

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

# The Leisure Facilities Review 2009

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*“Building a world-class city for everyone”*

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## Contents

	Page
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Section One – The Oxford Context</i></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Section Two - Where the Service is now</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>Section Three - The Future – A World Class Leisure Offer</i></b>	<b>11</b>
<b><i>Section Four – Delivering a World Class Leisure Offer</i></b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Charts:</b>	
1: Bar Chart illustrating the local differences in age ranges.	5
<b>Figures:</b>	
1: Spread of Child Poverty Across the City	7
<b>Tables:</b>	
1: Oxford Population by Ethnic Group, mid year estimate 2006	5
2: Comparative levels of provision for swimming, sports halls and gyms	9
3: Main Stakeholders – Direction and Opportunities	12
4: Financial Implications of the Leisure Facilities Review	23
<b>Appendices:</b>	
Appendix 1: A Summary of leisure research from 2000 onwards	26
Appendix 2: Catchment areas based on a 2km buffer	27
Appendix 3: Catchment areas based on a 20-minute drive time at 15 mph	28
Appendix 4: A summary of Fusions research on the remodelling of the leisure facilities	29
Appendix 5: Section 106 contributions in the pipeline: Sealed Agreement	30
Appendix 6: A Summary of each facility and recommendations based on 07/08 data	32

### **Document Control**

**V 1.15**

**Review date:**

**Reasons for review -**

## **i) Introduction**

- This leisure facilities review has been developed following the commencement of a ten-year contract with Fusion Lifestyles to manage the Council's Leisure Facilities. The overriding objectives of the contract are; to develop world-class leisure facilities, improve the value for money they offer and to ensure transferring employees are treated equitably.
- The Fusion contract will save Oxford City Council and local taxpayers over £7m throughout the ten years of the contract and will deliver a minimum of £2.2m invested within the first two years of the contract.
- Alongside the benefits of a successful contract such as increased participation, an upward cycle of continued improvement, and an improved public realm, there is also a surplus share arrangement that encourages the Council to support Fusion to exceed their contractual financial targets and provide further investment. As such the Council needs to actively support Fusion in the delivery of the Leisure Centres contract.
- The review has utilised the wealth of research commissioned from Deloitte's, KPMG and Strategic Leisure (appendix one). The se consultant's reports have consistently highlighted several issues; however, following a period of transformation and the contract with Fusion, many of which are now being addressed. The main outstanding matter is the need to agree a way forward for Council's leisure facilities in the South of the City, two of which are seen to be in very poor condition, and having a limited lifespan.
- The Leisure Facilities Review suggests the future direction for leisure and details the reason for this direction. The Oxford City Leisure Annual Transformational Plan is the overriding delivery plan. Each development referred to in the review will be evaluated through a business case and will be subject to consultation with stakeholders.
- The Leisure Facilities Review will support the development of the interrelated Sport Strategy that will also be produced in 2009.
- The review refers to the City's leisure offer, which alongside the future for the leisure centres is the second key theme. The leisure offer is the combination of Oxford City Council leisure centres, community halls, private leisure facilities, school leisure sites and voluntary sector leisure providers.

## **ii). Purpose of the Review**

- To establish a long-term plan for each leisure facility.
- To crystallise the Councils role in developing a City Leisure offer.

- Articulating what a world-class leisure service will look like and detailing how it will be achieved.

## **SECTION ONE– THE OXFORD CONTEXT**

### **1. Corporate direction**

#### **1.1 Our mission for Oxford**

*“A World Class City– for everyone”*

##### **1.1.1 The Vision for the council leisure facilities:**

*High quality services across the City that are consistently value for money, and have positive outcomes for service users and the community as a whole.*

#### **1.2 Understanding Oxford**

Although Oxford shares many characteristics with other authorities, it is also unique in many ways. To develop a World Class Leisure offering, the context of Oxford needs to be fully understood and reflected in the plan.

##### **1.2.1 Demographics**

Oxford’s ‘usual resident population<sup>1</sup>’ in mid-2007 was estimated to be 151,100.

##### **1.2.2 Active Population**

In 2007 20.5% of the population (29,820) exercised three times a week (Active People, 2007). The 2008 survey evidenced an increase to 25.2%, which although a significant step forward still positions Oxford City as the least active District in the County.

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<sup>1</sup> The Census count and subsequent estimates are of the ‘usual resident population’, which includes full-time students in residence at university. However it excludes people only temporarily resident, including some students, seasonal workers, homeless people and foreign students. As Oxford has a large transient population, this ‘usual resident population’ definition may arguably lead to a larger underestimate of population size than would be the case in other local authority areas. In addition Oxford has large seasonal variations due to the universities, foreign language schools and tourism.

### 1.2.3 Population profile

The below chart highlights the local age differences.

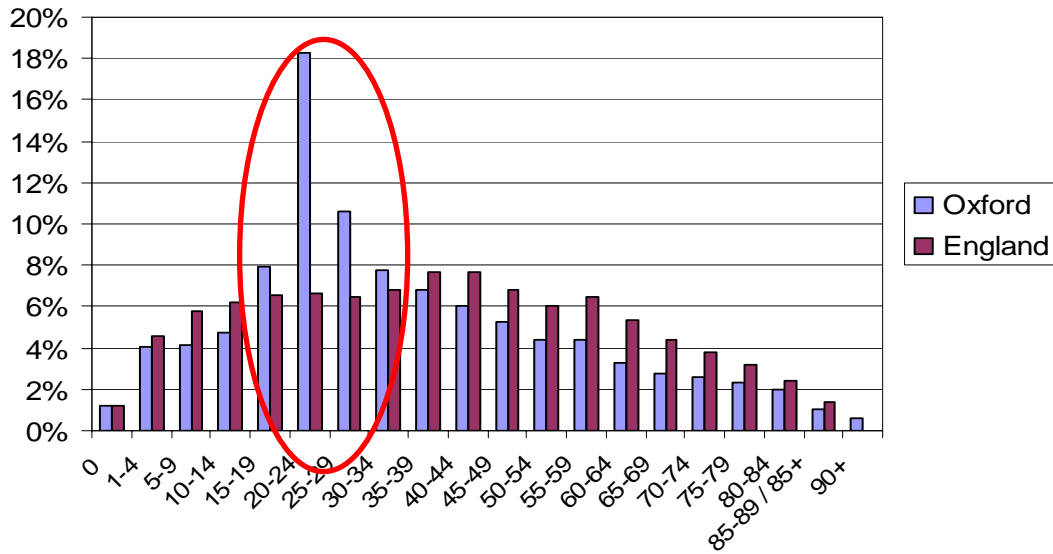


Chart one – illustration of the local differences in age ranges

Oxford has a very large proportion of 20-24 year-olds due to the two universities. According to the 2001 Census, 26% of the working age population were students - the highest proportion in England and Wales. In 2005/06 over 30,000 full-time students studied at Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. The universities offer some excellent leisure facilities, although these are in the main only available to University students.

### 1.2.4 Ethnic groups

Oxford population by ethnic group, mid-year estimate 2006

Ethnic group	Population (thousands)		
	All people	Male	Female
All Groups	149.1	74.3	74.8
White: British	108.1	54.3	53.8
White: Irish	2.5	1.3	1.2
White: Other White	13.7	6.5	7.3
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1.2	0.6	0.6
Mixed: White and Black African	0.6	0.3	0.3
Mixed: White and Asian	1.3	0.6	0.6
Mixed: Other Mixed	1.1	0.5	0.6
Asian or Asian British: Indian	3.8	1.9	1.9
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	3	1.5	1.5
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	1	0.5	0.5
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	1.1	0.5	0.5
Black or Black British: Black Caribbean	2	0.9	1
Black or Black British: Black African	2.2	1.1	1.1
Black or Black British: Other Black	0.4	0.2	0.2
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese	4.3	2.1	2.2
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other	3	1.4	1.5

Table one – Oxford population by ethnic group

In the 2001 Census, Oxford was estimated to have an ethnic minority population of 12.9% compared with 8.7% in England and Wales. By mid-2006 this had increased to 16.7%. The ethnic diversity among young people is especially high, at 19.8% of under 16s (in 2001). Oxford also has the second highest proportion of people born outside the UK in the South East.

### 1.2.5 Population Growth

Based on the Office of National Statistics (ONS) the population is set to increase to 161,700 by 2011. The City's desire for a boundary extension to the South of Grenoble Road would increase this figure in the following 5-year period.

### 1.2.6 Households

The City has a marked household population difference compared to regional and national averages; with a higher number of single person households, lower numbers of family households and higher student households.

### 1.2.7 Deprivation index

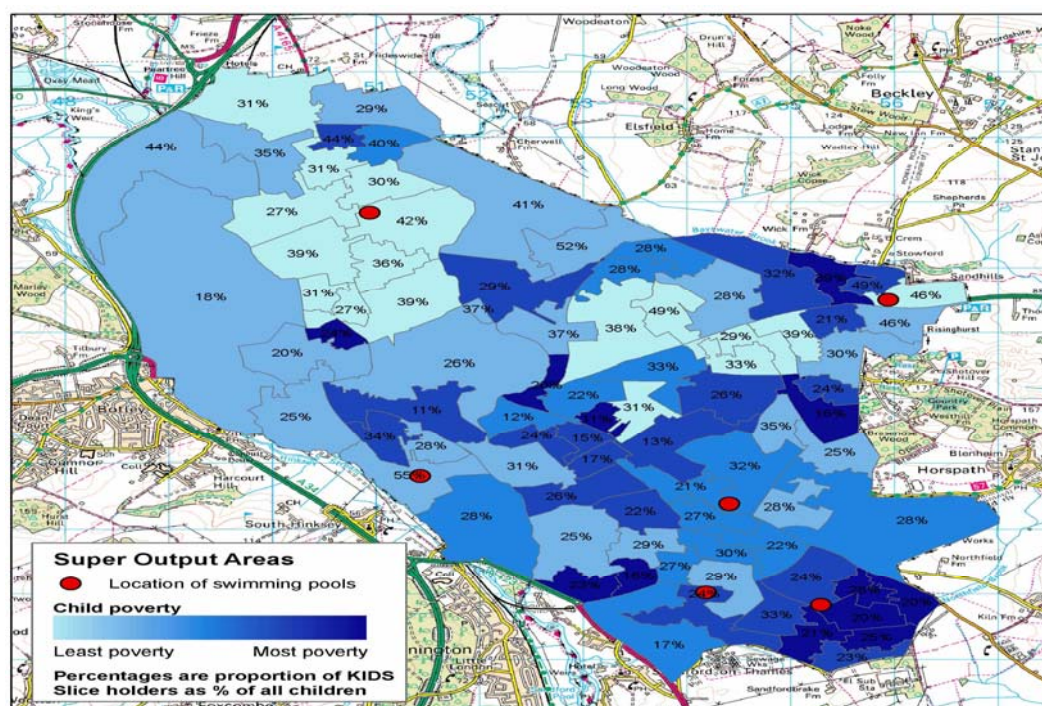


Figure one - spread of child poverty across the City (the percentages represent the proportion of child slice holders)

The above chart, produced in 2006, shows the spread of child poverty across the City, the percentages represent the proportion of child slice cardholders as a percent of all children in that area. The chart shows that leisure centre usage is well spread across the City and not just from the areas surrounding the centres.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 ranks Oxford 155<sup>th</sup> out of 354, placing it in the top half of the most deprived local authority areas in England. Of 85

areas in Oxford, 18 are among the 30% most deprived areas in England. These areas suffer multiple levels of deprivation - low skills, low incomes and high levels of crime.

Deprivation ranges significantly across the City, with areas of extreme wealth and abject poverty; this can be seen with people living in the most affluent post codes expected to live ten years longer than residents in deprived wards.

### **1.3 Economy**

Household income is very much in line with the average for Great Britain.

### **1.4 Car ownership**

Car ownership must be considered as this could impact on the ability to travel to leisure facilities. Car ownership varies between wards; with the exception of Cowley Marsh most wards with the highest numbers of households without a car are in the central wards closest to the City centre. Carfax (59.37%) and Holywell (54.09%) have the highest non-car ownership levels; they also have the lowest household levels.

### **1.5 Section one conclusion**

Contrary to the National picture portrayed of Oxford, the City sits in the mid range of deprivation. There are major inequalities with areas of extreme wealth contrasted by areas in the bottom 5% on the indices of deprivation; the two most deprived areas in Oxfordshire are in Blackbird Leys. By transforming the leisure facilities and delivering a vision of *“high quality services across the City that are consistently value for money, and have positive outcomes for service users and the community as a whole”* the City’s leisure offering will support the drive to increase participation and a healthier local populous.

## SECTION TWO - WHERE THE LEISURE FACILITIES ARE NOW

### 2.1 Drivers for change

Consultants' research has highlighted several inter-related problem areas:

1. The need to remodel facilities, especially in the South of the City
2. Poor value for money
3. Low usage of facilities
4. Poor marketing, with a limited knowledge of non users
5. Weak performance management, with a lack of clear targets
6. Lack of direction and stability in the service
7. The need to take a cross sector view of provision

The Fusion contract addresses problems two to six, this review now seeks to address one and seven.

### 2.2 City Overview of Provision

Sport England's *Active Places Power* tool gives accurate up-to-date data that can analyse levels of provision. This comparative data helps form a view alongside the local information. The data excludes private house pools & facilities.

**A table to show the comparative levels of provision for key leisure components**

	<b>England</b>	<b>Oxfordshire County</b>	<b>Oxford City</b>
<b>Swimming</b> (sq meters per 1000 population)	<b>18.72</b>	<b>29.66</b>	<b>42.78</b>
<b>Sports Halls</b> (area in sq meters)	<b>77.66</b>	<b>95.76</b>	<b>80.51</b>
<b>Gyms</b> (number of stations per 1000 pop)	<b>5.61</b>	<b>5.86</b>	<b>8.52</b>

**Table two – Comparative levels of provision for swimming, sports halls and gyms**

The City has extremely high levels of public leisure provision alongside a high number of education sites, private operators and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector providers, yet there are wards with no provision.

However the use of many current Oxford City Leisure sites is below average with the exception of Ferry and the Ice rink that have average usage. This strongly indicates that building more facilities in any area would not be value for money and would further reduce the usage at the current sites.

Research has shown that you would expect the areas closest to the leisure centres to have higher levels of usage, yet chart two (p.7) shows that usage from juniors has a good representation across all wards.

There are various barriers to exercise. The 2007 DCSM Taking Part survey found that of people who had not participated in an active sport during the past 12 months, 'health isn't good enough' was the main reason given for non-participation (47%), followed by 'it's difficult to find the time' (18%). The local barriers are clearly similar with the poor quality of the majority of public leisure facilities & the perceived cost of some activities being additional factors.

Appendix two shows the Audit Commission's recommended catchment areas for each Oxford City Leisure facility. Excluding other sector providers the Councils leisure centres alone cater for the vast proportion of the City. Within the South of the City most parts are covered three or four times over. When the private and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector providers are added, this the level of over provision becomes very apparent.

The second method the Audit Commission recommend to calculate leisure facility catchment areas is to use '20 minute drive time'. Even assuming an average speed of 15mph (due to the urban nature of the City) appendix three further illustrates the high level of coverage.

In the City there are also some agreements in place for community use at Oxford University's Iffley Road campus and one of the private operators (David Lloyd) enables a level of community access (appendix four). The Oxford City Council Leisure Client team will play a major role in ensuring that ways are developed to increase the take up from this part of the City offer and that all new developer agreements are made in consultation with the new Leisure Facilities and Sport Strategies.

A further dimension based on catchment areas is to consider that there are facilities which border the City and that are used by City residents such as the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre.

When the local dimensions such as the University provision and the proportion of time Hinksey is closed are removed, the City still fares very well compared to national averages. However when the comparative data is packaged up, it is very clear that while Oxford is extremely well catered for in relation to quantity of leisure provision, the quality of the provision is not good.

The problem the City faces is that the major part of the inclusive provision delivered by the Council's leisure centres is poor quality and in addition the maintenance costs over the next 10 years are likely to be circa £3.5 million. Within these maintenance issues there are certain projects that will need to be conducted under health and safety grounds and may lead to site closures to complete the works. Much of the works will show little visible improvements to customers e.g. they will be plant, machinery and structural.

A further compounding issue is that outside free swimming where there is a wider draw, the council's leisure facilities in the main satisfy a small core of local and existing users and have a limited wider draw. With the exception of Barton, Ferry and Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, they are not meeting rising

public expectations based on private sector quality at public sector prices that are available elsewhere.

### **2.3 Section two conclusions**

Although progress has been made to transform the leisure centres, the acid test to deliver this transformation will be the Council boldly taking informed high-level decisions around its facilities. This will require remodelling the current oversupply of poor quality, increasingly costly facilities into a high quality, inclusive and sustainable leisure offer.

## **SECTION THREE - A WORLD CLASS LEISURE SERVICE – THE FUTURE**

### **3. The National Picture**

There are two overarching themes that are shaping the national picture:

#### **3.1 Participation**

The accountability for delivering the Government's target of a 1% increase per annum in sport participation (Game Plan, 2002) has moved from Sport England with its £250m budget to the Department of Health with a £104 billion budget. The fact that sport and leisure are recognised as tools to help tackle the worsening health of the nation (High Quality Care for All, June 2008) is most definitely a positive step.

##### **3.1.1 Performance**

The 2012 Olympics is driving performance, and although the merits of Sport England's<sup>2</sup> narrower focus are debatable, the face of sport has changed to be increasingly competitive. The success of team GB in Beijing 2008 has increased the impetus to deliver a well-organised *and* fruitful 2012.

These expectations will undoubtedly lead to an increasing lobby for new facilities at a time when there is increasing pressure on local budgets. A rational sustainable approach is needed that delivers a high quality accessible leisure offer, underpinned by a focus on increasing participation.

#### **3.2 Stakeholders**

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<sup>2</sup> Sport England's agenda is *sport for sports sake*, they will be utilising the majority of their budgetary allocation to support bids from the National Governing Bodies of their 46 focus sports, with a reduced pot for developing participation and community initiatives.

To develop a World Class City leisure offer, understanding who the key stakeholders are and their future plans is required to enable an informed review. Meetings have been held with other key building operators, such as the PCT, education, further education, the library service, community centres and community organisations to look for potential synergies. However, this approach is unlikely to cover every eventuality and all stakeholders, especially when relating to the diverse 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector.

### Primary stakeholders – Direction and opportunities

Agency	Direction/ relevant actions	Opportunities
<b>PCT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commission providers to deliver services</li> <li>- A shifting focus to preventative care</li> <li>- Increased flexibility in deliver</li> <li>- Relevant areas from five year plan –<i>be healthier, promoting physical and mental wellbeing and prevent ill health</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared sites/services</li> <li>- Role in reducing health inequalities – both physical and mental</li> <li>- Improved signposting to pathway for PCT patients</li> <li>- Shared initiatives</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £100m BSF<sup>3</sup> programme, most likely to be three new, or heavily developed primary schools at Rosehill, Woodfarm and Bayards Hill.</li> <li>- They split City into three zones; North Central and South</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure school sites are part of the offer</li> <li>- Link with Children’s centres</li> <li>- New provision at Peers Academy</li> <li>- Support the delivery of children’s and young people plan, extended schools, enjoy and achieve and enabling children to participate in sport for five hours a week (the five hour offer)</li> </ul>
<b>Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a strong push for schools to remove barriers to the community and increase community use of their facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A key part of the Oxford offer, filling gaps in provision to ensure equitable access</li> <li>- An important element will be negotiating community access to the new Oxford Academy site</li> </ul>
<b>Oxford University’s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sporting excellence</li> <li>- Community use agreements in place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complementing the City offer</li> <li>- Increasing Community access</li> </ul>
<b>Oxfordshire Sports Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Following a shift in focus from their primarily funding body Sport England, they are reviewing how they can evolve themselves to meet changing demands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued partnership work to increase participation</li> <li>- Link to Sport England’s changing focus</li> <li>- Increasing role of NGBs<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Community Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A full facility review of Community Centres is pending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blackbird Leys community centre re-housed within BBLC</li> <li>- Improved signposting pathways</li> </ul>
<b>The library Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently developing a library strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint services</li> <li>- Joint promotion</li> </ul>
<b>Social Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extreme budget pressures from an aging population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preventative and secondary care, using individual budgets and direct payments for leisure</li> <li>- Improved signposting of pathway to social care service users</li> <li>- Possible joint use of facilities</li> <li>- Improving the offer to social care</li> <li>- Supporting the CSKI (Commission for Social Care Inspection)</li> </ul>
<b>The private sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on increasing shareholder return</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enabling community access through agreements (appendix four)</li> </ul>

Table three – Main Stakeholders - Direction and opportunities

<sup>3</sup> Building Schools for the Future

<sup>4</sup> National Governing Bodies e.g. the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA)

### **3.3 A World Class Leisure Offer**

The following section illustrates what World Class leisure provision will look like for the two major stakeholders.

### **3.4 Customers**

A range of providers starting at acceptable quality levels through to premium provision for those that wish to spend more on leisure. The quality and service standards should be high and facilities need to be accessible with diverse, inclusive programmes. Modern day customer demands are as such that convenience and high standards are paramount; to this end World Class facilities will become increasingly multi-functional offering community information and advice, cafés, spas, community areas alongside traditional leisure facilities all under the same roof, while being convenient this approach also greatly reduces operating costs. The measure of success is customer satisfaction; there is a corporate plan (2011) objective of increasing this by 10% from the 2006 baseline.

### **3.5 City Residents**

City residents who pay Council Tax will want it to be clear that the facilities offer good value for money.

### **3.6 Section Three Conclusion**

The Council's aim is to ensure an inclusive high quality value for money leisure offer across providers. The Council has two fundamental roles; improving the value for money and quality of its facilities and secondly the Council must increasingly work with other leisure providers to deliver this high quality, co-ordinated, inclusive and accessible City offer.

## **SECTION FOUR – HOW THE COUNCIL CAN DELIVER THIS WORLD CLASS LEISURE OFFER**

### **4. The need to change**

The following section sets out proposals for a vision for the development of World Class Leisure Facilities. This vision is of modern, accessible and value-for-money facilities that maximise the use of space with increasingly multi-functional usage.

#### **4.1 Supporting the delivery of key agendas**

##### **4.1.1 The Local Picture**

The new contract with Fusion focuses on the delivery of two key National Indicators:

- NI8 Adult participation in sport (LAA measure)
- NI 185 CO2 reduction from Local Authority Operations PSA 27

##### **4.1.2 Supporting the delivery of the Corporate Plan**

The service has been underachieving in relation to wider corporate plan targets, City Leisure will aim increasingly to support wider corporate objectives.

##### **4.1.3 Stronger and more inclusive communities**

City Leisure will play an increasing role in supporting the development of stronger and more inclusive communities. Civic pride is enhanced and health and wellbeing improved through a high quality leisure offer that is accessible to all. The current position of having two inadequate facilities with poor accessibility is not productive in achieving either of these aspects.

The corporate plan states that by 2011 there will be *significant improvement in leisure centres, with greater value for money, increased public satisfaction and take-up by young people and hard to reach groups*. The plan has a specific measure by March 2011 of adult participation in sport; that it will increase by 4%, which is also a LAA reward target.

Through the new leisure centres contract; alongside City Leisure taking an active role in the developing of a City leisure offer that includes all sector providers will create far improved inclusive leisure opportunities. Programming needs to be complementary and the Council's leisure stock needs to not only be well managed, but able to meet modern day expectations and modern lifestyles.

#### **4.1.4 Transform Oxford City Council by improving value for money and service performance**

The age and the design of Oxford's older facilities result in high operating costs with significant maintenance backlogs, poor building design results in a poor usage of space, excessive energy usage and increased employee costs which are further exacerbated when there are similar facilities within the same catchment area.

In order to transform the leisure centres to deliver value for money, we require; modern buildings, which have energy management systems and improved insulation and, buildings designed to maximise the usage of every square foot and increasingly provide a range of services under the same roof.

#### **4.1.5 Tackle climate change and promote environment resource management**

Leisure has a significant role to play since they account for 49% of Oxford City Councils' carbon emissions. The older leisure facilities are highly energy inefficient and failing plant equipment is further increasing the service's carbon footprint. The energy inefficiency of the older buildings is now very visible; the introduction of the energy site certificates which rate the buildings efficiently are now displayed at the facilities receptions.

Although improvements such as pool covers have been made, the age and poor condition of the older sites means that even with significant investment they will remain highly energy inefficient. To support the corporate plan objective of reducing carbon dioxide emission from Oxford City Council's buildings and operations by at least 25% compared to 2005 levels the service must radically change. By combining the provision of the poor quality high cost facilities into fewer, yet higher quality community facilities with energy management systems, the positive impact on carbon reduction will go a long way towards the overall Council target. This can be further enhanced and made more inclusive with improved bus routes and cycle ways to these high quality facilities, which further reduces carbon omissions.

#### **4.1.6 Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour**

The service is increasingly used by young people due to initiatives such as free swimming. The challenge is to further engage with today's young people with facilities and more services that appeal to them.

The new contract with Fusion will enable more exciting and innovative programming that will offer a wide range of activities to our young people and attract a more diverse user base.

#### **4.1.7 Supporting new agendas**

City Leisure needs to try to forecast change and understand and support future agendas. The new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is the additional part of the national performance framework complementing the new 198 National Indicator set. The key questions from the CAA that the service has a significant impact on are:

- How healthy and well-supported are people?
- How well is inequality being addressed?

The other relevant areas from the CAA that will influence the direction of the service are the need to *support families* and *children and young people*.

## **4.2 Access**

To deliver the City's vision, people who do not have transport and do not live within easy walking distance of facilities cannot be excluded. The service must be involved in planning developments to promote improved cycle ways and bus routes to leisure facilities.

### **4.2.1 Place shaping**

Oxford is undergoing significant changes, not least the West End Development and the urban extension to the South of Grenoble Road. This review will enable the service to take an overview of leisure provision and be active in the development of the City to help shape vibrant and active communities.

### **4.2.2 Local planning policy**

A strategic approach to planning is essential in the delivery of a City Leisure offer; City Leisure will work to ensure that previous developer contributions between Section 106 agreements work for the community and that future agreements take account of the current provision.

City Leisure must be involved in developments such as new school sites from an early stage to support schools in improving their community access in accordance with the extended schools agenda. This will increase the likelihood of school leisure facilities complementing as opposed to competing with the Leisure Offer.

## **4.3 Ensuring a sustainable service**

The Olympics has the potential to deliver on several levels; from increasing participation and improving sporting performance with the knock on effect on National pride and the health of the nation, through to the potential economic benefits such as increased tourism and an improved infrastructure. The Oxford challenge is to create a legacy that enables the delivery of longer-term strategic objectives such as increased participation and improved quality alongside value for money.

## **4.4 Improving quality**

The contract with Fusion will lead to a major investment programme and the implementation of the industries recognised quality management system (QMS) QUEST at all sites. Barton's successful QUEST accreditation has laid solid foundations for continuous improvements in operational systems.

#### **4.5 The Council's Leisure Facilities – a key part of the leisure offer**

As table four (p.14) shows there are a number of opportunities from working closer with the main organisation with a stake in the provision of leisure in the City. To do this, the City needs to clarify its role. The most important opportunity and the one the City is by far the best placed to do is the development of the overall leisure offer; coordinating and supporting providers to enable a more harmonised offering. This will require working in partnership with private and voluntary sector providers to increase participation as opposed to competing for existing users.

Alongside this the Council's leisure stock needs to improve, with a clear plan for each site. The following options appraisal details the reasons for the recommendations to remodel the Council Leisure Facilities.

#### **4.6 Options Appraisal for the Council's Leisure Facilities**

##### **4.6.1 Status quo**

Within the current financial climate this is not an option. The preparation for the leisure facilities contract have identified £313,000 medium term essential repairs and maintenance spend at Blackbird Leys Pool and £879,000 at Temple Cowley. Both sites have costly work items that if they are not rectified will lead to unplanned closures.

##### **4.6.2 Close Temple Cowley and create a combined competition pool and ice rink.**

The costs estimates of circa £30m and the requirement for a seven-acre site mean that the scheme appears to be a long way from being deliverable in the current economic climate.

##### **4.6.3 Remodel the leisure facilities creating a high quality competition pool attached to Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre**

This option is achievable and offers the opportunity to transform Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre into a community leisure centre with a far wider customer catchment area, stretching across the whole of the Southern part of the City.

Both options 4.6.2 and 4.6.3 would leave for a closure of Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool once the new competition pool had been opened.

## **4.7 Reasoning behind the options appraisal**

The Council currently has seven leisure facilities managed under a contract with Fusion Lifestyle that runs until 2019, with an option to extend this for a further five years. Blackbird Leys Leisure centre, Ferry and Barton are all on recently developed sites providing modern facilities.

The Ice Rink, Blackbird Leys Pool and Temple Cowley Pools have significant maintenance backlogs and each site will need major refurbishments in multi million pound schemes if they are not to be closed. However it is questionable that such investment would provide good value for money. The accumulated cost of redeveloping these sites would be circa £20 million. The ice rink has little direct competition although even in its poor state of repair it is still well used showing a strong demand for an Ice Rink. Blackbird Leys Pool and Temple Cowley Pools directly compete with each other offering similar facilities in very close proximity in the South of the City. This will be further exacerbated in 2010 when the Oxford Academy opens its new sports provision at Littlemore, which will include a sports hall, outdoor sports facilities (an astroturf pitch and six multi use games areas) and a gym.

The Fusion leisure contract enables sites with a potential limited life such as Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys pool to be removed from the contract without compensation payments being made to Fusion. At all other sites there are substantial costs to cover the costs of the investment that Fusion have made to improve those facilities.

Leisure operators such as Fusion, factor the high costs and uncertainty of maintenance issues as risk areas and as such it has been more financially advantageous for the Council to retain this risk and fund the major items of maintenance at these older centres. This means that the Council retains the risk for potential maintenance issues such as plant failure. As such it is still crucial for Oxford City Council to take difficult decisions about remodelling the leisure facilities to ensure that the savings are delivered.

It must also be remembered that the Council are not the only provider of affordable leisure. In the South of the City the Lord Nuffield Club, which is just 1km, or a three minute drive from Temple Cowley offers quality provision, yet is struggling due low use and high levels of competition, combined with an economic downturn. Support and promoting community use at sites that are community managed may enable a reduction in directly managed sites; revenue savings can then be invested into improving the quality of the remaining Council facilities.

The City also needs to work more closely with schools to increasingly open up their sites to the community. Again in the South of the City less than one minutes drive from Temple Cowley is Oxford Community School. The school site is already open until 10.00pm offering commendable community access to a tennis club and to football pitches used by Oxford United Youth. The potential BSF (building schools for the future) funding that the school are targeting would further enhance the school's community leisure offer with their

development plans including increased leisure provision such as a new community astro turf, a second sports hall and a small gym.

A high quality competition pool, with sufficient parking that is still accessible to people in the area on top of the two new modern high quality leisure facilities would create a sustainable leisure offering in the South East of the City.

#### **4.6.1 Developing the Council's Leisure Facilities**

A key part of developing a world-class leisure offer is ensuring the Council's leisure stock are modern, fit for purpose facilities.

Based on the Audit Commission guidance of leisure centre catchments areas being 2 Km, if we had a blank canvas we would build three multifunctional leisure centres, each delivering a specialist focus sport. The multi functionality would not just be the range of sporting pursuits, the centre would incorporate other services such as community rooms, GPs, libraries, this would promote leisure to traditional none leisure users and significantly reduce overheads with shared space. If the Council decided that ice-skating and an outdoor pool were crucial ingredients then they would be attached to the facilities to reduce operating costs. To ensure these facilities were accessible to all they would be serviced with excellent concessionary transports routes.

In reality, we are not starting from scratch and there is a mix of facilities that, with the exception of Ferry do not occupy these ideal sites.

The challenge is to remodel the current high cost and underused sites in a way that enables the inclusive part of the City Leisure Offer to be strengthened, maximising participation in a sustainable way and supporting the delivery of other inclusive providers.

The review details the future for each of the Council's Leisure facilities and the role of the Council and Fusion within this transformation. The costs for the initial development works will be in the main funded by Oxford City Council and are detailed in the project initiation document that accompanies this review. The financial risk for these developments remains with Fusion Lifestyle.

#### **4.6.2 Barton Pool**

Built in 2006 with an award winning design Barton pool is significantly underused and as of 2008 is achieving less than half of the usage targeted in the original business case<sup>5</sup>. The adjacent primary school has been identified within the BSF programme for a level of redevelopment.

The main reasons for the under use of the pool are; as Barton lacks a gym, the centre only has two of the key components for a leisure facility, the centre

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<sup>5</sup> 07/08 the centre achieved 46k visits against a target of 91k

competes for class usage with a heavily subsidised community centre and the site has not been marketed as effectively as it could have been.

### **Recommendation**

The centre will become an increasingly important part of the portfolio. Fusion will be developing a new gym over the flat roof next to the dance studio which when integrated with improved marketing will lead to increased usage.

#### **4.6.3 Hinksey Pool**

One of a diminishing number of inclusive facilities of its type; outdoor pools although popular with users and much loved summer facilities, are relatively expensive to operate particularly in poor summers. The facility compliments its park setting and in hot summers is very busy, making it a real community asset.

Although the site has limited parking it is in close proximity to a park and ride route and other buses, which makes it an accessible facility.

### **Recommendation**

Key maintenance such as relining the pool will be prioritised. Work will also be undertaken to improve the wider park and develop a more cohesive potentially all year round leisure offer.

#### **4.6.4 Ferry Sport Centre**

The busiest Oxford City Council facility, which has continued to improve its performance since its refurbishment in 2004/05.

### **Recommendation**

Fusion are planning to extend the gym and further improve generally the quality of the site and the customer experience.

#### **4.6.5 Temple Cowley Pools & Fitness Centre**

Usage is in decline at what remains a relatively busy site; the more concerning trend at the centre is the increasing cost of management and maintenance, which in 07/08 was £533k. This makes it by far the most costly site to run. The site is in need of significant repair and maintenance works; the pool ceiling is held up with a temporary scaffold with an estimated two-year life span.

It has always been deemed as important for a City the size of Oxford to have a swimming facility suitable for competitive swimming and is capable of catering for regional events. To meet this end it needs spectator seating and adequate car parking.

The conditions survey suggests that costs to maintain the building are £2.3m over the next four years. With a building of this age it would be wrong to assume that further work will not be uncovered when the original works commence. The diving pool has now been out of action since 2003 and bringing it back into operation would be costly.

The £2.3m required in tackling the maintenance backlog and short-term maintenance works is significant, and then have on top the spiralling revenue costs (£533k in 07/08). This maintenance work would not create a modern facility, but be lost in repairs that are not visible to the customers.

Taking this into account and the fact that the site has very limited car parking it would appear a more prudent decision to look to rebuild the competition pool on more accessible site that has sufficient parking.

The City owns the site and as such there would be a capital gain that could be reinvested into the development of a new modern competition pool. Previous site searches have been undertaken and with exception of the options of locating the pool at Blackbird Leys require significant capital investment to purchase the land.

## **Recommendations**

Fusion intends to make some minor changes to help to control the revenue costs. This is due to the beginning of planning the total rebuild of a competition pool at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre.

### **4.6.6 Blackbird Leys Pool**

The pool lies in an area previously written about as having poor quality provision. It is not well-used, and is in a poor state of repair, with an annual cost to the Council of £102k (07/08). There is a financial “time bomb” ticking away at the centre with the pool plant in need of replacement at a cost of £275K, this issue has already led to a spate of closures where manual intervention has failed to maintain the required standards. The pool is predominantly used by local schools to deliver their swimming lessons, which can relatively easily be transferred to another site. The County are also reviewing their involvement in the site, as they own the land.

The centre lies less than a one-minute drive just 482 metres from Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended to review the provision as part of the wider review of the rejuvenation of the Blackbird Leys Leisure centre. It would only be recommended to close the pool if a suitable replacement that caters for the school lessons has been progressed. It must be flagged that the pool plant issue may lead to the centre closing if substantial funding cannot be found.

#### **4.6.7 Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre**

This is a dry facility that has been accused of not meeting the needs of local residents; the centre is again severely underused, with specific areas of the centre not used at all. The centres net cost to the Council in 07/08 was £322k. There is preliminary investigatory work underway to develop an AstroTurf pitch on the site.

#### **Recommendation**

Fusion plans to develop the centre, again detailed in the accompanying Project Initiation Document. Key changes will be the extension of the gym and to better utilise the space in the centre by developing unused areas such as the snooker room into areas with an evidence demand such as a spinning studio.

The centre must focus heavily in the wider Blackbird Leys review and it offers the potential to be transformed into a community leisure hub.

In the dialogue with Fusion and the other unsuccessful final tenderer both companies made it clear that they saw Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre as the ideal site for a replacement competition pool. Both believed that the improvements they had planned for the centre would significantly increase usage and when coupled with a competition pool both saw the centre as having great potential and the ability to draw in customers from a far wider catchment area. The pool would actively increase social inclusion in an area of deprivation. A further benefit identified was that the centre has good parking, which is crucial for a competition pool.

Such a significant modern leisure centre with a competition pool would have a far greater catchment area than the average catchments shown in appendix two and three. Alongside a travel plan this would enable equitable access from across the City and neighbouring districts.

#### **Recommendation**

The capital cost of the development of a competition pool is estimated to be £7m. Funding for the pool would come from a combination of; a bid to Sport England under the free swimming capital improvement programme, prudential borrowing funded by revenue savings from the closure of Temple Cowley, capital from the land disposal of Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre and potential developer contributions. It must be noted that with interest rates currently very low that there is an ideal window of opportunity to deliver this option.

#### **4.6.8 Ice Rink**

The Ice Rink is of regional importance attracting many visitors from outside the City. The recent condition survey specifies that the facility will need

£1,655,500 over the next four years and its ancillary features limit the site. That said, it is the only facility that generates a surplus, £73k in 07/08.

Most modern ice rinks have been updated with environmentally friendly adaptations such as low emissive ceilings, which save on utilities. Oxford ice rink is in need of an extensive update, but finds itself centrally placed on the site that is proposed for the West End Development.

Consultation has found that an ice rink is viewed as a “must have” facility within the West End Development. The idea of a combined ice rink with a leisure centre holds sound on environmental grounds due to the ability to utilise a combined heat power unit, yet the cost estimates, which are in the region of £30m and the requirement for a seven acre site mean that such an aspiration is unlikely to be deliverable.

### **Recommendation**

Due to the recession the likelihood of the ice rink being rebuilt within the life of the ten-year contract is viewed as minimal. As such Fusion are planning to make improvements to the site to deal with essential repairs and maintenance, improve energy efficiency and improve usage.

### **4.7 Summary of Oxford City Council facility developments**

Difficult decisions need to be taken and there are clearly significant issues surrounding land ownership, planning issues, community benefit arrangements and fit with partner development plans. The decisions need to be taken within the context of the information that is in place and waiting for a perfect scenario will lead to buildings closing themselves and increasing Health & Safety risks. Following the agreement to the recommendations within this review a detailed business case will be made to support each development.

### **4.8 Financial implications of the recommended options**

<b>SITE</b>	<b>ANNUAL OPERATING COST (£)</b>	<b>CAPITAL COST (£)</b>
Temple Cowley	539,000	879,000 *
Blackbird Leys Pool	100,000	421,000 *
<b>Total:</b>	<b>639,000</b>	<b>1,300,000</b>

\* Minimum levels of medium term essential repairs & maintenance

SITE	ANNUAL OPERATING COST (£)	CAPITAL COST (£)
<b>New Facility</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>7,000,000</b>
Temple Cowley	(539,000)	(879,000)+
Blackbird Leys Pool	(100,000)	(421,000)+
Income from sale of Temple Cowley site		(3,000,000)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>(439,000)</b>	<b>2,700,000</b>
Indicative Payback on outstanding capital costs		6.15 Yrs

+ Savings on medium term repairs & maintenance

**Table four – financial implication of the leisure facilities review**

### Financial Notes:

- That the annual capital costs identified at Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys pool are only for urgent repairs and maintenance. There are significantly more costs as identified in appendix six.
- Table five makes no provision for the repayment of capital charges or severance payments.

### The figures exclude:

- Potential funding from Sport England's capital free swimming pot where Oxford City Council are bidding for £500,000
- Potential S106 monies

## 4.9 Conclusion - Section four and overall

There needs to be a recognition that the Council's leisure facilities are part of a City Leisure offer and can neither afford nor needs to provide facilities so close together that they actively compete for usage and income. The maintenance backlog and current high operating costs mean there is a financial time bomb ticking away within in Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys pool.

## SECTION FIVE - RECOMMENDATIONS

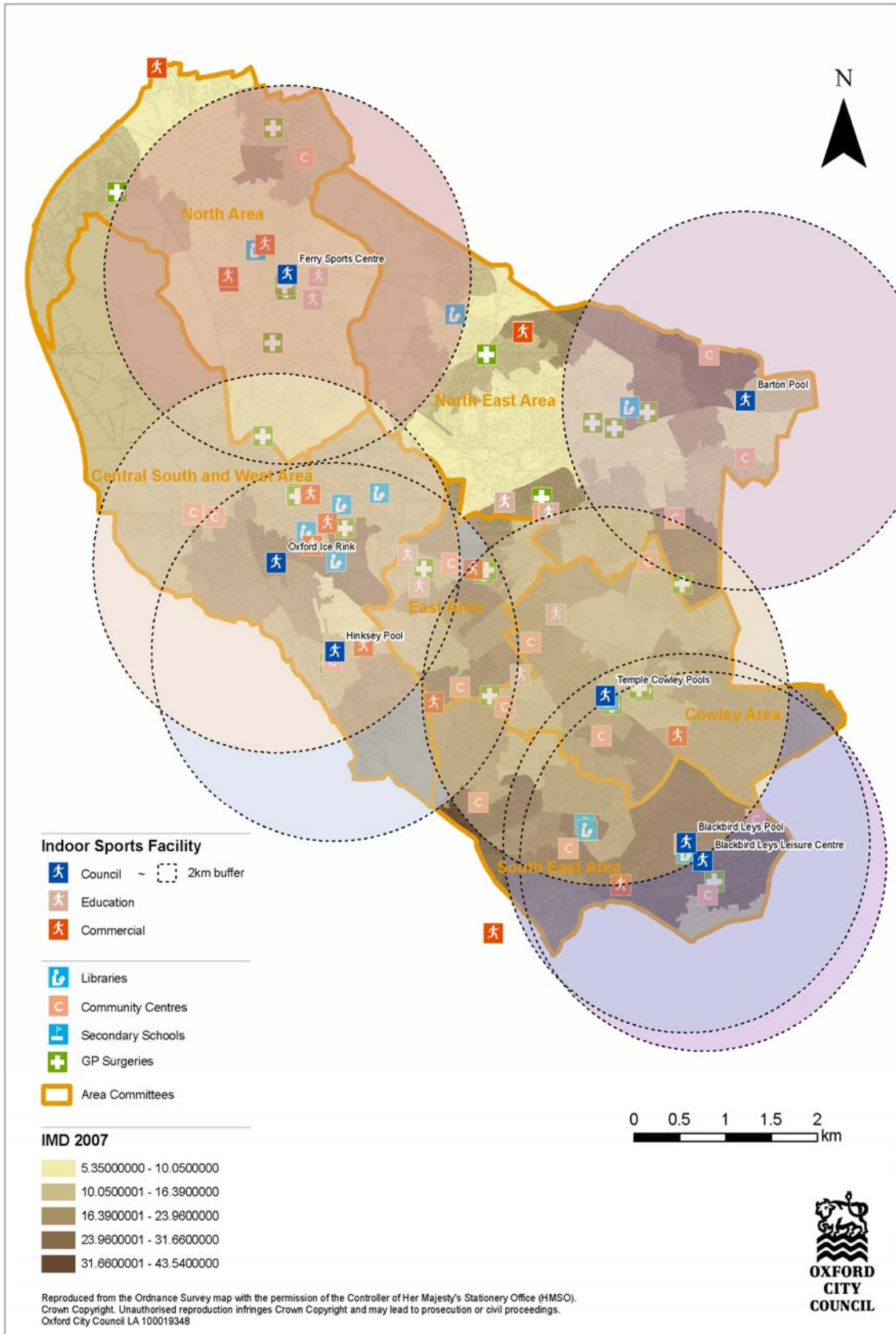
1. That City Leisure takes the lead role in co-ordinating the City Leisure Offer to increase participation in sport and physical activity.
2. That school sites are incorporated as key ingredients in the City Leisure Offer, with increased community usage of the leisure provision at school sites.

3. That City Leisure is actively involved in shaping the regeneration of the City. That all planning decisions relating to sport and leisure are taken in consultation with the sport and leisure strategies to enable the City Offer to effectively be developed.
4. That a new competition pool be built at the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre site.
5. When the new pool is complete then all lessons from Blackbird Leys pool would be able to transfer to the new facility enabling the site to close and that Temple Cowley Pool is scheduled for closure and that the current £533k per annum subsidy, alongside the £2.3m maintenance backlog costs, are spent on the development of a new state of the art competition and general swimming pool at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre.

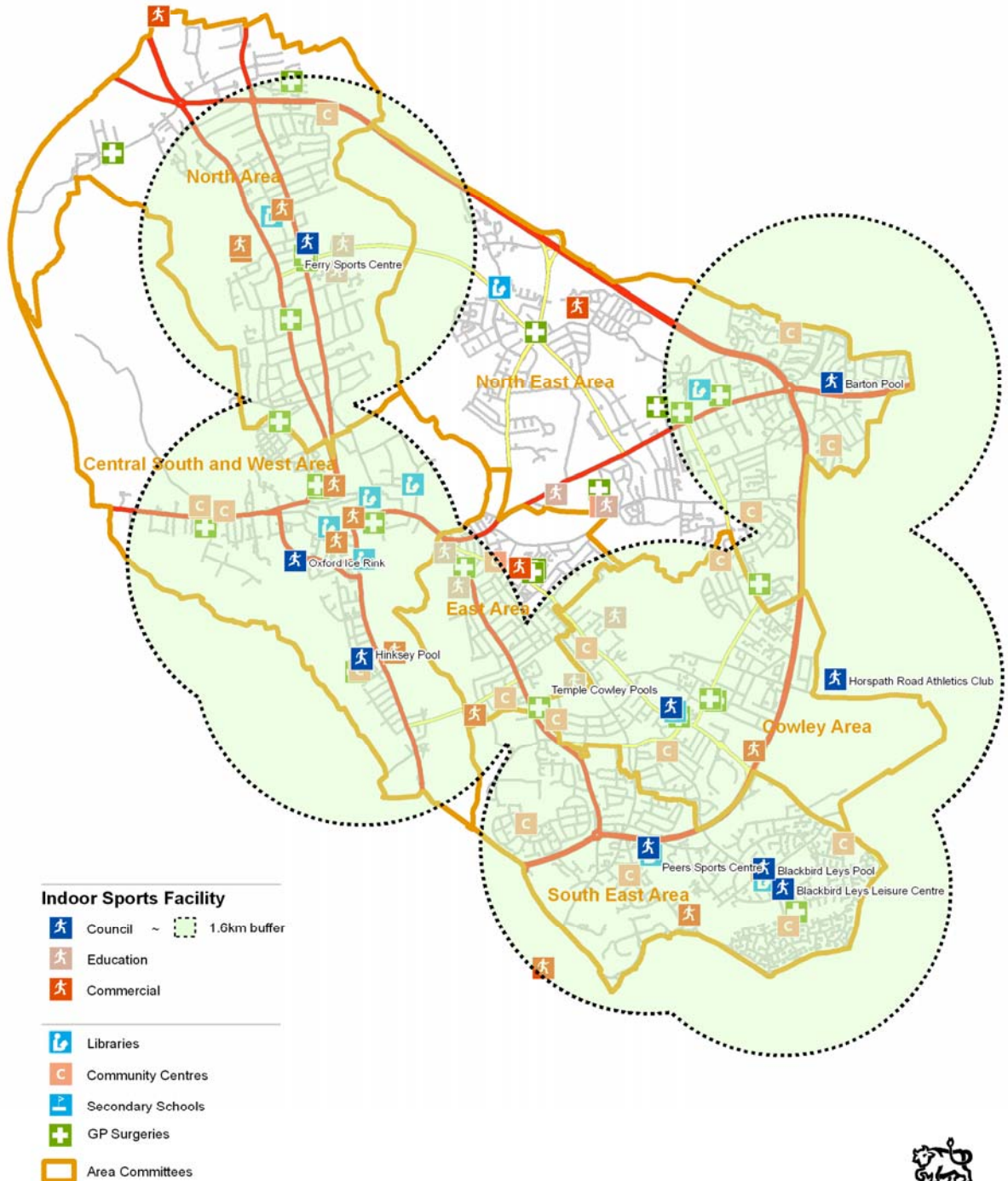
### Appendix One – A Summary of leisure research from 2000 onwards

TITLE	CONDUCTED BY	WHEN	CONTEXT	RELEVANT FINDINGS
Sport and Leisure Operational Review	Deloitte	2001	A review into delivery options for leisure services	That none for profit delivery options would enable VAT and NNDR relief that could then be reinvested back into the leisure facilities.
Indoor Facilities Strategy	Strategic Leisure (SL)	Appointed Sept 2003 – final draft Jan 2006	A in-depth analysis into the indoor facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consolidation of facilities in the South</li> <li>2. Development of a Town centre facility/replacing the ice rink</li> <li>3. Re-negotiate partnership agreements to sports hall facilities on education sites</li> <li>4. Increased sports development resources</li> </ol>
Open space, sport and recreation assessment	Strategic Leisure (SL)	Sept 2003 – Jan 06	A in-depth analysis into the sport and leisure facilities, outdoor recreation and community centres	An extensive action plan was developed focusing on high quality, multi use facilities and the need to take a City wide view on what is on offer
Leisure Service Management Options	KPMG	July 2006	A review of potential management options for leisure centres	That none for profit delivery options would enable VAT and NNDR relief that could then be reinvested back into the leisure facilities.
Leisure best Value Review	KPMG	Oct 2006	Assessing the performance of the leisure service	At this date was the service was deemed a poor, no star service

**Appendix Two – The Catchments Areas of Oxford City Leisure  
Facilities**  
**(Based on a 2km buffer)**



# Appendix Three - The Catchments Areas of Oxford City Leisure Facilities based on a 20 minute drive time at 15mph



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 Oxford City Council LA 100019348

Scale: 1:50,000





## **Appendix Four – A summary of Fusions research on the remodelling of the City’s leisure facilities**

*As the council’s chosen partner to operate and manage the leisure facilities in the city we are extremely keen to see the portfolio of buildings utilised in the most efficient and effective way to support us in delivering the objectives of the partnership.*

*At Fusion we agree with the recommendations outlined within the review. We strongly believe that a new competition pool at Blackbird Leys would dramatically upgrade Oxford facilities and deliver the councils objective of a ‘World Class’ city. This development would ensure that the South side of the city has a real ‘destination’ leisure facility that comprises the essential mix of sporting, community and social activities to support not only its direct community but attract users from a wider demographic.*

*The maintenance costs to ‘patch up’ Temple Cowley & Blackbird Leys Pool are substantial and would not necessarily offer the user an improved experience as the works are in the majority ‘back of house’. These sites currently do not offer a complete visit experience with issues around car parking, changing room qualities as well as ongoing maintenance issues that impact on the quality of the service. To redirect this capital to a new development would contribute a significant part of the funding required and ensure that a purpose built facility can meet the expectations of the users.*

*Further to redirecting maintenance costs a new build pool versus the closure of two aged buildings would have deliver vastly improved environmental impact and reduced ongoing utility costs through fewer sites to power but also an extremely efficient building.*

*With a combined wet and dry site the operational management synergies and economies of scale would be far more efficient, thus minimising subsidy requirements and contributing to the long-term sustainability of the overall leisure offer.*

*Locating the destination leisure facility would also help to increase participation amongst traditionally under-represented groups, such as those on low income and BME.*

*With the planned extensions at Ferry and Barton this would ensure that the city is surrounded by 3 centres, all recently refurbished and in a position to attract and facilitate greater usage in line with our plans to increase participation.*

*Relocating existing ‘wet’ activities from both Temple and Blackbird Leys pool would create a ‘centre of excellence’ for swimming and associated programs within Oxford city.*

### Appendix Five – Joint Use Community facilities Agreements/Community Access Packages covered by S106

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Date of Agreement</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Trigger</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Land at Oxford Business Park, Garsington Rd – erection of David Lloyd Leisure	8.1.03	Lye Valley COW	Prior to occupation to submit Community Access Package to Council	Community Access Package designed to promote mass participation in tennis
Crescent Road – Morris Motors Sports Ground	03.12.04	Cowley Marsh Ward COW	Prior to occupation of new hall to enter into agreement for community access package	Community Access Package to be entered into providing local groups and schools with access to Sports building before occupation.
Swimming Pool of Oxford University Sports Centre, Iffley Road, Oxford	29.01.03	St Mary's E	Summer 2003 (and to be reviewed in June of each year)	OUFAL will make available the Facility for public use and school use on the terms and at the times set out in agreement for the benefit of the public and schools
Magdalen College School Cowley Place	11.07.00	St Mary's E	Prior to development being bought into use	Enter into joint use agreement with the Council to allow use of development by schools, colleges, clubs and local community groups.
The Sports Centre, Iffley Road	15.03.98	St Mary's E	Prior to commencement	OUFAL will enter into joint use agreement for use of the all weather hockey pitch
Former OAC site on land east of Oxford Canal and accessed from Woodstock Rd – erection 71 houses&102 flats & community facilities	12.03.04	St Mary's N	Scheme of Community use of Ruskin Facilities	Construction on the blue land of community facilities of 200 sqm or such other area agreed by the parties.
Milham Ford School, Harberton Mead – convert existing school to 30 flats plus erection 34 houses & 45 flats. Convert Playing field to public open space & ecology park	26.11.02	Headington Hill & Northway NE	Completion of lease for playing fields area	Joint use agreement for playing pitch by St Michaels CE School, Marston RD during term time & local community

Oxford United Football Club. Kassam Stadium	15.10.01			Recreation (SLICE) card discount of 20% for membership. Recreation area to be retained by the City for development. Up to 50 tickets for home matches. One quarter page available in home match programme. City outreach staff provided with 20 pre match entertainment demonstrations. First team players available for City initiatives. Raise profile for Girls and Women football. Availability of various facilities to City Development initiatives including the grounds for 4 matches.
St Gregory the Great School Astro Turf Pitch				This is a condition in the planning permission that the County are dealing with that the school is to enter into a joint use agreement. This has not yet been done. John Hamilton from Oxfordshire County Council is dealing with this.

### Appendix Six – A Summary of each facility and recommendations based on 07/08 data

Facility	Financial Performance	Usage	Maintenance issues (2009-2012)	Recommendations	Implications of the Recommendations
Barton	Net Cost – (-£348k) Subsidy per user - £7.49 ↓	46k ↓	Replace chlorine generator and split air conditioning units. Capital £90,000 Revenue £185,000	Develop a gym Ensure complementary programming of other local facilities	Increase in usage and reduction in the subsidy Improved facility
Blackbird Leys LC	Net Cost – (-£322k) Subsidy per user - £4.52 ▬	71k ↑	Replace air handling units and boilers, replace air conditioning units, revamp bar area, Capital £649,000 Revenue £476,000	Link into the wider Blackbird Leys facility review Develop the centre as a community leisure centre Maximise the use of space i.e. the snooker hall, the café, and the old bar. Extend the gym	Increase in usage and reduction in the subsidy Improved facility
Blackbird Leys Pool	Net Cost – (-£102k) Subsidy per user - £2.00 ↓	51k ↓	Major plant works, roof repairs and decoration. Capital £490,000 Revenue £202,000	Link into the wider Blackbird Leys facility review	Revenue savings - £102k Capital savings – nil (The County own the land)
Ferry	Net Cost – (-£135k) Subsidy per user - £0.49 ↓	277k ↑	General works Capital £370,000 Revenue £493,000	Extend the gym and general improvements	Increase in usage and reduction in the subsidy Improved facility
Hinksey	Net Cost – (-£182k) Subsidy per user - £6.38 ↓	28k ↓	Re-line pool tank Capital £172,000 Revenue £272,000	Explore options to improve the as part of a wider park offering Re-line the pool	Gradual increase in usage and reduction in the subsidy Improved facility
Ice Rink	Net Cost - £73k (surplus) Subsidy per user - £0.34 ▬	212k ▬	Replace refrigeration system, refurbishment, DDA mods to entrance, replace PA system, replace lighting.	Improved entrance, café, changing rooms and aesthetics of the facility.	Gradual increase in usage and reduction in the subsidy

			Capital £655,000 Revenue £1,005,000		
Temple Cowley	Net Cost - £533k Subsidy per user - £3.24 ↓	164k ↓	Major investment is needed in the plant, fabric and DDA. Condition survey indicates increased costs. Capital £1,718,000 Revenue £674,000	Close the centre in 2011	Revenue savings – above £533k Capital savings- CK



Declining performance



Improving performance



Steady performance

The arrow indicates the three-year trend for usage and financial performance

The Net cost is the cost to keep the centre open (expenditure – income)

