

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE 14 June 2021
TITLE Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) Annual Performance 2021 (Plus Appendix I)	ITEM NO. 6
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities and Environment	CABINET MEMBER Culture, Communities and Equalities

1. Decision required

1.1. No decisions are required with regards to this report.

2. Links to the Royal Greenwich high level objectives

2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed high-level objectives as follows:

- A Healthier Greenwich
- A Safer Greenwich
- A Great Place to Grow Up
- Economic Prosperity for All
- A Great Place to Be
- A Strong Vibrant and Well-Run Borough

3. Purpose of the Report and Executive Summary

3.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the performance of Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) as Royal Borough of Greenwich contracted provider of sport, leisure, library services and adventure playgrounds from 1 January to 31 December 2020. Further information has also been added for January to April 2021.

3.2 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the services will be addressed throughout the report.

3.3 In summary, the report informs members of how GLL through its

leisure and library service has dealt with the impact of the pandemic and what changes were necessary to make throughout the last 12 months.

4. Introduction and Background

- 4.1. Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) was formed in 1993 and is the largest UK based charitable social enterprise delivering leisure, health, community services and children's centres, and have operated in Greenwich since inception.
- 4.2 In 2012, a new 15-year contract between GLL and RBG was agreed. It resulted in the seamless integration of 12 libraries, 5 adventure play centres, outreach sport development service, and 7 current leisure centres. This contract has been extended to 2031, through a new deed of variation, with a lower management fee and improved surplus share to RBG over the period.
- 4.3 The integration of services has brought a number benefits to everyone who lives, works, and learns with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, including:
 - Greenwich One Card and Higher Saver Card (Concessionary Card) with reduced pricing for residents.
 - Joined up offer across multiple services.
 - A key partner in Greenwich Get Active Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023.
 - All employees paid the London Living Wage.
 - Working with RBG to open new facilities e.g. The Greenwich Centre, Woolwich Library, Sutcliffe Park Sports Centre and the Plumstead Centre.
 - Public health partnership through Healthwise exercise-on-referral, helping thousands of residents manage long term health issues and their recovery.
 - Highly successful Xplore weight management programme for families and their children.

- 4.4 The leisure service operates a host of activities for residents both young and not so young, from the outreach sport development service, Healthwise programme and GP referrals alongside the traditional activities of gym membership, exercise classes, swimming and local clubs hiring the facilities.
- 4.5 The library service is a tremendous asset for our local people with traditional borrowing services, home delivery service, but also facilities offering children's learning and book clubs, free access to computers, as well as rooms for hire by community groups and organisations – all free of charge. In 2019 there were 2.4million visits to our libraries, with Woolwich library the second most visited library in the country.
- 4.6 The COVID-19 pandemic had and is still having a profound effect upon residents, businesses, staff and wider civil society in the borough and a major impact on libraries and leisure facilities.
- 4.7 Libraries and Leisure Centres reopened on 26 July under strict government COVID guidelines, restrictive use, limits on capacity, with additional operating costs incurred through PPE, sanitisers, increased cleaning regimes, signage and increase energy costs.
- 4.8 Throughout the summer and into the autumn, the leisure business environment remained challenging, with capacity limitations, ever changing restrictions such as no soft play and no team games indoors and low customer confidence.
- 4.9 The number of visits to libraries and leisure centres in lockdown 2, and Tier 3 restrictions dropped dramatically. When the new Tier 4 was rolled out in December, everything was closed except for the holiday food distribution programme.
- 4.10 The impact on visits are clear to see in the Appendices with leisure reduction in visits by 66% compared to previous period in 2019, and even greater impact on libraries with a 86% reduction in visits.
- 4.11 The Leisure Centres, Adventure Play Centres and Libraries re-opened for indoor activities on 12 April, and further opening of activities such as

exercise classes and soft play on 17 May 2021.

Performance - Leisure, Sport and Adventure Play

- 4.12 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very significant impact on the contract since early 2020 as outlined above. In the year to March 2021, the services were only permitted to operate for four months.
- 4.13 As a result of the enforced closures, and other factors such as low consumer confidence in the face of a pandemic, and falling household incomes, usage contracted drastically year-on-year.
- 4.14 Leisure Centre usage fell to 34% of 2019 levels. Adventure Play usage fell to 43% of 2019 levels. The monthly visits did recover to 70,000 in October 2020 against the monthly pre-COVID levels of 120,000 a month.
- 4.15 Indoor leisure reopened on 12 April 2021, and usage vs 2019 has since shown positive signs of recovery with usage levels around 50% of what they were in 2019 and increasing. As of mid-May 2021, usage is at 65% of 2019 levels and the milestone of 100k visits has been achieved.
- 4.16 Despite the pandemic, there were several building improvements that took place in 2020 including:
- The Greenwich Centre benefitted from a revamp of the gym facilities with a vibrant new 'look and feel' installed.
 - The Plumstead Centre, a brand-new leisure and cultural community hub, opened in February 2020. Features include a gym, two performance / dance studios, a sports hall, soft play facility, café, and library.
 - During the first lockdown at the Waterfront, GLL in partnership with RBG completed a joint £1m investment to extend the lifetime of the centre. This included:

- Replacement / refurbishment of boilers, air handling units and pool filtration.
 - Tiling replaced poolside and the reception area given a facelift.
 - Improvements to the changing facilities and decoration throughout the pool hall.
 - Water features such as jets and fountains were reinstated and an exciting new play feature for under-5s was installed.
- 4.17 GLL launched the 'Better at Home' portal, free to all residents, including free virtual classes, plus home workout video guides and meal planners. This was the first time they had rolled out these services in any of their UK locations. Better at Home has since been enhanced further and now offers free podcasts, plus daily streamed classes delivered by our very own instructors from Royal Greenwich.
- 4.18 Since the start of the pandemic, GLL has supported the Council's COVID response in a number of ways including with PPE donations, sourcing volunteers for the Community Hub and Project Hope initiatives and providing Waterfront Leisure Centre as a COVID testing facility.
- 4.19 GLL's Healthwise team delivered a telephone outreach service, supporting hundreds of residents with advice on safe physical activity, healthy eating, and signposting to Council services.
- 4.20 A 2020 recovery plan was implemented from July when centres were permitted to re-open. Thousands of residents took advantage of the following offers:
- Free Swim Fridays – free swimming across the borough's pools every summer holiday Friday for Greenwich One Card holders. 3,470 free swims were taken up by local residents.
 - Free swimming for two children with every adult ticket purchased. 4,900 free child swims were accessed.
 - Free holiday camps for children entitled to free school meals, with a heavily subsidised price for everyone else. 590 attendances were recorded.
 - Free sports activities across the borough's parks and open spaces, led by qualified coaches. 1,700 attendances were recorded.

- 250 free sports packs distributed to families, each consisting of a range of sports equipment to help get families active again after lockdown. 830 residents benefitted.

4.21 Despite the success of the recovery plan and achieving over 200k visits in the first restart, worsening case rates and local then national restrictions continued to hamper recovery. The service remained closed until 29th March 2021 (outdoor activities) and 12th April 2021 (indoor).

4.22 Since 29 March 2021, a new Recovery Plan has been rolled out with two aims – to encourage residents to become more physically active after lockdown, and to boost the performance of the service. The plan includes the following:

- Free access to Better at Home digital membership
- Free fitness taster classes for all residents (whether members or not)
- Free junior gym sessions for all young people with a paying adult
- Thousands of free family swim vouchers for families entitled to free school meals
- Hundreds of free family sports packs for those entitled to free school meals
- Membership discount for existing concessionary members
- First month from £5.50 offer for new customers
- Give It A Go scheme pilot including membership discount for inactive residents
- Hundreds of low-cost / free spaces on sport and activity sessions in parks, community centres and estates – including the Royal Borough's first Virtual Marathon

4.23 A communication strategy was developed with RBG to ensure that all residents were well-informed of the offers available to them. Methods of communication include:

- Greenwich Info – cover wrap, adverts, features, and articles
- Large-scale social media and digital advertising campaign
- 3-month promotion on the Woolwich Big screen

- Outdoor media (billboards and bus stop adverts)
- Organic social media
- Press releases and other PR

4.24 Early indications are that the Recovery Plan has been highly successful, with usage in April at around 150% of that seen in the first restart, membership sales 10% higher than 2019, and lesson sales 40% higher than 2019.

Performance - Sport Development Service

4.25 During 2019/2020 the Sport Development service continued to ensure that the number of community sport and physical activity sessions developed as part of the new Physical Activity and Sports Strategy and associated Action Plan were growing in number and attendance.

4.26 From July to September 2020, 364 sessions were delivered, and 4470 residents attended physical activity sessions.

4.27 A number of major events and activities were cancelled due to COVID-19 including, Mini Marathon, Sportathon, and London Youth Games normally attended by over 3,500 young people.

4.28 Following the 2020 lockdown, the service started to encourage residents back to physical activity. There are several highlights from the Sport Development Service in this period:

- 22 weekly interventions in outdoor venues.
- 17 weekly interventions on housing estates including Abbey Wood Park, Barnfield Estate, Clockhouse, Meridian Estate, Plumstead Common Gardens, Woolwich Common Estate – 816 visits.
- 325 sport activity bags were distributed to residents.
- 4 table tennis outreach roadshows on General Gordon Square.
- 151 community physical sessions in accordance with Public Health England and National Governing Body guidelines.

4.29 From July to September 2020, 364 sessions were delivered, and 4470

residents attended physical activity sessions.

- 4.30 The service made further adaptations to meet the needs of residents during tightening restrictions and further lockdowns. These included:
- Moving many activities from physical to virtual / online settings
 - Launching the borough's first virtual marathon which took place in April 2021
 - In partnership with MENCAP and Oxleas, delivering a 'round the world' challenge with 60 young people with learning disabilities which included free fitness trackers for participants
- 4.31 As restrictions loosen, the service is transitioning back to physical settings with many sessions now operating across the borough's parks, community centres and housing estates.

Performance - Library Services

- 4.32 The COVID 19 Pandemic has had a significant impacted on libraries, like leisure centres, and were only open for 4 complete months since the first lockdown.
- 4.33 However, from the March 2020 lockdown library services quickly moved online and offered an excellent range of e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers, e-magazines, together with music streaming and downloads.
- 4.34 The outreach Library Service continued to deliver books and DVDs to people at home and in care homes. There were also pop up community libraries in supermarkets in Abbey Wood and Plumstead.
- 4.35 In addition to these published resources, we moved library activities online, recording rhyme times, story times and craft sessions in empty libraries and sharing them on social media.
- 4.36 A number of activities went virtual on zoom: our knit and natter group were able to chat with each other and listen to tutorials on knitting techniques; the creative writing group also met virtually.

4.37 During the pandemic, some customers discovered new hobbies: the online family history resource, Ancestry, became very popular, with 15,143 uses between April 2020 and March 2021.

4.38 From April 2020 to March 2021, library staff delivered:

- 310 'baby rhyme times'
- 260 story times
- 280 craft sessions
- 280 'book of the day' sessions
- 70-80 tweet chats (chats with authors)
- 50 'knit & natter' zoom chats
- 50 knitting tutorials

4.39 There were over 140,000 viewings of these items on Twitter and Facebook. Use of our expanded e-resources also hit record heights, with more than 157,000 issues from April 2020 to March 2021, an increase of 242% on use in the previous year.

4.40 Despite the pandemic, the opportunity was taken to refurbish Eltham Centre Library. Works were planned as a "green" project, designed to minimise negative impact on the environment, and included new furniture, desks, and new carpeting throughout. In addition, the children's library has been moved into a larger area at the heart of the library, adjacent to the Enchanted Garden, a creative space for children that was designed to enable them to stay and play longer in the library.

4.41 During the school holidays, GLL library teams have supported the delivery of the 'free school meal offer' through a Feed and Read Programme from Woolwich, Greenwich Centre, Eltham, Plumstead and Thamesmere Libraries, with over 1000 free lunches distributed each week to local families.

4.42 As libraries widen their offer, Greenwich libraries have now diversified further and play equipment can be borrowed, including footballs, rugby balls and basket balls from local libraries. The programme has been

developed in partnership with the charity, Alive and Kicking.

4.43 In supporting and widening IT and digital opportunities, the Library service has purchased a number of tablets which will be lent to families and to mentors working with children. Greenwich Libraries are working with DG Cities who will be launching a similar tablet service as part of its Community Champions Digital Projects with Public Health.

4.44 There are plans to introduce virtual reality educational programmes as well as fun sessions for families. The technology can be used to enhance storytelling and educational programmes.

4.45 At the start of 2021 a new initiative was set up called Reading Friends, which is a reading befriending programme that helps to start conversations and connect people who are lonely and isolated. A small grant was provided by the national Reading Agency of just under £10,000. The library teams in Woolwich, Plumstead and Thamesmere facilitated sessions with the three identified groups, Woolwich focused on dementia and carers, Plumstead on socially isolated elderly members of the Asian community and Thamesmere young families, over an initial period of ten weeks.

4.46 During June libraries will be launching “100 Tales of Greenwich” asking people to share with us their tale of Greenwich through a single photo and line of text.

4.47 From 12 April, libraries have been able to offer the following services in a COVID-secure environment:

- Browsing for books and DVDs in the library.
- Click and collect reservations.
- Study spaces in Woolwich, Greenwich Centre, and Eltham (with over 40 spaces in Woolwich).
- People`s Network PC Access.
- Printing, scanning, and photocopying.
- Self-service issue and return, and cashless payments.
- Outreach Service resumed to all housebound customers and to local nurseries.

- 4.48 The implementation of social distancing regulations, removal of furniture, activities and restricted borrowing times did lead to a significant reduction of visits to libraries, throughout the pandemic reopening period. Visitor numbers fell from an average of 200,000 per month to 50,000 at its peak in October 2020.
- 4.49 The number of items borrowed when libraries could reopen in July 2020 did reach 70-80% of pre-pandemic monthly levels, however, this became much lower during click and collect and closed periods. The e-resources were the only issues format that went against the general trend.
- 4.50 People's Network PC usage pre-pandemic was on average 20,000 hours a month, and since reopening under social distancing guidelines and time restrictions, it's now 2,200 hours a month on average. More PN PCs have become available as restrictions ease, and GLL Libraries are looking more at tablet provision in future service provision.
- 4.51 Following the opening of all indoor venues on May 17 it is envisaged there will be a steady climb, in visits, borrowing and PC usage.
- 4.52 The leisure and library service have been tested through this period of the pandemic, but we have seen over the last month that residents are returning to our facilities. We look forward to welcoming back previous customers, but also lots of new users to try something new and 'Give it a Go'.

5 Available Options

- 5.1. Not applicable to this report

6 Preferred Option

- 6.1 Not applicable to this report

7 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 Not applicable to this report

8. Consultation Results

8.1 Not applicable to this report

9. Cross Cutting Issues and Implications

Issues	Implications	Sign Off
Legal, including Human Rights Act	Members are asked to consider this report which updates on the performance of Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) as the Council's contracted provider of sport, leisure and library services and adventure playgrounds, in the period between 1 st January 2020 and April 2021 a significant part of which was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. No formal decision will be taken. As such, there are no legal implications directly arising from this report.	Eleanor Penn, Assistant Head of Legal Services, 27 th May 2021
Finance and other resources	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.	Joanne Stark Accountancy Business Change Manager 25.5.21
Equalities	The information in this report has a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.	Tim Hetherington Head of Sport, Leisure, Libraries, and Community Services 27.4.21

Climate Change	No Decision proposed therefore no implications to consider	Tim Hetherington Head of Sport, Leisure, Libraries, and Community Services 27.5.21
Health and Wellbeing	<p>The facilities are available for all residents of the London Borough of Greenwich. The facilities provided for people of all ages, to increase participation in sport and physical activity and improve mental well-being.</p> <p>The service provided by RBG, through the Leisure and Libraries contract follows the Health and Well Being Strategy and the Greenwich Get Active Physical activity and Sport Strategy and Action plan and 4 key objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Greenwich to Get Active and Stay Active • Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Greenwich Residents • Developing Greenwich People and Growing the Local Economy • Strengthening Greenwich Communities and Facilities Infrastructure 	Tim Hetherington Head of Sport, Leisure, Libraries, and Community Services 25.5.21

10. Report Appendices

10.1 The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Appendix I – GLL Data information

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