

## **LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES**

**REPORT TO:** Environment, Sustainability, Sport & Culture Committee

**DATE:** 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**REPORT OF:** Assistant Director of Leisure

**TITLE OF DECISION** Pools on the Park – Health Suite

**WARDS:**

**KEY DECISION? NO**

**IF YES, IN FORWARD PLAN? YES**

**For general release**

### **1. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

The Sports and Fitness Service seeks consideration of the future of the Health Suite at Pools on the Park as it has reached the end of its life and has been unavailable to the public since March 2020.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee is asked to approve Option 2 and replace the Health Suite with a new Group Exercise Studio.

### **3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

3.1 The Health Suite has traditionally been a facility provided at Pools on the Park and was last refurbished in 2005. The facility consisted of a spa bath, sauna, steam room, feature fireplace, drench shower and a dedicated plant room.

3.2 The Health Suite was closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and during the enforced closure the opportunity was taken to carry out necessary electrical surveys, fire safety surveys and onsite maintenance. During this work it became clear that the facilities were no longer fit for use as a Health Suite. The area has remained closed since this date and in July 2022 the suite was fully stripped out to allow for a more detailed

understanding of the construction costs relating to the various options outlined in this paper.

3.3 The Council is developing a Leisure, Sports and Physical Activity Strategy setting out its strategic vision for increasing movement within the borough. The Sports and Fitness Service has the aim to increase and widen participation in physical activity and to provide opportunities for those that are not currently physically active. Over the last 18 months information has been gathered on all areas of provision including consultation with users around barriers to the existing leisure opportunities, usage and numbers of customers, condition of our assets, financial performance, and a needs assessment. The full strategy will be considered at a future Committee. The evidence base for the strategy endorses the current aim of the service and the recommendation in this report. There is a clear need to improve health outcomes within the borough.

3.4 In December 2022, Sport England published a report titled [Future of Public Sector Leisure](#) setting out a compelling narrative for the leisure sector to evolve from a traditional leisure service to an active well-being service.

3.5 This is a key driving factor behind the development of the new Leisure Strategy. As a result, the Sports and Fitness Service has considered how the space can be used to directly contribute to widening participation in physical activity. There is the opportunity to use the evidence gathered for the strategy in partnership with Public Health and the wider health sector to achieve a new use for the space that will support positive health outcomes.

3.6 There are two options to be considered as set out below:

3.7 **Option One** - Re-provide the Health Suite facilities, with a new steam room, sauna, spa bath, drench shower and associated plant.

3.8 Re-provision of the same facilities would allow some continuity in provision, but this facility would make a limited contribution to the aim of the sports and fitness service to increase and widen participation in physical activity and is unlikely to see any significant increase in income.

3.9 The cost of replacing the Health Suite is estimated to be **£210,000 (Estimated cost as at November 2022)**. The running costs of a new health suite would also be significant due to the high-power requirement to operate. This is at odds with the decarbonisation work the Council is undertaking as part of its climate emergency strategy and action plan.

3.10 It is not possible to separate out the running costs of the previous Health suite, but there is a high level of confidence that a group exercise studio would be cheaper to run and more in line with climate goals. Consequently,

the net income from a group exercise studio would be more favourable with less ongoing maintenance required.

3.11 **Option Two** - Replace the Health Suite with a new Group Exercise Studio

3.12 Currently group exercise sessions at Pools on the Park are often oversubscribed and the space that is currently occupied by the Health Suite could be converted to allow provision of an additional group exercise studio. This would increase the capacity to deliver group exercise and create an opportunity for a new programme to widen participation and to encourage residents that are not currently participating in physical activity to become more physically active.

3.13 Furthermore, a latent demand exercise conducted to inform the Leisure Strategy suggests there is demand for fitness memberships in the area. Access to broad and accessible group exercise is a determining factor in recruitment and retention of members.

3.14 The cost of replacing the Health Suite with a new Group Exercise Studio is estimated to be **£140,000(Estimated cost as at November 2022)**. The running costs of a Group Exercise Studio would be minimal and limited to lighting, heating and cooling with no requirement for high power usage equipment.

3.15 Conversion to a Group exercise studio is also expected to see an increase in opportunities for new revenue. The service is currently working with Public Health on delivery of a new scheme from 2024 which would be made possible by the increased provision of studio space.

3.16 A new studio will also allow the Sports and Fitness Service to deliver targeted classes in conjunction with partners such as PH / Falls network as capacity will increase significantly, with the current studio running very close to capacity.

3.17 A new Studio will create additional capacity to accommodate targeted Health improvement classes of 17 classes per week, with 10 participants in each equates to an increase in participation of 170 people per week The increase in capacity will also allow the service to bid for and deliver borough wide schemes such as Exercise on Referral / Active Living.

3.18 The estimated increase in Income is set out in the table below:

	<b>Classes P/W</b>	<b>Attendance Per Class</b>	<b>Attendance Per Week</b>	<b>Income per week £4.10 per session</b>	<b>Annual Income (50 weeks)</b>
<b>Health Improvement / Public Health classes</b>	17	10	170	697	<b>£ 34,850.00</b>
<b>External Rentals</b>	Based on 50% of current studio due to reduce availability				<b>£3,573.00</b>
<b>New Memberships</b>	1% increase per month over 12 months				<b>£8,000</b>
<b>New Classes</b>	Based on an addition of 1/3 of the current class numbers				<b>£ 10,663.27</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>					<b>£ 57,086.27</b>

#### 4. Recommendation

It is the recommendation to the Committee that Option Two is approved to deliver a greater number of health outcomes at a lower investment and lower running costs.

#### 5. Planning & Consent

Subject to approval, the works will be included in a wider package of capital works planned at Pools on the park to reduce disruption and potentially realise economies of scale. Due to the listed status of the building a single planning application will be required. All of the works are managed by Design Services

#### 6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE ON THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Health Suite has been shut since March 2020 and work is currently underway in developing a leisure strategy for future provision of leisure facilities within the Borough.
- 6.2 There is £187,000 approved budgetary provision in the Council's capital programme for the approved works. The approved capital budget is insufficient for the estimated cost to deliver Option 1. £23,000 of further funding would be required to be identified if this is option is chosen. Option 2 is the recommended option, and it can be delivered from within the existing approved budget.

#### 7. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Any procurement activity associated with this report will be in line with the councils procurement policy and in consultation with the Procurement team.

## **8. COMMENTS OF THE SOUTH LONDON LEGAL PARTNERSHIP ON THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications expected as a result of this paper.

## **9. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

- 9.1 A consultation exercise was completed in August 2021 to include the views of both Users and Non-Users. The consultation had 479 respondents, with 54% confirming they were users of the previous Health Suite. 78% of respondents were in favour of Option A: To replace the existing Health Suite with new environmentally sustainable facilities and to maintain the area as a Health Suite facility. A full breakdown of the survey results can be found in appendix 11.1
- 9.2 As part of the work carried out on the development of the leisure, sport and physical activity strategy, an Indoor Built Facility Assessment was undertaken. This largely supports that there would be demand and use of a Group Exercise Studio at Pools on the Park. It identified that there is a need for more flexible spaces in the Borough, especially during daytime hours. The public consultation which was conducted for the strategy also indicated that flexible use of the leisure centres and the ability to run other services from them would encourage users to attend a council facility. This is also inline with the principles of the Council's Asset Management Strategy.
- 9.3 However, there is some evidence to suggest that a Health Suite would be beneficial to the Council's leisure provision and some respondents to the strategy's public consultation communicated that the Health Suite is an important element for them. As such, a full feasibility will be undertaken as part of the strategy development to assess whether there should be a longer-term aspiration for the strategy to include the provision of a larger, higher quality and more sustainable Health Suite that would add more commercial value in the long-term. It is important to note that should a decision be made regarding provision of any future health suite at Pools on the Park, it would not be in the same location as the existing suite and would be a an entirely different specification. Therefore, the recommendation to transform the existing suite into a group exercise studio remains the best option for maximising health and financial outcomes in the short term.
- 9.3 Furthermore, consultation with Public Health has indicated that there is a desire to deliver Exercise / GP referral schemes in Richmond, and the

provision of a new studio would provide additional space for these activities to be provided.

## 10. WIDER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

<b>10.1 POLICY IMPLICATIONS / CONSIDERATIONS</b>
Confirming support for the inclusion of a new Studio would be in line with the aims and objectives of <i>Culture Richmond</i> vision.
<b>10.2 RISK CONSIDERATIONS</b>
The previous Health Suite was used by a number of users of Pools on the Park, and its removal may generate some dissatisfaction and / or cancellation of memberships.
<b>10.3 EQUALITY IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS</b>
Confirming support for the proposal at this stage presents no impact on equality considerations.
<b>10.4 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>
The removal of the Health Suite and the inclusion of the proposed Group Exercise Studio is supported by the aims of the Climate Change Strategy: The proposed change would see a reduction in utility use and a reduction in the use of chemicals to maintain hygienic water and associated facilities. <a href="#">climate_change_strategy_report_2020.pdf (richmond.gov.uk)</a> ;

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 User Consultation summary

## 12. CONTACTS

Matthew Eady

Assistant Director, Leisure

[Matthew.eady@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.eady@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk)