

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 OCTOBER 2023

FREEDOM LEISURE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Executive Summary

This report sets out the performance review of Freedom Leisure, including assessments on quality and performance management, KPIs and the priorities for year 2022/2023. Complaints, feedback and achievements are reviewed in the report as Freedom Leisure provide a wide range of services to the public.

In general Freedom Leisure have achieved the Key Performance Indicators set out in the Leisure Partnership Agreement and continue to work in partnership with the council. Freedom is aware and being supportive in the identification of future savings and the need to work towards a financially neutral position in the provision of leisure.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Leisure Partnership Agreement commenced on 1st December 2011. The Woking and Guildford partnerships were procured as part of a joint process that required a turnover threshold/scale of organisation that would have been challenging for Freedom Leisure to have met at the time on their own. Freedom Leisure therefore asked GLL to be the “principal” contractor, with Freedom Leisure delivering the contract, as a sub-contractor to them. The bid was written by Freedom Leisure who are fully responsible for its delivery. GLL receive an annual fee from Freedom Leisure for underwriting the original bid and holding the risk of Freedom Leisure failing to perform.
- 1.2 Since the original agreement the contract has had several major changes which include 3 new pavilions, the Sportsbox at Hoe Valley and Eastwood Leisure Centre.
- 1.3 The inclusion of Sportsbox also triggered the contract extension clause in the main contract which is for a further 4 years. Contract end is now 30th November 2025.
- 1.4 Separate to the contract Freedom have also been successful in securing the contract to run the kiosk in Woking Park.
- 1.5 In September 2018, Woking Park Tennis Courts were removed from the Leisure Contract and returned to the management of Woking Borough Council.

2.0 Priorities for 2022-2023

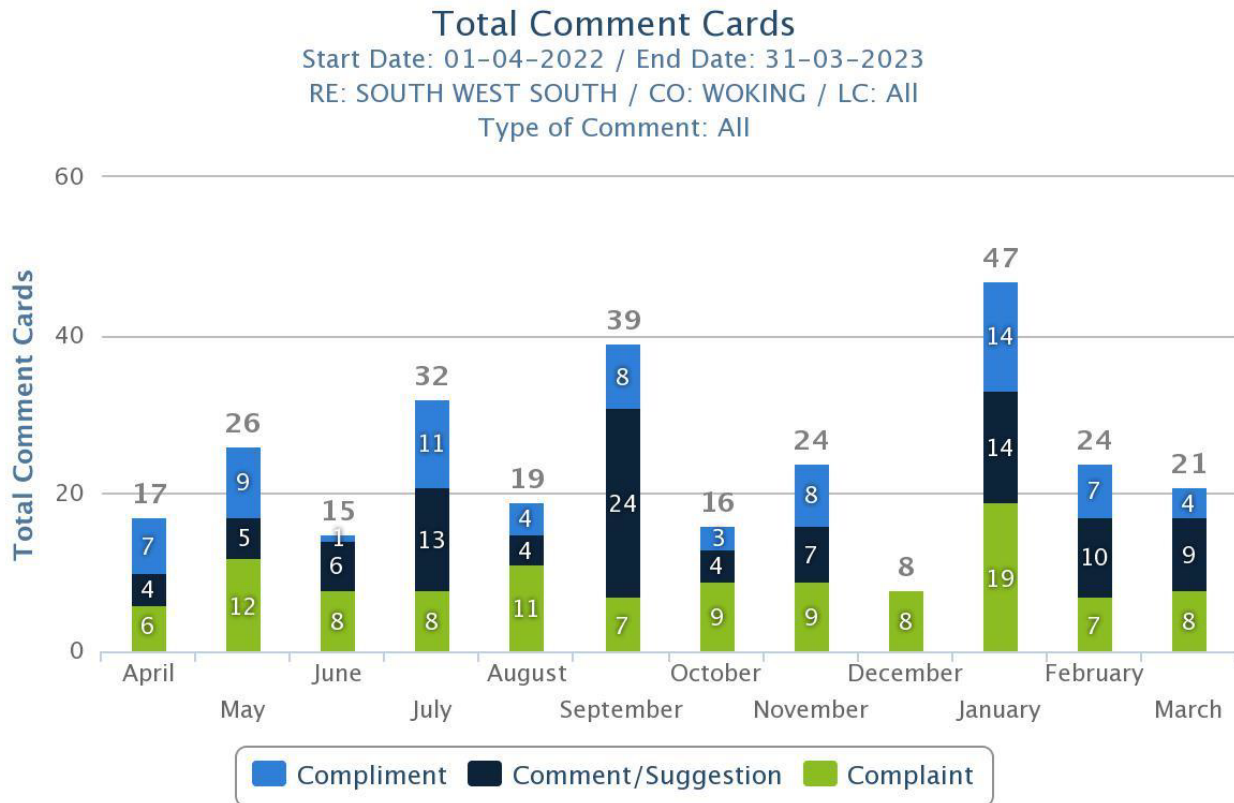
- 2.1 Freedom Leisure in consultation with Officers and their customers set a list of key priorities for 2022-2023. These were presented to the Leisure Partnership Board at the end of 2022 and agreed by this Board.

3.0 Performance during the 2022-2023

- 3.1 Overall, the leisure contract has over 1M visitors, Pool in the Park was the busiest of the venues with over 300,000 visitors down to our sports pavilions which some are only seeing a few hundred visitors a year. (St Johns Lye being the pavilion used the least with only 240 visits). Overall, though this is very good news and shows some good growth in number from the previous year. The contract as a whole has seen an enormous growth from 639 thousand visits in 2021-22 to 1,01 million in 2022-23.
- 3.2 This growth is linked to two main factors. The opening of Eastwood Leisure Centre. The year 2021-22 only included 5 months of operating figures. In 2021-22 only 66 thousand visits were recorded but in this last year just over 200 thousand visits have been seen. Secondly covid recovery continues with more people returning to leisure centres.
- 3.3 With Eastwood Leisure Centres numbers included we have just surpassed the highest attendance figures recorded, but if we were to remove these, attendances are 18% down on the pre-covid attendances.
- 3.4 Freedom Leisure deliver an extensive Active Communities Programme across the borough targeting those areas with the highest levels of deprivation. The team have worked with council officers and partners in the NHS to deliver a range of health products such as Covid Recovery, GP referral, Pulmonary and Cardiac Rehab. Further to this a range of classes around weight loss, diabetes management and falls prevention are offered.
- 3.5 Holiday Activity Fund: This is the scheme the government launched in 2021 to ensure all children in receipt of free school meals are able to access food and activity during the school

holidays. Freedom have run a very successful service, securing funding from Active Surrey to deliver 1700 meals and activity to children based in Woking.

- 3.6 Customer Satisfaction: Each year Freedom provide monitoring on customer satisfaction. A Net Promoter Score System is utilised throughout the year to analyse how members feels about the services provided and this is backed up further with user surveys to wider groups of facility users such as the football clubs or other sporting hirers.
- 3.7 Comment cards are also collected and breakdown for this can be seen below:



- 3.8 In total 288 cards have been received, of which 76 are compliments, 112 are complaints with the rest being suggestions.
- 3.9 Many of the complaints were about closures or part closures of the pool. There is a national shortage of lifeguards and as such there have numerous occasions where the pool could not safely open. In some instances, this was very last minute with staff calling in sick for a 6am start and as such the pools could not open. Understandably this has led to some members being very unhappy and the requirement for better resilience to be sought.
- 3.10 The positive comments have a really good theme and often are around helping those most in need through the health classes, or group exercise and really highlights the strength of the directly run sessions that Freedom have been putting on.

4.0 Improvements and significant changes to the service provision

4.1 A significant amount of refurbishment work has been completed in the year as follows:

- Woking Leisure Centre:
 - Upgraded Toilet Sanitary Goods
 - Gents Ceiling change replacement
 - Doors and Iron Monger replaced where required
 - Whole building has been decorated
 - Refurbished party room
- Pool in the Park
 - All Hairdryers replaced
 - Floor in showers has been replaced (again)
 - Improved signage
 - Spa Pool blowers replaced
- Sports Box
 - Basketball Hoop replacements
 - New track sound system

5.0 Financial position

5.1 Freedom Leisure Pays WBC a management fee. This fee is surpluses made within the contract and for this year this was £553K up from £247K last year. Unfortunately, whilst this was a great increase and linked to the afore mentioned attendance growth and some operational decisions to the management structure it did not cover the growth in costs of utilities. The price per unit for electricity did increase four-fold. Utilities remain the cost of the councils and as such led to the leisure contract as a whole running at a significant deficit.

6.0 Key Performance Indicators

6.1 Freedom Leisure reports a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to the Leisure Partnership Board twice a year.

Audits:

6.2 Freedom undergoes a range of audits each year. These include pool safety, health and safety and quality assessments:

6.3 Health and Safety Audits were conducted at all sites all achieving a good standard with a particular focus on opening in a COVID safe way.

6.4 Accident statistics are monitored monthly as follows:

- Woking Leisure Centre: 273 accidents (0.07%)
- Pool in the Park: 138 accidents (0.03%)
- Sportsbox: 19 (0.01%)
- Eastwood Leisure Centre: 31 (0.012%)

The percentage relates to against users and anything over 0.10% would require further investigation. It is worth noting that Woking Leisure Centres is slightly higher than the other sites due to the nature of its activities. Having a very well subscribed set of youth activities does lead by the nature of the activity to more “low” level accidents.

- 6.5 Environmental Health Audits (Conducted by the Borough) on food safety. All Sites achieve the highest 5-star rating. Costa also do their own audits with all sites passing with above average scores.

7.0 Moving forward

- 7.1 Freedom have presented a business plan to Leisure Partnership Board for 2023-2024. LPB requested some amendments that will be discussed at the next Board meeting but fundamentally were happy with the progress.
- 7.2 Increased focus continues towards health and wellbeing rather than activity and fitness. Whilst a minor change it encompasses the really positive links that have been made with health professionals at St Peters, and the GP practices.
- 7.3 Working towards a cost neutral overall position for leisure is essential. Running leisure more commercially remains the focus to maximise the surplus available to help support the utility costs.
- 7.4 Closures of some facilities are being investigated and consulted upon along with a range of other options that need to be explored to see if the subsidy can be reduced.

REPORT ENDS

