



South Holland District Council

Review of

Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre Contract.

An Overview and Scrutiny Review undertaken by the Swimming Pool/Leisure Centre  
Contract Task Group on behalf of Performance Monitoring  
Panel

(17 August 2016)  
V6

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Spalding swimming pool and sports complex are extremely well utilised facilities. The swimming pool which is designed for competitive swimming and general fitness (not leisure) attracts 165,083 customers every year whilst the sports complex 150,932 per year (based on 2015/16 total). However, following criticism and adverse publicity in 2015 around the cleanliness and 'wear and tear' of the Spalding swimming pool specifically, the Performance Monitoring Panel questioned the performance of the leisure facility's contract and the Authority's management of the contract.
- 1.2 The Performance Monitoring Panel agreed that this criticism, directed at the Council, should not have been necessary with programmed maintenance or if issues at the facilities were dealt with when reported.
- 1.3 Members of the Council agreed that there needed to be an understanding of how the current position had been arrived at, and that a Task Group would provide the appropriate means to do so.
- 1.4 In order to understand the situation, the performance of the current leisure facilities contract at the Spalding swimming pool and sports complex would need to be evaluated alongside the Authority's management of that contract.
- 1.5 The Performance Monitoring Panel agreed that the Task Group should take a positive role, to discover where mistakes, if any, had been made, and how this understanding could bring opportunities for the future management of the contract and beyond.

### **2. Scope of the Review**

- 2.1 The scope and therefore terms of reference were defined as:
  - To consider performance, in relation to the contract, by the Authority and the contractor, particularly with reference to building maintenance and cleanliness, promotion of the facilities and reinvestment in the facilities;
  - To look at the Council's performance in monitoring the leisure facilities; and
  - To learn from the outcomes of this scrutiny, to inform future contracts and contract monitoring.

### **3. Membership of Task Group**

- 3.1 The Task Group comprised Councillors JR Astill, TA Carter, GK Dark (Chairman), JL King and AM Newton. The Lead Officer was Emily Spicer and the Task Group was supported by Christine Morgan.

**4. Background to Review**

- 4.1 The review was conducted as a result of criticism received within local media and social media of the Spalding swimming pool facilities (please see section 1 of this report). The review was also seen as an opportunity to learn from current issues so that they may be of assistance in future leisure and/or contract provision.

**5. Method of Review**

- 5.1 The Task Group met on a number of occasions to consider the contract documents in respect to the Spalding Castle Complex and swimming pool provision, user feedback, media and social media reports, and national guidance in respect to swimming pool temperature. Officer witnesses were called – Phil Perry (Leisure Facilities Manager) and Emily Holmes (Communities Manager). External witnesses were also called – Mrs R Fox (1 Life Contract Manager). A site visit was also undertaken.

**6. Summary of Findings**

- 6.1 The Task Group is content that the Spalding leisure facilities (both the swimming pool and complex) provide a good standard of activities for residents of South Holland to use. The swim school in particular is extremely popular and has recently received an award for high standards of teaching. It is important therefore to note that in relation to the high usage of the facility, the number of complaints received is not high.
- 6.2 Whilst a number of complaints reported within local media cited the temperature of the swimming pool water being ‘too cold’, research by the Task Group has concluded that temperatures are compliant for competitive swimming, diving, fitness swimming and training pools. It is clear that moving to higher temperatures than the code of practice recommends would cause a number of problems including competitive swimmers finding them too uncomfortable and an increase in micro-organisms.
- 6.3 It was found that improvements were needed to the general cleanliness of the changing room areas and to provide an established proactive cleansing regime that could be clearly monitored and prove contract compliance.
- 6.4 Considerable improvements were required to the customer feedback / complaints process in order to meet the requirements set out in the contract documentation. Through their own experiences, members of the Task Group found that in some cases, complaints were taking up to 6 months to be addressed. At the very least, essential minor repairs were not being addressed in a timely fashion. It was evident that there was no consistent approach to the recording of complaints made by users of the facilities.

- 6.5 Due to the vast number of additions and variations to the Leisure Facilities contract it seemed that there was no clear direction of travel. Specifically, actions to be taken in respect to the cleaning regimes and cleanliness of the facilities were overly complicated and too broad. The cleaning regimes of any future contracts need to be addressed with real clarity.
- 6.6 A vast improvement of the fixtures and fittings within the facilities is needed with consideration of all users' needs. For example, ladies' toilet facilities within the changing room areas need to be addressed, flooring and hand washing facilities that children are encouraged to use need to be available, disabled access to be reconsidered, toilet facilities available for spectators.
- 6.7 In order to ensure contract compliance, recorded monitoring of the whole facility should be undertaken on a weekly basis.
- 6.8 Improvements and/or changes need to be made to the blue over shoes policy. The Task Group felt that the reasons why blue overshoes need to be used was not clearly promoted, nor any type of encouragement for users to wear them. In addition, children and wheels on push chairs continue to go through to the changing rooms without any type of cover. A publicity campaign would assist in promoting the blue overshoe message.
- 6.9 The Task Group found there to be no clear contract management system in place. The Group felt that the contract requirements were clear, but these were not followed through as positively as they need to be.

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Task Group reached the following **conclusions**:
- (a) That the facilities provide an extensive range of leisure activities.
  - (b) That the current cleansing routines at the swimming pool are based on a reactive model which is not fit for purpose and therefore needs to be changed to a more proactive regime.
  - (c) It is essential that good contract management is undertaken by the Council / Contract Manager, and when required, the appropriate procedures are followed when contract compliance has lacked or lapsed.
  - (d) That there is a need for improved contract management of the Leisure Facilities contract.
  - (e) That the facilities, in particular the changing rooms within the swimming pool, appear to be in need of repair and maintenance.
  - (f) That the 'blue overshoe' policy does not work in its present format.

7.2 The Task Group makes the following **recommendations**:

- a) That a full time cleaner is considered by 1Life as part of their annual budget allocations. It is evident that additional hours are required for the proactive cleaning of the swimming pool facility, in particular the changing room areas, in order to adhere to the requirements of the contract.
- b) That contract management of the site improves with a formally recorded daily and weekly monitoring regime and that should standards fall short of the requirements within the contract, the contract warning system is to be followed through and be robustly pursued by the contract manager.
- c) That staff within the facilities record and notify management of any repairs required on a daily basis and that these are dealt with in a timely manner. In addition, all outstanding repairs and maintenance should be undertaken promptly to improve standards at the leisure facilities.
- d) That the blue overshoe policy is reviewed immediately and a new, more effective policy is put in place within 3 months.
- e) That these recommendations are allocated to an identified officer to ensure they are actioned and that an update is received by the Performance Monitoring Panel on actions against these at 7 February 2017 meeting.
- f) That the Performance Monitoring Panel is involved in the consultation stage of any future option appraisals in respect to Leisure Facilities provision in South Holland as detailed in the Transformation Programme.

**8. Financial Implications of Recommendations**

- 8.1 The above recommendations should be included within current contract income and expenditure and will therefore provide no financial implications to South Holland District Council at this time.

**9. Main Sources of Information and individuals contacted during the Review**

- 9.1 The main sources of information were through those witnesses referred to in paragraph 5.