

Report to Stronger Place Select Committee

Date of meeting: 9 December 2019



Portfolio: Contracts & Technical Services (Councillor N. Avey)

Subject: Leisure Management Contract – Current Performance

Officer contact for further information: J. Warwick (01992 564350)

Democratic Services Officer: V. Messenger (01992 564265)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Committee note the current performance of the leisure management contract.

Report:

1. The leisure management contract is performing well; membership levels continue to grow. Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool and Gym membership has slowed somewhat after its initial success. This was not unusual and the overall membership level is still in excess of what was forecast. Epping Sports Centre membership is tracking the trendline but has declined over the last few months. The centre has had some long-term maintenance issues and is generally very tired. The centre staff have been trying a variety of marketing and promotional activities with only limited success. Loughton Leisure Centre membership continues to grow since the recent development works at the centre. Ongar Leisure Centre is beyond its design life and is starting to suffer repeated problems with outdated plant which has resulted in occasional pool closures, failed heating and chemical dosing issues. The staff are putting effort into new promotional activities and September saw a slight uplift in memberships.
2. In terms of the four sites, gym visits appear to have stabilised at Epping over the Summer. There is still capacity at the gym so hopefully additional promotions will have a positive effect. Group workouts recovered after the Summer break and have returned to expected levels over the last couple of months. The sports hall floor and the roof were both repaired in August.
3. Gym visits at Loughton Leisure Centre saw a drop in August as is expected over the summer and gym visits are now beginning to increase. In contrast to gym visits, the group workouts at Loughton have recovered from the traditional Summer decline and the trend continues upwards. There have been some issues with one studio floor so the positive increase is good. Casual swimming at Loughton is still trending upwards although the pool timetable change has not had an immediate effect. There have been anecdotal reports of users choosing to drive to the new centre at Waltham Abbey because it offers free parking. Under 8's swimming continues to trend downwards at Loughton. The Summer peak was much less than in previous years.
4. Ongar Leisure Centre Gym visits are slightly up this month at Ongar. There is demand for more gym visits at Ongar but space is limited despite the refurbishment in 2017. A steep rise in group workouts at Ongar in September is down to the appointment of a new

fitness manager who is focussing on the development of group classes. Casual swimming fell dramatically from the August peak again presumably due to schools returning. Under 8 swimming continues to decline at Ongar. There is no obvious reason but the Summer peak of previous years did not happen in 2019. Pool closures resulting from plant issues only goes so far in explaining the downward trend.

5. Gym visits at Waltham Abbey appear to have stabilised with only a slight decline over Summer. The colder weather may encourage gym users to return to their programmes. Group workouts increased noticeably in September as the weather cooled and children went back to school. Casual swimming fell dramatically at Waltham Abbey in September presumably because the school holidays ended and young people stopped visiting during the day. Under 8's fell away slightly in September following August's dramatic rise. The trend is still upwards which contrasts with the other centres, presumably due to local demographics.

Resource implications:

N/A

Legal and Governance Implications:

N/A

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

N/A

Consultation Undertaken:

N/A

Background Papers:

N/A

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

N/A

Equality: