

# CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

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## **LEISURE CENTRES NEEDS ASSESSMENT** **SECONDARY AND PRIMARY RESEARCH**

22 January 2026  
FROM ANDREW BEDDOW  
Lead director: Sean Atterbury

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## **Useful information**

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: FV.

<b>1</b>	<b>Summary</b>
1.1	<p>The Council's Sports Service (Active Leicester) is one of a small number of Council services that operates on a discretionary basis and must therefore remain commercially competitive within a challenging and evolving market. The service currently operates in a competitive leisure environment and has demonstrated sustained success in the quality, value, and outcomes it delivers for residents. This success has been achieved through a structured five-year planning cycle. This report sets out the primary and secondary research that will inform the next five-year plan and outlines how Active Leicester will continue to respond effectively to both commercial pressures and wider social challenges</p>
1.2	<p>Over the past decade, the Council's Sports Services have been guided by successive five-year plans that have focused on transformation, operational improvement, and increasing financial sustainability. These plans have provided a structured framework to modernise services, improve efficiency, and strengthen cost recovery, ensuring the long-term viability of the Council's leisure centre provision.</p>
1.3	<p>The first five-year plan focused on establishing a more efficient operating model. Key priorities included a comprehensive review of staffing and leisure management, developing high performing service culture, the rationalisation of opening hours, the modernisation of historically outdated fees and charges, and the introduction of improved direct debit and payment systems. Collectively, these changes laid the foundations for a more commercially robust and customer-focused service.</p>
1.4	<p>Between 2020 and 2025, the service has built on this foundation and delivered significant efficiencies and income growth through targeted, high return-on-investment capital investment, particularly in health and fitness facilities. This period also saw the creation and embedding of the Active Leicester brand, alongside a strong focus on driving participation and sales in core growth areas such as health and fitness memberships and the Learn to Swim programme.</p>
1.5	<p>As a result of these initiatives, gross income has increased from £3.5 million to £8.7 million, Learn to Swim participation has grown from approximately 4,000 to 9,000 children, fitness membership has increased from around 4,500 to 12,000 members, and, for the first time, leisure centre usage has exceeded two million visits per year.</p>
1.6	<p>To inform the development of the next five-year plan, a comprehensive Leisure Centre Needs Assessment (LCNA) has been undertaken. This assessment is underpinned by both secondary data analysis and primary research and provides</p>

	<p>a robust evidence base to understand current and future demand, participation trends, and facility requirements across the city.</p> <p>1.7 Once the proposed five-year plan has been developed this will be subject to open consultation before any final decisions are made. A further report will therefore be presented to Scrutiny to seek feedback and input as part of the consultation process, ensuring that elected members and stakeholders have an opportunity to input before any final decisions are made.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p> <p><b>2.1</b></p>	<p><b>Secondary Research Summary</b></p> <p>2.1 The secondary research of the LCNA presents a comprehensive analysis of the leisure facilities, covering areas such as facility performance, catchment, benchmarking analysis, usage patterns, user demographics, operational subsidies, maintenance and asset condition and market value assessment.</p>
<p><b>2.2</b></p>	<p><b>Leisure Centres and Catchment Analysis</b></p> <p>Sports Services (Active Leicester) currently operates seven leisure centres, which are well-distributed across the city. The network offers strong city-wide accessibility; however, analysis shows that there is overlap in catchment areas—particularly in the western part of the city—leading to duplication in provision. An overview of each leisure centre catchments is shown below.</p> <div data-bbox="311 1080 985 1567"> </div> <div data-bbox="1028 1091 1329 1331" data-label="Text"> <p><b>Pink</b> – Leicester Leys  <b>Green</b> - Cossington  <b>Brown</b> – Spence St  <b>Purple</b> – Evington  <b>Black</b> – Aylestone  <b>Red</b> – Braunstone  <b>Blue</b> – New Parks</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1028 1435 1355 1504" data-label="Text"> <p><i>Map that shows Leisure Centre catchments</i></p> </div>
<p><b>2.3</b></p>	<p>Over recent years the level of subsidy to the service has been reducing. This has been achieved through the capital investment in the health and fitness facilities coupled with improved programming of swimming lessons and pool usage. Active Leicester facilities play a critical dual role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing affordable and inclusive access to physical activity and sport</li> <li>• Contributing significantly to physical and mental health, wellbeing, and social cohesion, particularly in Leicester's most deprived communities.</li> </ul>

2.4	<p><b>FBR and viability of provision</b></p> <p>Over the next three years the service needs to significant FBR 3 budget savings and therefore this raises questions about the long-term sustainability and efficiency of the current model. The balance of provision across the city requires further examination to ensure resources are allocated where they deliver the most value. The LCNA has identified that some facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have lower utilisation levels</li> <li>• Incur higher operating costs</li> <li>• Deliver lower value for money compared to others.</li> <li>• Duplicate catchments</li> </ul> <p>The table below illustrates the 24/25 actual annual subsidy allocated to each leisure centre, highlighting the financial support required to maintain service delivery and operational sustainability across the network.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="234 781 1287 1087"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="234 781 933 826">Leisure Facility</th><th data-bbox="933 781 1287 826">24/25 actual subsidy</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="234 826 933 862">Aylestone</td><td data-bbox="933 826 1287 862">£362k</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="234 862 933 898">Cossington</td><td data-bbox="933 862 1287 898">£418k</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="234 898 933 934">Evington</td><td data-bbox="933 898 1287 934">£34k</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="234 934 933 970">Leicester Leys</td><td data-bbox="933 934 1287 970">£217k</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="234 970 933 1006">New Parks</td><td data-bbox="933 970 1287 1006">£432k</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="234 1006 933 1042">Spence Street</td><td data-bbox="933 1006 1287 1042">£343k</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="234 1042 933 1078">Saffron Athletics Track</td><td data-bbox="933 1042 1287 1078">£114k</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Leisure Facility	24/25 actual subsidy	Aylestone	£362k	Cossington	£418k	Evington	£34k	Leicester Leys	£217k	New Parks	£432k	Spence Street	£343k	Saffron Athletics Track	£114k
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2.5	<p>The LCNA research can be used as the evidence base to inform future plans, including investment, however any such decisions would need to be underpinned by robust community impact analysis, equality considerations, and public engagement.</p> <p>The leisure estate includes facilities with an average age of over 40 years. Although some centres have received refurbishments, the age and physical condition of the buildings remain a significant concern. Temporary or partial centre closure has taken place over the last three years including Braunstone, Aylestone, Cossington. Despite this, performance over the past five years has shown substantial growth in both usage and financial return.</p>																
2.6	<p><b>Income growth</b></p> <p>Over a sustained period of time Active Leicester has increased its gross income by 77% over a six-year period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £4.7m (2018/19)</li> <li>• £7.4m (2023/24)</li> <li>• £8.3m (2024/25)</li> </ul>																

	<p>This growth has been driven by targeted investment in health and fitness facilities, an expanding Learn to Swim programme, and consistent improvements and modernisation of the service. As part of FBR targets the service has been earmarked to achieve a further £2 million additional income over the next three years.</p>
2.7	<p><b>Customer Experience and Demographics</b></p> <p>A recent customer satisfaction survey rated the centres at 3.4 out of 5, indicating a good level of service. This is the first such survey, limiting trend analysis. Customer feedback aligns broadly across centres and services. User-profiles reveal that the centres are highly inclusive, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong engagement across all age ranges</li> <li>• Over 50% of users identifying as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME), reflecting the city's diverse population</li> </ul>
2.8	<p><b>Strategic Financial Performance</b></p> <p><i>Learn to Swim Programme</i></p> <p>Leicester operates one of the largest Learn to Swim programmes in the East Midlands, currently serving over 8,000 children weekly. The ambition is to grow this to 10,000 children, and this is dependent upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained demand generation</li> <li>• Recruitment and retention of swimming instructors</li> <li>• Enhanced marketing and digitalisation</li> </ul> <p><i>Fitness Growth</i></p> <p>Health and fitness membership has risen from 3,500 to nearly 12,000 members, largely due to capital investments in gym refurbishments. Centres such as Braunstone and Evington outperform others, highlighting the distinctiveness of local markets and catchments. Latent demand studies on health and fitness show that there is latent demand for fitness growth in the northwest area of the city impacting on Leicester Leys in particular.</p> <p><i>Future income target</i></p> <p>Over the next three years, as part of wider corporate budget savings, the service is expected to deliver substantial financial savings, including generating an additional £2 million in income. This would increase the service's gross income to over £10 million. Achieving this target may require further investment to ensure a strong return on investment (ROI), continued progress in developing a modern website, maintaining uninterrupted access to facilities, ongoing improvements in marketing and service standards, and a careful balance between commercial and social objectives.</p>
2.9	<b>Facility Condition and Sustainability</b>

	<p>Leisure centre condition surveys, undertaken in March 2023, indicates the following planned maintenance works required to bring centres back to a reasonable standard during the following periods.</p> <p>Within 2 years £14.2m, 3-10 years additional £11.6m, and 11-25 years a further £24.5m.</p> <p>The ageing leisure estate continues to exert pressure on maintenance budgets. Estates and Building Services expenditure on maintenance and servicing has increased by 50% over the last four years, a trend that is expected to continue.</p> <p>Despite the challenges associated with an ageing leisure estate, most of the leisure centres have achieved increases in usage and overall performance, with the exception of New Parks Leisure Centre. Leicester Leys Leisure Centre, in particular, benefits from a distinctive and well-established offer which has continued to drive growth, despite receiving limited recent investment.</p> <p>This sustained performance highlights the potential to further adapt and optimise the centre to possibly play an enhanced strategic role in meeting the future leisure and wellbeing needs of the city and its role within the balance and distribution of the council's leisure centre network.</p> <p>Key challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing utility cost budget pressures (approximately £600k pa)</li> <li>• Carbon efficiency of older buildings</li> <li>• Modernisation needs, especially pool plant systems.</li> </ul> <p>In response, the service is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking energy efficiency audits</li> <li>• Collaborating on clean and green initiatives</li> <li>• Working with EBS on a phased sustainability programme</li> </ul>
2.10	<p><b>Comparative and Market Analysis</b></p> <p>A market assessment by a leisure procurement specialist (as part of the LCNA) has identified potential cost efficiencies through alternative management models, such as outsourcing.</p> <p>Benchmarking against national performance metrics suggests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leicester performs strongly on participation and inclusion.</li> <li>• However, the city is below average in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Fitness income per station</li> <li>◦ Subsidy per visit</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>This reflects Leicester's price-sensitive population, with 40% of residents living in the most deprived 20% of areas nationally. Balancing affordability with financial sustainability will remain a key challenge.</p> <p>The LCNA's value-for-money rankings highlight disparities across centres, reinforcing the need to review the network's efficiency. (see cost per visitor in</p>

<p>table below) Centres with high operating costs and lower utilisation may no longer justify the level of subsidy they require. As part of the leisure centre needs assessment, visitor numbers and usage levels, subsidy at each facility. The table below presents a breakdown of 24/25 performance of all leisure centres, and the secondary research provides further historical data on leisure centre usage and performance.</p>							
2024/2025 KPI SUMMARY	NEW PARKS	BRAUNSTONE	AYLESTONE	LEICESTER LEYS	COSSINGTON	SPENCE STREET	EVINGTON
Annual Leisure Centre Visits	64,616	465,420	191,400	197,376	163,671	165,588	245,616
Income	£432k	£2,078m	£1,180m	£1.425m	£772k	£874k	£1.398m
Leisure Centre Subsidy	£432k	£263k	£362k	£217k	£418k	£343k	£34k
Total members	830	4844	3055	2743	2211	2332	3766
Cost Per visit	£6.68	£0.56	£1.89	£1.09	£2.55	£2.07	£0.13

2.11	<p><b>Public Health, Place-Based Working and integrated service delivery</b></p> <p>The Active Leicester service has a close partnership with Public Health, providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12-week programmes and 18-month concessionary access for Livewell clients</li> <li>• Collaboration on place-based strategies to increase physical activity across target communities.</li> </ul> <p>The Active Wellbeing Hub pilot has now launched. Its evaluation will inform potential rollout models within the wider place-based approach supported by Sport England.</p>
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2.12	<p>Future ROI investment in the Active Leicester portfolio should be considered not only in terms of improving physical infrastructure and financial sustainability, but also through a broader lens of integrated service delivery, community wellbeing, and strategic co-location. There is growing opportunity to align capital and operational investment working corporately within neighbourhoods and with Public Health in relation to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding place-based working in communities facing the greatest health inequalities</li> <li>• Enhancing integrated and co located services by linking leisure, health, libraries, and other public services.</li> <li>• Scaling the Active Wellbeing Hub pilot, using the evaluation to inform wider rollout models</li> </ul> <p>This approach reflects a shift from viewing leisure centres purely as sport and fitness venues, toward their evolution in co-delivering outcomes around physical activity, mental health, learning, and active wellbeing.</p> <p>Specifically, there is scope to:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore joint investment with libraries, particularly in areas where co-location or integration of services could enhance value for money and improve footfall across services.</li> <li>When ready, use the findings from the Active Wellbeing Hub pilot to shape the development of satellite wellbeing offers at existing leisure centres.</li> </ul>																																
2.13	<p><b>Benchmarking and supply and demand</b></p> <p>Leicester performs strongly on participation and inclusion. However, the city is below average in terms of fitness income per station and subsidy per visit. This reflects the price-sensitive population, with 40% of residents living in the most deprived 20% of areas nationally. Balancing affordability with financial sustainability will remain a key challenge.</p> <p>As part of the LCNA and indoor facility assessment was undertaken to understand the supply of indoor facilities provided by the council and how this compares to other unitary authorities in regard to swimming pool provision.</p> <p><b>Swimming Pools assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong overall coverage, with around 50% of residents within a 20-minute walk of a pool.</li> <li>Some overlap in catchments, especially between Braunstone and New Parks and west side of the city.</li> <li>Leicester has more, but smaller pools, than comparable cities, improving access but reducing operational efficiency.</li> </ul> <p>As part of the needs assessment, we have compared the amount of water space and number of swimming pools provided by Leicester City Council against other city unitary authorities. Leicester compares favourably in terms of the number pools the council provides, particularly when you take in to account the size of the city population. The comparison table is provided below.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>City</th> <th>No. of Council Swimming Pools</th> <th>Total m2 Pool Space by LA</th> <th>Population</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Leicester</td> <td>7</td> <td>2982 sqm</td> <td>368,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nottingham</td> <td>6</td> <td>3,207 sqm</td> <td>331,297</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Coventry</td> <td>6</td> <td>2,656 sqm</td> <td>345,300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Derby</td> <td>1</td> <td>1610 sqm</td> <td>261,136</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bradford</td> <td>5</td> <td>1,880 sqm</td> <td>534,300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Leeds</td> <td>13</td> <td>5,574 sqm</td> <td>792,525</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bristol</td> <td>6</td> <td>3,367 sqm</td> <td>467,009</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>By providing more smaller swimming pools we improve distribution and access, however on the downside we operate more buildings that in turn means we are less efficient in providing our pools because our water spaces are stretched across more buildings that need to be staffed, maintained and sustained going forward. The small sized pools however do mean our swimming pools are conducive to learn to swim with reduced width pools that are conducive to swim teaching.</p> <p>Analysis of usage and performance metrics shows that, overall, leisure centres have experienced growth in usage and improvements in operational performance, reflecting a generally well-balanced distribution of provision across the City. However, spatial and catchment analysis indicates a degree of overlapping</p>	City	No. of Council Swimming Pools	Total m2 Pool Space by LA	Population	Leicester	7	2982 sqm	368,000	Nottingham	6	3,207 sqm	331,297	Coventry	6	2,656 sqm	345,300	Derby	1	1610 sqm	261,136	Bradford	5	1,880 sqm	534,300	Leeds	13	5,574 sqm	792,525	Bristol	6	3,367 sqm	467,009
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	provision in the west area of the city, which has resulted in over lapping catchments and duplication of council provision. While neighbouring centres such as Braunstone and Leicester Leys have continued to grow, this concentration of facilities has constrained demand at New Parks Leisure Centre, which has not experienced comparable growth in usage or performance.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Primary Research Summary</b>

3.1	<p>As part of the wider LCNA, Active Leicester undertook a programme of primary research through a resident engagement survey conducted between 28th March and 11th May 2025. This work complements the secondary research already undertaken and provides key insight into residents' current and future use of the city's leisure facilities.</p> <p>The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback from both users and non-users of Leicester's leisure centres, helping the council to make informed, evidence-based decisions on the future delivery and investment in its facilities amid ongoing financial pressures.</p> <p>A total of 1,636 residents engaged with the survey, which was made available online and in paper form across leisure centres and libraries. This report presents a summary of the key quantitative findings. Additionally, over 800 qualitative comments were received; the qualitative comments are summarised within the report.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Key Findings</b></p> <p><b>Respondent Profile</b></p> <p>The survey captured a broad demographic cross-section of Leicester's residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largest age group: 36–45 years (20.5%), followed by 46–55 years (19.1%)</li> <li>• 55% of respondents identified as female; 39% as male; 6% identified as 'other' or preferred not to say.</li> <li>• 54% identified as White British; 25% were of Asian or Black heritage.</li> <li>• 14% reported living with a disability.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p><b>Geographic Reach</b></p> <p>Respondents represented a good geographic spread across the city. Mapping of postcode data confirmed no significant clustering or bias towards any single area or leisure centre.</p>
3.4	<p><b>Usage Patterns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 76% of respondents stated they currently use a leisure facility at least once per week.</li> <li>• 89% indicated they plan to use a facility within the next 6 months.</li> <li>• Only 11% do not plan to use a council leisure centre in that time frame.</li> <li>• These results suggest the majority of respondents are existing or engaged users.</li> </ul>

3.5	<p><u>Facility Preference and Travel</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many users travel outside their immediate area to use a preferred centre, with <b>33%</b> willing to travel more than 2 miles.</li> <li>43% reported living within 1 mile of their preferred centre.</li> <li>Braunstone and Leicester Leys centres were most frequently cited as residents' secondary choice.</li> <li>Notably, Braunstone draws a significant number of users from New Parks Ward, overlapping with New Parks Leisure Centre's catchment.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p><u>Satisfaction and Motivation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>53% of users were either very satisfied or satisfied with the current leisure facilities.</li> <li>Only 16% reported dissatisfaction</li> <li>The most common reason for usage was "to keep fit" (cited by 1,275 respondents), followed by mental and physical wellbeing</li> </ul>
3.7	<p><u>Activity Preferences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gym usage and swimming (leisure, lessons, and lane swimming) were the most valued activities.</li> <li>Further data on activity preferences is illustrated in the accompanying charts</li> </ul>
3.8	<p><u>Non-User Insights</u></p> <p>Of the 1,636 total respondents, 174 stated they do not currently use an Active Leicester facility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary Barrier: Cost — 62 respondents cited affordability as the main reason for non-use.</li> <li>Other barriers included lack of interest or specific personal circumstances.</li> <li>When asked what would encourage usage, the most common response was reduced membership fees or introductory offers, reinforcing that affordability remains a key consideration for engaging non-users</li> </ul>
3.9	<p>The findings from this resident engagement survey, alongside the secondary research in the full Leisure Centre Needs Assessment, will help inform the council's decisions on the future shape, location, and investment strategy for leisure provision across the city.</p>
3.10	<p><b>Summary of qualitative comments provided by residents</b></p> <p>Resident feedback highlights a broadly positive perception of the borough's leisure provision, particularly in relation to the quality of leisure facilities and the role centres play in supporting health, wellbeing, and community activity. Respondents consistently value well-equipped gyms, good-quality swimming facilities, and a wide range of supervised activities and classes.</p>
	<p>Staff are frequently described as friendly, supportive, and professional, with particular praise for swimming teachers and instructors. Several facilities are seen</p>

	as well-used community hubs, supporting clubs, organised sport, and informal participation, with strong local loyalty and a sense of community benefit.																																																						
3.12	Alongside these positives, residents also identify several recurring issues that impact the overall user experience. A common theme with specific centre related to the condition and cleanliness of changing areas, toilets, and showers, with some facilities perceived as dated and in need of refurbishment.																																																						
3.13	Residents did highlight the availability of lane swimming, and scheduling pressures between lessons and public use. Capacity constraints are noted in some gyms and changing areas, alongside requests for extended opening hours, improved equipment, and better maintenance. While these issues do not detract from the overall value placed on the service, they highlight opportunities to improve across the leisure centre provision.																																																						
3.14	<p><b>Non-User General Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback suggests during busy periods users have indicated that it is Lack of gym equipment relative to demand.</li> <li>Reduced gym classes post-COVID.</li> <li>Need to expand evening exercise classes and adult-only swim times.</li> <li>Certain centres need to improve Changing rooms and shower facilities</li> <li>Gym schedules and offerings don't fit working people's hours.</li> <li>Many prefer private gyms with early opening and late opening times.</li> </ul>																																																						
3.15	<p><b>Leisure Centre Resident satisfaction level</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Leisure Centre</th> <th>Very satisfied %</th> <th>Satisfied %</th> <th>Neutral %</th> <th>Dissatisfied %</th> <th>Very dissatisfied%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Aylestone</b></td> <td>17%</td> <td>44%</td> <td>23%</td> <td>10%</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Braunstone</b></td> <td>14%</td> <td>46%</td> <td>22%</td> <td>12%</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Cossington</b></td> <td>18%</td> <td>33%</td> <td>14%</td> <td>11%</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Evington</b></td> <td>10%</td> <td>36%</td> <td>24%</td> <td>18%</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Leicester Leys</b></td> <td>27%</td> <td>36%</td> <td>18%</td> <td>13%</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>New Parks</b></td> <td>18%</td> <td>42%</td> <td>22%</td> <td>11%</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Spence</b></td> <td>15%</td> <td>34%</td> <td>21%</td> <td>20%</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Saffron</b></td> <td></td> <td>80%</td> <td>20%</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Leisure Centre	Very satisfied %	Satisfied %	Neutral %	Dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied%	<b>Aylestone</b>	17%	44%	23%	10%	4%	<b>Braunstone</b>	14%	46%	22%	12%	4%	<b>Cossington</b>	18%	33%	14%	11%	11%	<b>Evington</b>	10%	36%	24%	18%	9%	<b>Leicester Leys</b>	27%	36%	18%	13%	4%	<b>New Parks</b>	18%	42%	22%	11%	4%	<b>Spence</b>	15%	34%	21%	20%	6%	<b>Saffron</b>		80%	20%		
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<b>Spence</b>	15%	34%	21%	20%	6%																																																		
<b>Saffron</b>		80%	20%																																																				
4.	<p><b>Strategic Challenges and Opportunities</b></p> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rising maintenance and utility costs and age and condition of our leisure centres including maintenance backlog.</li> <li>Backlog maintenance and pressure on corporate capital maintenance programme</li> <li>As part of the FBR savings the service aims to increase income and generate additional growth and therefore there is a need to avoid service disruption through temporary or partial closure.</li> <li>Catchment analysis shows significant overlap and duplication of leisure centre catchment between New Parks and Braunstone</li> </ul>																																																						

- Inconsistent value for money assessment for specific centres
- Need to assess the potential ceiling limit on fees and charges
- Impact of 'Pools for Schools' on School Swimming Programme
- Reliance on sustained customer demand cannot be guaranteed
- Condition and suitability of ageing buildings.
- On going challenge to balance achieving commercial income whilst retaining affordability and promoting inclusion and access.
- Limited external funding opportunities to secure investment places increased focus on service borrowing.
- Increased potential for health and fitness competition from the private sector creates competition and detrimental impact on income, growth and future ROI business case improvements.

## Opportunities

- Latent demand for fitness growth remains within the Northwest of the city
- Potential for growth and co-location and integrated services in the Northwest involving Leicester Leys.
- Develop further Active Wellbeing pilot and approach including co location and integrated services with Library and neighbourhood services.
- Link with Sport England Place Expansion over the next five years.
- Further scope to learn to swim and fitness membership in key areas of the city.
- Further scope to expand Learn to Swim including developing the learn to swim pathway and programme into 0-3 years as part of a new foundation programme linked to Leicester Leys Leisure water Fun Pool.
- Create the next five-year plan to take forward Active Leicester to mitigate against future challenges and maximise future opportunities.
- Track development as a venue for outdoor exercise and connection to the Active Leicester fitness offer and overall active wellbeing.
- Potential to leverage energy efficiency and sustainability programmes that may in turn reduce rising utility costs
- Further improvement in online access to service via Active Leicester Website to improve customer access to Active Leicester products, programmes and initiatives.

## 5. Moving Forward – Next five Years

5.1 The 5 year plan will oversee the development of Active Leicester Centres and will build upon the strengths of the current approach by establishing a cohesive and strategically positioned network of leisure centres across the city. These centres should deliver a core offer that encompasses leisure, active wellbeing, fitness, and concession-based services, ensuring equitable access and a consistent standard of provision citywide.

5.2 A key element of this evolution will be the piloting of centres as Active Wellbeing Hubs, underpinned by a clear move towards service integration and co-location where there is a strong business case and demonstrable community benefit. This model will create the foundations for a more efficient, collaborative, and financially sustainable network that meets the diverse needs of Leicester's residents.

5.3	Active Leicester has successfully navigated the balance between commercial viability and social responsibility, and this dual focus must remain central to its strategy. Moving forward, the network must continue to operate within the constraints of limited corporate resources and address the existing maintenance backlog, while working towards a more sustainable and resilient operating model.
5.4	The plan over the next five years, will need to mitigate operational risks, optimise resources, and progress towards a viable and strategically aligned network of leisure centres.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
6.1	<p>The Culture &amp; Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission (CNSC) are invited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the contents and findings of the report and appendices</li> <li>• Comment on the report and appendices</li> <li>• Note that consultation will take place on the draft 5-year leisure centre plan that will guide how Active Leicester will meet the future challenges and continue to develop and sustain the council's leisure centre provision.</li> </ul>
6.2	As part of any future consultation process the CNSC will receive a report from Officers on the proposed plan and an opportunity to feedback their comments as part of the consultation process.
6.3	The feedback from CNSC will be provided as part of the consultation process and will be considered before any final decisions are to be taken on the council's leisure centre plan.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications</b>
7.1	<p><b>Financial Implications</b></p> <p>Active Leicester's income has grown strongly in recent years, rising from £4.7m in 2018/19 to £8.3m in 2024/25, and is expected to reach £8.85m this year and over £10m next year. Even with this improvement, the service still needs a subsidy of around £1.7m, and the Council overall needs to make further savings. The recommendations in this report are designed to help reduce this subsidy and support the division's wider savings requirement of £9.19m.</p> <p>Bringing the number of centres down to six will reduce costs linked to staffing, maintenance and utilities, while still making sure residents can access good-quality facilities.</p> <p>Any future investment in centres will require a detailed capital bid so the Council understands the borrowing, timescales and financial impact of the proposals. In addition, the planned energy-efficiency improvements across the estate should save money in the long run but will require upfront funding.</p> <p>Income should continue to grow through improvements to swimming, gym memberships and better digital customer services. However, these rely on customer demand remaining strong and on the service being able to recruit and retain the right staff.</p>

	<p>Jade Draper, Principal Accountant 25.11.25</p>
7.2	<p><b>Legal Implications</b></p> <p>The consultation process to be undertaken should be meaningful, fair and proportionate to the potential impact of the proposal. It must comply with the “Gunning principles”: (i) it must take place when the proposal is still at a formative stage; (ii) sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response; (iii) adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and (iv) the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in making the decision.</p> <p>The first principle does not preclude consultations taking place on preferred options or on a decision in principle as long as the decision-maker’s mind remains open to change.</p> <p>The result of the consultation should be analysed, prior to any final decision being made, to ensure that any decision making is lawful, follows a fair process and is reasonable.</p> <p>Kevin Carter Head of Law - Commercial, Property &amp; Planning 14 January 2026</p> <p>From an employment perspective, no employment implications arise at this stage. The report is intended to provide an update in respect of the primary and secondary research undertaken regarding the Leisure Centre Needs Assessment and to assist the Council with its next five-year plan.</p> <p>The report has identified a potential overlap of services. At this present time, it remains unclear what the future arrangements will look like. As such, there is currently insufficient information to determine the employment implications.</p> <p>It is recommended that further legal advice is sought as the proposals develop.</p> <p>The report has referred to further recruitment (see 2.8), and accordingly, relevant advice should be sought from HR in respect of this.</p> <p><i>Suraiya Ziaullah Senior Solicitor – Education and Employment 0116 454 1487 14 January 2026</i></p>
7.3	<p><b>Equality Implications</b></p> <p>Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and</p>

	<p>victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.</p> <p>Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.</p> <p>This report sets out a strategic approach to the future management and development of the Council's leisure facilities. One of its core principles is the commitment to social value and health impact – protecting access for residents, especially in areas of deprivation, and continuing to reduce health inequalities. Given that 50% of current users identify as BAME and 40% of the city's population resides in highly deprived areas, the LCNA identifies that leisure provision is a primary vehicle for tackling health inequalities in Leicester.</p> <p>Leisure centres act as vital social hubs, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, ages, and abilities who might not otherwise interact. Shared activities foster a sense of belonging and community spirit, which helps break down social barriers and reduce isolation.</p> <p>An EIA has been developed and will be updated alongside the future consultation process.</p> <p><i>Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148</i></p> <p>14/01/26</p>
7.4	<p><b>Climate Emergency implications</b></p> <p>Taking a more focused approach in improving and maintaining energy efficiency measures is likely to have a positive impact in reducing carbon emissions from the operation of the leisure centres.</p> <p>When consolidating services there is often a risk that this will increase emissions associated with customer travel, however there is a significant overlap of service coverage which should mitigate this risk. Where a service offering is increased which encourages and enables sustainable behaviours such as increased levels of physical activity and healthy eating may have further co-benefits for tackling the climate emergency.</p> <p>The most significant potential impact will come from implementing the Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction Plan across the remaining operational facilities. Ensuring that the leisure centres involved have high-performing insulation, energy efficient heating, low energy lighting and low carbon/renewable energy systems along with effective building management systems would generate significant emissions reductions through the reduction of energy demand.</p> <p>Carbon emissions from further commissioning and delivery of services should be managed on a project-by-project basis, as relevant and appropriate to the service.</p> <p><i>Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer Ext 372246</i></p> <p>14/01/26</p>

8.	<p><b>Background information and other papers:</b></p> <p><b>Summary of appendices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leisure Centre Needs Assessment Secondary Research Appendix 1</li><li>• Primary Research Appendix 2</li></ul>
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