

Public  
Key Decision – No

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** One Leisure Independent Review Update

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny - (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025  
Cabinet – 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025

**Executive Portfolio:** Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Health – Councillor Sally Howell

**Report by:** Head of Leisure, Health & Environment – Gregg Holland

**Ward(s) affected:** All Ward(s)

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### Executive Summary:

The Council commissioned First Point Management & Consultancy Limited (First Point) in September 2023 to undertake an Independent Review of the One Leisure Long Term Operating Model and its in-house leisure function. The Independent Review included as **Appendix 1** focussed on:

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

The One Leisure Long Term Operating Model Independent Review was presented to and approved by Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024. As part of the Independent Review it stated:

*“A transformed in-house option is the recommended approach for the short term; this should allow sufficient time to optimise the service before considering medium and long-term delivery options”.*

In addition to this the Independent Review (**Appendix 1**) also provided a number of recommendations that One Leisure and the Council should consider for implementation. These can be seen in the Independent Review on pages 50 – 51.

As part of the Cabinet report presented to and approved by Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 it stipulated that the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment would provide Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet a 12-month update.

Therefore, this report is aimed at setting out an update on all of the recommendations illustrated in the Independent Review as stated above and to close out that particular action from the original report dated 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet is asked to acknowledge and comment on the following recommendations:

**RECOMMENDED**

1. To note the progress of actions identified within this report over the last 12 months.
2. To comment on the progress that has been made on the 22 actions identified within the Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure undertaken by First Point Management; and
3. To acknowledge and accept the key actions from the associated summary presentation and outlined within Section 4 of this report.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on the progress One Leisure and the Council have made following the recommendations made and set out within the Independent Review of the One Leisure Long Term Operating Model.
- 1.2 To provide Councillor's an opportunity to review, consider and respond to the progress One Leisure have made since the Independent Review of One Leisure was commissioned in late 2023.
- 1.3 To close out an action from (section 6.5 – point 5) from the original Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure which stated: *"A further commitment that One Leisure will return to Members and update on actions against all the recommendations made by the independent consultant"*.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Built & Playing Pitch Strategies for Huntingdonshire were commissioned in late 2022 and were then presented to [Overview & Scrutiny Committee \(Environment, Communities & Partnerships\) on 8th June 2023](#) and full approval from [Cabinet was gained on 20th June 2023](#).
- 2.2 The Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was undertaken in late 2023 and subsequently adopted by the Council in April 2024.
- 2.3 The review focussed upon the following key areas:
  1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
  2. Staff Review
  3. Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
  4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)
- 2.4 The full Independent Review for the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure can be viewed in **Appendix 1**
- 2.5 From the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure (**Appendix 1**) it provided 22 recommendations that the Council and One Leisure should consider for implementation.
- 2.6 These recommendations are set out in **Appendix 1** on page 50 - 51

### 3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

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

### 4. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION & COMPLETION

- 4.1 To ensure independence and provide accuracy One Leisure requested the involvement of First Point Management to undertake a “*Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure*”. This progress report can be viewed within **Appendix 2**

- 4.2 The progress report that First Point Management undertook reviewed all recommendations and actions and their findings are summarised in the table below:

- **15** actions/recommendations have been completed (**c. 68%**);
- **5** remain in progress and span more than a single year (**c. 23%**), whilst ;
- **2 (c. 9%)** have not been progressed, primarily due the pending implementation of Local Government Reform (LGR).

Percentage %	Status
68%	Completed
23%	In Progress
9%	Incomplete

- 4.3 As part of the progress report that First Point Management undertook it also concluded the following:

- 4.3.1 Overall, the performance and ongoing transformation of One Leisure continues to be good and the trajectory towards increased participation and financial sustainability remains positive and is very encouraging.
- 4.3.2 Good progress has been made on potential major capital investments into the leisure estate, these are major projects for One Leisure with the proposed Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub at RIBA Stage 1 and all other sites due to follow during 2025-26.
- 4.3.3 Developing a robust leisure capital programme will be important in light of the pending implementation of LGR.
- 4.3.4 In addition, securing capital funding and operational agreements to re-open and manage the swimming pool and leisure facilities at Sawtry is a significant achievement, with refurbishment and mobilisation taking place in 2025-26 with a view to reopening in Spring 2026.

- 4.3.5 However, it remains important to continually monitor progress and strive for continuous improvement across all aspects of service delivery wherever possible.
- 4.3.6 It is recommended that for consistency, independent annual reviews are commissioned to assess and report progress and performance.
- 4.4 To ensure the feedback from the progress report is not only captured but acted upon One Leisure have implemented the following actions into its 2025-2026 Council Service Plan so that progress and completion can be monitored. These actions are listed below and outlined within the summary presentation:
  - a. Commission an independent review of:
    - i. One Leisure's readiness for LGR
    - ii. High level state of the market review of leisure providers across Cambridgeshire
    - iii. Options, Risks & Recommendations for One Leisure
  - b. To complete all outstanding feasibility studies for One Leisure sites to RIBA Stage 1
  - c. Gain full approval for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub (RIBA Stage 2)
  - d. Secure partnership arrangement with NHS/ICB for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub
  - e. Finalise and gain approval for One Leisure Design Principles - Vision & Customer Charter
  - f. Mobilisation & Re-Opening of Sawtry Leisure Centre
  - g. Continue working with colleagues to develop de-carbonisation plans

## **5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

- 5.1 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
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.

- 5.4 Through utilising the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies and completing the Independent Review it has allowed senior officers to prepare and submit a suite of capital investment options that can be considered by the council. An example of this is the RIBA Stage 1 feasibility study completed for Huntingdon Leisure Centre (Hunting Sport & Health Hub). It can also be seen from section 4 specifically point 4.4.2 that One Leisure will complete RIBA Stage 1 feasibility studies on all other leisure centres across the One Leisure portfolio. This information will then be used to ascertain the best approach to capital investment across the Council and will allow the Council to make data driven informed decisions.
- 5.5 A key point from the Independent Review and in consideration of the Council's wider capital investment plans and to support the Council's Climate Plan ambition of becoming Net Zero by 2040 the review outlined the importance of considering how any new or re-provisioned leisure facilities could be de-carbonised similar to Ramsey Leisure Centre. This workstream on the feasibility of decarbonising the leisure centres will be reviewed as part of the ongoing RIBA Stage 1 & 2 works.
- 5.6 In line with the Independent Review One Leisure facilitated a staff lead review in late 2023 centred around the following key principles:
- a) More customers focus
  - b) Good quality structures
  - c) Improved value-for money services
  - d) Improved control and compliance to statutory obligations
- 5.7 Following the review the new staff structures provided greater visibility of management at our leisure centres, pathways for staff succession, improved training and development and ensured that we had efficient structures in place which supported a key metric of our staff to income ratio. This underpinned our core work and further supported the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 5.8 As noted within the original Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure the consultant recommended that One Leisure implement a more commercially focussed "Transformed In-House" operating model. Following the review and over the last 12 months One Leisure have made significant change to move from a deficit trading position to a budgeted trading surplus planned for 2025-2026.
- 5.9 The wider improvement in the One Leisure commercial journey has mainly been due to higher health and fitness membership sales, higher swim school pupil numbers, new workforce structure and a reduction of overall net costs for facilitating the Active Health service.

- 5.10 The One Leisure financial performance since 2017- 2018 can be seen in the table below. It also supports the statement made in section 5.8 where One Leisure have budgeted to move from a £230,143 net cost to a budgeted -£117,103 net surplus in 2025-2026. The statement in section 5.9 supports this journey.

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Income	-£6,751,045	-£6,798,703	-£6,686,867	-£5,261,260	-£4,777,731	-£5,471,785	-£6,045,904	-£7,292,693	-£8,596,875
Expenditure	£6,878,103	£7,078,157	£6,953,971	£5,574,027	£5,213,834	£5,925,802	£6,653,527	£7,522,836	£8,479,772
<b>Total</b>	<b>£127,058</b>	<b>£279,454</b>	<b>£267,104</b>	<b>£312,768</b>	<b>£436,103</b>	<b>£454,017</b>	<b>£607,623</b>	<b>£230,143</b>	<b>-£117,103</b>

## 6. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The original Independent Review acknowledged the work undertaken by the One Leisure teams by providing sport and health related activities to promote a healthy population across the district.
- 6.2 Within **Appendix 3** it provides the 2024-2025 One Leisure Annual Performance Review which showcases all of the work undertaken by One Leisure staff across the leisure centres, active health and sport development teams to support the wider communities they serve but also how One Leisure have progressed since the completion of the original Independent Review.
- 6.3 In addition to this performance and since the original Independent Review was commissioned and endorsed by the Council One Leisure have as part of the capital investment process on Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub (RIBA Stage 1) been engaging with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) around the development of a co-located “Health Hub” into the existing dry side facilities at Huntingdon Leisure Centre. An update on this will be provided to Councillors as part of the RIBA Stage 2 report that will be presented by the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in October 2025.
- 6.4 In June 2025 Active Lifestyle submitted a bid for the Cambridgeshire County Council’s public health team “Behaviour Change Contract” to commence October 2025 for 5 years + 2 years with a value of £1.9m. This follows the successful delivery of the Tier 1 & 2 Weight Management and Behaviour Change Service previously delivered between 2020 and September 2025. The performance of this programme can be viewed in **Appendix 3** as outlined in point 6.2.
- 6.5 Following corporate changes made to the senior management structure the leisure and health services (One Leisure & Active Lifestyles) are now positioned within the Place Directorate. The new Head of Leisure, Health & Environment now covers all leisure, health, parks and open spaces, climate and biodiversity.
- 6.6 These changes afford the Council greater opportunities to further deepen the relationship between all the services across the wider

Place Directorate to enable and deliver positive outcomes for residents, but also look at service delivery in a more commercial context thus creating the potential to make positive contributions to the wider local economy.

## **7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 7.1 To fulfil the commitment made to Council that One Leisure would return and provide an update on all recommendations and actions stemming from the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure.
- 7.2 To allow Councillors to review, comment, and feedback on the progress One Leisure have made on all recommendations and actions over the last 12 months.
- 7.3 To acknowledge the actions outlined in Section 4 of this report which One Leisure have incorporated into its service plans for completion through 2025-2026.

## **8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

**Appendix 1** – Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure

**Appendix 2** – First Point Management - Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure”.

**Appendix 3** – One Leisure Annual Performance Review 2024-2025

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 [Built & Playing Pitch Strategies 2022 – 2043](#)
- 9.2 [Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure \(First Point Management\)](#)
- 9.3 [Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure \(Cabinet Report & Approval\)](#)
- 9.4 Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub Feasibility Report (RIBA Stage 1) – April 2025 – Presented & Approved Under Part 2
- 9.5 Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure – First Point Management – **Appendix 2**
- 9.6 One Leisure Annual Performance Review 2024-2025 – **Appendix 3**



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