

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

21 July 2026



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	GLL Annual Performance Report 2025
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Emma Kinghorn, Leisure Contract Manager Donna Pentelow, Director of Culture, Leisure and Skills
Lead Councillor	Cllr Lanzoni, Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	1. That Committee notes the contents of the presentation by GLL in respect of the operation of the leisure contract; 2. That Committee notes: a. the successful renovation of the athletics track at Palmer Park stadium; b. Rivermead Leisure Centre's 'Outstanding' rating from Quest, Sport England's national quality scheme, one of only seven facilities nationally; c. £12m social value from the leisure contract with GLL, a 37% increase on 2024; 3. That Committee endorses the priorities for 2026/27 as set out in section 4.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the performance and delivery of leisure services and development of facilities by Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL).
- 1.2 The leisure contract started on 1 July 2021 and GLL commenced the operational management of the Council's leisure centres at Rivermead Leisure Centre, Palmer Park Sports Stadium, South Reading Leisure Centre and Meadway Sports Centre. This is the fourth annual report that has been presented to Committee reporting on the contract's performance over the past year.
- 1.3 Overall performance during 2025 has remained strong and demonstrates the positive impact of the Council's investment in leisure provision. Resident satisfaction with sport and leisure services achieved 62%, well above the Local Government Association benchmark, while dissatisfaction reduced to 10%. Participation also continued to grow significantly, with over 1.5 million visits recorded across the leisure centres during the year.

- 1.4 Major capital improvements progressed during the year, including the completion of the athletics track at Palmer Park Leisure Centre and Stadium. Rivermead Leisure Centre was independently assessed as 'Outstanding' under Sport England's Quest quality scheme, confirming high standards of customer experience, accessibility, compliance and environmental management - one of only seven centres to achieve this standard nationally.
- 1.5 Alongside increased usage, targeted programmes have continued to support improved access to physical activity for residents who may otherwise face barriers to participation. The contract's ongoing focus is on sustaining long-term engagement while continuing to improve the quality and accessibility of leisure facilities and services.
- 1.6 This report introduces a presentation by Greenwich Leisure Limited, which will inform the Committee in more detail of the services that are being delivered, their impact, and progress of the works described above.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council's leisure service specification within the GLL contract defines target indicators and performance measures to deliver against the following outcomes.
 - Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities
 - Providing local economic benefit
 - Ensuring local people have the skills to prosper
 - Supporting safe and inclusive neighbourhoods
 - Promoting community cohesion
 - Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for young people
 - Supporting and caring for vulnerable adults and older people
 - Providing high quality services
 - Sustainability/ environmental improvements.
- 2.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28, one of which is to secure Reading's economic and cultural success by delivering quality cultural and leisure services. The contract continues to deliver against the contract outcomes and the Council Plan priority in a variety of ways.

3. GLL Performance January 2025 - December 2025

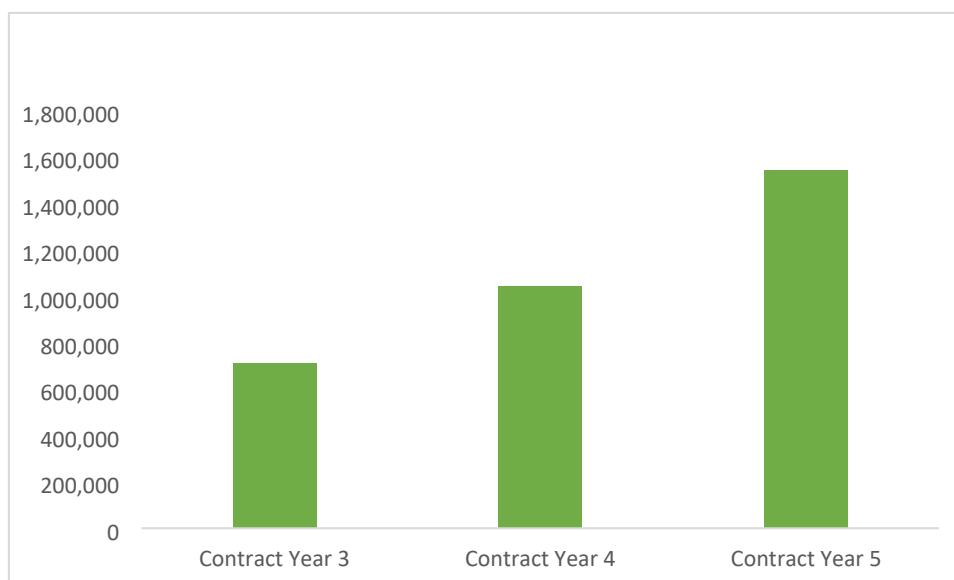
- 3.1. The Council's £40m investment programme in leisure provision included further major works last year. At Palmer Park Leisure Centre & Stadium, the athletics track was completely reconstructed in a £500,000 project funded by the Council and GLL. The track was replaced from its stone base, providing improved drainage, a smoother and flatter surface, and consistent rebound and impact absorbance. It was fitted with Polytan SMART technology for real-time performance monitoring and built using environmentally friendly materials, with an expected 30-year lifespan.
- 3.2. The track reopened in time to host the Festival of Inclusivity, welcoming a wide range of adaptive and inclusive sports and drawing strong support from local organisations and community groups. Looking ahead, the site is set for further growth, with the first triathlon event successfully launched and the upcoming Reading Schools competition expected to bring up to 800 children to the track.
- 3.3. Throughout the year, GLL has worked in close collaboration with a broad range of Council services and community partners to enhance the reach and impact of local health and wellbeing initiatives. This has included the development of bespoke activity sessions and tailored membership options designed to meet the specific needs of partner services and the communities they support. These joint efforts have contributed to the Council's wider objectives around improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities, and ensuring that leisure provision remains accessible, inclusive, and responsive to local priorities.
- 3.4. Key partners engaged during the reporting period included the Place-Based and Community Improvement Team, Age UK, Sport in Mind, This Girl Can, Get Berkshire

Active, Public Health, Reading Voluntary Action, Compass Recovery College, the Physical Activity Alliance Group (PAAG), Royal Berkshire Hospital, N3W Angle, and Berkshire Vision. Collaborative work with these organisations has enabled targeted outreach, strengthened referral pathways into physical activity, and expanded opportunities for residents who may face barriers to participation.

- 3.5. The investment into the leisure service reflects the Council's recognition that the provision of suitable and accessible leisure facilities underpins increased participation in sports and physical activity and supports the delivery of the social and economic benefits that can be attributed to an active community.
- 3.1 The Council's investment into new and improved leisure centres is clearly reflected in rising resident satisfaction with sport and leisure services, which has increased from 49% in 2020 to 62% in 2025, while dissatisfaction has fallen from 30% to just 10%. Performance has remained consistently strong since 2023, demonstrating the positive impact of upgraded facilities and expanded provision, with Reading now performing well above the LGA benchmark (50% satisfaction, 20% dissatisfaction).

Question	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		LGA Oct 24	
% satisfaction with Council Services	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dis-satisfied</i>
Sport and leisure services	49 %	30 %	41 %	25 %	51 %	23 %	62 %	15 %	63 %	15 %	62 %	10 %	50 %	20 %

- 3.2 Rivermead Leisure Centre was judged one of the UK's top facilities after receiving an 'Outstanding' rating from Quest, Sport England's national quality scheme. Following a mystery visit and a two-day inspection, the centre was rated 'excellent' across all areas, including customer experience, accessibility, compliance and environmental management. The award recognised the high standards delivered by the GLL management team and confirmed Rivermead as a flagship, high-quality facility for Reading residents.
- 3.3 Participation continued to grow strongly across the leisure centres, increasing from 710,542 visits in 2023 to 1,043,715 in 2024, and then to 1,542,342 in 2025. Monthly figures showed consistent year-on-year growth, with increases driven by service enhancements and the introduction of new programme offerings. This upward trend reflects the investment and improvements made across the centres and aligns with the Council's wider priorities, including public health objectives and tackling health inequalities.
- 3.4 Annual Contract Participation



- 3.5 The GLL membership base began the year in a strong position at 9,014, before reducing to 8,810 by year-end. The decline was most evident at Rivermead, where two new low-cost gyms opened nearby during the year, creating significant competitive pressure on the centre. GLL had been striving to reach 9,500 members by year-end, and this target remains the ambition for the current year, with renewed focus on recovery and growth across all sites.
- 3.6 Although this reduction is disappointing, the overall membership base remains significantly higher than in previous years, and encouragingly, numbers have begun to rise again in recent months. Membership performance is being closely monitored and targeted interventions are being implemented by GLL to mitigate further losses and support continued recovery across all sites.
- 3.7 For clarity, the membership base refers to customers who pay for their membership in advance by direct debit for services and activities across the leisure centres.
- 3.8 Officers carried out the contractual monthly inspection of the leisure centres, with GLL achieving a score of 82%, exceeding the 80% contract target and demonstrating continued strong operational performance.
- 3.9 GLL joined the Water Safety Partnership Board and is working closely with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to deliver preventative water safety education at Rivermead. This includes sessions with local schools to strengthen awareness and reduce water-related risks across the borough.
- 3.10 GLL continue to offer a range of targeted programmes to improve access to physical activity for residents who may otherwise face barriers to participation.
- 3.11 GLL offer six month, nationwide free memberships for refugees and in 2025 a total of 64 refugees took up this offer. They were provided with six-month memberships, giving them free access to our swimming pools, gyms and fitness classes. The total value of these memberships is over £25,000, reflecting the support offered to refugees settling in Reading.
- 3.12 As part of the leisure contract, GLL also offers care leavers a free six-month membership, providing access to the gym, swimming and fitness classes for eligible young people aged 16 - 25 who are Reading residents. Eligibility checks are completed by the Council before individuals are referred to GLL to finalise their membership. During the year, GLL issued 73 six-month memberships to care leavers in Reading, representing a total value of over £20,000.
- 3.13 GLL delivered a programme of junior drop-in activities and swimming sessions throughout the year for children aged 5 -16 years. The offer included Junior Football, Multi-Sports, Pickleball and Swim for All sessions. Swimming was available across all four leisure

centres, while dry-side activities were delivered at Palmer Park and South Reading. Across the programme, a total of 3,163 junior attendances were recorded, with all sessions priced at £1 per child to support affordable access to sport and physical activity for young people.

- 3.14 GLL supported 33 local schools by donating prizes and gifts to assist with their events throughout the year.
- 3.15 GLL delivered a series of open weekends throughout the year across all leisure centres as part of their national 'More Ways to Play' initiative. These events provided a wide range of free and low-cost activities, including gym and class taster sessions, £1 children's swimming, racket sport socials, café tasters, competitions and opportunities for residents to meet centre managers. GLL also strengthened community engagement by involving local schools, community groups and partner organisations. The open weekends aimed to increase participation, support healthier lifestyles and build stronger local partnerships, building on the success of the previous year's national programme, which attracted over 100,000 attendees.
- 3.16 Social value is calculated using a nationally recognised Social Value Calculator, which converts participation and activity levels into financial benefits for the community, based on established national and NHS benchmarks.
- 3.17 During 2025, GLL reported that the leisure contract generated £12.0 million in social value, a 36.9% increase on 2024, driven primarily by higher participation levels. More than 101,000 residents benefited from improved physical and mental health, enhanced wellbeing, and stronger community connections. The greatest contributions came from improved wellbeing outcomes and preventative health benefits.
- 3.18 Contract performance continues to exceed sector averages, with strong year on year growth. Rivermead generated the highest total social value, while South Reading Leisure Centre recorded the fastest growth.
- 3.19 Over 6,000 free swims have been offered to Reading residents through the continued delivery of the former Your Reading Passport (YRP) Concession Scheme, supporting improved access to leisure and helping more people stay active.
- 3.20 Active Lives is Sport England's national measure of residents' participation in physical activity, providing local data to support planning and service delivery. In Reading, the latest results (based on a sample of 374 adults) show a reduction in the proportion achieving 150+ minutes of activity per week, decreasing from 70.9% in 2023/24 to 67.7% in 2024/25. Despite this decline, Reading continues to exceed the national average (64.6%) and remains broadly consistent with the Berkshire figure (67.9%). This comes at a time when leisure centre participation numbers are at a record high and continue to rise, demonstrating strong and growing engagement with Council owned facilities.
- 3.21 In addition to growing attendance, another core element of the contract is the introduction of effectively targeted activities to improve participation in physical activity and health for key groups of Reading's communities - the Healthwise programme.
- 3.22 Across 2025, the Healthwise programme delivered strong outcomes in supporting residents to become more active, manage their weight and improve overall wellbeing. Through the Physical Activity on Referral Scheme (PARS), 43% of programme completers achieved over 150 minutes of physical activity per week, with a further 33% reaching 90 -149 minutes and 20% increasing their activity levels from baseline. Weight related outcomes were also positive, with 56% of PARS completers and 69% of those completing the Weightloss with Better programme losing weight over the 12 - week courses. The Healthwise team delivered 21 Weightloss with Better programmes during the year, providing weekly group sessions focused on motivation, nutrition and sustainable lifestyle change, supported by concessionary access to gym, swim and class activities.

- 3.23 To strengthen community engagement, the Healthwise timetable expanded to include supervised gym sessions, circuit classes and social racket sports, helping participants build confidence and maintain social connections beyond the initial programmes.
- 3.24 Mental wellbeing also remained a key focus, with 10% of PARS referrals citing mental health as the primary reason. Among completers, 60% achieved a positive wellbeing score on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh scale and showed improvement from baseline, with a further 24% also demonstrating meaningful progress. Collectively, these outcomes highlight the programme's continued impact on physical health, emotional resilience and community cohesion.
- 3.25 GLL's key Healthwise objectives and priorities for 2026 focus on expanding specialist health pathways, strengthening staff capability, and increasing opportunities for residents to engage in programmes that support long term health, wellbeing and community connection. The key areas of focus for the year are:
- Launch the new Cancer Rehabilitation pathway to support residents following cancer treatment
 - Continue delivering and strengthening specialist pathways, including Phase 4 Cardiac Rehabilitation and Better Balance
 - Upskill staff to Level 3 Exercise on Referral to enhance capacity within the PARS programme
 - Train staff to deliver Aquatics for Health sessions
 - Further expand the Healthwise timetable and increase the range of social events offered
 - Launch Better Health and Wellbeing Events across leisure centres
 - Support 12 targeted health promotion initiatives throughout the year.
- 3.26 More detail on the numbers being engaged and range of services is provided within the GLL presentation. Craig Woodward, Partnership Manager and Steph Smith, Area Community Sports Manager from GLL will present to the Committee progress made in the key streams of the leisure contract including:
- Leisure Centre Improvements
 - Usage Levels
 - Community Engagement
 - Energy & Environment
 - Targeted Health Activities.

4 Priorities for 2026/27

- 4.1 The following priorities for the partnership will remain a focus in 2026/27:
- Increase physical activity, reduce obesity and widen participation in the local population;
 - Facilities improvements at Palmer Park Sport and Leisure Centre and South Reading Leisure Centre;
 - Financial sustainability.

5 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 5.1 The improvements to our leisure centres directly support the Council's aim to make Reading a healthier, more accessible and more active place to live. By investing in

modern, inclusive facilities and expanding the range of activities on offer, more residents can take part in affordable exercise and community programmes. This is especially important for people who may otherwise struggle to stay active, including older residents, young people, low-income households and those with health conditions.

- 5.2 Rising participation shows that our facilities are being well used and are helping to reduce health inequalities across the town. Targeted programmes like Healthwise give extra support to those who need it most, helping people build confidence, improve their wellbeing and stay active for longer. This directly supports our priority to promote more equal communities and safeguard residents' health and wellbeing.
- 5.3 Our leisure centres also contribute to Reading's wider economic and community life. They provide local jobs, attract visitors and offer high-quality spaces for clubs, schools and community groups.
- 5.4 Using sustainable design and modern technology helps ensure the centres operate efficiently and reduce their carbon footprint.
- 5.5 Overall, this work demonstrates our commitment to improving leisure services, strengthening our communities and supporting a healthier future for Reading.
- 5.6 The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025-28. These priorities are:
- Promote more equal communities in Reading
 - Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
 - Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
 - Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
 - Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future
- 5.7 In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:
- Putting residents first
 - Building on strong foundations
 - Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
 - Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
 - Being proudly ambitious for Reading
- 5.8 Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

6 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 6.1 This report does not introduce any new environmental or climate impacts, as it provides an update on the ongoing leisure contract. Environmental sustainability remains a priority within the contract, with continued focus on efficient, lower-carbon facilities and responsible operations.
- 6.2 As part of this ongoing commitment, officers successfully secured a £30,000 Sport England grant to replace the swimming pool windows and pool cover at Meadway Sports Centre. These upgrades improved the building's thermal efficiency, reduced heat loss from the pool hall, and supported lower-carbon, more energy-efficient operations. Since 2019/20, a 30% reduction in energy consumption and decarbonised energy sources has been delivered at our leisure centres.

7 Community Engagement

- 7.1 No additional consultation or community engagement has been required specifically for this report, as it provides an update on the operation of the existing leisure contract rather than proposing changes to services.

- 7.2 However, community engagement remains embedded within the delivery of the contract. GLL continues to work with residents, schools, clubs and community groups to maximise participation, promote inclusion and ensure that services respond to local needs. Targeted initiatives, including concessionary access and health and wellbeing programmes, support engagement with residents who may face barriers to participation.

8 Equality Implications

- 8.1 There are no new equality or diversity impacts arising from this report, as it does not propose changes to service provision.
- 8.2 The leisure contract continues to support equality objectives through inclusive facility design, concessionary pricing schemes and targeted programmes aimed at increasing participation among under-represented groups, including older people, young people, low-income households and residents with health conditions.
- 8.3 Equality considerations remain embedded within the ongoing management and monitoring of the contract.

9 Other Relevant Considerations

- 9.1 There are no other relevant considerations arising from this report.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11 Financial Implications

- 11.1 The leisure contract continues to be delivered within the approved budgets agreed by the Council and are amended annually through the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) process.
- 11.2 Since the contract began in July 2021, the management fee had been a payment from the Council to GLL. However, from 2024/25 this arrangement reversed, with the base fee becoming a payment from GLL to the Council rising to its maximum level in Year 5 (2025/26). These payments from GLL to the Council remain subject to fluctuation due to inflation and changes in utility costs, for which the Council retains responsibility under the contract. The contract also includes provision for profit share should financial performance exceed forecast levels.

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 None.