

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **14 January 2020**
Title: **Leisure Contract – Task & Finish Group
Concluding Report**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First / Commercial Services**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:
Immediately

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Recommendations:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the review and the recommendations arising from the Task and Finish Group.

1 Executive summary

- 1.1 The aim of the review is to focus on the relationship between Fusion Lifestyle and its local communities in West Devon. In so doing, the Review will specifically focus on the delivery of Fusion's key objectives and consequent outcomes before the organisation provides its annual report.

2 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 3 September 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Leisure Task and Finish Group (comprising of Cllrs Daniel, Ewings, Musgrave, Spettigue and Wood) to undertake a review of the relationship between Fusion and our local communities, with a concluding report being presented to the Committee meeting on 14 January 2020 (Minute *O&S 28 refers).

- 2.2 This report will focus on the following outcomes:
- Centre experience – including accessibility/parking;
 - User experience;
 - Impact of cashless;
 - Community engagement;
 - Communication;
 - Links to health;
 - How are Fusion adapting to climate change; and
 - Delivery against outcomes.
- 2.3 The key outcomes set in the leisure contract as key performance indicators which Fusion will deliver through its plans and targets, include:
- A more active district – through increased leisure centre usage and overall levels of physical activity.
 - Promoting community development – increase in use by target groups.
 - Improving health and wellbeing by increased use of exercise referral schemes, targeted health programmes.
 - Quality of Services – through maintaining and improving Quest scores, increased User satisfaction levels.
 - Sustainability/ Environmental improvements – through reduced CO2 emissions, reduced energy use and decrease in waste.
- 2.4 The contract includes the lease of the facilities to Fusion on a full repairing basis, removing previous historical complexities of shared maintenance responsibilities.

3 Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 Task and Finish Group Members highlighted the need to review how the operation of cashless across the centres had gone and its impact, customer satisfaction and issues around cleanliness and maintenance. The contract has been running for 3 years and Cllrs wanted to have a more in-depth review of how things were going.
- 3.2 Group members carried out their own visits to each of the Centres, including a 'mystery shopper' visit, gathered feedback from centre users and groups, undertook customer surveys – online and face to face and attended appropriate User Group meetings.
- 3.3 Customer Experience:
- i) Feedback from the surveys revealed that customers were very glad to visit, enjoying the leisure centres and some were very loyal customers.

The main areas of concern expressed by customers:

- ii) Cleanliness problems in changing rooms and toilets, especially after swimming lessons when a cleaner was not around.
- iii) Older shabby areas in particular in the Meadowlands swimming pool area compared against the new facilities at the gym and exercise studio.
- iv) The length of time for certain repairs, maintenance and replacement of items, such as the Parklands pool cleaning kit, hairdryers. Concern was expressed around heating and failures of the boilers at times. In particular concerns were highlighted at Meadowlands on the recent roof incident and the delay in getting the front entrance back working. For Parklands concern was raised about the on-going use and future of the pool floor.
- v) Difficulties were expressed using the payment card, increases in some of the fees especially for those on low incomes and older people. Also communication was sometimes slow in regards to programme changes and closures.

3.4 Customer suggestions for improvements include; free Wi-Fi, notice boards for clubs, use of cash for cafes, regular cleaning and supply of toilet paper, better communication of changes, improve lighting around poolside and outside, better pool ventilation maintenance of boilers, anti-wave ropes at Meadowlands, better management of customers around the centres – limit phone and camera use.

3.5 Centre Visits and Group Member Observations:

- i) Group Members were impressed by the friendliness, knowledge and experience of the 2 Centre Managers and the staff overall. Both Managers have worked at their centre for many years with the Meadowlands Manager have recently returned from maternity leave and at Parklands the current Manager is acting in an interim role until a permanent position is appointed.
- ii) Members would like to see more support given to the Managers directly at each Centre, especially over local budget decisions and the purchase of smaller items. As well for more help and support to the local Managers from Head Office.
- iii) Similar concerns are expressed by Members on cleanliness and maintenance issues. Both centres have boilers out of action and operating on just one / two boilers and require updating with more energy efficient models.
- iv) Both pool areas at the Centres had suffered from moisture and condensation damage. In Parklands an exposed metal beam needed re-cladding in the changing rooms and the UV filtration system requires attention. The pool floor requires action for its future viability as problems were encountered earlier in the summer with it being out of service for several weeks. An automated pool cleaner is required as well. In Meadowlands the pool area and pool features are suffering being old, looking grubby and out of action. Lockers were not working properly in some cases and still required £1 coins.

- v) Positive comments were received about the new improvements made from the recent investment, new gym kit and overall modern dry side facilities at Meadowlands and its improved link with the park. Customers liked the new booking system and the variety of classes on offer. The provision of personal trainers was very well received by customers.
- 3.6 Climate Change and Environmental Management of the Centres is a key concern for this Council through its own Emergency Action Plan to this agenda. The Parklands roof has a build-up of moss and require action, along with the investigation to install solar panels. As well at Meadowlands with the recent roof incident that future environmentally friendly options are considered.
- 3.7 On recycling and better waste management Members are concerned that no sorting of waste takes place and that it is all goes for incineration and no consideration for the environmental impact is given. For instance at Parklands closer working with the Town Council could improve this area.
- 3.8 Impact of Cashless: Overall this had gone well and Members were pleased to hear the positive feedback from Fusion on how users were being helped and given support in continuing using the facilities. However feedback had been provided that difficulties with the Centre's Membership Card had been experienced. Also that no information could be monitored on who had stopped using the centres due to being cashless?
- 3.9 Fusion have responsibility for delivering Sports and Community Development (SCD) across both areas, working with key local partners – Active Devon, clubs and schools. In West Devon this work is supported through a partnership with OCRA – Okehampton Community Recreation Association. Through this work, significant community engagement takes place which is highlighted in the SCD plan and reporting.
- 3.10 At Parklands, an exercise referral scheme was taking place and is looking to develop further with close links to the local Primary Care Network. In Meadowlands a similar scheme had just been launched.

4 Options available and consideration of risk - future recommendations;

- 4.1 Fusion Lifestyle to give assurance and confirm that all maintenance and cleanliness levels will be carried out to the required standards of the service specification. Concern expressed that existing centre staff had to carry out cleaning whilst undertaking their main roles. Specialist cleaning services to be implemented across all centres.
- 4.2 Centre Managers are given appropriate management support and have the necessary systems and processes in place to carry out their roles and services. For Fusion to develop a comprehensive staff training programme with a focus on retaining and improving current skills and qualifications.

- 4.3 Climate change and environmental management improvements are implemented by Fusion, such as the provision of energy efficient plant and the installation of renewable energy generation systems. Also that improved recycling is developed and for links with respective Town Councils be progressed. The overall carbon footprint of both centres are measured, monitored and actions to reduce are implemented to link with the work of this Council.
- 4.4 Whilst going cashless seems to have gone well across both centres, Fusion is requested to keep records of customers trying to use cash or having difficulties paying cashless, so future monitoring can be established.
- 4.5 It is recommended that this Task and Finish Group reconvene in 3 years to review and survey again to check the progress of these recommendations.
- 4.6 The risks associated with the ongoing operation of the contract, have been minimised through the use of Sport England Standard contracts and outcomes, promoting best practice.

5 Implications

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee approve the findings of this report and its way forward.

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Leisure is a discretionary service. The management of the council's leisure centres are agreed in a formal contract agreement with appropriate reporting structures.
Financial	Y	The investment borrowing and contract payments were approved as part of the contract award.
Risk	Y	Mitigated through the formal procurement process and the business case appraisal.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	All leisure centres remain open and have activities open for all sections of the community
Safeguarding	Y	Relevant policies and practices in place through the contract.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	Improved though better facilities and part of service delivery.

Other implications		None
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Supporting Information

Fusion Annual Report 2018

Leisure Task and Finish Group – Terms of Reference, Centre Visits,
Customer Surveys