

# Public Document Pack



**WOKINGHAM  
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To: All Committee Members

## **COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 28TH NOVEMBER, 2023**

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the meeting of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2023, the following report that was marked as 'to follow' on the agenda sent out recently.

### **Agenda No    Item**

69.    **St Crispin's Leisure Centre (Pages 3 - 42)**

To consider an updated report on the future of the leisure centre, following the discussion at the Committee's meeting on 14 November 2023.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Parsonage  
Chief Executive

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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>St Crispin's Leisure Centre</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community & Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2023
<b>WARD</b>	(All Wards);
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Neil Carr – Scrutiny Officer

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

In June 2023, the Council's Executive gave approval for a public consultation on the future of St Crispin's Leisure Centre, including an option of closing the leisure centre, and considering all potential options for the future use of the site.

At its meeting on 30 November 2023, the Executive will consider a report setting out the findings from the public consultation and the feasibility of the five options identified for the future of the leisure centre.

The 30 November Executive report is appended to this covering report, together with an Appendix that provides additional information requested at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee:

- 1) consider the attached Executive report and supplementary Appendix on the future of St Crispin's Leisure Centre;
- 2) make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Executive at its meeting on 30 November 2023.

## **Background**

In June 2023, the Executive gave approval for a public consultation on the future of St Crispin's Leisure Centre, including an option of closing the leisure centre, and considering all potential options for the future use of the site. The use of the St Crispin's facility has continued to reduce following the Covid-19 pandemic and the opening of new leisure facilities in Wokingham Town Centre.

The public consultation subsequently took place for a period of 8 weeks, both in person and face to face. At its meeting on 30 November 2023, the Executive will consider a report (attached) which sets out the findings of the consultation and provides an in-depth feasibility analysis for each of the five options identified for the future of the leisure centre.

Members are requested to scrutinise the attached report together with the supplementary information provided in the Appendix (requested at Overview & Scrutiny Committee 14<sup>th</sup> November) and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Executive. Any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the Executive at its meeting on 30 November.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

*The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.*

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Set out in the attached Executive report		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

<b>Other Financial Information</b>
Set out in attached Executive report

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Set out in attached Executive report

<b>Climate Emergency</b>
Set out in attached Executive report

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Closed Session</b>
None

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Executive Report – 30 November 2023

<b>Contact</b> Neil Carr	<b>Service</b> Democratic Services
<b>Telephone</b> Tel: 0118 974 6000	<b>Email</b> neil.carr@wokingham.gov.uk

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>St Crispin's Leisure Centre</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on 30 November 2023
<b>WARD</b>	(All Wards);
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers Director of Children's Services – Helen Watson
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure - Ian Shenton Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Children's Services – Prue Bray

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

During the summer a consultation was carried out on the future of St Crispin's Leisure Centre. The Council wished to get input on the future of the Leisure Centre and its site from residents and users of its facilities, due to a decline in usage and concerns expressed by St Crispin's School, which adjoins the Leisure Centre and uses it for various educational purposes. The consultation asked for views on a number of options for the site, as detailed in the report below. The consultation responses have now been analysed and are being reported back to the Executive for a decision on the future of the Leisure Centre.

The Consultation has been considered in the following context that informs the recommendations of this report as follows;

- There is significant pressure on secondary school places and as mentioned below there is an opportunity to expand St Crispin's School which if not taken, it is likely that there will be a shortfall in places in September 2024.
- Transfer of the site was included in the consultation and although retention of the site for the Leisure Centre was the most popular outcome of the consultation, it should be noted that consultations are carried out in order to assist with decision-making, and, while they should be given consideration, they are only one factor that needs to be taken into account when a decision is made.

As at the latest census in 2021, there were 177,502 people living in Wokingham Borough. That is 15% more people than in the previous census 10 years prior in 2011, when the population was 145,380 people.

According to the ONS, as of 2021, Wokingham is the 28th most densely populated of the South East's 64 local authority areas. The population of Wokingham has been increasing by approximately 12% every 10 years, based on population changes between 1981 and 2021. Therefore, if the population continues to rise in line with this average, then in 2031 the population in Wokingham could be at nearly 200,000 people. The population increase in Wokingham has resulted in an unusual pattern of emerging secondary school place shortage for local young residents.

There is an opportunity to help the Borough Council to fulfil its legal duty for sufficient school places in the area by approving the transfer of land to St Crispin's School (The Circle Trust) enabling the school to continue to deliver 55 extra places each year in the next five years. This will be subject to associated conditions of transfer and use of the site so as not to detract from contractual issues within the Leisure contract with Places for Leisure.

The existing leisure centre can be repurposed for dedicated school provision through small scale of work schemes, which would need to be specified and delivered by the Trust after the handover.

Subject to the Executive approval of the recommended option, the Council is proposing a funding of £1m to the Trust to enable them to enable the Trust to make any necessary adaption for extra school places until 2029.

The report also provides a short summary update on the reduced usage of the site since the pandemic and opening of the new facilities in Wokingham Town Centre and results of consultation undertaken during the summer 2023.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive:

1. Notes the findings of the public consultation on the Future use of St Crispin's Leisure Centre.
2. Notes the Council's legal responsibility in securing sufficient school places for local residents.
3. Approves in principle the closure of St Crispin's Leisure Centre and transfer of the land to St Crispin's School (The Circle Trust) to fulfil the school placement requirements and to continue to deliver 55 extra place each year in the next five years; subject to detailed agreement with the trust with lease arrangement under relevant Academy regulations.
4. Notes that the revenue impact of ending the Council's Leisure contractors' utilisation of the premises will be funded through the Leisure Management Equalisation Fund.
5. Notes that the capital expenditure of £1m for works is funded from the secondary school's expansion budget already approved as part of the 2023/24 capital programme.
6. Note the Circle Trust is keen to work with the Council and Local Communities to continue the local squash provision in addition to the current community activities the school provide.

7. Notes that any repurposing of the school must also include the requirements of the Council to deliver a polling station at the site for elections as per requirements set out.
8. Delegates authority to the Director of Resources and Assets and Director of Childrens Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Leader of the Council, to enter into negotiation with Places Leisure to facilitate the closure of St Crispin's Leisure Centre and with The Circle Trust to secure the provision of additional school places and the transfer of the land and buildings from the Council to The Circle Trust.
9. Delegates authority to the Director of Resources and Assets and Director of Childrens Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Leader of the Council, to enter into negotiation with Places Leisure with regards to the running of leisure activities at Montague Park Community Centre or elsewhere which will be subject to a financial viability test.
10. Notes the attached Appendix that provides additional information to support the proposal, following the consideration by Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

There is an urgent need for additional secondary school places across the Borough and St Crispin's School (The Circle Trust) has been identified as an opportunity to fulfil the school placement requirements and to continue to deliver 55 extra places each year in the next five years. The local authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient secondary school places in the area.

In June 2023, the Executive gave approval for a public consultation on the future of St Crispin's Leisure Centre, including an option of closing the leisure centre, and considering all potential options for the future use of the site. The use of the site continues to reduce since the pandemic and the opening of new leisure facilities in Wokingham Town Centre.

The public consultation took place for a period of 8 weeks, both in person and face to face. This report provides the findings of the consultation and a more in-depth feasibility for each of the five options.

## **BACKGROUND**

School place sufficiency forecasting for Wokingham indicates that the Borough has a total shortage of 1,045 Year 7 places at secondary schools in the next five academic years.

Furthermore, in planning for secondary school places, the provision of 5% quality school place surplus is considered the optimum level of sufficiency in terms of value for money

school place planning. In other words, having a 5% surplus, instead of only filling the gap of 1,045 place shortage, would achieve value for money by avoiding costly last minute crisis management of school place shortage. The Council has been working hard with its school partners to plan and ensure the appropriate level of sufficiency of places for the next five years. This level of sufficiency has not yet been secured. The ability to secure an additional 55 school places each of next five years from St Crispin's School would contribute positively, as a value for money option to achieving the optimum level of sufficiency in secondary school places. Failing to secure these extra school places would lead to the need to explore other significantly more costly school expansion options, availability of which are very limited and would not be value for money in a small borough.

St Crispin's Leisure Centre is operated by Places Leisure under the contract to Wokingham Borough Council. The Centre has seen over 30% reduction in footfall since re-opening post pandemic, with particularly reduction in footfall in the over 60s demographic. The new Wokingham Leisure Centre at the Carnival Hub opened in July 2022, also operated by Places Leisure, and has continued to draw customers away from St Crispin's.

Prior to Covid, the majority of members were St Crispin's site only members (63.9%) and used this site exclusively, the multi-site usage was considerably lower and the main reason for upgrade to multi-site was to use the swimming pool at the old Carnival.

Since the opening of the new Carnival Hub, we have seen the multi-site option being taken up by the majority of current and new St Crispin's members (70.92%) – their usage of Carnival Hub is for all facilities including swimming, gym, classes and badminton.

Data indicates now nearly 40% of St Crispin's members exclusively use Carnival Hub.

A high-level options appraisal was completed for five future options for the centre including retaining the site as is. At a meeting on 29 June 2023, the Executive approved a public consultation on the future of St Crispin's Leisure Centre, including an option of closing the leisure centre, and considering all potential options for the future use of the site.

The Executive decision of June 2023 noted that a report will be brought back to Executive following the consultation recommending the next steps.

This report constitutes this further report.

The Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the proposal on 14<sup>th</sup> November and requested further details to inform further consideration on 28<sup>th</sup> November. The additional information provided is included as an Appendix to this paper and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny will report back to Executive on the outcome of the considerations on the 28<sup>th</sup> November.

## **BUSINESS CASE**

### **Findings from Public Consultation**



The public consultation, agreed by Executive on 29 June 2023, took place over an 8-week period commencing 10<sup>th</sup> July 23. A series of public meetings were held, and an on-line facility to comment was also provided to encourage greater resident participation.

A total of 940 responses were received. Independent expert advice was commissioned to analyse the findings in detail. A summary of these findings are appendix to this report. As would be expected in a consultation of this nature, most respondents did not support closure of the centre with main issues being loss of facilities (in particular squash courts) and support for the current location of the centre.

Among the options for potential alternative use of the asset, transfer to the Circle Trust was the most supported and disposal for residential development or mothballing receiving little or no support. Approximately 50% of respondents said they would consider using Wokingham Leisure Centre at Carnival Hub should St Crispin's close and approximately 20% indicated they would consider joining a private gym. There was a sizeable minority of respondents (156 in total) who did not indicate they would consider any alternative gym or form of regular exercise and would consider ceasing exercise altogether.

In recognition of the responses received in support of a continued leisure services offer, the Recommendation seeks to maintain this as far as possible, whilst meeting other community needs for this site.

### **Potential Opportunity to Enable Extra School Places from St Crispin's School**

The Leisure Centre is located on a dual-use site with St Crispin's School. The school has grown in size since opening in 1953, with new teaching accommodation added over the years.

However, important core facilities are little altered since the school opened. In 1953 the school was a small Secondary Modern, that did not offer courses leading to public examinations. It is now growing towards being a 1,500-place school, with a sixth form and diverse curriculum offer and a designated exam and assessment centre that requires specific space to meet the relevant regulations.

The Circle Trust has indicated that it can provide 55 extra year 7 places at St Crispin's School each year between 2023/24 and 2028/29 academic year. This will be a total of 330 places in addition to the extra places already provided by the school. The further offer for next five years is dependent on WBC agreeing a range of additional facilities at St Crispin's School to ensure the school has sufficient capacity, with sufficient PE provision (including changing rooms), teaching accommodation, dining facilities, examination space and car parking spaces. Given the existing constrained nature of the site, with no opportunities to expand beyond the existing site boundaries and many of the existing buildings are Grade 2 listed, the site currently occupied by the leisure centre would be required to provide the floor area for some of these new and expanded facilities.

The existing leisure centre can be repurposed through small scale of work scheme, which would need to be specified and delivered by the Trust after the handover with the

aim to continue to deliver 55 extra place each year in the next five years while the school safeguarding arrangements to be extended to cover the whole site.

We understand that the trust would use the leisure centre mainly for PE based activity for the St Crispin's Secondary School, Wescott Infants and Westside Primary along with the 'weights room' being converted into classroom for secondary school pupils plus a dance studio, as well as its sole use for exams. The use of the changing rooms in the leisure centre will release the current temporary changing rooms in the secondary school's main building, which will then be reconfigured as teaching space. Subject to the Executive decision, all this planned repurposing and reconfiguration would directly or indirectly create extra classrooms and associated mandatory education facilities for the provision of extra school places.

Subject to the Executive approval of the recommended option, the Council is proposing a funding of £1m to the Trust to enable them to adapt the existing leisure centre for the provision of the agreed extra school places until 2029. The figure of £1 million represents good value for money with regard to the provision of the additional places. Any change of use of the centre would require planning permission.

### **Options appraisal**

Taking into account the consultation responses received as set out above, an assessment of the five options is considered below.

#### ***Option 1: Retain site for the use of the Leisure Centre.***

Current usage numbers are declining across the centre, with over 30% reduction in footfall versus pre-covid.

Retaining the use of the site as a leisure facility would require investment and a re-assessment of the facilities in line with demand seen in other centres within the Borough and across the leisure industry. Types of investment that could be considered include:

- Re-configure of studio space to additional activities/resources not currently offered.
- Spinning studio; Meeting and Community rooms and dedicated sport space such as martial arts.
- Review of existing classes and sports hall usage to drive and expand the offering as per current demand.
- Upgrades of the facility including upgrading the outside space and shared internal areas such as toilet and changing facilities.
- Re-brand of the site in line with potential usage changes supported by a comprehensive marketing plan.

The proposals above would require a level of investment of circa £1M for which there is currently no budget and no viable financial business case. Therefore, this option would be difficult to progress and is not recommended.

***Option 2: Closure and transfer land to St Crispin's School (The Circle Trust).***

This option delivers against the Council's statutory duty to provide adequate secondary school places, with costs representing value for money of £20k vs the national benchmark of £26k /per pupil space. This includes the estimate value of the Leisure Centre.

This option is the recommended option to the Executive, subject to associated conditions of transfer and use of the site with Places for Leisure.

A transfer of the asset to The Circle Trust would most likely be by way of a variation to the existing Academy Lease to include the area occupied by the leisure centre, on the existing terms. The timing of the transfer from one operator (Places Leisure) to another operator (The Circle Trust) would need careful coordination so as to limit the exposure of the Council to building costs liabilities such as business rates and security costs.

In this scenario of closure of the leisure centre the associated financial costs for a proposed closure under the leisure contract are detailed within the existing contractual agreement between the Council and Places Leisure.

In order to provide the additional capacity required by the school for educational use. it is anticipated that the Trust would need to utilise all the current leisure facilities. Therefore, the potential to re-provide for sports and leisure is not felt to be an option, consultation with the leisure provider to provide evening activities is likely not commercially viable, other community venues such as Montague Park for activities will be explored with the provider as part of this option and subject to existing contractual conditions. Reprovision at an alternative site would mitigate the impact of the closure of the existing facility and would particularly benefit those users who indicated that they do not wish to use Carnival Hub, either because of the additional distance from Wescott or because of its size.

Under the existing contractual agreement with our leisure provider and under clause 'Competing Facility' the Council must not sponsor any facility in a defined geographical area (within a 2-mile radius of another facility operated by the leisure provider) which they own that competes within the leisure market. The council would likely be liable for any income shortfall should this take place. Despite the foreseen difficulties, in final negotiations with the school and Places for Leisure the potential to continue some leisure services on the site will be discussed and if financially and operationally possible will form part of the final settlement.

This option delivers against the Council's statutory duty to provide adequate secondary school places, with costs representing value for money of £20k per pupil place comparing with the national benchmark of £26k per secondary school place expansion. This is based on an initial estimated value of the Leisure Centre plus the fundings required for its adaption and other facilities. Initial considerations suggest, if a suitable alternative site could be found for this number of school places the council would likely need to fund over £5m capital for their provision.

Additional issues with the current arrangement were that there is a shortage of car park space on the site and therefore conflicts over the school and leisure centre parking spaces, and that there are safeguarding issues for the school in having students and

unknown adults present on the site at the same time. Both of these could be resolved if this option was taken forward.

The option was the second most popular option of the consultation responses, citing the need to provide additional space at St Crispin's School and the overall need for more school places in the Borough.

This option is the recommended option to the Executive and will include working with the Circle Trust to continue with a local squash court provision in addition to the current community activities they provide; an intention put forward in their response to the consultation. Furthermore, the opportunity of providing the smaller site leisure activities desired by a number in the consultation response, will be explored at Montague Park Community Centre in partnership with our leisure contractors Places Leisure. This will be subject to a financial viability assessment.

### ***Option 3: Use for other service***

Within the consultation results residents were asked on opinions on the use of the site to provide other services. Out of 653 answers 41% were against it to be used for any other use, 20% wanted to ensure some community use remains.

For those residents that offered an answer on their thoughts for another service, suggestions included:

- Health services / GP / Dental / Dementia Care.
- Investing in children / young people / youth centre.
- A SEND school.
- Affordable / social housing.

In considering the use of the site for other service uses, consideration needs to be given to the demand/need for that service and the practical delivery of that use of the site (including size and proximity/co-location with the school).

Taking each of the suggested uses, a review has been carried out to confirm why these are not suitable for this site.

- Health Services - no identified health service demand in this area and no suggestion of an operator or delivery model that would operate here.
- Investing in children / young people / youth centre – the option recommended to the Executive would provide additional school places and therefore would provide investment into children within the Borough. A youth centre or other provision for young people has not been explored as part of this proposal, but this could be still provided in the building if it is transferred to the Circle Trust.
- SEND school – funding for two new SEND schools have been secured and these will be built at Rooks Nest Farm in Barkham. This site was not considered in the review for the delivery as the site was not available at the time and in any event would not have met the size requirements to deliver a SEND school. The Council has secured funding for SEND resource units and several opportunities have been identified which are more suited to deliver these around the Borough.

- Social housing / specialist housing need - see limitations on residential development under option 4.

As per option 2 above, in this scenario of closure of the leisure centre the associated financial costs for a proposed closure under the leisure contract are detailed within the existing contractual agreement between the Council and Places Leisure. The agreement is based on a gain share arrangement, with any amendments to this based on negotiations between WBC and Places Leisure.

Currently no alternative service use has been identified that is required and can be delivered in timely manner on the site. For this reason, this option is not recommended to the Executive to pursue.

***Option 4 - Disposal of site with or without planning for residential development***

More detailed work on the site has shown that there are a number of constraints on the site which could impact the suitability of the site for residential development.

A planning application would need to justify the loss of and suitable alternative local provision for the “community use”, including compensatory provision for the school use.

The current vehicle access, shared with the school, would likely prove unfeasible on safety and safeguarding grounds; whereas the formation of a new vehicle access on London Road would likely be difficult due to the proximity to the existing school access and the potential loss of a number of mature trees along the London Road frontage, which itself is designated a ‘green route’.

In addition, the next-door development is tightly packed around the existing boundary meaning it would be difficult to achieve reasonable separation distances between residential uses and the proximity of the skate park would need to be considered in terms of noise impact for any new residential units. Some of the St Crispin’s school buildings are grade II listed, so any redevelopment would need to respect the setting of the school building.

Given the potential constraints for residential development on this site, this option is not recommended to the Executive to pursue.

***Option 5 - Demolish the buildings and mothball site until land values increase and/or an alternative service need identified.***

As per option 4, a planning application would need to demonstrate a lack of demand and suitable alternative local provision for the “community use”, including compensatory provision for the school use.

Costs would be estimated at circa £200k for demolition, with additional costs for making the site secure to avoid vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Holding vacant sites would not be making the best use of the Council’s assets, particularly when there is an identified service need (investing in secondary school place

sufficiency) which could be provided for on the site. Therefore, this option is not recommended to the Executive to pursue.

## **Implementation**

If the Executive is minded to agree the recommended option of transferring the site to The Circle Trust, then authority would be delegated to the Director of Resources and Assets and Director of Childrens Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Leader of the Council, to undertake the necessary legal processes to facilitate this.

This would include changes to the current Leisure Contract with Places Leisure and the agreement with The Circle Trust to secure the provision of additional school places. In addition, the Council would need to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Education for the transfer of the asset.

Subject to the progression of these legal negotiations, design and planning work would be undertaken for the capital works required to the leisure centre buildings for conversion to educational use.

Members should note the Leisure Management contract covers numerous sites and the profit share arrangement generating an overall Management fee paid to the Council. There will be numerous variables impacting on this annual fee, including the potential loss of this site and the disbursement of activities to other sites operated by the Contractor. An annual income target is included in the base budget which is achieved and equalised over the contract through an Equalisation Fund. The feedback from the consultation will be used in discussions with Places Leisure to identify where surrounding facilities can be adapted or added to in order to meet requirements fed back from the community.

The closure of the Leisure Centre facilities would need to be managed and a communication, mobilisation plan and onsite support will be created for existing users of the centre. Wokingham Leisure Centre @Carnival Hub also ran by Places Leisure is a mile away from the existing site and can offer classes, gym, sports hall and pool use with alternative football provisions across the Borough. The use of other available premises in the local area will be explored.

## **Conclusion**

Five options were presented in the consultation. Further work has shown options 3-5 to be unviable. These were also the least popular options.

The consultation showed support for keeping the leisure centre open, but the second most favoured option was to transfer it to The Circle Trust. Having looked at the financial implications of retaining the leisure centre and of providing additional required school places, and the potential for mitigation of the loss of the leisure facilities, the recommendation is to transfer the Leisure Centre to The Circle Trust.

These remain indicative timescales set out below:

- Executive Approval – Nov 23

- Detailed design and planning Application for change of use – Dec 23 – Feb 24
- Contractual changes with Places Leisure – Dec 23 – March 24
- Asset Transfer process with The Circle Trust and approval from Secretary of State for Education by April 2024.
- Places Leisure vacate centre – March 24
- Alteration works to centre – April – Sept 24

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

*The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.*

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£1m	Within Capital programme	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil		

**Other Financial Information**

This option reduces the likely level of capital investment required to provide required school places if alternative sites were identified. Initial consideration suggests alternative provision, if identified and depending on potential timescales, would likely cost the Council over £5m in capital costs. This would require the identification of a similar reduction in other Capital schemes or additional borrowing.

With regards to revenue Implications there will be numerous variables impacting on this annual fee, including the potential loss of this site and the disbursement of activities to other sites operated by the Contractor. An annual income target is included in the base budget which is achieved and equalised over the contract through an Equalisation Fund.

**Legal Implications arising from the Recommendation(s)**

This is matter is within the financial limits of the Executive under 5.1.9.4, and Recommendations 8 & 9 are empowered by 5.4.3(a) of the Constitution.

**Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation**

St Crispin’s School, Existing users of the leisure centre.

**Public Sector Equality Duty**

An Equalities assessment has been completed and is appended to this report.

**Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030**

Any development work on the site, including any school expansion, will, as minimum, comply with statutory policy requirements regarding energy efficiency.

**Reasons for considering the report in Closed Session**

N/A

**List of Background Papers**

Appendices include:

Appendix A) A summary of public consultation responses,

Appendix B) Additional information to support the proposal, following the consideration by Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

Appendix C) Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Paper: Full Consultation results, please contact the report authors if you would like to view these.

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**Service** Resource and Assets

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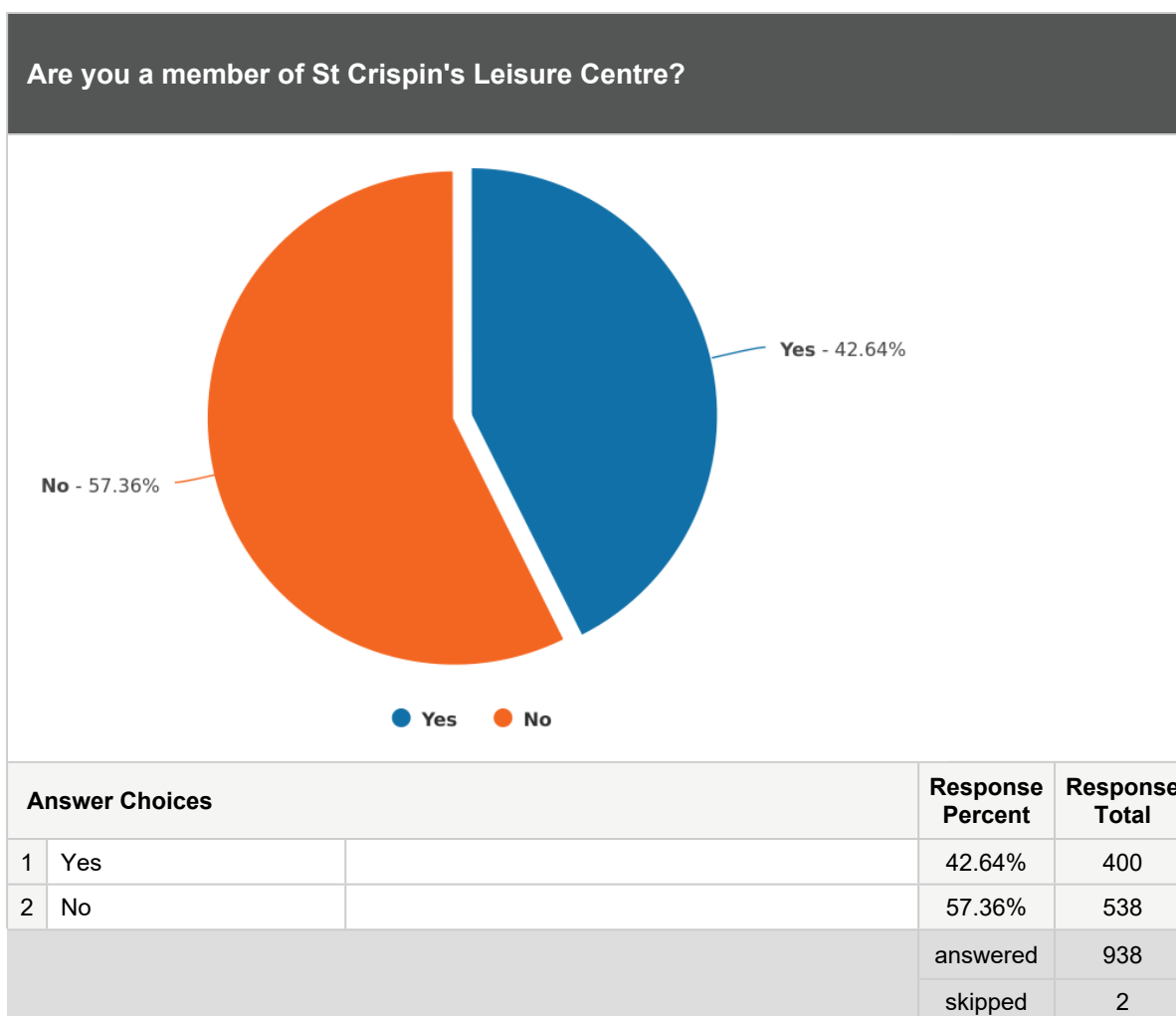
**Email** peter.kilkenny@wokingham.gov.uk  
Ming.zhang@wokingham.gov.uk



## Future use of St Crispin's Leisure Centre

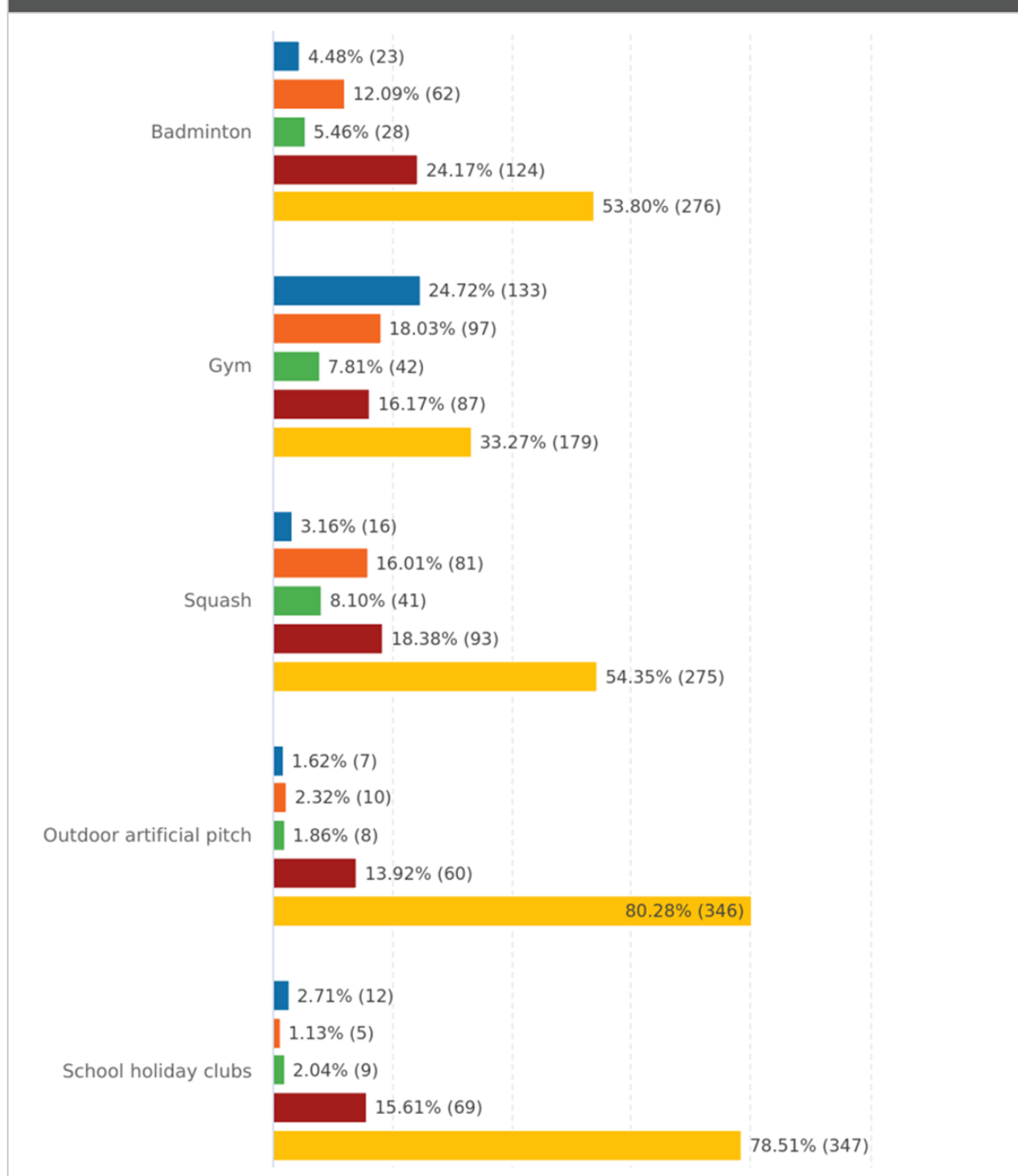
10 July to 4 September  
940 responses

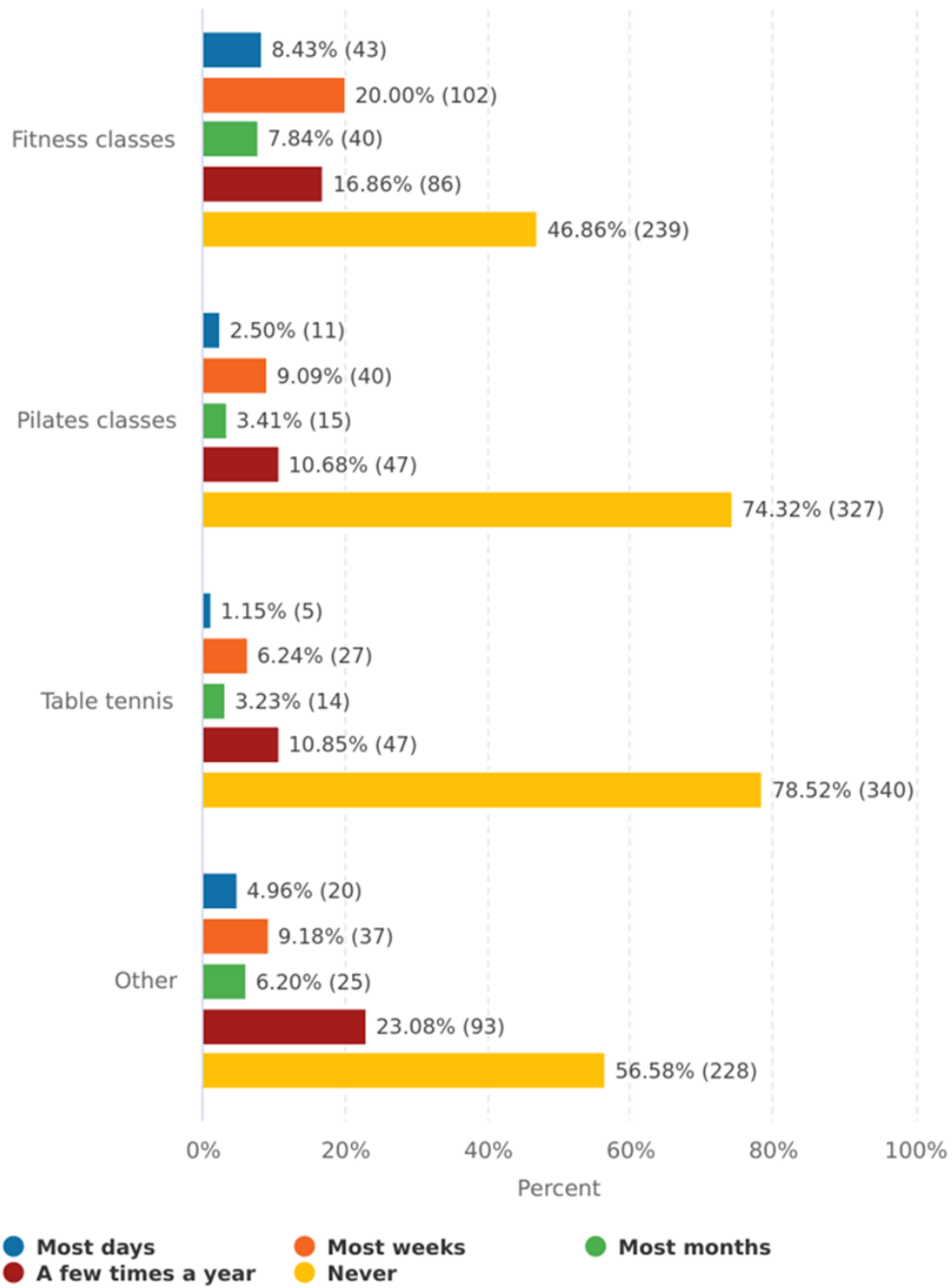
Are you responding as				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	A Wokingham borough resident		89.99%	845
2	An elected borough councillor		0.43%	4
3	A town or parish councillor		0.11%	1
4	Representing an organisation		1.81%	17
5	Completing the survey for someone else		0.75%	7
6	Other (please specify):		6.92%	65
			answered	939
			skipped	1



<b>How often do you use St Crispin's Leisure Centre, as a member or general visitor?</b>				
<b>Answer Choices</b>			<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
1	Most days		17.82%	167
2	Most weeks		30.95%	290
3	Most months		7.68%	72
4	A few times a year		21.34%	200
5	Never		22.20%	208

### What facilities do you use and how often?





**If St Crispin's Leisure Centre were to close, what options for alternative sports and/or leisure activities would you consider? (Select all that apply)**

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Use Loddon Valley Leisure Centre	8.76%	79
2	Use Wokingham Leisure Centre at Carnival Hub	49.11%	443
3	Use Ryeish Green Sports Hub	0.67%	6
4	Use Arborfield Green Leisure Centre	3.33%	30
5	Use Bulmershe Leisure Centre	4.43%	40
6	Join a private gym or leisure facility	19.73%	178
7	Stop using indoor sport/leisure facilities and exercise informally outdoors instead	17.85%	161
8	Stop exercising/taking part in sport and leisure completely	24.39%	220
9	Other (please specify):	18.63%	168
		answered	902
		skipped	38

When asked to explain their answer, 525 provided comments.

Respondents were asked about the impact a potential closure of St Crispin's Leisure Centre would have on how and where they exercise. They were asked to select from a range of options for alternative exercise (ticking all those that could apply to them).

About half for respondents (49%) indicated they would use Wokingham Leisure Centre at Carnival Hub. About 20% indicated that they would use a private gym and about 17% that they would exercise outside.

A total of 156 (17%) stated they would stop exercising completely without indicating another option. Of these the two most common reasons were:

- Related to location - good location/can't drive/can walk there as a reason not to continue activities (51%)
- No alternative squash provisions

The more common themes (mentioned by at least 5% of respondents) were:

- St Crispin's has a good location
- Lack of alternative squash facilities
- Closure would prevent people from exercising
- Parking is more difficult at alternatives
- St Crispin's is used by younger people
- St Crispin's is more affordable than alternatives
- St Crispin's is good for older people who may prefer a quiet gym
- There is a need for more facilities not fewer – to support health and well-being
- St Crispin's has a good range of facilities (wider than elsewhere)
- More housing is leading to more demand
- Alternatives will become too busy if St Crispin's is to close
- St Crispin's has been neglected – investment and marketing would bring more users

**To what extent would you agree or disagree with the idea of closing St Crispin's Leisure Centre?**

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Response Total
----------------	------------------	----------------

To what extent would you agree or disagree with the idea of closing St Crispin's Leisure Centre?				
1	Strongly agree		5.11%	48
2	Agree		6.07%	57
3	Neither agree nor disagree		8.95%	84
4	Disagree		14.80%	139
5	Strongly disagree		65.07%	611
			answered	939
			skipped	1
<p>80 per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with closing the leisure centre, with 703 giving us reasons why. The most cited reasons are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location (cited by 47% of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed)</li> <li>• General loss to community (43%)</li> <li>• Loss of squash facilities (38%)</li> <li>• Use of the centre by younger people (36%)</li> </ul>				

## 10. What do you think of the options we have set out as potential uses for the site?

Continuing with the leisure centre as is was generally the most popular option with some respondents suggesting it could be promoted to attract more usage.

The second most popular option was to transfer the asset to The Circle Trust to support the expansion of St Crispin's School, with comments relating to:

- The needs of St Crispin's School for additional space
- The overall need for more school places in the borough
- Potential for some community use to be maintained at the centre should it be transferred to the trust

There was almost no support for disposing of the site for residential development, with negative comments relating to:

- Location (too close to school)
- Existing perception of over-development
- Loss of a community facility while more housing would increase need for such facilities

There was limited support to use the site to provide other services with comments relating to:

- Support for ongoing community use
- Need for more detail on what services could be provided

There was very little support to demolish the centre with comments relating to:

- Existing perception of over-development
- Loss of a community facility while more housing would increase need for such facilities
- Safety concerns over a vacant site
- Concerns over the visual appearance of an empty site

## 11. Are there other options you believe we should consider?

The most popular alternative suggestions were:

- Community hub / community use
- Let the school use it / share with school
- Youth provision
- Health / medical centre
- Use for children's activities
- Rent out for parties / activities

About you (optional)

## 16. What town or parish do you live in?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Arborfield and Newland	1.01%	8
2	Barkham	2.41%	19
3	Charvil	0.13%	1
4	Earley	1.52%	12
5	Finchampstead	4.31%	34
6	Hurst	0.63%	5

16. What town or parish do you live in?				
7	Remenham		0.00%	0
8	Ruscombe		0.00%	0
9	Shinfield		0.76%	6
10	Sonning		0.13%	1
11	Swallowfield		0.13%	1
12	Twyford		1.39%	11
13	Wargrave		0.13%	1
14	Winnersh		3.04%	24
15	Wokingham		72.75%	574
16	Wokingham Without		2.15%	17
17	Woodley		1.65%	13
18	Don't know		0.38%	3
19	Outside Wokingham borough		7.48%	59
			answered	789
			skipped	151

17. What sex/gender do you identify as?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Female		54.73%	434
2	Male		43.51%	345
3	Transgender		0.13%	1
4	Prefer not to say		1.39%	11
5	Other (please specify):		0.25%	2
			answered	793
			skipped	147

18. How old are you?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	17 or younger		1.27%	10
2	18-20		1.02%	8
3	21-29		4.44%	35
4	30-39		10.41%	82
5	40-49		31.22%	246
6	50-59		24.24%	191



## 18. How old are you?

7	60 or older	27.41%	216
		answered	788
		skipped	152

## 19. What race or ethnicity best describes you?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Arabic	0.13%	1
2	Asian/British Asian: Bangladeshi	0.00%	0
3	Asian/British Asian: Chinese	1.40%	11
4	Asian/British Asian: Indian	3.95%	31
5	Asian/British Asian: Pakistani	0.38%	3
6	Black/British Black: African	0.26%	2
7	Black/British Black: Caribbean	0.26%	2
8	White: British	80.23%	629
9	White: Other	7.40%	58
10	Mixed race	1.02%	8
11	Gypsy/Traveller	0.00%	0
12	Prefer not to say	3.57%	28
13	Other (please specify):	1.40%	11
		answered	784
		skipped	156

## 20. What do you consider your religion to be?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Buddhism	0.13%	1
2	Christianity	44.36%	346
3	Hinduism	2.56%	20
4	Islam	0.90%	7
5	Judaism	0.26%	2
6	Sikhism	0.77%	6
7	No religion	42.56%	332
8	Prefer not to say	7.18%	56
9	Other (please specify):	1.28%	10
		answered	780

### 20. What do you consider your religion to be?

skipped	160
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### 21. Which of the following terms best describes your sexual orientation?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Asexual	1.17%	9
2	Bisexual	1.17%	9
3	Gay	0.65%	5
4	Lesbian	0.39%	3
5	Heterosexual/Straight	85.62%	661
6	Prefer not to say	10.10%	78
7	Other (please specify):	0.91%	7
		answered	772
		skipped	168

### 22. Have you undertaken any form of sex/gender reassignment?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	0.00%	0
2	No	93.26%	719
3	Prefer not to say	6.74%	52
		answered	771
		skipped	169

### 23. Are you currently pregnant or have you given birth within the last year?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	0.91%	7
2	No	80.68%	618
3	Not applicable	14.10%	108
4	Prefer not to say	4.31%	33
		answered	766
		skipped	174

24. Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health condition?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		13.67%	105
2	No		79.69%	612
3	Prefer not to say		6.64%	51
			answered	768
			skipped	172

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# Future Use of St Crispin's Leisure Centre

## Outline Business Case

**Primary strategic purpose/Criteria for change and commitments supported.**  
(select relevant strategic priorities)

- Enriching Lives
- Providing Safe & Strong Communities
- Enjoying a clean and green borough
- Delivering the right homes in the right places
- Keeping the borough moving
- Changing the way, we work for you
- Being the best, we can be

**Date of document**  
**Sign off Date from Leadership Team**  
**Sign off from CLT (if applicable)**

22/11/2023  
Click or tap to enter a date.  
Click or tap to enter a date.

**Author and main contact**  
**Director**  
**Executive Member**  
**Programme Manager**

Ming Zhang/Sally Watkins  
Graham Ebers/Helen Watson  
Name(s) of Exec Member (if required)  
Ngozi Fakeye

## 1 Introduction

There has been corporate focus on strengthening the understanding of current and future school place needs and demand, to ensure we can plan, design and deliver the best outcomes for children within the borough. Also, WBC has undertaken an assessment of the usage of St Crispin's Leisure Centre in Wokingham which has been declining since the opening of the Carnival Hub Leisure Centre in July 2022. Following public consultation, there is a proposal that future use of this asset should transfer to The Circle Trust to facilitate future expansion of St Crispin's School and help address the significant deficit in secondary school places in the borough whilst maintaining community use as fully as possible. The council's Executive will take the final decision on the way forward, informed by the outcomes of the public consultation and other information and data including the shortfall in secondary school places and the patronage of the current leisure centre.

## 2 Need for Change

**School places deficit:** WBC's current school place sufficiency forecast highlights that there is limited capacity to meet the council's statutory duty in relation to secondary school places. In the academic year 23/24, 49 pupils had 'no offer' at Year 7 and WBC was one of only 13 Local Education Authorities nationally with this issue. The Council has a legal duty to provide sufficient school places. School place sufficiency forecasting for Wokingham indicates that the Borough has a total shortage of 1,045<sup>1</sup> Year 7 places at secondary schools over the next five academic years. This forecast has been verified by an independent specialist.

As the local authority, Wokingham Borough Council has a statutory duty to provide school places for every child resident in the Borough whose parents want one. A school place MUST be provided, if needs be by such options as sending children to the nearest out of borough schools with places or by providing additional classrooms. Both those options would involve significant additional costs, as well as being worse for the education and welfare of the children concerned.

As the community expands, the council's strategic approach to school place planning is addressing deficits in provision across the borough in conjunction with other schools best placed to provide the most cost-effective solutions. Including investments already made in Piggott, Bohunt, Forest and Emmbrook schools. St Crispin's School is best placed to support the education of more young people in this area and provides WBC with circa 330 much needed Y7 school places. Based on the current roll and birthrate projection in Wokingham, the council expects the population to continue to expand beyond 200k by 2031 because of new house builds and inward migration. Therefore, the long-term strategy must meet this demand requiring the necessary investment in the schools' expansion infrastructure.

**Impact on capital investment:** Over the next five years, the Council has forecasted circa £25m for capital investments in secondary school expansion programmes in partnership with Academy Trusts in the Borough as part of the long-term strategy. Therefore, to meet the Council's statutory obligations and manage the financial pressures associated with the investment necessary to do so, it is prudent WBC explore avenues to work in partnership with Academy Trusts to address the shortage in secondary school places and get the best value for money.

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<sup>1</sup> People Too School Place Model

### 3 Justification for the site transfer to St Crispin's School

The St. Crispin's Leisure Centre site is circa 1.32 acres, adjacent to the St Crispin's secondary School. If this was realisable as residential value, it would be worth circa £1.5m, however its proximity to the school and planning constraints means that commercial use or scope for residential development is limited. As such, its value is likely to be community use only.

The secondary school needs capital investment to provide the space required to safely manage the rising number of pupil places. It is critical to invest in the borough's local secondary school provision to ensure parents and carers can access their school of choice wherever possible.

The council also has an obligation to ensure young people are safe. Due to the communal car park and access arrangements, there have been site security and safeguarding challenges which the Circle Trust have raised with the council. Furthermore, as the school community expands, there is a significant risk of overcrowding at the school which the council must support the school to address. This option presents an opportunity to address these obligations.

**Meet council priorities:** This option also delivers against the Council's statutory duty to provide adequate secondary school places. Without the leisure centre to create additional classrooms, St Crispin's School cannot take an additional 55 students in September 2024 nor an additional 55 students in September 2025 and thereafter. The option of transferring the asset to St Crispin's school represents value for money compared to providing extra module or new build classroom. To expand St Crispin's school to meet the extra school places WBC needs by adding a modular build for example, would cost circa £5m-£6m. DfE and Building Regs requires Modular or new Build and therefore Portacabins are no longer an option.

In addition, as St. Crispin's is a Grade II listed building, the only alternative option would be to build on the existing playing fields. Sport England have declared that they would not support any further encroachment on to playing fields and so this is not a viable option. This in turn limits the school's expansion at the back of the site for additional prefabricated classrooms.

Should WBC instead invest at another school site elsewhere in the Borough, this will cost at a minimum £5m - £6m for the same size modular building, plus potentially an additional £1m-£2m for infrastructure and utilities.

**Mitigates safeguarding risks within St. Crispin's school:** Safeguarding is a fundamental responsibility of a council and therefore WBC must take all reasonable steps to mitigate that risk. From a recent security survey completed by St Crispin's School, the school would need a perimeter fence to defend the school site from intruders and this can best be achieved if it had control of the whole site. These concerns have been raised by the Circle Trust in their consultation response.

**Value for money:** A key consideration has been ensuring that we also bring value for money in any investment WBC commits to. Transferring the site to St. Crispin's school would require a £1m contribution towards site improvements which is considerably less than investing £5-£6m that would be required for a modular building extension in the school.

### 4 Risks and mitigation

WBC have identified the risks associated with this proposal but have assessed that the mitigations are adequately robust.

Key risk	Risk mitigation
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The loss of the community facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Circle Trust have committed to support existing community/voluntary groups using the facility as well as the Squash league.</li> <li>• The Circle Trust will continue to provide wraparound care model and holiday club offer for parents and carers within the local community.</li> <li>• Places for Leisure will incorporate all other sports classes and activities except Squash in their other sites.</li> <li>• Places for Leisure have also agreed to support continuing voluntary groups in any of their other sites if this is required</li> <li>• Places for Leisure will support the opening of Montague Park community centre in the future</li> <li>• Places for Leisure will support alternative provision for some of the exercise/aerobic classes including at BXG FIT in Peach Place, a site they already operate on behalf of the council</li> </ul>
Fluctuation in school place demand over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council’s strategic school place planning is based on a five-year projection. This is reviewed every year as migration and population need changes. Should the current rate of growth change so that growth ceases or diminishes future works packages will be adjusted or omitted to reflect school needs in these new circumstances.</li> </ul>
Concern of the length of a lease term vs five-year schools need demand profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lease term is a separate matter based on the legislative framework for how councils give Academy Trusts land to operate schools. 125 years is the DfE’s national standard lease period for an academy. The school places are agreed based on the Collaboration Agreement contract terms where the Circle trusts commits to the WBC places demand.</li> </ul>

## 5 Cost and benefit appraisal of the recommended option

The recommendation is to contribute £1m to the refurbishment and redesign of the leisure centre to enable the provision of 330 extra school places. The value of the leisure centre site to WBC is for community use only. Therefore, if WBC protects its community use value, the total cost to WBC could be in the region of £1m total capital cost. A modular or new build would cost more than £5m anywhere it is in the borough and may be as high as £8m depending on the infrastructure and utility requirements.

## 6 Legal conditions under proposed transfer

The proposed lease arrangement for this transfer is a standard academy lease discharged under legislation whereby community schools and church schools normally use some land that their local authority owns as a long-term lease model for stability. As the site under consideration is contiguous, and so a Commercial Transfer Agreement will be the appropriate addendum to the St. Crispin’s school’s current lease term. And therefore, the leisure centre lease will expire at the same time as the original lease agreement for the school.

WBC have successfully renegotiated the clause in the existing contractual agreement with our leisure provider forbidding WBC from sponsoring a ‘Competing Facility’ within a 2-mile radius of another facility operated by the leisure provider and therefore the Circle Trust can offer Squash courts to continue.

There will be a clause that stipulates the squash provision continues as committed to by the Circle Trust. Clauses ensuring the statutory Health and Safety guardrails, including maintenance and infrastructure management will be included in the transfer agreement.



Where the Academy Trust may wish to end the lease or becomes insolvent, the asset is either transferred to an incoming trust that takes up the school or reverts to the council. There are guardrails to prevent insolvency as Academy trusts with deficits are subject to ESFA (Education School Funding Agency) who give early warnings and can intervene via the DfE where a trust is at risk.

Community service provision, anti-competition requirements, maintenance and service provision standards will be enforceable through a legal agreement.

The contract will also cover continued use of the Leisure Centre building as a polling station.

## 7 The Circle Trust’s commitment

WBC has listened to the concerns raised in the consultation and transparently shared these with the Circle Trust. They have made the following commitments should the leisure centre be passed to the Trust

1. Develop and maintain the centre and its sports facilities, enhancing the sports provision to benefit our students during the school day.
2. Support existing community groups using the facility such as the Squash players.
3. Support services that provided a wraparound care for young children so that parents and carers had the opportunity to work.
4. Welcome local charities and groups to use the site as a venue for events and meet-ups outside of school hours.

## 8 Supplementary update on other options

At the Overview and Scrutiny meeting, there were some options that officers were advised to further explore. The rationale has been summarised as follows:

<b>1. Retain site for the use of the leisure centre</b>	
This is the status quo option. However, the St. Crispin’s leisure centre has seen a 30% reduction in footfall since the opening of the new Carnival Hub which is less than one mile away. The table indicated the footfall reduction.	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Footfall</b>
April 19 – March 20	151,577
April 22 – March 23	105,399
This site represents one of six within the leisure management contract and is less than two miles from the new Carnival Hub therefore it is not viewed financially viable as a long-term leisure provision since the opening of Carnival Hub. The school has had an increasing requirement for use of the building, for example, as an examination centre, which has led to it being unavailable for approximately 9 weeks a year. This has impacted the ability of Places for Leisure to offer classes, both in terms of the restrictions in times, and in finding staff willing to work to the pattern of availability.	
<b>Meeting council priorities:</b>	Leisure facilities undoubtedly meet the Council priority of ‘enriching lives’ however the proximity of the new sports and community centre in the Carnival Hub and potential to offer classes at other locations mean the long-term viability is at risk.
<b>Financial assessment</b>	With regards to revenue implication there will be numerous variables impacting on this leisure management annual fee, including the potential loss of this site and the disbursement of activities to other sites operated by the contractor. An annual income target is included in the base budget which is achieved and equalised over the contract through an Equalisation Fund. Furthermore, the current contractor has indicated that maintaining this site as part of the offering will be loss making.

<b>Value for money</b>	Based on the financial assessment, there is a disbenefit in retaining the site and therefore would not be an effective use of council assets.
<b>Key risk</b>	Not financially viable as a long-term leisure provision since the opening of Carnival Hub.
<b>Risk mitigation</b>	Repurpose the use of the site to help address WBC needs and optimise the benefits that transfer to the school will bring to the community.

<b>2a. Hybrid use (Divide the building)</b>	
This model involves WBC dividing the site into two, so that Places for Leisure would retain the gym and squash courts while the school would have the main hall and ancillary areas. The site footprint would be smaller for each use. This has been rejected by Places for Leisure because it would adversely affect the Places for Leisure programme and the much smaller footprint. This has also been rejected by the school as it curtails the expansion plans and creating the extra spaces needed to grow. It also does not fully address the safeguarding issues.	
<b>Meeting council priorities:</b>	WBC has a statutory obligation to ensure that there are sufficient health and wellbeing facilities to meet the needs of its residents. It would cost circa £2m to repurpose.
<b>Financial assessment</b>	The Circle Trust and Places for Leisure have advised that this would not be operationally effective to adopt this model.
<b>Value for money</b>	The council will need to invest circa £2m to achieve this conversion, however as it is not operationally acceptable to the school or commercially viable to the leisure operator, it will not be value for money.
<b>Key risk</b>	Neither Places leisure nor Circle Trust are supportive of this option.
<b>Risk mitigation</b>	Opt for the transfer the site to the Circle Trust

<b>2b. Hybrid use (Block booking)</b>	
There was consideration on whether the leisure centre block-books the facilities that the school needs while retaining the management and operations by the leisure management contract. This model was not deemed viable for Places for Leisure because it would adversely impact flexibility of their programmes. This was also not accepted by the school because it would not address the long-term expansion or safeguarding needs.	
<b>Meeting council priorities:</b>	WBC has a statutory obligation to ensure that there are sufficient health and wellbeing facilities to meet the needs of its residents.
<b>Financial assessment</b>	This model does not address the case for change. It is also not supported by the leisure provider or the school because it is as a variation of the current arrangements where the school block-books the site for exams for example.
<b>Value for money</b>	WBC will need to invest circa £1m to improve the facilities, however this investment will not be value for money because it will not be advancing the priority needs of residents in either fitness or education.
<b>Key risk</b>	Neither Places leisure nor Circle Trust are supportive of this option.
<b>Risk mitigation</b>	Opt for the transfer the site to the Circle Trust

<b>2c. Provide space for the school at a different location</b>	
There was consideration as to whether a different council-owned property could provide the space the school needs. Examples of other properties that were considered included the Old Library, and Wokingham Youth & Community Centre. However, suitable properties are either occupied or have a more appropriate alternative use, and would require considerable work to repurpose them which is unlikely to be completed in the timescale required. Operating a split site would be difficult and expensive for the school, and safeguarding concerns would be difficult to address.	

<b>Meeting council priorities:</b>	Use of another building would impact the council's ability to reorganise its use of its properties to enable it to realise savings, or receipts from sales or rental income or to use the building in question for other services.
<b>Financial assessment</b>	The cost to repurpose a building would exceed the cost of transfer to the Circle Trust. There would also be potential loss to the council resulting from the inability to use whichever building was selected to support income generation, capital receipts or service cost reductions.
<b>Value for money</b>	As well as the additional cost of repurposing the building, there would be significant ongoing additional costs for the school in delivering education on two sites that are not geographically connected, as well as practical difficulties in moving students between the sites.
<b>Key risk</b>	Suitable WBC properties are either occupied or have a more appropriate alternative use
<b>Risk mitigation</b>	Opt for the transfer the site to the Circle Trust

## 9 Improvement works to:

The contribution of £1m from WBC is for immediate refurbishment that will be necessary to make the site ready ahead of the 24/25 academic year and become a sustainable long-term standard school provision. This will include.

- Gym to be removed and re-purposed as additional classrooms.
- Existing studio space X2 re-purposed as two extra classrooms.
- Provision of changing room facilities and indirectly increase teaching space.
- Provision of examination rooms
- Refurbishment of the sports hall for the provision of enhanced PE modules

## 10 Opportunities in other sites:

Montague Park community centre is being explored as an opportunity to accommodate any activities that are not able to be run at St. Crispin's or WBCs other leisure facilities in the vicinity. Places leisure have confirmed that they are willing to support the provision of activities at Montague Park subject to WBC being able to make this site financially viable.

However, BXG FIT is a smaller fitness centre in the council's ownership, in Peach Place, closer to St Crispin's than Carnival Hub, and on the same bus route. It is already operated by Places for Leisure. It is suitable and available to accommodate daytime activities which currently take place at St Crispins. It would meet the needs of those who indicated in the consultation that they would prefer a quieter and less high-tech venue than Carnival Hub. Places for Leisure are willing to support relocating activities to this venue. Places for Leisure are also willing to consider offering some classes in a room away from the main gym at Carnival Hub.

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## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: the initial impact assessment

### 1. Process and guidance

The purpose of an EqIA is to make sure that the council is meeting the needs of all our residents by ensuring we consider how different groups of people may be affected by or experience a proposal in different ways. EqIAs help us to meet our [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) and where applicable the [Armed Forces Duty](#)

The council has a two stage EqIA process:

- Stage 1 - the initial impact assessment
- Stage 2 - the full impact assessment.

This form is for use at Stage 1 of the process. This must be completed when undertaking a project, policy change, or service change. It can form part of a business case for change and must be completed and attached to a Project Initiation Document. The findings of the initial impact assessment will determine whether a full impact assessment is needed.

Guidance and tools for council officers can be accessed on the council's Tackling Inequality Together intranet pages.

Date started:	06 November 2023	
Completed by:	Joseph Howorth/Susan Bentley	
Service:	Sport & Leisure (Resources & Assets)	
Project or policy EqIA relates to:	St Crispins Future Use – transfer to school for School Placement requirements	
Date EqIA discussed at service team meeting:	07 November 2023	
Conclusion (is a full assessment needed?):	No	

Signed off by (AD):	Yes – Peter Kilkenny	
Sign off date:	07 November 23	

## 2. Summary of the policy, project, or service

This section should be used to summarise the project, policy, or service change (the proposal).

### **What is the purpose of the proposal, what are the aims and expected outcomes, and how does it relate to service plans and the corporate plan?**

Following the consultation for the future use of St Crispins Leisure Centre, an executive report has been produced for executive decision on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. In principle the closure of St Crispin’s Leisure Centre and transfer of the land to St Crispin’s School (The Circle Trust) to fulfil the school placement requirements. The recommendations in the report include that the school is keen to work with the Council and Local Communities to continue the local squash provision in addition to the current community activities the school provide. This proposal will work alongside the WBC corporate plan by supporting the school in providing the right environment for effective learning for all pupils. The Wokingham Borough Secondary Schools Strategy (age 11 to 16) Needs and Options Paper Consultation 2021: Background paper; demonstrates that the projected number of Year 7 pupils within the borough will exceed the number of Year 7 places available by 2024/2025 and therefore additional secondary school places are required to meet the needs. In relation to our Leisure Strategy 2020-25, £52.9m has been invested in Leisure facilities, this includes £23m in Wokingham Leisure Centre which is located within 1 mile of St Crispins Leisure Centre which is part of the proposal for existing leisure members.

### **How will the proposal be delivered; what governance arrangements are in place and who are the key internal stakeholders?**

The proposal will go to the executive committee for a decision to be made, which in turn will trigger further collaboration between respected legal teams, the school, and Place Leisure (leisure provider) addressing current and future contractual arrangements with all parties. Internal property team will then be involved in the change of use for the Leisure Centre to be utilized by the school. Children’s services will be involved across all decisions made between parties to ensure the efficient transfer of the facility, to the school.

**Who will be affected by the proposal? Think about who it is aimed at and who will deliver it.**

All existing users of the Leisure Centre will be contacted by Places Leisure (the leisure provider) and given options to move their membership to Wokingham Leisure Centre @ Carnival Hub. Discussions will take place with Places Leisure in regards to the running of leisure activities at Montague Park Community Centre or elsewhere.

Existing squash provisions and existing non-sporting activities will be discussed further with St Crispins School as recommendations are for the school to continue to sport these activities.

There will be no impact to current school students.

**3. Data & Protected Characteristics**

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This section should be used to set out what data you have gathered to support the initial impact assessment. The table below sets out the equality groups that need to be considered in the impact assessment. These comprise the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and other priority areas defined by the council.

Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Pregnancy/Maternity
Religious belief	Race	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Socio-economic disadvantage

The Armed Forces Act 2021 also requires consideration of the [impact on Armed Forces Communities](#) when exercising certain housing, education or healthcare functions (excluding social care). Further guidance can be found [here](#).

**What data and information will be used to help assess the impact of the proposal on different groups of people? A list of useful resources is available for officers on the Council’s Tackling Inequality Together intranet pages.**

- Data based on school places need vs capacity available at St Crispins school.
- Demographic and membership data for St Crispins and Wokingham to ensure similar provision and usage is observed
- Places leisure data on members transferred from St Crispins to alternative facility.
- Assessment of population trend data.
- Membership data single vs multi-site memberships.
- Data on other squash provisions across the borough.
- Data on investment in Leisure Services in Wokingham Borough.

#### 4. Assessing & Scoring Impact

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This section should be used to assess the likely impact on each equality group, consider how significant any impacts could be and explain how the data gathered supports the conclusions made.

Scoring impact for equality groups	
Positive impact	The proposal promotes equality of opportunity by meeting needs or addressing existing barriers to participation and/or promotes good community relations
Neutral or no impact	The proposal has no impact or no disproportionate impact.
Low negative	The proposal is likely to negatively impact a small number of people, be of short duration and can easily be resolved.
High negative	The proposal is likely to have a significant negative impact on many people or a severe impact on a smaller number of people.



Referring to the Scoring table above, please give an impact score for each group, explain what the likely impact will be, and briefly set out how the data supports this conclusion.

Equality group	Impact score	Impact and supporting data
Age	No Impact	The age profile for St Crispins is very similar to the profile for the nearest centre Wokingham leisure centre with no increased number of young people or older adults in comparison between centres. Therefore, there is no age bias of use at St Crispins vs Wokingham.
Disability	No Impact	
Gender reassignment	No Impact	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No Impact	
Pregnancy/Maternity	No Impact	
Religious belief	No Impact	
Race	No Impact	
Sex	No Impact	
Sexual Orientation	No Impact	
Socio-economic disadvantage	No Impact	Although St Crispins is the located adjacent to Norreys ward which is an area of high deprivation in Wokingham, the investigation of alternative provisions such as Montague Park under 1 mile and option of utilisation of Wokingham leisure centre located 1 mile from St Crispins allows mitigation of impact on this equality group Cycle, walking, bus and car access routes between facilities ensures adequate and options of transport within Wokingham.
Armed Forces Communities	No Impact	

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## 5. Conclusion and next steps.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment if you have identified any groups as having a low or high negative impact.

If no impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must include reference to the initial assessment in any associated reports, and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy, or service change.