



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee

4 November 2026

Maintaining Accessible Leisure Services

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Angela McClements - Cabinet Member: Culture, Tourism & Leisure, Culture, Tourism and Leisure
Lead Director:	Katherine Kynaston – Director: Housing, Commercial and Customer Services
Service Area:	Operational Services (Leisure)
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Wards Affected:	All
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee – 4 November 2026

1.0 Recommendations for noting:

It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee:-

- 1.1 Note the contents of the report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with information relating to progress made against the key recommendations contained within Council's Indoor Leisure Facility Strategy, including how the service is ensuring it is accessible to all residents whilst prioritising inactive residents and those communities most in need.

- 2.2 The report illustrates how the service has developed its offer to encourage and support participation amongst groups who typically have lower levels of sport and physical activity participation.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Council's Leisure Services incorporates the strategic provision and direct operational management of 10 leisure facilities. The facility mix is diverse and includes, swimming pools, sports halls, an ice rink, dry ski slope and golf course.
- 3.2 The leisure facilities attract more than 1million community visits per year in addition to accommodating usage by local secondary and primary school pupils and for the 2026/27 financial year are budgeted to generate £6.9m of income.
- 3.3 In 2022 the Council published its 10-year Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy which along with the Outdoor Sports & Recreation Strategy provides the overarching strategic framework for sports, recreation and leisure provision within the borough.
- 3.4 The independently commissioned Leisure Strategy and outcome of the consultation concluded that the Council's leisure centres are well placed to serve residents. All facilities were rated green and as being excellent or good through the facility audits, they are all of a high quality, clean and well maintained.
- 3.5 It was identified that whilst improving physical activity levels across the board should be a focus for future service planning, particular importance should be given to prioritising inactive communities and those communities most in need. Leisure centres should offer activities for every stage of life to support physical and mental health.

4.0 Information

- 4.1 Resident consultation carried out as part of the Strategy identified that 89% of respondents said that improving facilities would encourage participation and 42% of respondents were keen to do more exercise.
- 4.2 Significant progress has been made in response to the key recommendations identified within the Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy both in respect of further investment into the physical facilities and in terms of policy and programme developments to break down barriers to participation.
- 4.3 The Strategy includes a number of recommendations relating to facility investment priorities including a new swimming pool in the Dawley area and the importance of ongoing investment into maintaining and further improving leisure facilities. In response to these recommendations the Council has:
- Commenced the development of the new Captain Matthew Webb Swimming & Fitness Centre (due to open in 2027).

- Completed extensive facility refurbishment and energy efficiency works at Newport Swimming & Fitness Centre, Oakengates Leisure Centre and Wellington Civic & Leisure Centre.
- Secured long term partner investment into the Telford Tennis Centre, including the provision of Padel Courts.
- Refurbished its health & fitness facilities, including the installation of new equipment at Wellington, Newport and Horsehay with Oakengates to follow later this year and Abraham Darby in 2027.

4.4 Cost and lack of confidence were reported by residents as the two main barriers to participation. These local findings are reflective of the Sport England nationally identified barriers to participation; cost, lack of confidence/motivation or time, health conditions and cultural limiting factors.

Nationally the groups most affected by barriers to participation and least likely to participate include:

- Lower socio-economic groups
- Disabled people
- Older adults
- Women & Girls
- Some BME groups

4.5 The Council has put in place a range of policies and programming initiatives to help remove some of the barriers to accessing its leisure centres and reduce these inequalities.

4.6 **Affordability**

4.6.1 Cost is cited both nationally and locally as one of, if not the main barrier to participation and it disproportionately affects many of the above groups. In response to this the Council has a well established Leisure Concessions Policy [Telford Loyalty Card \(TLC\) Leisure Concession Scheme - Telford and Wrekin Leisure Services](#)

Concessionary groups include those in receipt of Universal Credit, Pension Credit, People with disabilities, Carers (inc Young Carers), Armed Forces Personnel and Students.

4.6.2 Whilst there are no national comparators for leisure concessions the Telford & Wrekin scheme, along with the additional incentives outlined below, is widely considered to be one of the most generous in the Country.

The Concessions Policy affords entitled individuals/households to:

- 50% off the standard price of a swim (unless already free)
- A minimum of 40% of all other non-instructed activities

- A minimum of 15% off instructed activities
 - Discounted swimming lesson and health & fitness memberships.
- 4.6.3 Nationally health & fitness and swimming are two of the most popular leisure activities with swimming also identified by Sport England as having the highest reported latent demand (people who would like to take part but currently do not). As such these activities represent a significant opportunity to increase levels of participation across the borough.
- 4.6.4 In recognition of the above the Council offers free public swimming to all residents aged under 25, a 50% discount for concessionary groups and a 25% discount for residents over 50.
- Between 1st September 2025 and 31st August 2026 there were a total of 25,782 free swims from CYP.
 - Between 1st September 2025 and 31st August 2026 there were a total of 19,742 discounted swim admissions by residents over 50 (exc those entitled to concessions).
- 4.6.5 Learning to swim is an essential life skill and over 3,500 young people per week attend the Council's Swim 4 Life lessons programme, however, cost can be a barrier. As such in addition to including swimming lessons as part of the Leisure Concessions policy, the Council also offers a free block of swimming lessons to children under the age of 10 who are unable to swim as part of its 10 by 10 initiative.
- Between 1st September 2025 and 31st August 2026, 793 children accessed free swim lessons through the 10 by 10 programme.
- 4.6.6 In addition to Swimming the Council also offers a range of flexible and targeted pricing options to encourage as many of its residents as possible to access its leisure facilities as part of an active and healthy lifestyle. A range of pay as you go and all-inclusive membership options are offered across golf, ice skating and health & fitness to provide flexibility, choice and value for money.
- Currently 25% (1,429) of Council gym memberships and 32% (1,166) of junior swim 4 life memberships are concessionary.
- 4.6.7 An extensive programme of low cost (£2) activities is provided for children 3 years and upwards during each school holiday. These activities are offered alongside the free community based Urban Games sessions which are targeted towards young people aged between 8 and 16.
- During the 2026 school summer holidays 4,600 attendances were recorded through the £2 activity programme and 2,724 attendances through Urban Games.

4.6.8 Discounted memberships for young people and teenagers including junior and youth/teen golf and health & fitness memberships are available along with discounted Family Ice Skating tickets.

4.7 Disability

4.7.1 Sport England identify that people with a disability are one of the least active groups and around twice as many people with a disability are less likely to be physically active than the wider population.

4.7.2 In recognition of the barriers to access faced by residents living with a disability and in response to resident feedback the Leisure Services Team has worked with a range of internal and external partners to develop and deliver an Inclusive Leisure Action Plan.

4.7.3 The Council's Leisure Services team were invited by the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) to present and share its approach to inclusive leisure provision as an example of good practice at their National Sports & Leisure Conference in November 2025.

4.7.4 All of the Council swimming pools incorporate dedicated SEND swimming lessons as part of their weekly programme, offering the additional time, support and care necessary to help these young people learn to swim.

4.7.5 Telford Ice Rink and Telford Ski Centre also include weekly inclusive Ice Skating, Soft Play, Skiing and Tobogganing sessions as part of their respective programmes.

4.7.6 Oakengates Leisure Centre is home to Club 2000, a sports and social club for over 16's living with a physical or learning disability and Wellington Civic & Leisure Centre is the home of Wrekin Special Swimming Club, a swimming club for people of all ages with disabilities, additional needs or long-term health conditions. The centres and their staff help ensure a safe, inclusive and fun environment for club members who use the facilities on a weekly basis.

4.7.7 A number of the leisure centres are regularly used by individuals and groups from the My Options Service and free access is provided for accompanying carers.

4.8 Older People

4.8.1 It is recognised that physical activity levels decline with age, with a pronounced fall in participation from around 55 years and a dramatic decline from 75 years onwards. Both the Council's Leisure Strategy and Ageing Well Strategy (2023-2033) recognise the importance of supporting people to remain active in later life. In recognition of this the Council offers discounted swimming (25% reduction) for residents over 50.

- Between 1st September 2025 and 31st August 2026 there were a total of 19,742 discounted swim admissions by residents over 50 (exc those entitled to concessions).

- 4.8.2 Other incentives for older people include discounted over 60's gym memberships, adults only swimming sessions, weekly supervised Senior Gym sessions and a new Adult Learn to swim programme.
- 4.8.3 The Leisure Services team has for several years worked together with a group of volunteers to encourage and support older residents to exercise. The former Prime Time Group, now the Senior Gym Group, enjoy weekly supervised gym sessions at Horsehay Golf & Fitness Centre.
- 4.8.4 The Senior Gym sessions are supervised by Physical Activity Consultants who hold specialist level 4 health & fitness qualifications enabling them to support residents with a range of health conditions, such as cancer, diabetes and cardiac rehabilitation including patients referred from the Princess Royal Hospital to exercise safely.
- 4.8.5 Abraham Darby and Oakengates Leisure Centres run weekly 'Good Boost Sessions' which is a nationally accredited water-based programme to assist in the management and rehabilitation of muscular skeletal conditions. Whilst these sessions are open to anyone, many of the attendees are older residents, some referred through the Community Physiotherapy team.
- 4.8.6 A choice of low impact exercise classes are available including virtual Aquafit (exercise to music in water) as part of the weekly fitness programme.

4.9 Women & Girls

- 4.9.1 Nationally, despite increasing physical activity levels, Sport England report ongoing inequalities and lower levels of participation amongst women when compared to men. Whilst gender specific data is not generally reported it is noted that currently 51% of the Telford & Wrekin Council health & fitness members are women.
- 4.9.2 Swimming Pool programmes across the borough include several 'Women Only' sessions and Shortwood Swimming Pool has been used to accommodate groups that require more privacy including an Asian Ladies group and a Swimming After Surgery group.
- 4.9.3 The exercise to music class programme offers a choice of over 120 classes per week including Aquafit and whilst these sessions are not exclusive, they are predominately attended by women.
- 4.9.4 In recognition of the demand for additional Aquafit sessions investment has been made into a new virtual aquafit product (Hydro-Hex) which has significantly increased the number of Aquafit sessions and therefore attendances.
- 4.9.5 The investment into Hydro-Hex will enable the introduction of dedicated pre-natal and post-natal sessions.

4.10 Other Initiatives

- 4.10.1 Oakengates Leisure Centre now hosts the weekly Wrockwardine Wood and Trench Youth Club in an attempt to increase youth club attendances and build greater links between school (New Rd Academy) and community youth provision. The Centre has also provided several free community youth football sessions for children and young people during the school holidays.
- 4.10.2 Telford Ice Rink offers bi-weekly sessions for children and young people who are home educated. The Ice Rink also provides vouchers to support the Family Nurse Partnership to encourage young parents to attend soft play sessions alongside their family nurse.
- 4.10.3 The service works with internal and external partners to support a range of targeted community initiatives such as 'Kinship Week' through activities including Dad's & Lads Footgolf at Horsehay and providing a variety of activity vouchers.
- 4.10.4 Feedback from residents captured in the development of the Leisure Strategy identified that limited accessibility to school-based leisure sites, particularly swimming pools, during the school day was a barrier to participation.
- 4.10.5 Working with schools and following changes in school funding the service has been able to provide over 15 additional hours per week of community pool time at Oakengates Leisure Centre. This has allowed for additional daytime public swimming, Aquafit and Parent & Toddler sessions.
- 4.10.6 The new Captain Matthew Webb Swimming and Fitness Centre will significantly increase the amount of available swimming sessions, including providing additional community daytime swimming and health & fitness opportunities.

4.11 Future Developments

- 4.11.1 Later this year the Council will launch a new E-Gym, one of only two such facilities in Shropshire, the other being at the David Lloyd private leisure club in Shrewsbury. EGYM takes the guesswork out of using gym equipment by creating personalised training programmes that adapt to individual needs and goals. The technology automatically adjusts equipment settings for each user and tracks progress over time, helping people to exercise safely and confidently.
- 4.11.2 A new Exercise Referral Scheme is to be launched in early 2027, utilising the EGym facility and providing a direct referral link for participating GPs and other health practitioners. The referral scheme for residents with a range of health conditions will include a free initial assessment, 12-week supervised programme and re-assessment.
- 4.11.3 It is intended to use the evidence and learning from the referral scheme to support future investment planning and to make the case for additional external health related funding.
- 4.11.4 A new online library of age specific virtual exercise classes (Born 2 Move) is to be made available to primary schools across the borough in 2027, supporting pupils to enjoy a range of fun filled fitness activities.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The provision of Leisure facilities and services is a discretionary Council function. As such it is for the Council to decide what provision is to be made and how that provision is to be managed and delivered.

6 Key Risks

- 6.1 There are no key risks arising from this report.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The Strategy supports the council to achieve the following priorities:

Priority 1 – every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.

- 7.2 Increasing community physical activity levels plays an important role in maintaining healthy weight and supporting people to live well and age well, priorities which are identified within the Council's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2027.
- 7.3 The Council's Leisure Centres actively contribute towards a child friendly borough, helping young people feel that they are healthy and happy through the provision of an extensive range of sports, leisure and social opportunities.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The report is for noting and does not seek approval for any additional expenditure or create any new financial commitments. The leisure service is budgeted to generate £6.9m of income in 2026/27, and the concessions, discounted activities and targeted programmes described in this report are being delivered within the service's approved revenue budgets and existing resources.
- 8.2 Any future development or expansion of the initiatives outlined in the report will need to be delivered within approved budgets or supported by an identified funding source. Where a proposal would require additional revenue or capital funding, a separate business case and approval will be required. The service will continue to monitor income, participation levels and operating costs to ensure that its accessibility objectives are balanced with the need to maintain financial sustainability.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The matters in this report engage the public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The initiatives described are directed at advancing equality of opportunity and removing barriers to participation for groups sharing protected characteristics — in particular disability and age,

together with sex and, through the concessions scheme, those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The report is for noting and does not of itself alter service provision; no adverse equality impacts are identified. Any future decision to change provision should be supported by an equality impact assessment addressing the section 149 needs. There are no HR implications arising directly from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The service and associated policies are borough wide and as such impact all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Leisure Services continue to work very closely with the Public Health team in recognition of the important contribution the service makes to physical activity levels and the wider health and wellbeing of the community.
- 11.2 The Council's leisure centres provide opportunities and support residents of all ages to be active and live well in their communities, including those who are currently inactive. They also provide valuable social spaces enabling residents to come together and help address social isolation.
- 11.3 The Council's leisure centres have a wider role to play in strengthening and connecting communities and directly contributing to the local economy, through providing employment and attracting visitors to the borough.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 The report details how the Council's Leisure Service is working to address the recognised barriers to access experienced by a number of groups to help reduce inequalities.
- 12.2 Active serving armed forces personnel and veterans are included within the Leisure Concessions Policy and as such are entitled to discounted leisure activities.
- 12.3 Care leavers under the age of 25 years are entitled to both free swimming and a free health & fitness membership for them and a companion.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 Leisure Centres are typically big consumers of power and as such are a focus for the council in support of its commitment to ensure its operations are carbon neutral by 2030. Recent investment has been made into significantly improving the energy efficiency of facilities at Newport Pool, Oakengates Leisure Centre and Wellington Civic & Leisure Centre.

- 13.2 Energy efficiency and sustainability planning remain central to both the development of any new facility plans and facility refurbishment works. Including the development of the borough's first carbon neutral swimming pool at Dawley.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 Telford & Wrekin Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy: Cabinet 15 December 2022.

15.0 Appendices

None.

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	17/10/2026	25/010/2026	KK
Legal	23/10/2026	26/10/2026	EH
Finance	23/10/2026	26/10/2026	MLB