

**Annual Presentation by Freedom Leisure**  
**Thursday 30 January 2025 at 14:00**  
**Guildford Spectrum/ Microsoft Teams**

**Present;**

From GBC:

Charlotte Brindley (CB)

Sally Seymour (SS)

Cllr Catherine Houston (CH)

From Freedom Leisure;

Emma Beavis (EB)

Melanie Main (MM)

Ref:	ITEM	Action
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Apologies for absence &amp; introductions</b>	
1.1	Apologies were received from Kelvin Mills.	-
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Annual Presentation by Emma Beavis</b>	
2.1	The presentation by EB provides an overview of the performance of the leisure facilities (Guildford Spectrum, Guildford Lido and Ash Manor Sports Centre) during the period of 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.	-
2.2	EB began by providing a summary of the financial performance for the year (2023/24). EB explained how record attendance levels impacted on the strong financial position. The overall position, after the deduction of the management fee and repayments, was a net surplus of £247,728.	-
2.3	<p>EB then went on to highlight the participation breakdown of the 1,686,721 people who visited Spectrum in the year. The ice rink saw 346,670 visitors (for public ice skating alone), with the leisure pool also seeing similar numbers at 317,782 visits. The toddler splash session provision has also continued to grow, with 16,553 customers enjoying these sessions. EB commented how well-received these sessions are.</p> <p>EB was pleased to report the continued success of the Learn to Swim (LTS) programme, with Spectrum seeing on average 3,000 children per week attending swim lessons. EB explained that the installation of pool platforms enabled Stage 3 classes to be moved to the 25-meter pool, allowing for more Stage 1 &amp; 2 classes to take place thus meeting demand and allowing the LTS programme to grow even more.</p>	-
2.4	EB then went on to provide an overview of the capital investment that took place during the year. April saw new fitness equipment being installed, building upon the gym refurbishment in the year prior. EB commented that there were over 249,000 attendances for fitness, which includes group exercise, personal training and indoor cycling. The presentation showed more examples of compliments made by customers. The meeting noted that it was pleasing to hear such positive feedback, not only on the facilities but the service provided by staff.	-

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	<p>EB highlighted the main areas of investment at the Spectrum, with the installation of replacement boilers (£242k) in July, installation of a new sound and lighting system in the ice rink (£83.2k) and competition pool seating replacement (£38.2k) in the same month. Significant investment was made into the leisure pool and associated changing facilities (£169.6k). The toilets on Level 3 also underwent significant refurbishment (£63.4k) as well as the baby-changing area and saunas. The intruder alarm was also upgraded at a cost of £66.3k. Other expenditure included new lane ropes, benches and new carpet in the bowling area.</p> <p>EB explained the importance of ensuring all works are scheduled in at the best time, to minimise disruption to the customer and operation. EB added that many of the projects are planned 12 to 18 months in advance.</p> <p>Of the total £1,867,598 invested into the contract in 2023/24, the Lido saw £136,394 invested. This included pool tile repairs, paving works and general maintenance as part of the pre-season works.</p>	
2.5	<p>EB explained how FL focus on the entire customer journey, and the importance of ensuring investment is made in all areas. This year has had a particular focus on refreshing the visuals across the centre. FL has worked closely with a local supplier to carefully tailor the designs to each area. EB referred to the work completed in the leisure pool walkway area which is now more aesthetically pleasing for customers while also providing customers with better directional signage and guidance on pool safety. The graphics installed in the cafe area have also made the space feel a more welcoming and pleasant area for customers to sit and enjoy a coffee. EB commented how there has been a noticeable difference of customers wanting to stay longer and using this space more for meetings.</p>	-
2.6	<p>CH asked whether FL try to use local suppliers where possible. EB confirmed that whilst some will be centralised due to buying power, other, more local companies are used, for example the abovementioned company for the visuals is based in Guildford.</p>	-
2.7	<p>EB then went on to summarise how the loyalty scheme works and was pleased to report an increase of over 3,500 members, with over 43,500 members now on the Active Card scheme. EB explained how the concessionary scheme (which is available for Senior Citizens, Students, disabled people, unemployed and those receiving income support) offers discounted activity sessions. EB was asked why there has been significant growth in active card holders in the year. EB explained it was due to a number of factors, and that FL do a lot of outreach work to promote the scheme, linking in with local support services and advertising the offers available. EB added that memberships have also grown and each member is automatically enrolled onto the active card scheme upon joining.</p> <p>Free to Guildford Borough residents, and £5 for those living outside of the borough, the active card scheme allows customers to build</p>	-

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	up their loyalty points which can then be converted into free activities, all the way up to a children's party. In 2023/24, EB reported that customers used £45,760's worth of loyalty points.	
2.8	<p>EB summarised the next slide which showed a map indicating where members live, the majority of which live in GU1-GU4 areas as would be expected. EB then presented another map showing where people travel from for public ice skating and swimming sessions, demonstrating the Spectrum's draw as a destination venue and tourist attraction.</p> <p>EB summarised the marketing strategy for the contract and the varying tools used according to target demographic and type of activity that is being promoted. Facebook 'reaches' increased almost 50% since 2022/23, with 'link clicks' and 'impressions' also significantly up on the previous year. EB explained that FL continue to analyse postcode data, booking patterns (from first connection) and marketing tools to continually build an effective marketing strategy. EB then went on to explain how the focus on marketing also varies across the week, with memberships, group exercise and health &amp; wellbeing the primary mid-week focus, and weekend activities being heavily promoted on the Friday and weekends.</p>	-
2.9	<p>EB then provided an overview to the year's ice pantomime which was 'Alice in Wonderland'. EB was pleased to report that 10,062 tickets were sold which equates to 94% of total tickets available, with one day selling the most tickets in one day ever, taking £19k. EB confirmed that lessons were taken from this event, and previous years so that Spectrum can build on its success for subsequent years. CH iterated how fantastic the ice pantomime is each year and is always so impressed by the effort, professionalism and talent that goes into such a brilliant production. CH is keen to link the Spectrum up with the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre so that further work can be done to promote each other's pantomimes. EB thanked CH and added how important it is for each venue to ensure their programmes are complimentary of each other so that the offer does not clash.</p>	<b>EB/CH</b>
2.10	<p>MM provided an overview to the exercise referral scheme which saw a big shift in demographic of those typically being referred. The period saw an increase in younger people being referred as well as those needing support with their mental health. This change has meant that FL have had to adapt the entitlement arrangements as those generally now accessing the scheme are not available during the week or daytime. MM added that the programme continues to grow and be adapted according to the types of referrals received so that it remains fit for purpose.</p> <p>MM was proud to report the success of the Menopaus Wellbeing programme. This programme focused on women's health, and had a big focus on ensuring the classes were fun, inclusive and felt safe for women to participate, therefore breaking down the barriers to participation. MM said that the scheme was so successful that additional classes were added to the programme.</p>	-

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	<p>MM summarised the ‘Ladies who lift’ class which was designed to educate women and girls about strength training and provide a safe and comfortable environment where women can lift weights and ultimately enjoy the training process. These classes still continue due to high demand and the feedback that is received echoes how enjoyable the sessions are and that a real sense of community has been established.</p> <p>MM said that another top priority for FL was engaging with the older demographic through promotion of the concessionary scheme for senior citizens and also providing swimming lessons for the over 60’s. During 2023/24, 72 swimming sessions were delivered (a total of 648 attendances). These swimming lessons were offered during the week (in the teaching pool) and then many would then be enrolled onto the adult swimming lesson programme. MM was asked how the class came about. MM confirmed that originally it was a Swim England initiative to get more adults swimming.</p> <p>MM provided an overview of the number of other classes that have been introduced predominantly for senior members, such as restorative yoga and low impact aqua sessions to ensure a broad range of activities for this age demographic.</p>	
2.11	<p>The next slide provided an overview of the Guildford junior citizens safety event which saw around 300 school children from local schools taking part in specially designed safety workshops by key partners. Due to its success, Spectrum will be hosting for the third year running in June.</p>	-
2.12	<p>EB then drew the attention of the meeting to the many clubs that use the facilities across a broad number of activities, demonstrating the Spectrum’s ability to provide such a diverse programme that caters for everyone.</p>	-
2.13	<p>EB then went on to provide an overview to the customer feedback that was received over the year. EB explained that FL actively seek feedback and all customers are automatically contacted following their visit to ask them about their experience. Of the 1.8m visitors across Spectrum, Lido and Ash, 780 comments were made, 453 of which were complaints, 113 comments/ suggestions and 214 were compliments. EB confirmed that each Head of Department is sent a spreadsheet of feedback every month of all customer comments received for the venue (not just their area of responsibility). EB outlined the importance of making sure the full customer journey is listened to and acted upon.</p> <p>The meeting commented how positive it was to see the number of compliments received during the period. CB agreed and said that the compliments reflected all areas of the business and across each of the 3 sites but one of the common themes of the feedback was over the excellent customer service provided by staff. CH commented how the majority of people would not provide feedback if the service provided was adequate or at a level they would expect, and so it is really positive to see that so many people felt compelled to complement the services as their experience was clearly beyond their expectations. Likewise, people generally only</p>	-

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	feedback when their is an issue or reason for complaint and so it is pleasing to see this level of feedback.	
2.14	H&S EB outlined the importance of Health and Safety and the various (internal and external) audits that take place each year.	-
2.15	EB then provided an overview to the Lido's performance over the period. EB commented how the new changing facilities which opened in June 2023 have transformed the Lido and how the upgrade has impacted not just customers but Lido staff in terms of managing them. The Lido saw around 86,000 visitors during the period, with 476 season tickets sold (100 more than last year). MM added that even more season tickets were sold this year. The Lido's 90 <sup>th</sup> birthday celebration was a lovely way to mark its success, with many compliments received from families who enjoyed the activities provided. The aqua fit classes were also a huge success and FL aim to build on these further. EB confirmed that a new Lido Manager has recently been appointed and is working closely with the current manager on a detailed handover to ensure a smooth transition.	-
2.16	EB summarised FL's environmental commitments and provided an overview to FL's plans ahead. EB confirmed that the working group have recently reviewed the progress following the implementation of the winter environmental action plans to share what worked well across the group and where savings have been made. EB referred to Ash Manor's reduced opening hours over the quiet Christmas period.	-
2.17	EB then provided an overview of the broad range of training & development that has taken place over the period. The training provided varies from new starter essential H&S / induction training to higher management training, which can be completed flexibility to suit the staff's work schedule. Of the training completed, 172 lifeguards completed their National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ). 33 staff also completed their Level 1 and/or Level 2 swim teacher training. The majority of participants are from local schools and colleges and will then work at the Spectrum and/ or Lido. EB explained that all staff have the opportunity to attend training and that some training is delivered in house e.g. trainer-assessor courses, first aid, NPLQ. EB said how beneficial this was, as the course can be adapted to the attendees' shift patterns and demands within the leisure industry.	-
2.18	As well as the numerous partnerships in place which continue to grow, EB was pleased to report the large number of schools that have used the Spectrum athletics track over 2023/24, particularly given the challenge around transport for many schools.	-
2.19	The final slide provided information over the Salvation Army's Easter Egg appeal whereby 174 easter eggs were collected and donated in March. CH asked about the cost of activities, in particular the cost of memberships. MM/EB explained that continuous benchmarking is completed to ensure the facilities remain competitive. The Spectrum is unique in that it is able to offer pay as you go sessions, junior memberships and access to pools and huge group exercise	-

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	programme. It is therefore not comparable with 24 hour budget gyms. The spaces are very different at Spectrum too, with 3 or 4 classes able to be run at the same time across studios and pools. The loyalty scheme and concessionary green card is also not offered at competing facilities which is an added benefit to those who choose to be a member at the leisure facilities.	
2.20	There were no further comments or questions and the meeting closed.	-