

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub Feasibility Report
Meeting/Date:	O&S (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) – 2 nd October 2025 Cabinet – 14 th October 2025
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Communities, Health & Leisure - Councillor Sally Howell
Report by:	Gregg Holland Head of Leisure, Health & Environment
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

The Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was undertaken in 2023 and subsequently adopted by the Council in April 2024. The review included a proposed prioritisation of capital investment across the One Leisure estate in line with the Council's ambitions for One Leisure to grow participation and become financially sustainable.

The proposed capital investment in leisure forms a critical part of the transformation journey that One Leisure has been on in recent years, supporting increased participation, an enhanced customer experience and financial sustainability.

This report focuses on the opportunity that exists at Huntingdon and provides an update for Councillors on the progress that has been made through the RIBA Stage 2 design process following Cabinet approval in April 2025 (RIBA Stage 1) of "Option 2".

It provides context on the three sub options of "Option 2" that have been developed by the Council and its consultants, in order to determine an optimum solution that delivers against the project objectives:

- Addressing the shortfall of swimming pool provision across the district as identified in the Built Facility Strategy and Swim England Aquatics Review
- Growth in participation
- Future proofing local council assets for future generations
- Supporting the financial sustainability of One Leisure and the Council
- Supporting the Council's Corporate Plan and wider Strategic Priorities

Given the shortfall in swimming facilities, the optimum solution should prioritise the replacement of the existing swimming pool that has far exceeded its expected lifespan and relocate the aquatic offer by building a larger pool, potentially on to the main dry-side building.

With the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders there is the opportunity to develop a modern, fit for purpose and fit for the future, flagship leisure facility for Huntingdon with significant capital investment.

This report seeks to formally endorse “Option 2C” as the preferred option which will allow for significant improvement and major transformation in the leisure offer at Huntingdon and for its residents. This will then allow for further scheme development and financial planning. This report also seeks formal approvals and delegations for Officer’s to proceed as outlined within the recommendations below.

Whilst this will be a sizeable and complex proposal, the opportunities to create an improved leisure, health and well-being facility for Huntingdon are significant, and align with a variety of Council strategies, policies and ambitions; as well as those of other partner organisations.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

Project Development & Progression:

- a. To note the project progression to date and approve the recommended option – **(Option 2 C)**.
- b. To delegate to the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in consultation with the Corporate Director (Place) & Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) to proceed to and conclude RIBA Stages 3 & 4, including the submission (December 2025) and resolution of a planning application, and secure any other necessary consents to allow the development to commence (RIBA Stage 5).
- c. To note that, subject to the project securing all necessary consents; funding being secured through the budget process; and project costs being within budget; the intention is for works to commence on-site in 2026 with an anticipated opening in the 27/28 financial year.

Funding & Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

- d. To note and agree the capital budget envelope of £30.5m for the project to be utilised for budget setting purposes.
- e. To approve within the budget scope, the forward funding of £1m of capital to support the health & wellbeing hub fit out, subject to the conclusion of necessary legal agreements with the NHS/ICB – with the intention that this capital funding is repaid to the Council over time (for example through future S106 monies).

- f. To note and approve that the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment will lead on and complete negotiations with the Football Foundation with the intention to secure around £800k of capital funding towards a new 3G Pitch.
- g. To note and support a joint Fields In Trust submission for the re-provision of land to support the wider Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub project; the details of which will be delegated to the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment to develop and facilitate in conjunction with Huntingdon Town Council.
- h. To note that a CIL funding application has been made by Huntingdon Town Council for a new Cricket Pavillion which closely relates to the release of Town Council land for the re-provision of Fields In Trust land – **This will however be considered through a separate process and decision.**

Partners & Legal Agreements:

- i. To delegate to the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment to facilitate, and in consultation with the Corporate Director (Place) & Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) complete all relevant land and legal requirements to facilitate this project and enable its delivery.
- j. To delegate and allow the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment to facilitate, and in consultation with the Corporate Director (Place) & Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) to finalize the MOU; Heads of Terms; and subsequent legal agreements with the NHS/ICB for the co-located health and wellbeing hub.

Engagement:

- k. To approve the associated stakeholder communication and engagement plan and support its implementation following the proposed recommendations set out as part of this report being approved by Cabinet.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors of the progress Officers have made on the RIBA Stage 2 process for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub including final designs, progress of the project and overall capital costs.
- 1.2 To showcase three sub-options for the final design of Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub following approval of Option 2 by Cabinet in April 2025.
- 1.3 To provide confidence to the Cabinet and wider Council that due diligence has been undertaken by Officer's on the final designs and costs with support of expert consultants.
- 1.4 To utilise the final capital costs outlined within this report to help inform budget setting and approval and the wider project delivery of Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub.
- 1.5 To provide an update on stakeholder engagement and progress to date across the project and to illustrate the broad support Officers have gained from partners for the Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub project.
- 1.6 To gain full approval from Cabinet to allow this project to proceed to RIBA Stage 3 & 4 and to allow for a full planning application to be submitted (December 2025).

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 Built Facility Strategy identified that there was a shortfall of Swimming pool provision across the Huntingdonshire district of the equivalent of 12 lanes of a 25-metre swimming pool based upon current population across the district.
- 2.3 This was supported by Swim England who undertook an Aquatics Review for One Leisure in late 2024 and they confirmed that there was a shortfall of swimming pool provision across the district equivalent to circa 13 lanes of a 25 metre Swimming pool.
- 2.4 An Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was undertaken in Autumn 2023 and subsequently adopted by the Council in March 2024.
- 2.5 The Independent Review included a proposed prioritisation of capital investment across the One Leisure estate in line with the Council's ambitions for One Leisure to grow participation and become financially sustainable.

- 2.6 As part of this independent review one of its key recommendations based upon the swimming pool shortfall across the district identified by the Built Facility Strategy and Swim England was that Council and One Leisure should undertake a commercial options feasibility on wider capital investment across all One Leisure sites but determined that the process should start at Huntingdon Leisure Centre.
- 2.7 Based upon the shortfall of swimming pool provision across the district outlined within the Built Facility Strategy and Swim England's Aquatics Review the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure confirmed that as a priority outline business cases should be developed for 1. Huntingdon, 2. St Neots and 3. St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre's.
- 2.8 Following initial feasibility work undertaken by First Point Management, the Council appointed Alliance Leisure who are an industry leading leisure development consultant.
- 2.9 They undertook a more detailed feasibility options analysis to establish and develop concept floor designs, construction costs, revenue generation associated to all options and return on investment and payback years. This work was presented to Councillors in April 2025 as a RIBA Stage 1 report.
- 2.10 Within the RIBA Stage 1 report four options were considered and presented these are summarised below:

Core Facilities	Option 1 - Refurb and Extend (6-lane pool)	Option 2 - Refurb and Extend (8-lane pool)	Option 3 - New Build (8-lane pool)	Option 4 - New Build (50m pool)
Ground Floor				
Main Pool	6 lane 25m	8 lane 25m	8 lane 25m competition	6 lane 50m
Spectator Seating				
Learner / Teaching Pool	Water area 104m	Water area 104m	Water area 104m	
Studio 1	25	28		
Spin Studio	37	34		
Health and Wellbeing Spaces	120m	304m	209m	
Sports Hall / Activity Space	2 Court Sports Hall/Activity Zone 428m	2 Court Sports Hall / Activity Zone 428m	4 Court Sports Hall / Activity Zone 599m	Activity Zone 270m
Treatment Rooms	Heat Treatment 70m		4 x treatment rooms 45m	
Cafe	185m	76m	67m	197m
Party Room / Community Room				2 x party rooms
Pavilion Replacement			223m	
First Floor				
Fitness Suite	98	107	114	106
Studio 1	28		29	37
Studio 2			24	20
Studio 3			24	
Spin Studio			20	15
Health and Wellbeing Spaces	500m	500m		
Activity Zone				270m
Total GIFA	6030	6800	6922	4341

- 2.11 In April 2025 the Cabinet approved the preferred option “Option 2” should be taken forward for further feasibility work and cost certainty through the RIBA Stage 2 process. It was also agreed that officers should continue to work with Alliance Leisure to bring forward a proposal for consideration at the end of RIBA Stage 2; to develop proposals with partners including the NHS & Integrated Care Board (ICB) and develop a detailed communication and engagement plan.
- 2.12 As part of the RIBA Stage 2 process Officers have worked closely with Alliance Leisure and their partners to finalise building plans, site plans, capital costs and timelines for project commencement and completion subject to Council approval.
- 2.13 The RIBA Stage 2 process also considered three sub options as part of the preferred proposal “Option 2” which mainly centred around the future use of the existing wet side (swimming pool) facility. These sub options are outlined below in Section 3.
- 2.14 This report seeks to build on the work to date, address the requests made previously under 2.11 and seek to secure delegations and approvals to enable the scheme to move forward to RIBA stages 3 & 4 at pace. The information to date will also be used for budget setting purposes, with the project being structured in a way which will enable development to commence promptly subject to all necessary approvals and budget agreements being made over the coming months in accordance with the indicative timeline.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED & FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Options:

- 3.1 As stated in Section 2 Alliance Leisure as part of their wider options analysis reviewed the preferred option “Option 2” from the RIBA Stage 1 process and provided final designs for the existing dry side and proposed new wet side facility but also three sub options for how the Council could utilise the existing wet side facility. These sub options are shown below:

- **Option 2 A (base scheme):**
 - New wet build extension and refurbishment works to existing buildings. Reprovision 1nr tennis court
 - Provision of 2nr new padel courts
 - Reprovision of play area
 - **Demolish existing wet side and reprovision as parking**
- **Option 2 B:**
 - New wet build extension and refurbishment works to existing buildings. Reprovision 1nr tennis court
 - Provision of 2nr new padel courts
 - Reprovision of play area
 - **Decommission existing wet side building and handover to school**

- **Option 2 C:**
 - New wet build extension and refurbishment works to existing buildings. Reprovision 1nr tennis court
 - Provision of 2nr new padel courts
 - Reprovision of play area
 - **Existing wet side conversion to soft play and changing facilities**

3.2 The table below shows the three sub options of “Option 2” and the core facility mix.

ACTIVITY AREAS	Option 2 A	Option 2 B	Option 2 C
	Existing wet side demolition and convert to additional parking	Decommission existing wet side building	Existing wet side conversion to soft play and pitch changing
New Build and Extension			
Main Pool, 8 Lane 25m			
Poolside Spectator Seating, 247 Seats			
Learner / Teaching Pool, 104m ²			
Studio 1			
Spin Studio			
Fitness Suite			
Health and Wellbeing Spaces			
Sports Hall x 2 Courts			
Treatment Rooms			
Café with Seating			
Conversion of Existing Wet side			
Large Indoor Soft Play / Tag Active etc.			
Party Rooms x 2			
Squash Courts x 2			
Other			
11 v 11 3G Football Pitch			
Pitch Changing			
Total GIFA of Buildings	5712	5712	7212

* Option 2 is the same as Option 1 but includes decommissioning of the old wet side site and prepare to transfer to school for additional educational space

Assessment of Options:

3.3 Officers have reviewed all of the options considered and presented by Alliance Leisure and have in partnership with them undertaken an options appraisal to establish the suitability of each sub option against criteria set out in the options appraisal table below. It should be acknowledged that the options appraisal will continue to be reviewed as more detailed design work is undertaken during RIBA Stage 3 & 4, this is to ensure that the Council can maintain assurance that the most appropriate option is pursued as detailed technical information becomes available.

Options Appraisal (Consultants):

Scoring (1 = poor fit, 3 = strong fit)	Option 2 A	Option 2 B	Option 2 C
Criteria	Existing wet side demolition and convert to additional parking	Decommission existing wet side building	Existing wet side conversion to soft play and pitch changing
Meets a clearly identified need	3	3	3
Supported by stakeholders	3	3	3
Physical test of fit on site	3	3	3
Form factor & energy efficiency	3	3	3
Whole life carbon consumption	3	3	3
Financial viability and payback period	1	2	3
Range of facilities / activities	2	2	3
Throughput & visitor numbers	2	2	3
Total	20	21	24
Ranking	3	2	1

3.4 In addition to this Officers have also reviewed the outcomes of the options appraisal alongside the evidence base that the Council have developed over recent years to help underpin and support wider capital investment across its facilities supported by data and research thus strengthening decision making. The reports are as follows:

1. Built Facility Strategy
2. Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure
3. Swim England Aquatics Review

3.5 The outcome of the options appraisal undertaken by Officer's inclusive of the evidence base in points 1-3 above **confirms that the preferred sub option is Option 2C.**

3.6 This is the preferred choice as it:

- Maximizes and supports the shortfall of swimming pool lane provision across the district.
- It supports the Built Facility Strategy and Swim England Aquatics Review and the recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model Review for One Leisure.
- It provides a greater facility mix of options, increased commercial opportunities and shorter ROI and pay back in years.
- This scheme allows the re-purpose and re-provisioning of the existing wet side centre.
- It supports Squash provision within the District.
- It allows for the reprovision of the 2 x astro turf Football pitches with a state-of-the-art full size 11 a side 3G Football pitch.

- It provides a children and young people's destination facility with the new 8 lane swimming and learner pool and soft play areas.
- It turns cost (demolition) into a commercial opportunity for the benefit of children and young people.
- This scheme will also capture improvements through car park reconfiguration, CCTV implementation and new lighting and provide security of the area.
- This project will also provide a multi-use health and wellbeing hub supported by the NHS/ICB for the benefits of local residents.
- It allows for wider partner collaboration with the NHS/ICB, Huntingdon Town Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and other key stakeholders.
- It supports the HDC Corporate Plan and Place Strategy by supporting local people to become more physically active and ensuring we have facilities that are fit for future generations.

Financial Considerations

- 3.7 The table below outlines the three sub-options considered, the differences in net revenue (comparison of existing contribution vs. proposed contribution), funding limits and payback periods:

Funding & Affordability	Option 2A	Option 2B	Option 2C
Total Project Cost	£25.2m	£24.2m	£27.9m
Improvement in Revenue to Fund Borrowing	£868,000	£868,000	£1.1m
Total Funding	£10.5m	£10.5m	£13.6m
Funding Requirement from Council Resources	-£14.8m	-£13.7m	-£14.3m
Payback Period (Years)	29	28	26

Note: Based upon the work undertaken by the external consultants the payback period of 26 years assumes no borrowing costs (loan repayments or interest costs).

- 3.8 The table shows the funding which the consultants advise could be achieved based on the improvement in revenue. The results show that all options have a significant funding gap, which will need to be closed to deliver any of the options. These range from £13.7m (Option 2B) to £14.8m (Option 2A).
- 3.9 Overall, Option 2B is the most affordable option, followed by Option 2A and Option 2C. Whilst there is a gap in terms of overall project costs to deliver the respective schemes it is deemed that this is fairly low based upon the level of commitment proposed for a scheme of this nature, the added value in terms of new facilities Option 2C would introduce and the overall benefit in payback.

3.10 To support this further there is a need to look beyond pure cost of delivery, and consider how this relates to income generation, need and overall affordability. In this context, **it is recommended that Option 2C** is taken forward to RIBA Stage 3 & 4.

3.11 **Option 2C** was selected based upon a number of factors both by the consultants and the Officer's. This was based upon the following principles:

- a. The net revenue in Option 2C was nearly £200,000 per annum better than the other two options. This is equivalent to £5.2m over 26 years of the life of the investment.
- b. This leads to an improved financial return on investment (payback) as Option 2C was 26 years and Option 2B was 28 years and 2C was 29 years.
- c. The overall income betterment in Option 2C is centred around the inclusion of soft play and the 11 a side 3G Football pitch leading to Point B above.
- d. A greater facility mix can be provided through Option 2C providing better outcomes to local residents and wider visitors to the area.

This will be seen by:

- A state of the art 11 a side 3G Football pitch allowing greater access for children and young people to be physically active
- Supports the students at the local secondary school as they have improved facilities to utilise
- One Leisure can increase utilisation and support increases in physical activity across its membership base and Active Lifestyle's can provide increased classes for health prevention
- It provides a new innovative soft play centre for children and young people which will enhance the offering across Huntingdon and further afield which will also attract customers from the nursery opposite the site.
- Dedicated birthday party rooms enabling One Leisure to launch new products and services
- Newly refurbished Squash courts as part of the wider project
- Meeting and corporate hospitality space
- Overall the additionality of new facilities and services as part of Option 2C will support the wider health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and links closely to the outcomes outlined in Section 8.

3.12 Following the submission of the RIBA Stage 2 proposals the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment is continuing to work closely with the finance team and consultants who developed the financial projections to fully work through how the capital funding can be accessed to support the wider delivery of this scheme.

- 3.13 Officers have sought to test the financial information provided by our consultants to ensure that in headline terms, the preferred option could be affordable to the Council – noting that a final decision on financing is not proposed at this time. There are various sources of funding which could come forward to support this project including borrowing, use of reserves, external funding, and CIL as examples.
- 3.14 Based upon the information provided within section 3.13 the table below is an illustrative example of how various forms of funding could be layered to achieve the overall figure required to deliver the development:

Organisation/Scheme	Estimated Capital Contribution
Prudential Worker Loan Board (PWLB) (Includes Football Foundation (£800,000))	£13,600,000
HDC	£9,400,000
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	£5,000,000
Section 106	£1,000,000
Total	£29,000,000

- 3.15 At this stage it has been established that an appropriate working budget for the project is £30.5m, and this is the figure which is recommended to be used to inform future budget setting. This allows for the c£29m of core cost, plus an allowance of c£1.5m for any necessary additional or facilitatory works. The Head of Leisure, Health & Environment is working closely with the Section 151 Officer, Head of Finance and Corporate Director (Place) to agree a package of funding which covers the level of capital required.
- 3.16 This process will be finalised through the RIBA Stage 3 & 4 process and will be overseen and guided by the Corporate Director (Finance & Corporate Resources – Section 151 Officer) as to the feasibility and access to capital investment.
- 3.17 However, for budget setting purposes for the 26/27 MTFS, it is reasonable to conclude the £30.5m is to be incorporated as the relevant capital figure for this proposed scheme. This is based upon professional advice and guidance and cost reviews by the relevant consultants.
- 3.18 Further cost reviews would continue to be undertaken as RIBA stages 3 & 4 progress. Subject to conclusion of RIBA stage 4 a final cost plan would be developed, and subject to that being within the budget envelope agreed as part of the 26/27 MTFS, works could then proceed.
- 3.19 Where necessary, Officers will work with the consultant team to refine Option 2C, to ensure that it is deliverable and within budget; whilst ensuring that the fundamental principles and core facilities required are not lost. This can be managed through typical project management.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Overview & Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) Panel discussed the report at its meeting on 2nd October 2025.
- 4.2 Following enquiries from Councillors Criswell and Bywater, the Panel heard that Officers had met with the Academy on multiple occasions and had ongoing communication with them, through this, it had been established that the school did not have any current or future plans to utilise the space where the current wetside building is located. It was also confirmed that Officers had been working alongside Planning colleagues and did not anticipate for any issues to be caused by the imminent Local Plan refresh, that the developments at the site were in line with HDCs existing building strategy and supported the anticipated population growth of the district.
- 4.3 It was confirmed following a question from Councillor Alban, that the existing squash courts would remain in line with the current plans. It was also noted that the 11 a-side pitch proposed would be similar to the recently installed pitch at Sawtry which was in the process of coming under the One Leisure umbrella. The need for an additional 11 a-side pitch in the area has been identified via the Local Football Plan.
- 4.4 Following concerns raised in relation to car parking spaces, Officers advised that due to the free carparking available on site, other individuals, notably Royal Mail staff and those visiting the town centre, were known to park onsite thus reducing available parking for centre users. Options to introduce paid for parking with free parking for members were being considered as part of the development along with options to reconfigure the car park layout. It was also advised that discussions were ongoing with the adjoining school to utilise their car parking provision during evenings and weekends thus creating an anticipated 60 additional spaces during peak user hours.
- 4.5 Councillor Mokbul raised safeguarding concerns relating to the viewing area for the learner pool and its proximity to the cafe. The Panel were advised that whilst the centre would have access turnstiles it was essentially open to the public and restrictions between the café and the learner pool would be considered to address safeguarding concerns.
- 4.6 Following an enquiry from Councillor Hassall, the Panel heard that the swimming pool and gym would be on different levels of the building and that opportunities to develop commercial operations would be looked at through RIBA stages 3 and 4. In particular, the opportunity to extend the gym to a 24 hour model utilising the Council's existing CCTV systems would be considered.

- 4.7 The timescales of the development were discussed, and in particular a question from Councillor Lowe regarding Local Government Review. The Panel were informed that it was hoped for construction to commence in Autumn 2026 with completion in Spring 2027 when the shadow LGR boards would be introduced. Following a further question from Councillor Bywater relating to potential delays to the planning process, the Panel were advised that there may be a requirement to decouple the 11 a-side pitch from the main application to ensure delays were minimised. It was also clarified that due to the proposed layout of the new centre, there would be minimal disruption to current users and sports, an example being given that swimming would continue in the existing pool until the new pool was ready for use at which point the sport would transfer location and redevelopment of the wetside building would commence.
- 4.8 The Panel heard, following an enquiry from Councillor Shaw, that in general discussions with local stakeholders had been positive and that where raised, Officers had been able to address concerns and collaborate to find amicable solutions. There were many letters of support available from stakeholders to support the development.
- 4.9 Councillor Pitt expressed his delight at partnership working with the NHS and observed that due to the shared entrance space of the development, this would be a window to maximise opportunities for One Leisure through NHS footfall. The Panel were advised that terms and a Memorandum of Understanding were being developed with Health partners and that further opportunities to develop any unused space for either the One Leisure Active Lifestyles team or Customer Service teams would be investigated as they were presented.
- 4.10 Following a further question from Councillor Pitt, Officers reassured the Panel they were working in conjunction with specialists in the leisure industry and were confident of robust budgeting and that plans were being adapted as the progress of the planning stage moved on.
- 4.11 Councillor Hassall expressed concern that the development would create a valuable asset and was concerned that following LGR, the new authority may look to sell this asset for a financial benefit. The Panel were assured that the centre development was for the benefit of residents regardless of its ownership however it would be hoped that the intention of a leisure provision for all residents would remain. It was advised that due to the complexities of the multiple landowners across the site and restrictive covenants upon the land being that it must remain in use for leisure gave some security. It was also noted that the land at One Leisure Ramsey and St Neots sites was owned by the schools. It was further advised by Officers that whilst the perceived risk was noted this would need further investigation by specialists in the field and that the Council would look to protect and preserve this asset for the future.
- 4.12 In response to an enquiry from Councillor Lowe, the Panel heard that a wider communications plan was in place with details to follow in further stages of the development.

- 4.13 Concerns were raised by Councillors Lowe, Alban and Hassall relating to the potential loss of hedgerows in the carpark through a potential reconfiguration. The Panel were advised that Officers were already in discussions about creating habitat banks across the council's parks and open spaces which could be used for BioDiversity Net Gain Credits both for internal projects and external developers. Following the suggestion of a memorial garden to be added to the site, Officers undertook to investigate opportunities to develop this proposal either at the Huntingdon site or nearby utilising HDC assets.
- 4.14 In response to an enquiry from Councillor Hunt, it was confirmed that the NHS space would utilise the former PURE heat suite which was unused following being mothballed during Covid. It was also advised that opportunities for the Shadow Leisure Board to further scrutinise the plans would be made available as the project progressed.
- 4.15 The Panel heard, following several enquiries and suggestions relating to the redevelopment of the wetside building, that Officers were looking for opportunities which would fit within the existing structure and that would generate a long term income. The merits of more specialist teen activities such as clip and climb were discussed but that in practice these operations tended to have a short income generation period. The proposal to create a multipurpose super soft play with the addition of laser tag for older children, at times later than younger customers would be using the area, would maximise income streams for a sustainable period.
- 4.16 Officers addressed concerns relating to the lack of creche facilities on site, it was noted that a traditional nursery set up was at an exceptionally high cost to the operating costs of the centre, however other opportunities to utilise the sports hall in lieu of a creche facility would be investigated and development as the project moved forward.
- 4.17 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.

5. RISKS & MITIGATION

- 5.1 An internal risk and mitigation plan for the project was developed by Officer's following RIBA Stage 1 approval by Council in April 2025. This has been updated as part of the journey through RIBA Stage 2 and can be viewed in **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 In separation to this a fully comprehensive risk register has been developed and prepared by Alliance Leisure and their partners covering all aspects of design, project and construction delivery subject to Council approval. This will be overseen and implemented by their project management partner Varsity Consulting. This will continuously be updated as we move forward with RIBA Stage 3 & 4 following Council approval. This will be managed and monitored by Alliance Leisure in liaison with HDC.

- 5.3 To support this process the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment has set up through Alliance Leisure and Varsity Consulting a bi-weekly project management meeting. This is supported when required by colleagues across other areas including planning, regeneration and finance. Both risk and project management will be considered on a whole council basis as per our capital project management approach and this will continue to be reviewed as the process moves forward.

6. GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 As part of the RIBA Stage 1 report and approvals in April 2025 the Council approved the set-up and facilitation of a dedicated Member Advisory Board to ensure the Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub project had a robust governance structure.
- 6.2 This board is utilised to develop, review and implement plans and monitor and manage all associated risks across the project.
- 6.3 The Member Advisory Board have met twice since April 2025. This was on Tuesday 15th July and Thursday 18th September 2025.
- 6.4 From the last Member Advisory Board Meeting where Officers provided a robust update on the RIBA Stage 2 process and preferred Option 2C proposal a number of comments were made to the operational team and they have been summarised below for full transparency and all of which have either been or are in the process of being actioned by the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment and his colleagues. These points were:
- a. Greater understanding around legal agreements with partners around land swaps and lease changes to allow for the wider project to be delivered
 - b. Confirmation that the Squash courts will be retained in Option 2C
 - c. Whether there would be catering provision for families in the proposed soft play area through the wider development of facilities
 - d. How the catering space would be staffed and thus One Leisure would look to complete this in line with St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre
 - e. How the overall funding for the project would be afforded and what Officer's plans were for engaging with partners
 - f. A wider brief on how residents will access and benefit from the co-located health and wellbeing hub
 - g. How would the health and wellbeing hub be funded?
 - h. Why had Officer's stated that stakeholder engagement on the risk and mitigation plan was recorded as "high" which centred around the council requiring direct support from Huntingdon Town Council and the Tennis club around land swaps and wider agreement of the overarching project
 - i. How would the Council but more importantly One Leisure engage with local swimming clubs once the new 8 lane swimming pool had opened. This would be supported by Swim England following the strategic aquatic review that was undertaken in early 2025.

7. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 To move the project forwards, the next stage would be to undertake RIBA Stage 3 & 4. Based on progressing Option 2C (£29m value), the pre-construction fees are £499,737 (RIBA Stage 3) and £767,107 (RIBA Stage 4) (exc. VAT) including contingency.
- 7.2 The costs outlined here are not extra costs to the project, they are extracted from the overall capital costs required to deliver the project. They will initially be revenue costs and upon the proposed option being approved by council then they would become capital costs aligned to wider project delivery.
- 7.3 To support this process Alliance Leisure and the wider team will attend Council meetings (and briefings) as necessary, to provide the information outlined in this proposal and produce and issue the final report and presentation.

8. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 8.1 The work undertaken on the Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub strongly support the council's corporate plan and its key priorities which are:
 - 1. Improving the 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 The development of the options feasibility presented as part of this report on Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub can contribute and support the delivery of the Councils strategic priorities and Corporate Plan in the following ways:
 - a. Meeting the recommendations set out in the Long-Term Operating Model Independent Review of One Leisure by supporting the shortfall of swimming pool lane provision. Currently short by 12/13 lanes across the District on current population levels.
 - b. Supporting the evidence provided by Swim England as part of their Aquatics Review.
 - c. It will allow an increase of 4 swimming pool lanes from 4 (existing swimming pool) to 8 lanes in the proposed new swimming pool.
 - d. It will create 3 Group Exercise studios which is an increase of one studio on existing arrangements, and this will allow more extensive programming, an increase in physical activity and improvements in current and future customer service delivery.
 - e. Within Option 2C it will also provide a dedicated spectator viewing gallery which will allow One Leisure to work in partnership with Swim England, Amateur Swimming Association (ASA), Royal Lifesaving Society (RLSS), and Swimming clubs to facilitate local, regional and national Swimming competitions which will support a grass roots to elite athlete talent pathway to help create and support local children become Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

- f. This scheme will also deliver a dedicated learner pool which can be utilised to deliver a more expansive learn to swim programme, additional water-based group exercise classes, disability sessions, health intervention classes and pre- and post-natal classes which will all be an increase on current provision.
- g. The proposed option will also provide a larger fitness centre floor space which will align itself with the opportunity to welcome more health and fitness pre-paid and casual members aimed at getting more people, more physically active, more often and support financial sustainability.
- h. Option 2C will also enable a greater floor space for health and wellbeing. This will provide the potential opportunity to work collaboratively with the NHS and Integrated Care Board (ICB) to develop and deliver a “health hub” which will in itself welcome more people to the facility, enable greater working relationships between the NHS staff and Active Lifestyles, access for their patients to be prescribed access to our interventions and more widely a greater opportunity for those patients to become One Leisure members and more importantly become healthier, happier residents.
- i. It provides a dedicated soft play area for children and young people which will be supported by dedicated birthday party rooms supporting commercial sustainability and physical activity opportunities.
- j. The same soft play area will also provide a positive option to avoid having an unnecessary capital cost in the demolition of the existing wet side (swimming pool) as per Option 2B.
- k. The potential opportunity to introduce a state of the art 11 a side 3G Football pitch on the land adjacent to the existing wet side facility (St Peter’s School land) which would re-provision the old and end of life x 2 astro turf pitches near the existing dry side facility.
- l. Option 2C also allows HDC to retain the x 2 squash courts at the existing facility and this will be combined with the soft play area, birthday party rooms and new dedicated Football Association grade changing rooms.
- m. Creating these new spaces will benefit and improve the quality of life of local residents and it will provide a greater access to state-of-the-art facilities, a larger space to exercise in, and in doing so will deliver health and wellbeing facilities that will be fit for future generations and a better Huntingdonshire for local residents.
- n. It will support and enhance priority three within the Corporate Plan as it will deliver good quality, high value for money services which will continue to run in line with our membership architecture, which is based upon choice, affordability, value for money and importantly access to our facilities so that local residents do not have a barrier to participation.

8.3 Likely use of the new Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub will stem from across Huntingdon, Brampton, Godmanchester and Alconbury Weald and based upon the existing Local Plan current committed homes expected to be completed by 2036 are 4,457. A further 1,480 are committed and expected to be built after this and up to the mid-2040’s.

- 8.4 The Local Plan (2036) is currently being updated, and this will look to add significant additional new homes which are likely to start being built from 2028 onwards to 2046. There could likely be further growth of 5,000 new homes.
- 8.5 Following the approval of the final proposals they will take into account the future growth of Huntingdon and its wider area so the new facility will support existing and new residents become and remain physically active, provide high quality facilities for future generations and will deliver multiple benefits and outcomes for the community of Huntingdon and wider District.

9. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Stakeholder Engagement:

- 9.1 Following on from the submission and approval of the RIBA Stage 1 report to Council in April 2025 the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment and wider colleagues have undertaken a significant amount of stakeholder engagement to help progress the “Option 2C” proposal and to enable and influence the recommendations put forward as part of this RIBA Stage 2 process.
- 9.2 To showcase the engagement work undertaken with stakeholders the table below summarises the current HDC position:

Stakeholder	Dates of Meetings
Huntingdon Town Council (HTC)	• Tuesday 24 June 2025 • Tuesday 5 August 2025 • Monday 1 September 2025 • Thursday 11 September 2025 • Thursday 18 September 2025
Tennis Club	• Thursday 11 September 2025
St Peter's Road Secondary School	• Thursday 1 May 2025 • Tuesday 2 September 2025
Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)	• Wednesday 9 July 2025 • Thursday 4 September 2025
Football Foundation or Hunts FA (HFA)	• Monday 12 May 2025 • Friday 25 July 2025 • Friday 1 August (HFA) • Wednesday 13 September 2025

- 9.3 Following these meetings and subject to full Council approval during the RIBA Stage 2 process and as part of the recommendations of this report the Head of Leisure Health & Environment will continue to lead on all stakeholder engagement to enable this project to be realised.
- 9.4 The key principles discussed with each stakeholder can be summarised as follows:
- 9.5

Organisation	Key Principles
Huntingdon Town Council	a. Land swap/s b. Rights of way through a new road to support emergency vehicle access and chemical deliveries c. Re-provision of land through Fields in Trust submission (Tennis court x 1 & Play area) d. HDC support of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding bid for the Cricket Pavillion
Tennis Club	a. Relocation of one Tennis court b. HDC to support space for x 2 Padel courts as part of wider project (Tennis club to fund) c. Likely re-provision of Tennis court will be x 4 Pickle Ball courts to support wider access for users
St Peter's Road Secondary School	a. Negotiations on future use of existing wet side facility b. Potential use of a soft play facility for existing wet side c. Request from HDC to utilise land to create a new 11 a side 3G pitch for wider benefit of school students through multi use agreement
Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)	a. Land swap/Asset transfer/Lease amendments b. Building condition & future use
Football Foundation (FF)	a. External funding discussions around new 11 a side 3G Football pitch
NHS/ICB	a. Likelihood of a co-located health & wellbeing hub in existing dry side facility b. Heads of Terms (commercial arrangements & long-term lease) c. Memorandum of Understanding d. External funding e. Health & wellbeing offer

Communications:

- 9.6 Following the approval of the RIBA Stage 1 report by Cabinet in April 2025 the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment worked closely with the HDC Marketing, Communications and Engagement team to develop and implement a communications plan. This can be viewed in **Appendix 2**.
- 9.7 This plan has been set across three key phases, and the messaging and target audience will reflect each phase and is clearly summarised below:

Stage	Status	Communication Date/s	Audience
RIBA Stage 1	Complete	April 2025 – (Position Statement)	Relevant HDC Staff Councillors Key Stakeholders
RIBA Stage 2	Complete	October 2025	Relevant HDC Staff Councillors Key Stakeholders Public – (Soft Messaging)
RIBA Stage 3 & 4	Not Started	2026 – (February 2026 once Full Council approves 2026/2027 budget)	Relevant HDC Staff Councillors Key Stakeholders Public – (Full Launch Messaging)

- 9.8 As a reminder the RIBA Stage 1 communication as set out in the table included a position statement to relevant HDC staff members, Councillors and key stakeholders. The position statement read as follows:

“The purpose of this scheme is to inform Councillors, HDC staff and key stakeholders of the options developed as part of the wider capital investment feasibility works into One Leisure Huntingdon as identified within Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure

It is also to showcase the potential opportunities that this capital investment scheme can deliver to the community to access state of the art leisure facilities fit for future generations”.

- 9.9 It is our intention that following approval by Council of RIBA Stage 2 in October 2025 that following consultation between the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment and the Head of Communications, Engagement & Public Affairs that we release the same statement to Councillors, Staff and stakeholders as we did in April 2025 similar to section 9.7. This is to ensure that the messaging is appropriately managed to ensure that expectations are met, noting the need to secure planning permission and budget approval through annual budget setting.
- 9.10 Subject to approval by Council the intention of Officer’s is to then fully implement the Communication’s & Engagement Plan as set out in **Appendix 2**.

10.LEGAL IMPLICATIONS & SITE CHARACTERISTICS

- 10.1 The leisure facilities at One Leisure Huntingdon are comprised of a number of different sport and leisure interests operated either by HDC or other parties and are unusually split over two sites. There are also a number of other potential complexities arriving from landownerships, leases and other matters.
- 10.2 As per the RIBA Stage 1 report presented to Council in April 2025 HDC commissioned Browne Jacobson through 3C Shared Services to undertake a high-level review of land ownership and the relevant covenants and leases that exist on the whole footprint. The report included the bowls, cricket and tennis facilities and albeit they are beyond the scope of this report; they were included as it was believed it would provide a useful holistic insight into the entirety of the site.
- 10.3 Following the completion of the Browne Jacobson legal report and subsequent RIBA Stage 1 report to Council in April 2025 and as outlined in section 9.4 of this report the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment has with his council colleagues completed a series of stakeholder engagement meetings with partners to help facilitate a clear understanding of how this project can be delivered with their help and support through land swaps, lease changes, building transfers and likely submissions to the Field in Trust.
- 10.4 As part of the next stage of development (RIBA Stages 3 & 4), further due diligence by Officer's will be undertaken, along with continued discussions with relevant parties to discuss the emerging proposals and seek to ensure that the Council can obtain any necessary agreements to ensure that the existing arrangements pertaining to the site are not an impediment to delivery. The Head of Leisure, Health & Environment with support from 3C Legal Shared Services will look to continue working with Browne Jacobson to move the points outlined in section 9.4 to a conclusion.
- 10.5 Officers are also conscious of the landscape of local government reform, and whilst this will become clearer as the project develops, there is no reason legally that the Council should not continue to explore developments such as this at the current time. Members will note that the timetable currently identified allows for conclusion of works within the 27/28 financial year.

11.RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The 2025/2026 Budget has been used to fund all design, conceptual imagery, costs, payback and ROI works undertaken by Alliance Leisure in line with RIBA Stages 1 and 2.
- 11.2 Subject to approval by Cabinet in October 2025 it is the intention to submit a Capital Investment Bid to include the overall amount of the approved option so that it can be part of the 2026/2027 HDC Annual Budget and MTFS.

- 11.3 A small project team has been set-up and introduced to enable and support the wider delivery of the proposed option. These costs sit within the One Leisure budget. The project will be supported by the Council's existing officer governance for projects, and it is proposed that the Member Advisory Board also have a role in this moving forward as part of the assurance for Cabinet and wider Council.

12.HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The building of the Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub would provide a valuable and accessible community asset that can enhance both social and health benefits to the community now and in the future for Huntingdonshire residents. Accessibility is a key factor, with specifically locality and affordability important considerations of public leisure provision as public pools can help reduce health inequalities experienced by low-income individuals and families.
- 12.2 The Council is a partner authority of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care Service (ICS) and has worked in partnership with them to offer residents evidence-based interventions for those with mild to moderate frailty and those at risk of cardiovascular disease. The building of the Huntingdon Sports and Health Hub can play a key role in delivering these types of health interventions and other social prescribing initiatives and is accessible for people with mobility difficulties or disabilities. As previously explained, part of the investment within the recommended proposal is to increase the swimming pool from 4 lanes currently (old swimming pool) to a recommended 8 lanes; giving greater access and opportunities to residents and clubs.
- 12.3 In addition to this and as set out in both the RIBA Stage 1 report (April 2025) and this RIBA Stage 2 report the Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub will also look to house a "health hub" which will be fronted by the NHS and ICB and their wider neighbourhood teams to ensure that local residents have the health services that they require on their doorstep. Their staff will also work closely with the Active Health team to ensure we have an end-to-end health service offering.
- 12.4 Swimming is one of the best forms of exercise that works all the main muscles of the body and supports maintaining and improving physical health and mental health. Unlike many other activities, swimming is universally accessible to all including people with mobility disabilities, and is an all-year-round activity, which provides life skills including saving lives and reducing the risk of drowning. The benefits of the Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub are not just limited to swimming; the new facility would offer a larger gym and 3 studios; that would facilitate more gym stations (meeting the needs set out in the Built Facility Strategy to increase gym station provision in the district) and wider programming of the studios increasing the opportunity and access to health and fitness activities and classes.
- 12.5 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.

12.6 Swim England confirm that community swimming pools are positive investments for communities for multiple reasons. Community pools serve as an encouragement to community health and increase the social cohesiveness of the area. Community pools can have many benefits on the physical, mental, emotional, and social health of the community as illustrated below:

- Improves community bonds
- Confidence
- Fitness for all – Swimming/Physical Activity is fun
- Increases public safety
- Combats childhood obesity
- Local employment
- Pathways to other sports

12.7 This opportunity will also allow The One Leisure Active Lifestyles team an opportunity to utilise the Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub to develop and enhance their programming and increase their membership base to allow residents a wider service offering and access to a 'Best in Class leisure centre.

12.8 Overall, the utilisation of this new facility will benefit the local residents and provide facilities that will allow access to help improve their quality of life, create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations and offer good quality value for money services.

13. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The sustainability principles that have been used to develop and finalise Option 2C as part of this report are summarised below:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1.  Energy | 6.  Services |
| 2.  Thermal Balance | 7.  Water Efficiency |
| 3.  Materials | 8.  Ecology |
| 4.  Solar Balance | 9.  Transport |
| 5.  Layout | |

13.2 These principles and the initiatives behind them will continue to be developed for Option 2C (Preferred Option) as part of the RIBA Stage 3 & 4 process.

- 13.3 The new Member Advisory Board (supported by the consultant team) will be utilised to develop, finalise and implement plans associated with a number of important design characteristics and energy and sustainability of a new leisure centre is part of this process.
- 13.4 As part of the RIBA Stage 2 process and report the designers and architects have indicated that Solar PV will be installed on the roof of the new wet side (Swimming pool) building.
- 13.5 In addition to this air source heat pumps have been proposed to be installed within the new building to support a fully decarbonised approach to energy management.
- 13.6 The existing dry side site that will be retained and housed by the NHS/ICB will continue to be powered through gas and electricity. Prior to the RIBA process being undertaken at Huntingdon a consultant report was developed and produced by the HDC Facility Management team to consider the costs and benefits of decarbonising the dry side site. As plans were expedited to review the feasibility study for new leisure provision at Huntingdon leisure centre the decarbonisation was paused, with a view that we would revisit this option as we proceeded through the RIBA phases. We will consider this as part of RIBA Stages 3 & 4. An indicative cost of doing this scheme was reported at £1.4m.
- 13.7 Once the scheme for the Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub is known, proposals for heating and hot water for the retained parts of the current building could be developed further. As per section 13.6 there may be the option to keep this part of the building on gas, which would be by far the lowest capital cost option as the pipework and emitters could be retained and replacement boilers would be a relatively low capital cost.
- 13.8 Final plans for energy and sustainability for the preferred Option 2C will be developed and finalised through RIBA Stages 3 & 4.

14. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 14.1 **Option 2C is the preferred choice** as it maximizes and supports the shortfall of swimming pool lane provision across the District whilst also addressing the need to increase gym stations and current and future demand for studio space.
- 14.2 It also supports the Built Facility Strategy and Swim England Aquatics Review and the recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model Review for One Leisure.
- 14.3 It allows for wider cross programming and operational efficiencies for all aquatics disciplines and sport and fitness activities.
- 14.4 It provides a dedicated poolside viewing gallery which will support competitive swimming galas and regional events and an area for parents

and guardians to watch children participate in swimming lessons or sessions.

- 14.5 It has a combined 800 sqm of floor space to support a health and wellbeing co-located space.
- 14.6 Option 2C creates a state-of-the-art 11 aside 3G Football pitch and new innovative soft play centre which supports the commercial sustainability of the project and allows for wider access to new and improved facilities for residents.
- 14.7 Option 2C provides a larger fitness centre, including an additional studio, thus creating a larger provision for gym equipment, and an increase in the programme/classes, therefore supporting commercial opportunities and giving residents greater opportunity to access leisure activities and be more active.
- 14.8 The Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub future proofs and ensures that important local Council assets are fit for future generations. The current swimming pool is at the end of life and does not meet the current needs of the population and this development will support wider provision.
- 14.9 It allows for more people to be more physically active more often in one place and supports the wider health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents and visitors.

15. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Internal Risk & Mitigation Plan

Appendix 2 – Communication & Engagement Plan

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Built Facility Strategy 2022
- Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure
- RIBA Stage 1 Cabinet Report – April 2025
- Swim England Aquatic Review
- Swim England Strategic Plan
- Local Plan 2036

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