Monthly membership costs £39.99.

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Public

Key Decision - No

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title/Subject Matter: | Biodiversity for All – Project Update |
| Meeting/Date: | Overview and Scrutiny (Environment, Community and Partnerships) – 07/03/2024 |
| Executive Portfolio: | Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray Cllr Simone Taylor |
| Report by: | Nicholas Massey – Open Spaces Project Manager |
| Ward(s) affected: | All |

Executive Summary:

This report outlines the progress of the Biodiversity for All project, which was funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) in February 2022. Due to this project being solely funded through an external source (CPCA), there is no financial burden for HDC.

There are five main elements to the project, and four of these elements have developed into their own work programme.

1. CPCA Grant
2. Jobs and Skills
3. Strategic Open Spaces
4. Community Driven Delivery
5. Mapping

The overall project is running on time and within budget despite delays at the start of the project. The most complex areas of the project are the Strategic Sites elements, where Cabinet agreed upon the process and schedule of work in January 2024.

The Community Delivery theme has been delivered through two Community Biodiversity grant rounds: an initial pilot round open to identified key partners, then a full grant round open to all land owners and managers who allow public access. The initial pilot round enabled the team to identify and build on identified learnings for the full grant round. The second grant round has resulted in 35 expressions of interest, which will lead to 10 audits being delivered on successful sites.

The Biodiversity for All project directly links to the action of local demonstration projects on biodiversity, which is set out in the [CPCA Climate Action Plan](#) and HDCs [Corporate Plan](#), which commits to delivering the Plan for Nature and

contributing to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to guide greater biodiversity and nature restoration in the district..

The project also directly links to the Council's [Climate Strategy](#) through the delivery of good quality and accessible open spaces and play facilities, which has a direct impact on:

- **Improving the quality of life for local people, specifically improving the happiness and wellbeing of residents**
- **Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations specifically lower carbon emissions**

The Corporate Plan recognises the importance of **enabling residents** and businesses to thrive by **listening and working with them**, opportunities to **collaborate in the effective and efficient delivery** of open spaces and nature-based activities a priority **to best meet the needs and wants** of our communities.

The corporate plan also highlights the importance of **influencing partner organisations and stakeholders** by creating a **shared vision** benefiting Huntingdonshire. By providing **evidence and sharing opportunities**, we can influence the provision of the **right open spaces and play facilities** for our communities.

RECOMMENDED

- to note the positive progress and the measurable outcomes being delivered against the Corporate Plan priorities and the Climate Strategy Action plan; and
- to note that there will be a further progress update of the project in the future.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet on the progress of the Biodiversity for All project and the planned actions.
- 1.2 It will outline the importance of the project and how it will benefit the District and its communities.
- 1.3 The report will provide details on each thematic area of the project and update on the progress and achievements delivered in those areas.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In February 2022, the Council secured a three-year £ 1.35 million grant from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to accelerate the delivery of measurable biodiversity net gain in Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 83% of respondents in a survey supporting the development of the Climate Strategy agreed that the Council should restore nature and plant trees. Nature benefits health and is a haven of biodiversity and essential natural processes. Huntingdonshire has a wealth of green spaces and natural assets, rich in biodiversity, providing a home for many native species and a link to the natural environment for our residents.
- 2.3 The grant enabled the launch of the Biodiversity for All project and laid the foundations for a cleaner, greener, healthier Huntingdonshire. The specific elements of the Biodiversity for All project can be found in Appendix A.
- 2.4 The Biodiversity for All project supports the Council's priority in 'Creating a better Huntingdonshire for Future generations' by enabling community action and supporting the development of green skills. The project also supports the delivery of the Plan for Nature and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to guide greater biodiversity and nature restoration in the District.
- 2.5 The delivery of good quality and accessible open spaces and play facilities has a direct impact on:
- Improving the quality of life for local people, specifically improving the happiness and well-being of residents.
 - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.
- 2.6 The Biodiversity for All project builds opportunities to enable and influence our partners by leading by example and delivering measurable biodiversity improvements in the District. By delivering other thematic projects in the programme, including the Community Grant process, the Council can make demonstrable changes to biodiversity beyond the areas we are directly responsible for.
- 2.7 The project responds to the significant impact on nature from the changing climate by calculating biodiversity and then working through options to

enhance it through changes that are supported by our communities. The project includes council-owned land and supports other landowners in making similar changes.

2.8 The Vision for the Biodiversity for All project aims to

‘Accelerate the delivery of measurable biodiversity net gain in Huntingdonshire, delivering the aspiration of Doubling Nature through:

- Faster and more direct action on our land, engaging the community.
- Pilot projects with parish councils and other landowners to roll out similar projects.
- Pilot projects with community organisations and groups to develop skills and community delivery models to enable the delivery of more biodiversity in the future.’

3. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

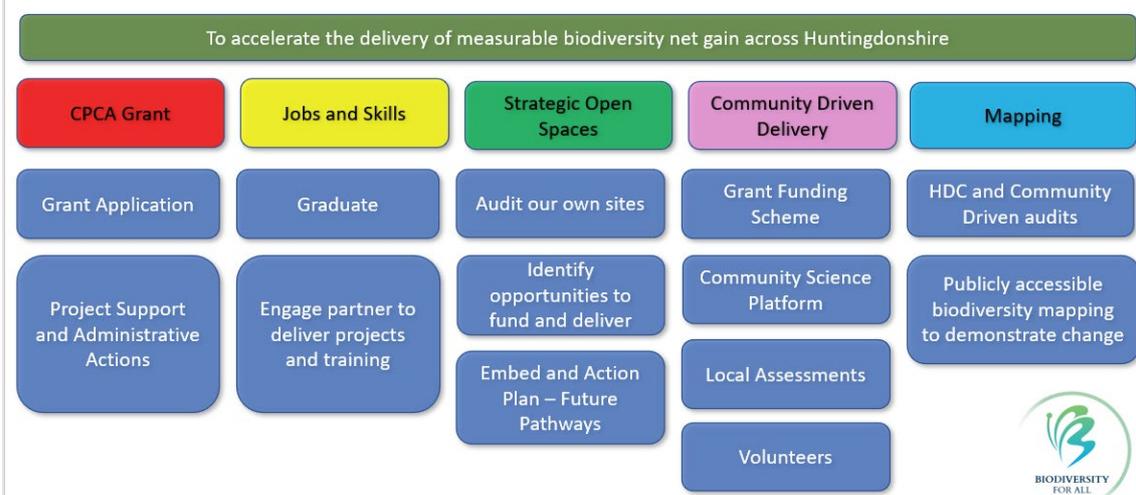
Overview

3.1 The £1.35million awarded to HDC covers the following thematic areas of the projects.

- CPCA Grant/Project Management
- Strategic Sites
- Jobs and Skills
- Community Driven Deliver
- Mapping and Citizen Science

3.2 **Figure 1** below shows the Thematic areas of the project and the identified activities that fall within each area. Each theme creates opportunities for Biodiversity to be improved in different settings and improve awareness and education around the project.

Figure 1



- 3.3 The table on the next page provides a high-level overview and RAG status rating of the progress within the different themes of the project, as well as some of the key successes and milestones that were hit in the delivery of the activities. Please see the appendices in the table below for a more comprehensive summary of each project activity.

| Project Theme Overview | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theme | CPCA Grant | Jobs and Skills | Strategic Open Spaces | Community Driven Delivery | Mapping |
| RAG Rating* | Green | Green | Green | Green | Green |
| Detailed Progress | Appendix B | Appendix C | Appendices D | Appendix K | Appendix L |
| Progress Summary | The Grant Agreement has been signed and sealed and is with the CPCA. The project team was recruited to total capacity. | On time and on budget, with notable successes in delivering work on three strategic sites and 14 volunteers completing the course and gaining qualifications. | HDC strategic sites plan was approved by the Cabinet in January 2024. Tender for a contractor for works instigated. The project is running on time and is expected to be completed by March 2025. | It is a complex approach and has required significant learning and testing to build a successful audit and grants process. Although behind the originally planned schedule, it is still within budget and projected to be completed by the project's end. | The iNaturalist platform has been selected, and the DPIA has been passed. The app and platform are being tested internally with a plan to use it on future BioBlitz exercises. |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Key Successes</p> | <p>Employed two full-time Graduate Ecologists to help us lead by example.</p> <p>Nominated for multiple iCare Awards.</p> <p>We have developed our own innovative audit templates and scoring metrics to deliver evidenced-based award grants in line with social and ecological factors. This helps us to enable others to deliver biodiversity enhancement work on their land.</p> | <p>Three Green skill Projects delivered, 14 volunteers have successfully completed qualification during Green Skill projects, enabling them to develop skills and qualifications to either use in their local community or to help their future employment prospects.</p> | <p>The ecological audits delivered have influenced the team at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park to adapt the Management Plan of the park to accommodate the recommendations in the audit, resulting in a 43% uplift of Biodiversity units.</p> <p>We aided the facilitation of off-site funding for a biodiversity net gain on spring common, this has seen an increase in community engagement and an improvement of the habitat conditions. This will result in an ~26.80 units uplifted, ~68.9% increase on Spring Common and Renton Meadow through the BNG agreement.</p> <p>We have designed and supported the implementation of four</p> | <p>Coneygear Park Huntingdon is our first grant with the project delivering 115% increase in Biodiversity, when it's delivered.</p> <p>Stilton is the second grant awarded and could achieve the potential uplift of 236.36%</p> | <p>Developed a citizen science approach to enable the community the chance to engage further with nature and be part of our approach, whilst developing their knowledge</p> <p>>9,500 observations in Huntingdonshire</p> <p>~1,500 active users (including a plethora of existing wildlife groups)</p> <p>This network will help us deliver on the project's aim of supporting nature to flourish.</p> <p>159 additional users >1,800 species recorded in the district.</p> <p>~800 non-native/invasive species recorded in the district</p> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Developed strategic relationships with organisations such as **ARU** and the **Ouse Valley Trust** to continue our professional development for the benefit of the environment.

pocket habitats across the district.

GREEN – ON TARGET/WITHIN BUDGET, AMBER – INTERVENTION REQUIRED, RED – SIGNIFICANT CHANGE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE

4. TIME FRAME

- 4.1 As the Biodiversity for All project progresses, it's important to recognize the challenges and complexities inherent in such a vast initiative. The development so far has been marked by a series of significant milestones, each reflecting a key aspect of the project's themes. For a detailed overview of these milestones, categorised by thematic areas, please refer to the comprehensive graphical representation provided in the Appendix Q. This section aims to transparently communicate our journey and the strides made in enhancing local biodiversity.

Activities achieved.

- February 2022 – CPCA Awarded HDC £1.3Million
- September 2022 – MKA Strategic Sites Audits begin to be delivered
- October 2022 – Appointment of Project Manager
- December 2022 – Appointment of Project Support Officer
- January 2023 – 1st Green Skills Project at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park (Huntingdon)
- June 2023 – 2nd Green Skills Project at Spring Common
- July 2023 – Appointment of 1st Graduate Ecologist
- September 2023 – 3rd Green Skills Project at Regatta Meadow
- October 2023 – Grant Pilot Audits Delivered
- November 2023 – Appointment of 2nd Graduate Ecologist
- November 2023 – 1st Expression of Interest Round Opens for Audits
- December 2023 – Permission to use iNaturalist as a Citizen Science platform

Planned Activities

- January 2024 – 1st Grant awarded in the Pilot Round
- January 2024 – Cabinet Sign Off for the Strategic Sites approach
- January 2024 – 4th Green Skills Project at Paxton Pitts
- January 2024 – 2nd Expressions of Interest round opens for audits
- January 2024 – Hard launch of Citizen Science through social media
- April 2024 – 5th Green Skills Project at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park
- May 2024 – Biodiversity for All's first public iNaturalist Bioblitz
- June 2024 – Applicants invited to submit bids for the second grant round
- July 2024 – 6th Green Skills Project at Huntingdon Riverside
- July 2024 – Biodiversity for All's second public iNaturalist Bioblitz
- August 2024 – Decisions on successful grant awards
- August 2024 – HDC Officers public iNaturalist Bioblitz
- September 2024 – 7th Green Skills Project at Stukeley Meadows

- October 2024 – Biodiversity for All’s third ‘Halloween’ public iNaturalist Bioblitz
- December 2025 – iNaturalist year in review
- January 2025 – 8th Green Skills Project at Holme
- March 2025 – 9th Green Skills Project at a TBC Site
- March 2025 – Completion of Tranche 1 Strategic Site enhancements
- March 2025 – Completion and evaluation of funded Pilot and Grant Sites
- June 2025 – 10th Green Skills Project at a TBC Site
- September 2025 – 11th Green Skills Project at Berman Park

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The CPCA awarded HDC the Grant in February 2022. However, the Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with the CPCA was not signed until January 2023.

5.2 Due to this project being solely funded through an external source (CPCA), there is no financial burden for HDC.

5.2 Within the GFA, each of the themed areas was allocated revenue and capital funding as set out below:

| Theme | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Total |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Strategic Open Spaces Asset Works | £215,000 | £155,000 | £155,000 | £525,000 |
| IT system for social science IT tools for mapping biodiversity now and projected as a result of asset works (Capital) | | | | |
| Small Capital Grants | £5,000 | £55,000 | £60,000 | £120,000 |
| Asset works using Green Recovery – Jobs and Inclusivity (Social Value) (Capital) | £60,000 | £60,000 | £60,000 | £180,000 |
| Capital for Land Issues/Landscaping | £120,000 | £130,000 | £125,000 | £375,000 |
| Programme Management (Revenue) | £50,000 | £50,000 | £50,000 | £150,000 |
| Total | £450,000 | £450,000 | £450,000 | £1,350,000 |

5.3 Due to delays in signing the GFA, confirmation of the exact funding was not confirmed until January 2023, which resulted in a significant delay to the project initiation. The delay was partly to manage the financial risk to the Council and finalise the Grant Agreements with the CPCA.

5.4 Due to the delay, an application was made to the CPCA to carry funds forward from 2022/23(Yr1) to 2023/24(Yr2). A further change request will

be submitted to the CPCA to carry forward the remaining funds from 2023/24(Yr2) to 2024/25(Yr3), alongside permission to extend the project to an amended completion date. The revised project completion date will allow the team to offset the lost time at the start of the project and realise the agreed deliverables of the thematic activities.

- 5.6 In identifying and carrying out works to be delivered through this project there will be comprehensive stakeholder engagement to include the Council's Operations Team to ensure that there isn't an increased financial burden on the council from the ongoing maintenance of the sites.
- 5.7 Any work delivered on sites not owned by HDC will be done so with the agreement of the landowner or manager that they will commit to the required maintenance, and HDC will not be responsible for the ongoing maintenance unless a separate agreement is made.
- 5.8 Discussions have begun regarding the possibility of future funding from the CPCA.

6. RESOURCING

- 6.1 To deliver and manage this extensive programme of works the project team has been recruited.
- 1x Part Time Project Manager (20 hours a week)
 - 1x Part Time Project Support Officer (20 hours a week)
 - 2x Full Time Graduate Ecologists

- 6.2 The governance for the projects consists of monthly reporting to a Project board that has the following structure:

Chair – (Project Sponsor) Assistant Director for Delivery & Insights
Project Manager – Open Spaces Project Manager
Service Expert - Open Spaces Operations Manager
Communications – Communications Executive
Subject specialist – Operation Manager
Funder – CPCA (Funder) Strategic Planning Manager

- 6.3 The project also reports quarterly to the CPCA to accompany the financial claim for the project's expenses.

7. LEGACY EMBEDDING CHANGE

- 7.1 The project's legacy will be seen for generations to come, as the work being delivered will allow future generations to enjoy and benefit from the enhancements made to the environment for years to come.
- 7.2 In the near future, the schedule of priority sites to have biodiversity enhancements, set out in Appendix J, will continue to deliver work after the completion of the project. This will be coupled with the promoted

iNaturalist Citizen Science platform, which enables the public to learn about and record nature on HDC sites.

- 7.3 This work on our priority sites and the support we deliver through the Biodiversity Community Grant Scheme will enable the creation of new friends groups and volunteers, fostering a greater sense of community and public ownership over our green spaces.
- 7.4 The recent success of obtaining external funding to enhance biodiversity on Spring Common provided an excellent experience and lessons learned. This will benefit HDC in preparation for new statutory BNG regulations.
- 7.5 Preparations are being made to embed the successes and learning of the project to ensure the future legacy of the project deliverables. Both the Open Spaces and Countryside Teams are building ways to ensure that the approach to biodiversity enhancement adopted by the project is taken forward in the future. This work will be enhanced by greater collaboration with key stakeholders and regular meetings with key internal partners, such as the Operations Service, so that plans and work are developed and delivered.
- 7.6 Due to the project highlighting the value of having an in-house ecological skill set, the Open Spaces team are keen to explore ways of providing an ecological resource that could be utilised for the benefit of the community and support the Council's approach to enhancing biodiversity. The citizen science platform will continue to engage and support the public in understanding nature and ecology.
- 7.7 The legacy of the project will leave behind a practised evidence-based approach and toolkits that include user-friendly audits for professionals and the District's various communities to use and a cohort of individuals with enhanced skills and horticulture qualifications to help them enter into the green skilled economy. This legacy will help schools enhance their grounds, impact their curriculum, and upskill local nature groups so they can then pass on their knowledge and best practices.
- 7.8 The Biodiversity for All project has enabled the Open Spaces service to build a pipeline of evidence-based projects to be used to secure future funding, including outcomes of the Environment Act 2021. This position comes from increasing our knowledge and understanding of increasing biodiversity and our ability to support communities in achieving increases in biodiversity in their areas.
- 7.9 The project has positioned itself well to contribute to Huntingdonshire's Local Nature Recovery Plan by commissioning a Hunts Nature Network report detailing our priority habitats and nature corridors, providing evidence for HDC to develop further.

8. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 8.1 Our Strategic Open Spaces are often well-loved and have protective and engaged stakeholders. A robust engagement programme will be

executed to ensure that the actions are taken forward on our priority sites to ensure co-design for biodiversity improvement measures.

- 8.2 The project is monitored through the governance of the project and the Major Change Board. Risk Assessments are reviewed monthly with the Project Board.
- 8.3 The project team have recently been the first to Pilot an internal Project Health Check led by the Delivery and Insights team. The Health Check final report is under review. However, initial findings are positive and encouraging, with suggestions around the transition and legacy of the project following its completion

9. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

9.1 The project's deliverable can be directly connected with the Priorities of the Joint Administration. Some of the key interventions and activities are listed below.

| | Priority 1 | Priority 2 | Priority 3 |
|--|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Improving the quality of life for local people | Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations - Lowering carbon emissions. | Deliver Good Quality, High Value-For-Money Services with Good Control and Compliance with Statutory Obligations. |

| | | | |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DO | We will increase the levels of biodiversity in HDC strategic sites, resulting in residents having access to a greater level of nature. | We will increase the levels of biodiversity in HDC strategic sites. This increase will be achieved by enhancing areas such as wood and shrubland and creating new habitats. These will have added carbon sequestration benefits ³ . There are well-documented social and economic benefits of accessing nature. The Biodiversity for All project aims to enhance HDC sites and support other landowners in improving their own to ensure that more people can access high-quality nature sites for future generations. | Shaping Policies and Practices - The project aims to embed a culture of quality, efficiency, and compliance by influencing local policies and practices. This includes advocating for standards that align with the project's values and working collaboratively with authorities and organisations to uphold these standards. |
| ENABLE | We will enable residents to improve their quality of life by creating and maintaining areas to experience | We are enabling communities to have a say on how the biodiversity levels will be enhanced. Part of the project is devoted to | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| | <p>nature. We will provide opportunities for individuals not in Education, Training or Employment to obtain a City and Guilds Level 1 qualification in Horticulture and gain practical experience delivering work to enhance biodiversity on Council-owned open spaces.</p> | <p>enabling other landowners to improve biodiversity on their land that has public access so that more communities can benefit from accessing nature.</p> | |
| <p>INFLUENCE</p> | <p>We will influence others to create and maintain biodiverse areas by leading by example and educating the public about the benefits. We will encourage local people to access HDC open spaces by improving the council sites and educating people about the local biodiversity by promoting a Citizen Science platform for all to access.</p> | <p>We will influence others by leading by example and educating the public about the benefits. The project's approach to citizen science helps to influence local communities and young people to take an interest in biodiversity and record their observations.</p> | |

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 10.2 The contract for the Biodiversity for All project with the CPCA was developed with 3C Legal Services.
- 10.3 All procurement is undertaken with the support of the Council's procurement Officer in line with Procurement Rules.
- 10.4 3C Legal Services coordinated the drafting and approval of the Grant Funding Agreement with the CPCA.

11. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 As set out in the main body of the report, the delivery of biodiversity enhancement work and Short-term actions on HDC strategic sites will require a project team and the services of an external contractor to deliver the proposed works before the end of the project in March 2025.
- 11.2 The services required:

| Service | Role |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Open Spaces | Assessment of proposed benefits against community need and existing site benefits for the community Existing plans for the site |
| Ecology | Biodiversity value/opportunity on the site Any environmental designations |
| Grounds Maintenance | Consideration of current maintenance implications |
| Planning | Status of Site in relation to Neighbourhood/Local Plan Any linked S106 development agreements |
| Insurance | Any insurance/liability implications |
| Health & Safety | Any health and safety implications given nature of public open space/assets |
| Contractor | Delivery of public consultation phase and delivery of biodiversity enhancement works. |

- 11.3 The costs of the proposed, short-term works will be project-managed and monitored by the Council's project governance.
- 11.4 The proposed priority sites will have a plan of work co-designed with stakeholders and the Biodiversity for All project team. In particular, when identifying biodiversity improvements to be delivered, our Operational teams will be engaged to ensure the deliverables' practical, ongoing safety and financial maintenance. Collaboration across teams underpins the project team and its decision-making.

12. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Providing open spaces and managing them to benefit biodiversity, our environment, and wellbeing is critical to delivering our Corporate Plan. Access to play for all ages and nature, which supports physical and mental health, is a vital component of the broader determinants of health that impact our District's long-term sustainability, health, and economy.
- 12.2 The Council adopted a Healthy Open Spaces Strategy in 2020, which set out our key priorities and actions for 2030 to ensure Council open spaces are protected, that biodiversity and nature are enhanced and that they support healthy and active communities. 90% of our residents confirmed that greenspaces improved mental health and wellbeing, with nature and wildlife being the most essential aspects of greenspaces.

13 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Council adopted its Climate Strategy in February 2023, including an action plan for short, medium and long-term actions. Following engagement and an evidence review, the strategy identified increasing biodiversity and natural capital as one of the three district-wide climate priorities.
- 13.2 Climate Strategy - This is one of the three priority actions in the Climate Strategy. Specifically, this project will deliver on the positive example aspect of the nature theme in the council's Climate strategy.

| We will be a Council that proactively tackles the climate crisis and ecological emergency, working closely with partners, and leading by example | | BUILDINGS | ENERGY AND RENEWABLES | NATURE | TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT | WASTE, RECYCLING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT | COMMUNITY |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | The buildings and infrastructure around us shape how we live, our health and our well being. We need to ensure what is built is as environmentally sustainable as possible | We need to reduce emissions caused by our activities and ensure that our energy is from renewable sources | We know our residents highly value the open spaces and natural environment in Huntingdonshire. We need to protect, restore and improve our environment, and build resilience to extreme weather events | We want to see a Huntingdonshire where our residents are able to access what they want locally, with effective lower carbon transport options and safe cycling routes | We want to see a Huntingdonshire where much less is thrown away | Our communities should shape the places they live in to be better adapted to the future climate |
| <p>The Climate Strategy is the Council's response to the climate crisis and ecological emergency. It sets out what we will do to play our part in addressing climate change. We will be a positive example to others by reducing our own emissions and adapting our service to the changed climate, an enabler to support action within our communities and across our partners, and an encourager to ensure all efforts help to deliver our ambition of a Carbon Net Zero council by 2040.</p> | <p>POSITIVE EXAMPLE</p> | <p>Improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings, and by 2040 stop using gas for heating</p> <p>Adapt our buildings and make our services more resilient to prepare for the impacts of climate change</p> | <p>Look for opportunities to install renewable energy generation on our land and buildings</p> <p>Implement an Energy Strategy to guide our future decision on renewable energy supply and resilience</p> | <p>Deliver community developed plans for greater biodiversity gain and more trees on our land</p> | <p>Develop a plan to invest in fleet to reduce emissions from council owned vehicles to zero by 2040</p> <p>Understand how our staff travel for work, and how we can reduce these emissions</p> | <p>Reduce the carbon impact and waste from our own services and those we commission</p> | <p>Openly share progress against our climate targets</p> <p>Include climate and biodiversity in our impact assessments to ensure they are embedded in our decision making</p> |
| | <p>ENABLER</p> | <p>Support development of sustainable communities through our Local Plan review to provide lower carbon places for people to live and work</p> | <p>Support schemes that help communities and businesses reduce their emissions and use renewable energy</p> | <p>Engage our communities, partners and businesses in managing their open spaces for nature, sharing opportunities to increase biodiversity</p> | <p>Seek partnerships and funding to enhance our electric vehicle charging infrastructure</p> <p>Work with partners to expand the infrastructure for sustainable and low carbon travel</p> | <p>Improve information, knowledge and advice to increase the recycling rate of municipal waste and reduce the amount of our waste that goes to landfill</p> | <p>Host Huntingdonshire's annual Climate Conversation for sharing of best practice, concerns and priorities</p> |
| | <p>ENCOURAGER</p> | <p>Use Sustainable Business Awards to recognise and promote great practice</p> <p>Work with our partners and communities to adapt to the needs of climate change</p> | <p>Support the sharing of guidance and advice to residents and businesses on measures they can take to improve energy efficiency, insulation, switch to low carbon heating, and install renewables</p> | <p>Work with communities and businesses to help them look after the natural environment, including delivering community litter picking/river cleaning projects</p> | <p>Promote the health benefits of active travel and alternative travel choices</p> | <p>Support and celebrate re-use and recycling schemes to reduce the use of disposable products</p> | <p>Work with communities and partners to support climate action across the district</p> |

14. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix A – Thematic areas of The Biodiversity for All Project
- Appendix B - CPCA Grant/Project Management
- Appendix C - HDC Strategic Sites Biodiversity Development
- Appendix D - HDC Strategic Sites with Ecological Audits
- Appendix E – Example of work set out in an MKA Audit
- Appendix F – Summary Table from the MKA Audits
- Appendix G - Tranche 1 Strategic Sites (3 sites)
- Appendix H – Tranche 2 Strategic Sites
- Appendix I – Tranche 3 Strategic Sites
- Appendix J – Strategic Site Prioritisation Process (diagram)
- Appendix K - Community Driven Delivery
- Appendix L - Mapping/Citizen Science
- Appendix M - Jobs and Skills – Greenskills
- Appendix N - Community Biodiversity Grant Scheme Second Round Timeframes
- Appendix O - iNaturalist Communications Plan
- Appendix P - Glossary of Terms
- Appendix Q – Project Timeline

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Healthy Open Spaces Strategy 2020-2030
- Climate Strategy
- Corporate Plan 2023-2028

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1. [the-lawton-review-factsheet.pdf \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](#)
2. Maller, C., Townsend, M., St Leger, L., Henderson-Wilson, C., Pryor, A., Prosser, L. and Moore, M., 2009, January. Healthy parks, healthy people: The health benefits of contact with nature in a park context. In *The George Wright Forum* (Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 51-83). George Wright Society.
3. [The relationship between biodiversity, carbon storage and the provision of other ecosystem services \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix A – Thematic Areas of The Biodiversity for All Project

- **HDC Strategic Sites Biodiversity Development**
 - Baselining and Auditing each of HDC’s Strategic Sites.
 - Tendering for a delivery partner to undertake the community engagement and co-design elements of the project.
 - Delivery of agreed biodiversity enhancement works.
- **Community Driven Delivery**
 - Pilot Grant Funding Round
 - HDC worked with ten identified Town and Parish Council partners.
 - Delivery of baselining and audits on identified non-HDC-owned sites.
 - Grant funding to the Town and Parish Council Partners to deliver the recommended works based on the audits.
 - Full Community Biodiversity Grant Round
 - Developing on the learnings from the Pilot round.
 - Open to any landowner or manager who has permission to deliver works and allows public access.
 - Delivery of baselining and audits on 15 identified non-HDC-owned sites.
 - Grant funding at least ten successful applicants to deliver the recommended works based on the audits.
- **Jobs and Skills**
 - Recruitment of two Graduate Ecologists to create an in-house ecological expertise capacity.
 - Delivery of the Green Skills / Green Recovery Project
 - Working with Groundworks East to deliver training and experience to individuals not in work education or employment. Helping them to achieve a City and Guilds Level 1 qualification in Horticulture.
 - Delivering evidence-based work on HDC-owned sites.
- **Mapping and Citizen Science**
 - Partnering and promoting the iNaturalist Citizen Science app to enable mapping and community engagement to identify all the different elements of biodiversity in the district.

Appendix B - CPCA Grant/Project Management

Project Status – GREEN – on-time and within budget

Overview

The CPCA grant has enabled the Open Spaces team to recruit a Biodiversity for All project team. This Team sits in the Open Spaces services and reports to The Open Spaces and Countryside Operations Manager.

1x Part Time Project Manager (20 hours a week)
1x Part Time Project Support Officer (20 hours a week)
2x Full-time Time Graduate Ecologists

The governance for the projects consists of monthly reporting to a Project board that has the following structure:

Chair – Neil Sloper (Project Sponsor)
Helen Lack - Open Spaces Operations Manager
Molly Ward – Communications Executive
Matthew Chudley – Operation Manager
Adrian Cannard – CPCA (Funder) Representative

The project also reports quarterly to the CPCA to accompany the financial claim for the project's expenses.

Achievements

Each position has been filled, and the Team is at full capacity. The Team has developed the project from a concept to a tangible delivery plan. The Team have also formalised the method underpinning the project's evidence-based approach with each site.

What Went Well

The Team has been nominated for the Council's iCare staff collaboration award, and individual team members have been nominated for other individual awards, highlighting the Team's effectiveness.

The recruitment of the Graduate Ecologists has been a success, as they have contributed to improving the project's ability to produce high-quality service and supported the work of other areas of the Council, such as the work with the Countryside Service and the Management Plans. Creating the ecological expertise capacity has also resulted in the project not relying on external contractors to deliver biodiversity audits, which saves on costs and gives the project greater control over the project's timeframes.

Planned

The Team have set out the delivery schedule for the project, which has developed into a programme of work. The Team will also provide a service to external partners who apply for biodiversity audits through the grant scheme.

Planning for how the legacy of the project can continue and develop into business as usual is underway.

Appendix C – HDC Strategic Sites Biodiversity Development

Project Status – GREEN – The project is running on time and is expected to be completed by March 2025.

Overview

The strategic HDC Sites aspect of the project accounts for a large portion of the project budget. Our strategic sites are defined as large, publicly accessible open spaces owned or leased by HDC, usually used by the community for events and recreation.

There have been 13 HDC-owned sites that have received comprehensive audits conducted by MKA Ecology, which led to the initial baseline assessment of the biodiversity and habitats on each strategic site.

Achieved

Cabinet agreed on the site delivery schedule, and the appointment of an external contractor has now been completed. This work will set the schedule and outline the desire to co-create the planned works on the first tranche of strategic sites. The process used to determine the work schedule for the strategic sites is set out in Appendix J.

What Went Well

The audits conducted on each site have been invaluable in the decision-making process and an excellent source of information influencing certain sites' management plans, such as Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, which has achieved a 43 % increase in Biodiversity Units just through adopting the audit recommendations into the management plan for the park.

Planned Work

For each of the priority strategic sites, a plan for the biodiversity improvements will be shaped by both the recommendations in the Biodiversity Audits and a comprehensive community engagement, which an appointed contractor will conduct. From this plan, the Council will commit to delivering biodiversity improvements practicable from the allocated project finances.

The project will deliver short-term actions for Biodiversity improvements at the agreed Tranche 1 sites. In terms of the delivery of the medium- and long-term actions at these and the remaining strategic sites, the project will need to be scoped out, and feasibility will be identified following completion of this project.

It is envisaged that the development of biodiversity on the three priority sites will follow the below broad timeline.

1. Evidence Gathering & Interpretation –Jan 2024
2. Community Engagement & Education – Feb/Mar 2024
3. Co-Design with the community – Apr/May - 2024
4. Delivery & Integration - June to December 2024
5. Review – January to March 2025

In initial procurement, competition has been carried out to scope out delivery partners. This tender exercise closed in October 2023 with one delivery partner identified.

The delivery partner will manage the community engagement and the onsite delivery of biodiversity improvements beginning in January 2024.

Further funding will continue to be sought and applied for to support the enhancements for the site identified in the medium and long-term priority lists.

The project team and sponsor completed a project health check during November/December 2023 to ensure that project governance and delivery are on track.

Appendix D - HDC Strategic Sites that have had Ecological Audits delivered.

St Neots

- Priory Park*
- Barford Rd, Pocket Park
- St Neots Riverside
- Paxton Pits

St Ives

- Berman Park
- The Thicket
- Holt Island
- Hill Rise Park*

Huntingdon

- Spring Common*
- Stukeley Meadows
- Sapley Playing Fields
- Oxmoor Urban Park
- Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

**Denotes Priority Strategic Site*

Appendix E – Example of work set out in an MKA Audit

Strategic Site

Spring Common

Overview of Site

A site located in the centre of Huntingdon, which supports various different habitat types, such as neutral grassland and wet woodland, as well as hedgerows, ditches and areas of scrub.

Examples of Biodiversity Enhancement Actions

- Management Plan Development to Enhance Habitats.
 - Updating management methods for improving grassland and other habitats will increase species diversity.
- Digging a new Pond to Create a New Aquatic Habitat.
 - Creation of a new pond in the wetland area to help with the water retention in the area.
- Additional Planting to Enhance Existing and Creating a New Habitat.
 - Planting mixed scrub at the boundaries of wet woodland to create a scalloped scrub woodland edge, which will benefit species such as bats and will improve the connection between different habitats.

Appendix F – Summary Table from the MKA Audits

| Site | Area (h) | Current Status | Habitat Type Units | Linear Type Units | Hedgerow Type | River Type | Scenario One | Scenario Two | Scenario Three | Priority Habitats |
|----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| St Neots | | | | | | | | | | |
| Priory Park St Neots | 32 | Mostly Poor | 145.59 | 15.56 | 0 | 0 | 34.70% | 55.26% | 63.00% | No |
| Barford Rd, Pocket Park St Neots | 18 | Mostly Moderate | 129.48 | 5.6 | 0 | 0 | 14.00% | 24.80% | 43.20% | Yes |
| St Neots Riverside | 29 | Mostly Poor | 58.76 | 0 | 0 | 6.48 | Not provided in same format | | | Yes |
| Paxton Pits | 131.6 | Mostly Good | 1697.44 | 0 | 33.16 | 12.77 | Not provided as part of the study, due to Mgt Plan | | | Yes |
| St Ives | | | | | | | | | | |
| Berman Park, St Ives | 8.2 | Moderate and Poor | 65.83 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9.92% | 19.70% | 21.80% | Yes |
| <i>**The Thicket</i> | 500x75m | Good | 72.12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | n/a | n/a | n/a | Yes |
| <i>**Holt Island</i> | 2.8 | Mostly Good | 33.85 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.16% | -30.00% | | Yes |
| Hill Rise Park St Ives | 6 | Mostly Moderate | 49.26 | 1.06 | 0 | 0 | 225.00% | 235.50% | 238.20% | Yes |
| Huntingdon | | | | | | | | | | |
| Spring Common | 5.26 | Moderate and Good | 52.11 | 6.94 | 0 | 0 | 11.80% | 29.20% | 27.90% | Yes |
| Stukeley Meadows | 4.45 | Mostly Moderate | 34.49 | 0 | 0 | 0.92 | 32.40% | 70.70% | 267.00% | Yes |
| Sapley Playing Fields | 7.3 | Mostly Poor | 27.98 | 14.71 | 0 | 0 | 11.80% | 12.10% | 39.20% | Yes |
| Oxmoor Urban Park | 4 | Mostly Moderate | 21.03 | 4.14 | 0 | 0 | 67.00% | N/A | 88.40% | Yes |
| Hinchingbrooke Country Park | 65 | Moderate and Good | 811.36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.60% | 12.90% | 27.70% | Yes |

Appendix G – Tranche 1 Strategic Sites (3 sites)

Spring Common, Huntingdon (1 of 3)

| Scenario | Actions | Total % uplift |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the neutral grassland to good condition. • Improve the swamp habitat to moderate condition. • Planting mixed scrub at the boundaries of wet woodland to create a scalloped scrub woodland edge. | 11.8% |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the southwest section of the ditch to moderate condition. | 41% |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a new pond in the wetland area. • Establishment of reedbed in the wetland area. • Restoration of the relic woodland pond. | 68.9% |

Priory Park, St Neots (2 of 3)

| Scenario | Actions | Total % uplift |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and extend the wildflower meadow grassland at Priory. • Park by reseeding with a perennial wildflower grassland mix and • Adopting a sensitive management regime • Improve the condition of existing woodland habitats • Improve 50% of the tree lines in moderate condition to good condition | 34.70% |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the extent of the west woodland belt • Restore the pond in the woodland pocket at the centre of the park • Designate the east section of the park as meadow grassland | 89.96% |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild-scale conversion of Priory Park to parkland habitat | 152.96% |

Hill Rise, St Ives (3 of 3)

| Scenario | Actions | Total % uplift |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the condition of the woodland from moderate to good. • Plant mixed scrubs along the woodland edge. • Increase the extent of species-rich neutral grassland to the north of the park. • Plant a species-rich native hedgerow to create a double hedgerow feature. | 225% |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of species-rich grassland around the boundary of the park | 460.4% |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Orchard Habitat | 698.6% |

Appendix H – Tranche 2 Strategic Sites

Sapley Playing Fields, Huntingdon

| Scenario | Actions | Total % uplift |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement of Amenity grassland borders to neutral wildflower grassland in moderate condition. Creation of native scrub border in moderate condition along woodland boundary. Enhancement of existing mixed scrub to moderate condition. | 11.8% |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a 'biodiversity garden' centred around a wildlife pond with a wildflower grassland border. Replace non-native ornamental hedgerow with a native species-rich hedgerow of at least twice the length | 23.9% |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting a native line of trees along the south-western boundary. Planting 320m of additional species-rich native hedgerow to the park boundaries. Creation of a traditional-style orchard managed for wildlife | 63.1% |

Stukeley Meadows, Huntingdon

| Scenario | Actions | Total % uplift |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the mixed scrub to good condition through invasive species removal and management. Improve the neutral grassland habitats to good condition through management works tailored to specific grassland areas Enable mixed scrub to develop into the areas of neutral grassland currently in poor condition. Create an additional wildflower strip, sown with a perennial mix, of approximately 240m². | 32.40% |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the woodland to good condition through a bespoke management regime. Improve the condition of the main ditch channel without the need for extensive channel restoration works by installing floating vegetation rafts along the bank margins. | 103.10% |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambitious ditch restoration project involving the removal of concrete reinforcement and re-meandering of the channel. | 370.10% |

Barford Road Pocket, St Neots

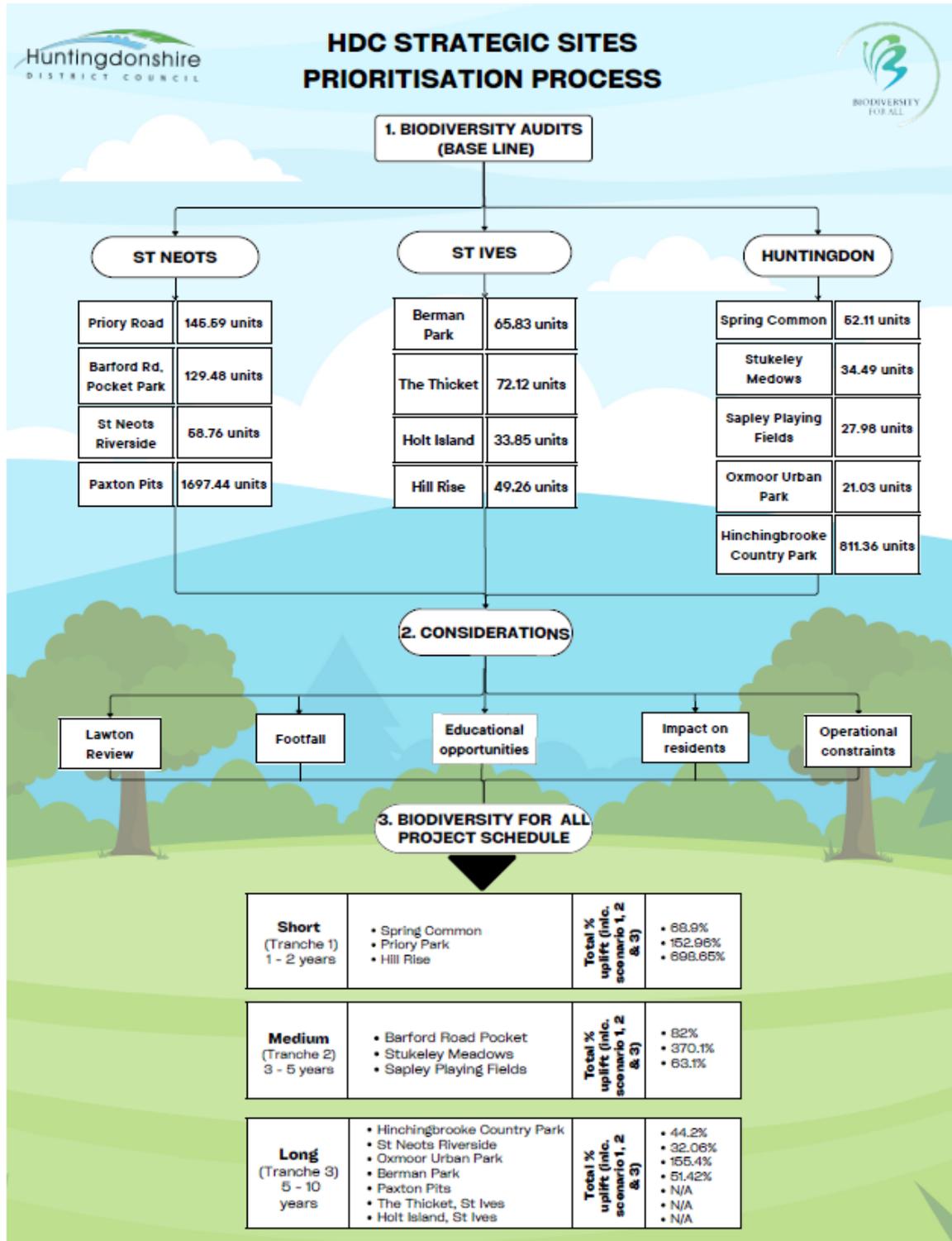
| Scenario | Actions | Total % uplift |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement of existing amenity grassland along the 'biodiversity walkway' to other neutral grassland in moderate condition. Enhancement of neutral grassland from moderate to good condition. Enhancement of neutral grassland to the south of the park from poor to moderate condition. | 14% |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the broadleaved woodland from moderate to good condition. • Enhance the wet woodland from moderate to good condition. • Enhance the woodland pond from poor to moderate condition. | 38.80% |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a line of willows along the bank of the River Great Ouse, with a pollarding management regime. • Creation of a small orchard to the north of the park, created and managed with support from Grow Wild St Neots. | 82% |

Appendix I - Tranche 3 Strategic Sites

- Hinchingsbrooke Country Park – Work delivered by Green Skills and management plan
- St Neots Riverside – Work delivered through Green Skills
- Oxmoor Urban Park – Work delivered by Open Spaces Team
- Berman Park – Work scheduled for Green Skills
- Paxton Pits – Work scheduled for Green Skills
- The Thicket, St Ives
- Holt Island, St Ives

Appendix J – Prioritisation Process



Appendix K – Community Driven Delivery - Biodiversity Community Grant Scheme

Project Status – GREEN – A complex approach that is behind the initial planned schedule but still in budget and projected to be completed by the end of the project.

Overview

The Biodiversity for All 'Community Biodiversity Grant' is an environmental grant scheme delivered by the Council's Biodiversity for All Team and funded via a grant from the CPCA.

The process of the grant is aimed to be a simple and efficient financial incentive to encourage landowners to improve biodiversity and sustainable land management on their publicly accessible land; these landowners can be Parish Councils, Town Councils, educational bodies, and even private landowners.

There are **two separate** rounds of the Community Biodiversity Grant; both rounds will follow the same process.

1. The first is a Pilot round, which took place in 2023/24
2. The full grant round, which will take place in 2024/25. Both rounds will follow the same process.

Each Grant round will be broken into a **two-stage process**.

1. Expression of Interest for a Biodiversity Audit of an identified site.
2. Application for a grant to deliver evidence-based ecological work.

The scheme is anticipated to provide an ecological assessment (or audit) of the land conducted by HDC's in-house ecologists. It will include three additive scenarios designed to enhance biodiversity on the site.

The ecological assessment will use the same metrics that are being used to demonstrate the Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements of the Environment Act. Our Ecologists will also use other professional diagnostics and their skills and experience to identify possible improvements.

Once a site has been nominated and the audit completed and issued, the landowner can apply for a grant of up to **£8,000**. Each application will be processed through a metric devised by our ecologists, providing a recommended and proportionate grant value for each site.

Pilot Sites

To ensure success, the Biodiversity for All Team has conducted a 'pilot round' of 10 pilot sites to develop an efficient service. The Pilot Sites are a mixture of sites where landowners have been keen to 'test' the process with us and help us hone the scheme before its full launch.

| Site Name | Location | Authoritative Body |
|----------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Onyett's Field | Warboys | Warboys Parish Council |
| Coneygear Park | Huntingdon | Huntingdon Town Council |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| St Neots Old Cemetery | St Neots | St Neots Town Council |
| St Ives One Leisure Outdoor | St Ives | St Ives Town Council |
| Yaxley Recreation Ground | Yaxley | Yaxley Parish Council |
| King George V Playing Field | Ramsey | Ramsey Town Council |
| Bill Hall Way | Sawtry | Sawtry Parish Council |
| Apreece Way | Stilton | Stilton Parish Council |

The audits were undertaken by an external ecological consultancy undertaking a similar project at Cambridge City Council. However, our Graduate Ecologists will carry out all future audits, ensuring that the audits are written in-house. The pilot site applications are all at different stages due to varying speeds in responses; the further applicants have already had grants approved for the site and are set to begin work, and others are set to present the audits at the next available routine meeting. The responses have been largely positive, with multiple applicants exploring using HDC's Operations Team to deliver the recommended work.

Achieved

Two grants were awarded in the pilot round, with another six expected to be awarded in March 2024. If all of the pilot sites accept all of the recommendations in the audits. There will be a percentage increase of ~4164.28% across all sites.

There have been a total of 35 expressions of interest in the full grant round.

What Went Well

Carrying out a pilot round for the Community Biodiversity Grant Scheme enabled the Biodiversity for All team to identify project elements that required refinement. This round allows the team to develop a process that benefits both the external stakeholders and HDC.

Planned Work

Our pilot sites have all had Audits distributed accordingly. They are all at varying stages in their grant application, and all bids should be in before March 2024. We continue to support the applicant's task of finding quotes, offering various in-house services at competitive prices.

With the initial round one of expressions of interest concluded in November 2023 for the public community biodiversity grant scheme, the second window for applicants will wrap up in February 2024. Then, once approximately 10 sites have been selected, ecological surveys will take place, and reports will be composed. Following this, the applicants who successfully secured an audit will be invited to submit a bid for funds to deliver the works. The timeline for the grant round can be seen in Appendix Q.

Appendix L – Mapping/Citizen Science

Project Status – **GREEN** – The iNaturalist platform has been selected, and the DPIA has been passed. The app and platform are being tested internally, with a plan to use them on future BioBlitz exercises.

Overview

iNaturalist is a free, global citizen science platform. The app allows for recording fauna and flora (through photographs and sound bites), using an AI to suggest identifications of the subject in question. The data is then sent to experts to confirm the identification before releasing it publicly on a map, including information on the recorded species. Users can view and download data on the webpage, filtering data down to a specific species (for example, a specific timeframe in a particular location). SEEK is an app by iNaturalist that provides the same features but in a child-friendly interface, contributing data to the same platform.

This supports the Council's aim for biodiversity to be 'for all', evidently being able to incorporate local wildlife groups into the Council.

Achieved

Developed a **citizen science** approach to **enable** the community the chance to engage further with nature and be part of our approach whilst developing their knowledge

- **>9,500 observations** in Huntingdonshire
- **~1,500 active users** (including a plethora of existing wildlife groups)
 - This network will help us deliver on the project's aim of supporting nature to flourish.
 - **159 additional users**
- **>1,800 species recorded** in the District.
- **~800 non-native/invasive species** recorded in the District.

What Went Well

Our pilot event was successful with the 'Wild About Huntingdon' (a community led environmental group) on Spring Common; this event tripled the observations on the site (even highlighting a non-native invasive species that we had no record of on the site).

Planned work

The timeline for the planned communications work to raise awareness of the app and platform is as follows:

- 1st Monday per month – Monthly species post
- 19/01/2024 – Internal launch in a Friday email
- 22/01/2024 – Hard launch through social media
- 19/04/2024 – Socials announcement regarding the first Bioblitz
- 18/05/2024 – First Bioblitz
- 28/06/2024 – Socials announcement regarding the second Bioblitz
- 27/07/2024 – Second Bioblitz
- 13/08/2024 – HDC staff Bioblitz
- 27/09/2024 – Social announcement regarding the third Bioblitz

A communications plan is illustrated in Appendix O.



Image from the most observed species of the month of January communications video. The Species is Cundlesnuff Fungus (*Xylaria Hypoxylon*).

Appendix M – Jobs and Skills – Greenskills

Project Status – **GREEN** – The work schedule was agreed upon with Groundworks East Ltd, and a positive working relationship has been fostered.

Overview

Working with Groundworks East to deliver training and experience to individuals outside of work education and employment. Helping them achieve a City and Guilds Level 1 qualification in Horticulture whilst delivering evidence-based work on HDC-owned sites.

This project aims to foster environmental stewardship and increase the beloved park's biodiversity. Each project runs for eight weeks in different locations, primarily focusing on landscaping skill development for the volunteers, including earning a Level 1 City & Guilds qualification in horticulture and landscaping.

Achieved

There have been three successful projects delivered in this programme at the following locations:

1. Hinchingsbrooke Country Park
2. Spring Common
3. Regatta Meadow

A total of 14 individuals have completed the course and achieved the qualification.

What Went Well







GREEN WORKS CASE STUDY

SUMMARY

The Green Recovery Project provides an opportunity for individuals to achieve a City and Guilds qualification in practical horticulture and gain career advice and support whilst improving the levels of biodiversity at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

The project works with adults over the age of 19, 3 days a week for 8 weeks.

"The best part of my life and the **best working experience** I have ever been apart of"

NEW SKILLS

City and Guilds - Level 1 Practical Horticulture
Three participants opted for and achieved their Level 1 qualification

"I have really enjoyed it. I felt challenged and supported.
I wish it wasn't over."

POSITIVE CHANGE

Five participants took part and completed the project. All were asked if they felt participating in the project had made a positive impact to them.

All participants recorded a **positive change** thanks to the project.

IMPACT

Participants were asked to rate how they felt the Groundwork project had impacted them.



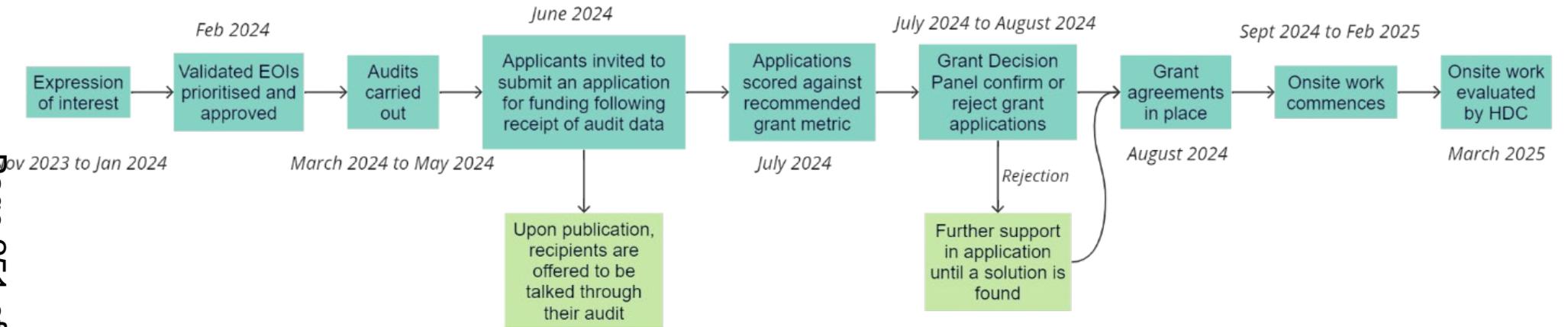
"A fantastic opportunity to practise interpersonal skills and to demonstrate to myself that in the right setting, **I can do things I didn't think I could**"



Planned work

| Dates of Proposed Projects | Project Location |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 17/01/2024 - 08/03/2024 | Paxton Pitts |
| 15/04/2024 - 07/06/2024 | Hinchingbrooke Country Park |
| 08/07/2024 - 30/08/2024 | Huntingdon Riverside |
| 30/09/2024 - 22/11/2024 | Stukeley Meadows |
| 06/01/2025 - 28/02/2025 | Holme |
| 31/03/2025 - 23/05/2025 | TBC |
| 23/06/2025 - 11/08/2025 | TBC |
| 15/09/2025 - 07/11/2025 | Berman Park |

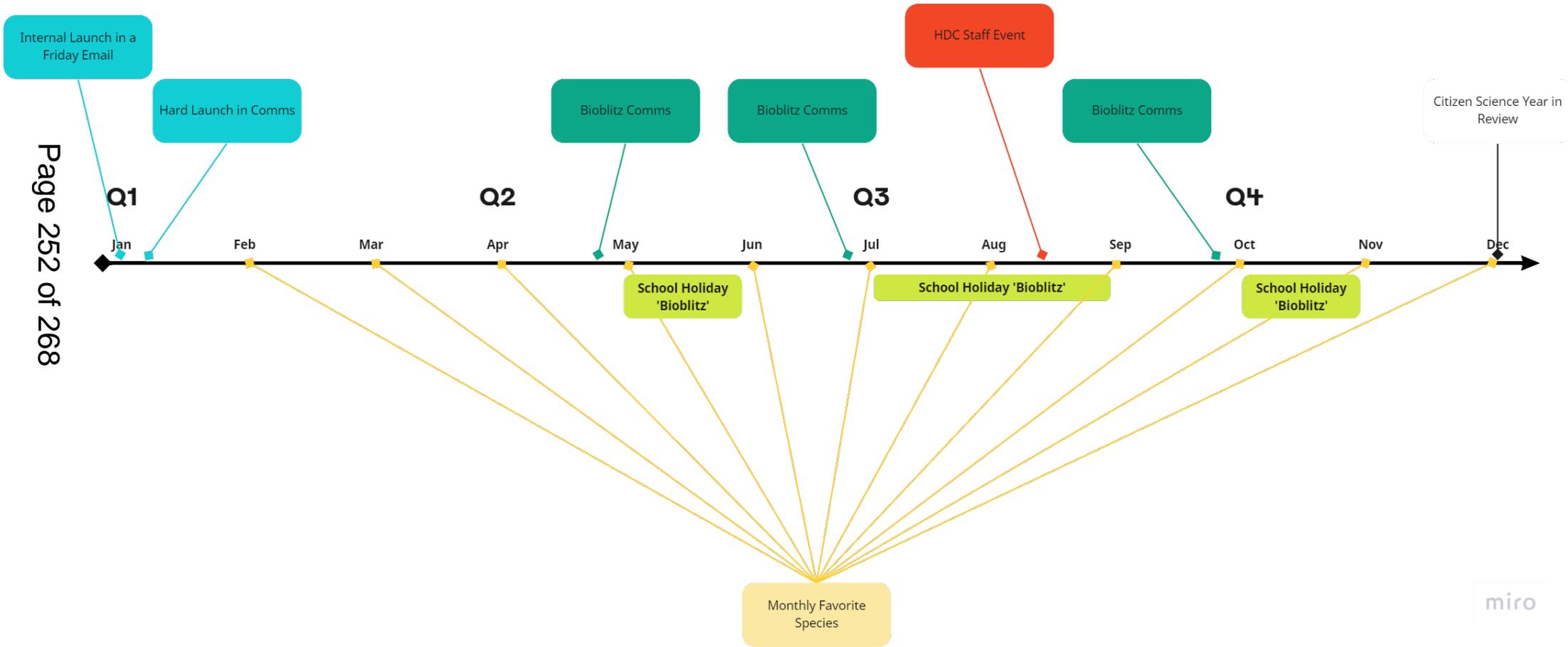
Appendix N – Community Biodiversity Grant Scheme Second Round Timeframes



Appendix O – iNaturalist Communications Plan

Proposed Communication Timeline

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APPENDIX P - GLOSSARY

Biodiversity: The variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat, region, or the world. High biodiversity is often considered to indicate a healthy ecosystem.

Bioblitz: A BioBlitz is an event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. A Bioblitz is also known as a biological inventory or biological census.

Biodiversity for All: The programme of activities funded through CPCA grant to deliver Biodiversity improvement in Huntingdonshire. [Biodiversity for All - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/biodiversity-for-all)

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): An approach to development and land management that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Under the Environment Act 2021, developers must ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced, with a 10% increase in habitat value for wildlife compared to pre-development.

Biodiversity Units: A measure used in biodiversity accounting to quantify changes in biodiversity as a result of development or conservation activities. The unit is a figure calculated through DEFRA's BNG Calculator, the value is a proxy calculated from physical factors such as habitat type, size, condition, and distinctiveness. There are three types of units, watercourse, hedgerow, and area habitat - each containing many differing habitat classifications. The units can be sold under the statutory BNG legislation.

Climate Strategy: The Council's adopted strategy to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

CPCA (Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority): The combined authority covering the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, focusing on local governance, economic growth, and development.

Corporate Plan: Our Corporate Plan provides a clear direction for what we are doing and why we are doing it. It sets out what we aim to achieve in addition to the provision of core statutory services and also provides the framework for evaluating the council's performance. The Corporate Plan is reviewed annually to ensure that the key activities and measures are still relevant and that we are continuing to achieve the targets we set ourselves. [Corporate Plan and Performance - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/corporate-plan)

DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs): The UK government department responsible for environmental protection, food production and standards, agriculture, fisheries, and rural communities.

Ecology: The branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.

Environment Act 2021: A UK law focusing on environmental protection and recovery, including measures to improve air and water quality, tackle waste, increase recycling, and protect biodiversity.

Green Skilled Economy: It is the term used to cover the technical skills, knowledge, behaviours and capabilities required to tackle environmental challenges, and unlock the opportunities for growth they present.

Green Skills Project: A motivational project run by GroundWork UK funded by part of the CPCA grant, that is often the final stepping stone into employment and offers a taster of the construction and landscaping industries [Green Skills - Groundwork](#)

HDC Strategic Sites: Refers to key locations identified by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) for significant development or conservation, playing a crucial role for Local Communities and biodiversity net gain.

Healthy Open Spaces Strategy: A strategy adopted to contribute to the health and well-being of the community, often including aspects like green spaces, parks, and recreational areas.

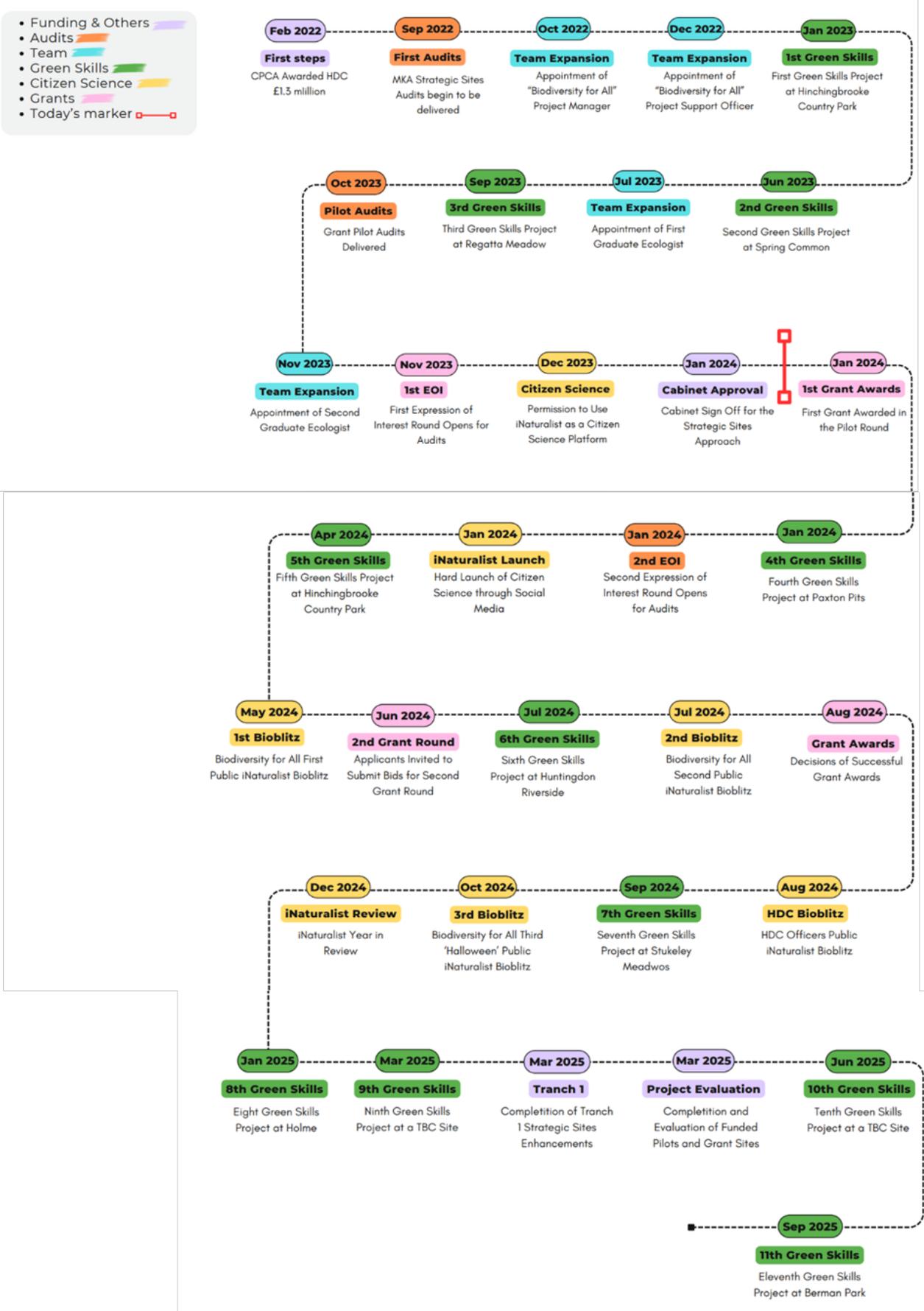
Horticulture: branch of agriculture concerned with growing plants that are used by people for food, for medicinal purposes, and for aesthetic gratification.

Lawton Review: A scientific review led by Professor Sir John Lawton, focusing on wildlife conservation in the UK. It emphasises the need for more, bigger, better, and joined habitats.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy: A plan or framework designed to drive local efforts for nature recovery, including restoring habitats and creating green spaces.

S106 (Section 106): Refers to a legal agreement under the UK's Town and Country Planning Act 1990, allowing local authorities to enter into a legally binding agreement with a developer to mitigate the impacts of their development.

Appendix Q – Project Timeline As of January 2024



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Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Household Garden Waste Subscription Service – Update
Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 7th March 2024
Executive Portfolio: Cllr Simone Taylor – Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene
Report by: Andrew Rogan, General Manager for Operations
Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

Since the approval by the Cabinet on 24th August 2023 to implement a chargeable garden waste subscription service a number of areas of work have been delivered. These include extensive consultation with Town and Parish Councils and community groups, the development and implementation of an automated Direct Debit system, the procurement of a supplier to distribute stickers and information packs to subscribers and the development of a range of community initiatives.

This report provides an update on the work and level of subscription uptake across the district. In addition, the report sets out the forthcoming campaigns to raise awareness about the change in service and how residents will be supported through this period.

Recommendation(s):

- a) that an update to the actuals against forecast subscriptions numbers of householders and income be noted;
- b) that an update on the operational impacts for a chargeable garden waste collection service be noted;
- c) that an update on the implementation of community initiatives, supported by the engagement activities in September 2023 with Town and Parish Councils and community groups be noted; and
- d) that an update to the Communications Plan to support all residents understand and take action regarding the change in service from 1st April 2024 be noted.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an update on the key implementations of the Garden Waste Subscription Service, further to the approval to proceed at the Cabinet meeting on 24th August 2023.

2. FINANCIAL POSITION AND ANALYSIS

2.1 The Cabinet approved the implementation of a chargeable garden waste subscription service on the basis of the following financial modelling

Table 1 - Financial projection of the chargeable garden service, including potential contribution to County.

| Income & Expenditure Statement | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Proposed Garden Waste Subscription, Business Case basis | | | | | |
| | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 |
| Income: | | | | | |
| 1st chargeable bin ^[1] | 0 | (1,380,000) | (1,840,000) | (2,300,000) | (2,300,000) |
| 2nd chargeable bin ^[2] | (172,040) | (86,400) | (86,400) | (86,400) | (86,400) |
| Chargeable income | (172,040) | (1,466,400) | (1,926,400) | (2,386,400) | (2,386,400) |
| Remove existing MTFS second bin assumption ^[3] | 172,040 | 205,000 | 205,000 | 205,000 | 205,000 |
| Total Income | 0 | (1,261,400) | (1,721,400) | (2,181,400) | (2,181,400) |
| Expenditure: | | | | | |
| Staff cost savings ^[4] | 0 | (318,580) | (238,935) | (159,290) | (159,290) |
| Fuel cost savings ^[5] | 0 | (81,089) | (60,816) | (40,544) | (40,544) |
| Call centre staff ^[6] | 0 | 35,000 | 35,000 | 35,000 | 35,000 |
| Annual billing ^[7] | 0 | 20,000 | 30,000 | 40,000 | 40,000 |
| Transaction fees, card payment ^[8] | 0 | 27,600 | 36,800 | 46,000 | 46,000 |
| Administration - staff ^[9] | 0 | 31,519 | 31,519 | 31,519 | 31,519 |
| Annual renewals ^[10] | 0 | 28,320 | 37,760 | 47,200 | 47,200 |
| Community Initiatives ^[11] | 0 | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| Potential contribution for losses to CCC, unconfirmed | 0 | 198,000 | 264,000 | 330,000 | 330,000 |
| Total Expenditure | 0 | 140,770 | 335,328 | 529,885 | 529,885 |
| Net (Surplus)/deficit | 0 | (1,120,630) | (1,386,072) | (1,651,515) | (1,651,515) |
| Implementation costs ^[12] | 0 | 849,601 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Net adjustment to prior year MTFS - (benefit)/adverse | 0 | (271,029) | (1,386,072) | (1,651,515) | (1,651,515) |
| Total all years - (benefit)/adverse | (4,960,133) | | | | |

2.2 Following the implementation of an automated Direct Debit system, residents were able to subscribe to the service from 5th December 2023.

2.3 Residents were incentivised to sign-up early (before the beginning of February 2024) to allow sufficient time to plan the scheduling, crews and vehicles required for the changeover of service from 1st April. Residents who signed up by Wednesday 31st January 2024 were able to take advantage of an Early Bird offer where the cost of the first bin was £50. If residents chose to pay for the service by Direct Debit, the reduced price was fixed for a minimum of three years.

- 2.4 Weekly monitoring of the subscription numbers shows that the expected first chargeable bin revenue for financial year 2024/25 is above target, with approximately 2/3 of residents subscribing by Direct Debit (See Appendix 1 for most recent figures)

3. OPERATIONAL DELIVERY

- 3.1 The chargeable garden waste subscription service built on the current service offered to residents whereby the bin collection rounds operate fortnightly. Residents have the option to pay for an additional bin(s) and are issued with a sticker to place on the back of their bin to evidence the payment.
- 3.2 The modelling of new separate garden waste rounds for customers *could* result in some changes to collection days. It is acknowledged that this may create some confusion for residents in the early phase of the delivery. To mitigate the impacts to the current schedule and bins rounds, the Early Bird discount secured 23.6k confirmed households subscribing to the service by the end of January 2023. The Waste Management Service is now working with a specialist waste round mapping company to create the new rounds with as few changes as possible to current collection days and to ensure routes are optimised for efficiency. The approved routes and schedules will be confirmed in February 2024 allowing time to notify any impacted residents directly. Extensive communications will be promoted throughout March 2024 about any changes to schedules with the introduction of a new bin calendar for financial year 2024/25 allowing residents to check their scheduled collection beyond 1st April.

4. SERVICE DESIGN

- 4.1 Since making the new service available to residents to subscribe, weekly analysis of the data has been undertaken to enable an effective response to any barriers in the process and to be able to improve communications in local areas. As a result of the weekly analysis, a number of conclusions can be drawn:
- There is a shift in the channel of contact to the Council from telephone to online services as seen through the number of residents accessing the online subscription form versus the number of transactional calls to the Contact centre. (See Appendix 1) This is supportive of the Council's intent to be digital first in design and delivery of our services.
 - The geographical mapping of subscriptions volumes across the district is relatively uniform, with all postcode areas reporting a minimum subscription percentage of eligible households as 30%.
 - The highest number of calls received to the Contact centre are on a Monday (compared to other days of the week) and on average 50% of calls are received between 09:00 and 12:00, allowing the optimisation of resources in Customer services to meet this known demand in call volumes.
- 4.2 In addition to the changes in service, a number of community initiatives were tested and developed with community representatives, ensuring

residents were fully supported to continue with their commitments to compost and recycle green waste.

- 4.3 Engagement activities were undertaken with Town and Parish Councils and community groups throughout September 2023. The findings of the engagement sessions were presented to Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 2nd November 2023.
- 4.4 In total 33 local councils (towns or parishes) were represented across the 4 sessions, with a total of 58 representatives actively inputting into the viability and support considerations required for a number of proposed initiatives. On the basis of the views and comments received the following community initiatives will be available from the 1st April 2024:
- **Saturday Freighters** – a schedule over a 4-week period of vehicles every Saturday between the months of April and September in prearranged locations across the district. This schedule will be kept under active review to ensure they meet resident need, and do not cause any unintended disruption.
 - **For parishes not included on the 4-weekly schedule** – the Council will contact outlying Parish Councils, not included on the 4-week schedule, to offer them up to 10 community bins, free of charge, to be hosted at a community location of their choice. These bins will be accessible for local residents to use to deposit their garden waste and will be collected as part of the normal route scheduling for fortnightly garden waste collections.
 - **Parish Council allocation for land management** - Parish Councils can request free of charge bins, which they can allocate to residents to support them maintaining local green spaces in their communities.
 - **Subsidised price home composters** – in addition to the current offer of ‘buy one and get a second half price’, HDC will seek to offer residents a subsidised price on the purchase of their first compost bin.
 - **Free loose compost** – working with Town and Parish Councils, along with Allotment Associations, HDC will promote the availability of locations to collect free compost. In addition the Waste Minimisation team will support residents to engage with composting in their community and promote Compost Awareness Week (first full week of May 2024)
- 4.5 The Council will continue to monitor both the materials picked up as fly-tipping using a reporting mechanism called "WasteDataFlow" to inform government of the levels and nature of waste along with enforcement actions taken therefore close monitoring will be undertaken to determine any changes to fly-tipping patterns.
- 4.6 The Council will continue to monitor and actively respond to any variances in changes through ongoing reviews of the waste tonnages, and direct communication and waste minimisation activity to respond to ensure waste is managed in the most effective manner going forward. Collections will also inform the service design to accommodate the requirements of the DEFRA waste reforms, anticipated to be needed from 2026.

4.7 The County Council have confirmed that the principal to charge districts has been established but as yet the details have not been developed. The Chief Executive is awaiting a timetable from the County Council.

5. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

5.1 **Communications** – the most significant risk to the new garden waste subscription service is the impact to residents, and therefore Customer Services, either because residents are unaware of the change in service or because they are unaware of any potential change in collection days/weeks.

5.2 A robust Communication Plan has been approved by the project board detailing the key messages for residents about the changes to service, the channels through which they will be promoted, and the schedule of key messages. These key messages include but are not limited to:

- Residents can subscribe and pay the annual charge throughout the year (not limited to subscribing before 1st April)
- Residents not wishing to subscribe and want to have their bin removed can notify HDC through the form on the website (only empty garden waste bins can be removed)
- Advice on how residents can reduce the volume of waste they generate through behavioural change.

5.3 Based on the successful campaign of bin hangers over November/December 2023, a similar approach will be used to inform all residents about the changes in garden waste collection.

5.4 The HDC website has a significant number of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which are regularly reviewed and updated with Customer Services, determined by the type and frequency of enquiry that they respond to.

5.5 To meet demand for the increased contacts (telephone, email, social media) the changes in service, an additional 5 temporary staff have been trained to answer all enquiries solely related to the garden waste subscription service. This has been managed through a dedicated telephone number for enquiries on garden waste subscriptions. This has managed the risk of increased demand to Customer Services on the generic contact telephone number.

5.6 The significant percentage of calls received on the dedicated line relate to supporting residents to subscribe to the service (transactional), with lower call volumes related to simple enquiries, complex enquiries or complaints (See Appendix 1)

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

[\(See Corporate Plan\)](#)

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If DEFRA mandate that garden waste collection should be collected free of charge from all domestic properties and is written in legislation, we would need to legally comply.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Costs of implementing the change in service have been met through the income generated. This has covered resource costs and technology development implementation costs, along with specialist resource to deliver the work.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The project resource to manage the changeover of service was introduced in April 2023. The early establishment of the project team has led to the success and robust management of the change, while allowing the key services in Operations to continue to deliver high quality Business As Usual services throughout this period.
- 9.2 The number of subscriptions to the new service has been positive and consistent. The introduction of an Early Bird discount has greatly increased the number of residents subscribing to the service early, ensuring that the scheduling and routing can be accurate and the risk of changes to residents is minimised.
- 9.3 A designated telephone line for garden waste subscriptions has ensured resources in the Contact centre can be well managed and training for staff can be specific and high quality. The lower number of calls received in the Contact centre compared to the interaction on the HDC website (for both subscriptions and information) demonstrates the increasing preference of residents to access Council services via online methods.

10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

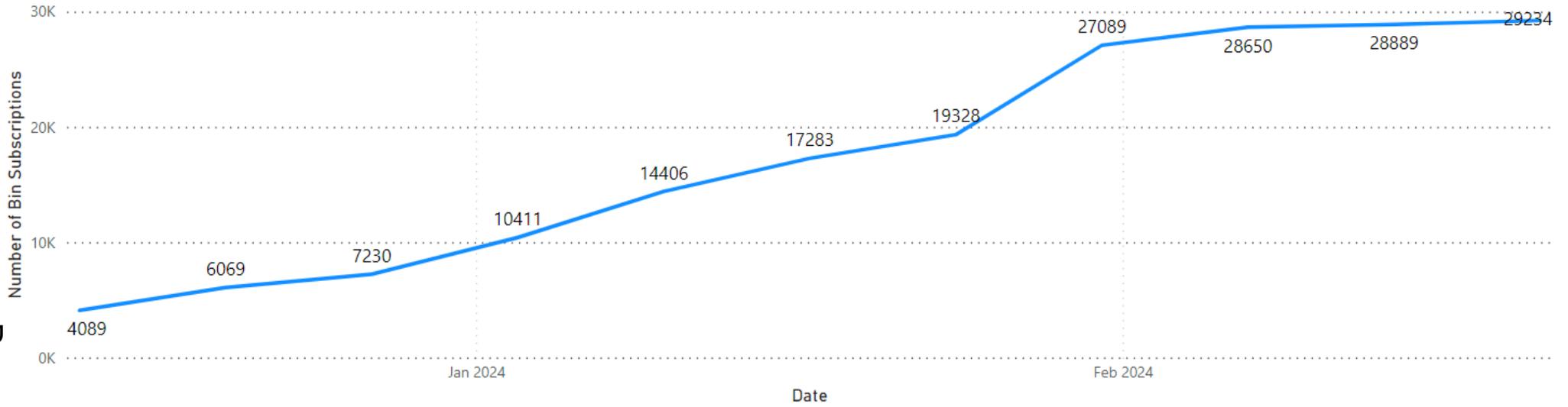
Appendix 1 - Analysis of garden waste subscriptions

CONTACT OFFICER

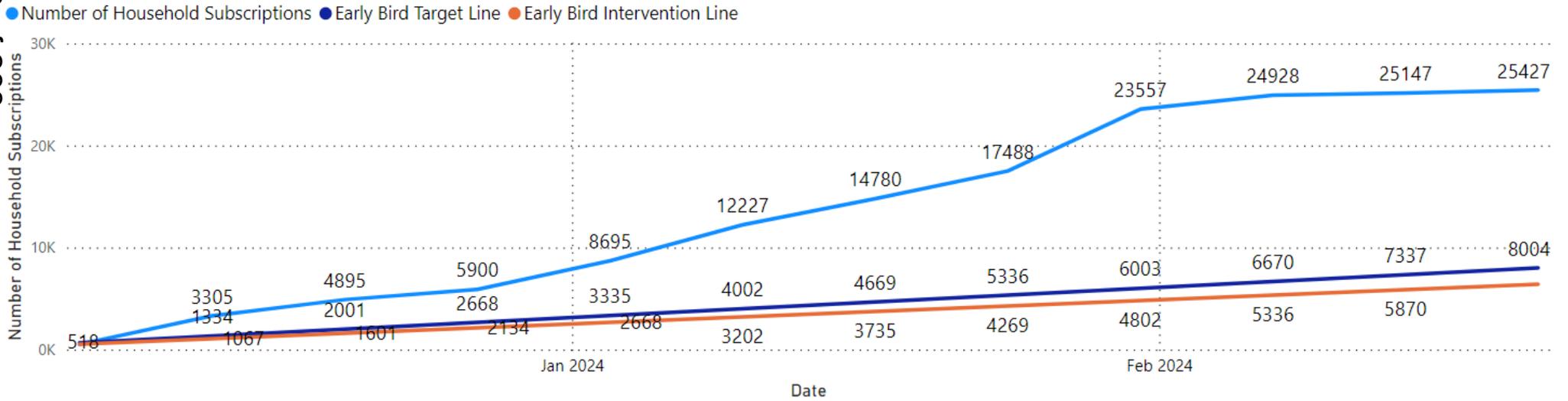
Name/Job Title: Andrew Rogan, General Manager Operations
Email: andrew.rogan@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Analysis of garden waste subscriptions

Cumulative total number of bin subscriptions by Date

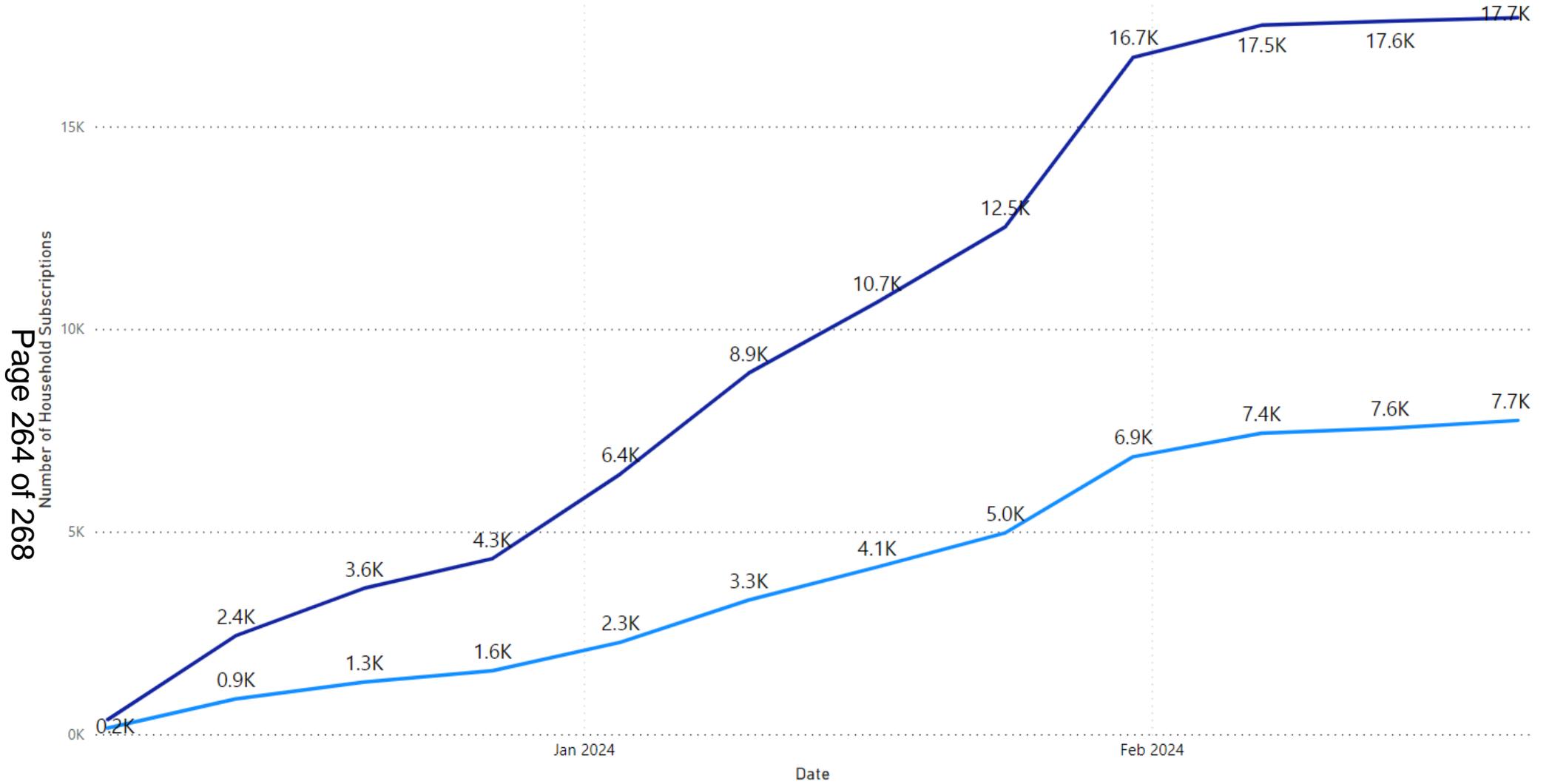


Cumulative total number of household subscriptions by Date

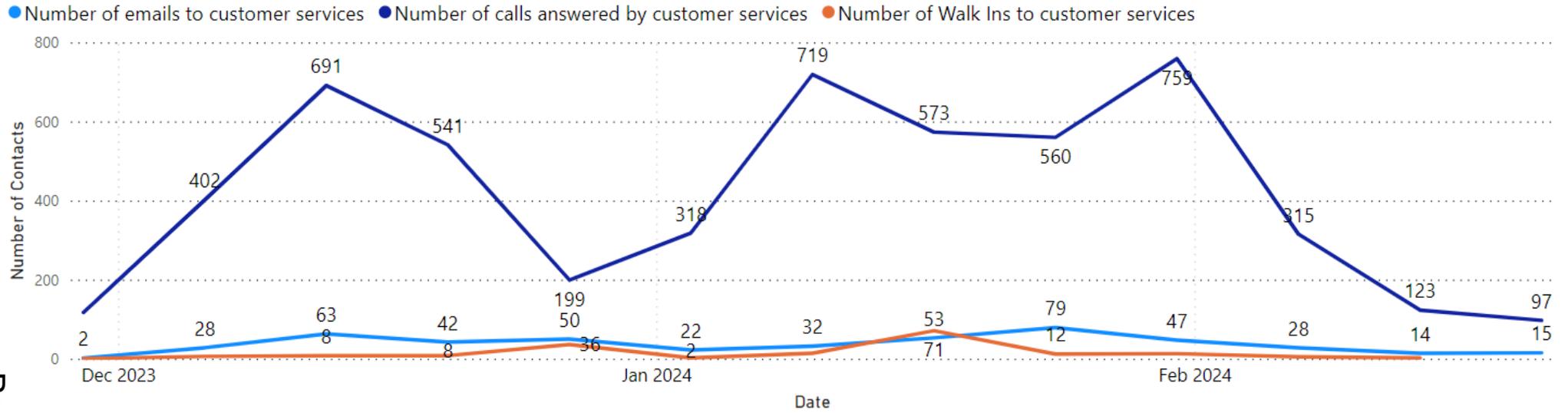


Cumulative total number of subscriptions by payment type

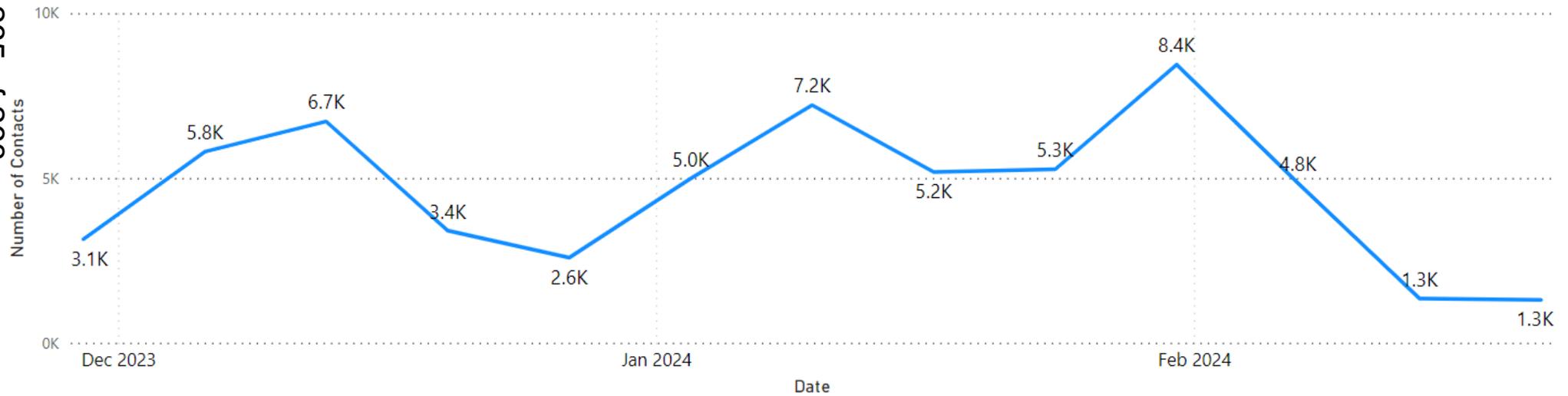
● Number of Household Subscriptions paid for by Card ● Number of Household Subscriptions paid for by Direct Debit



Number of emails, walk-ins and telephone calls per week by Date

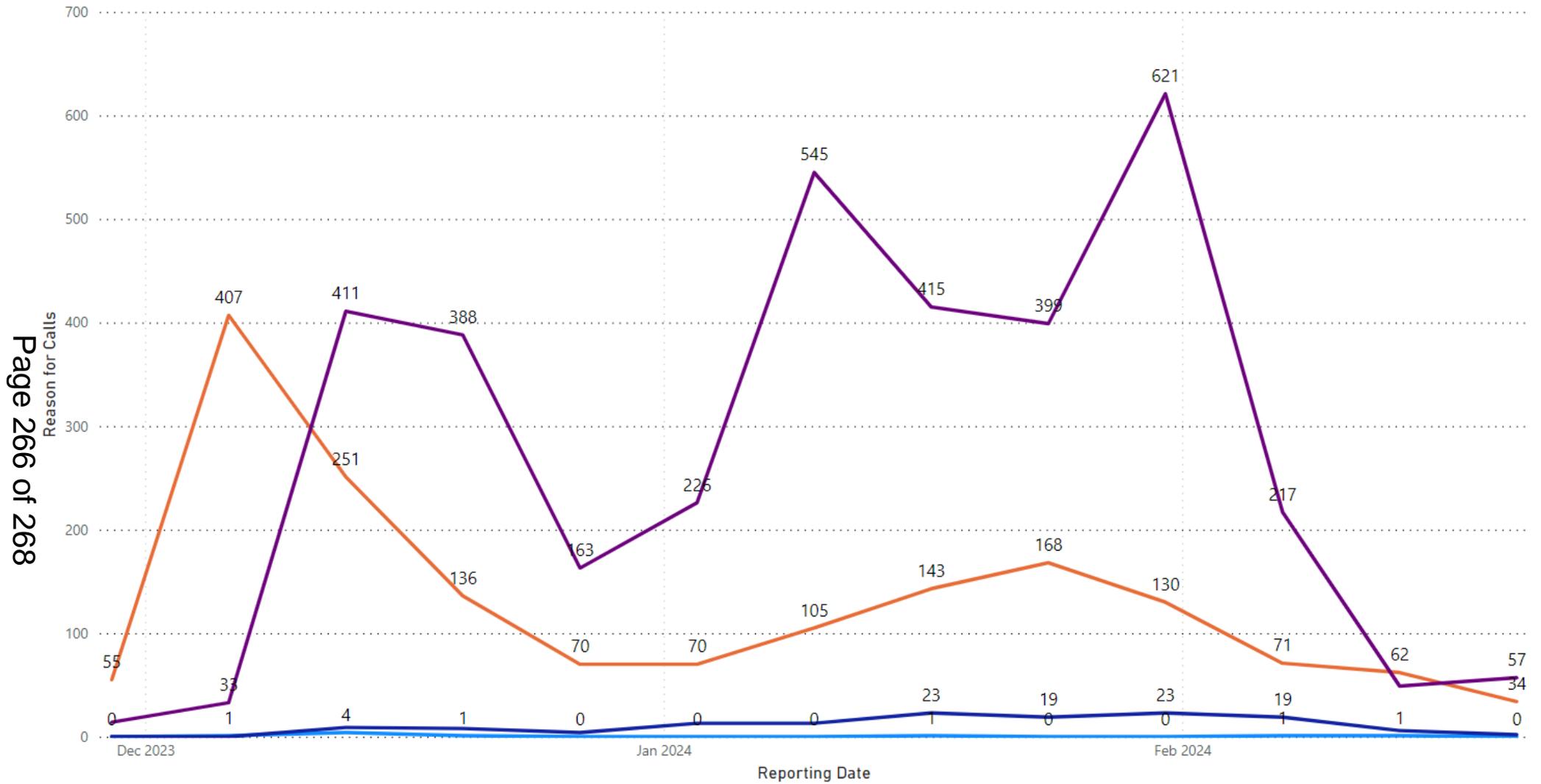


Number of web page views (all garden bins pages) per week by Date



Reasons for Calls

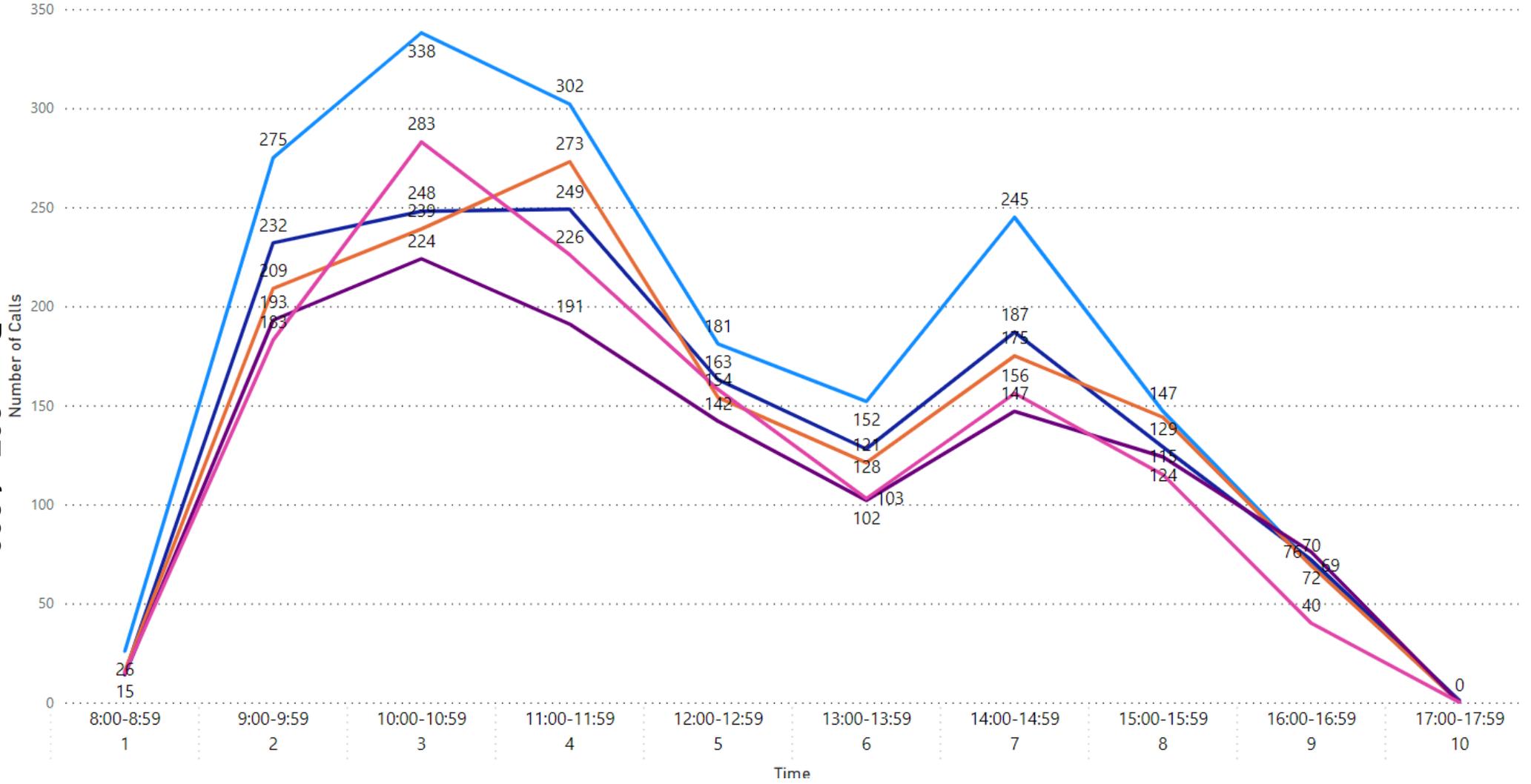
● Complaint (Escalated to complaints) ● Complex Enquiry (Back Office Resolved) ● Simple Enquiry (CS resolved / information given) ● Transactional / Payment



Calls by Weekday

● Mondays ● Tuesdays ● Wednesdays ● Thursdays ● Fridays

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