

## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Audit and Governance Meeting**

**Date of meeting: Tuesday 30 June 2026**

**Report by:** Councillor Sarah Hopewell – Executive Member for Wellbeing

**Report title:** Annual Leisure Contract Performance Report

**Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);**

**Summary** – To present the annual review of East Herts Council’s fifteen-year leisure contract with Sport and Leisure Management Ltd (SLM) trading as Everyone Active (EA).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Audit and Governance Committee:**

- a) To review and receive the Annual Leisure Contract Performance Report (2025) as set by the service leisure provider below.

#### **1.0 Background**

1.1 The fifteen-year contract with our leisure provider, Sport and Leisure Management Ltd. (SLM), commenced on 1 January 2020 and is now in its seventh year. This report reviews the performance of Everyone Active (EA) during 2025 in delivering services in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

1.2 East Herts Council remains committed to delivering high quality leisure services that support health, wellbeing, and community participation across the district.

1.3 The Council's Corporate Plan commits to:

- To listen, engage, and act transparently in our decision making and operations, placing greater emphasis on consultation, engagement, and meaningful dialogue with our communities.
- Maintain and improve council services while making them more cost efficient through the “Transforming East Herts” programme.
- To deliver the Thriving Together Plan, promoting physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and initiatives that enhance the wellbeing of residents and communities.

1.4 This report highlights key achievements and developments across the district’s leisure centres during 2025.

1.5 Attendance figures for 2025 were affected by the loss of two dual use sites in December 2024, reducing the contract from four pool facilities to two. The two sites accounted for 180,781 total visits and 33,607 swimming visits in 2024.

1.6 On a like for like basis, excluding the impact of the lost sites, attendance increased by 45,114 visits, equivalent to growth of 3.1%.

1.7 Refurbishment works at Grange Paddocks gym and changing village improvements at Hartham resulted in approximately 13,500 fewer visits; however, both centres achieved positive attendance and performance results on a like for like basis.

1.8 Everyone Active invested a total of £962,686 across East Herts leisure centres in 2025, including £683,892 at Grange Paddocks and £278,794 at Hartham for gym and activity area refurbishments.

1.9 The Grange Paddocks refurbishment included a complete replacement of gym equipment less than four years after the centre opened, alongside the introduction of Hertfordshire's only virtual aqua offering and one of only two Hydro Hex installations in the county.

1.10 Although the gym refurbishment required a 15-day closure, additional studio and outdoor sessions were provided to minimise disruption to customers.

1.11 A new Reformer Pilates studio was created at Hartham between February and March 2025 by converting underused dry side space. The new studio has enabled an additional 30–35 classes per week, supporting strong demand and contributing to continued growth in group exercise participation.

1.12 Community engagement, physical activity and wellbeing remained a key focus throughout 2025, building on initiatives introduced in previous years. The Exercise Referral Scheme, relaunched in 2024, continued to grow, receiving more than 152 referrals during the year.

1.13 This was supported by a range of promotional activities and five referral partnerships, including collaboration with the Active GP Partnership to deliver seated activity sessions within local GP surgeries.

1.14 These outreach sessions have successfully engaged residents who do not currently use leisure facilities, with a number of participants progressing onto the Exercise Referral Scheme and swimming programmes. Thus, demonstrating the positive impact of community-based activity interventions in supporting healthier and more active lifestyles.

1.15 EA continues to support the community by promoting inclusivity and accessible participation opportunities. A structured programme of holiday activities has been developed, including SEND soft play sessions and arts and crafts sessions.

1.16 During the summer, these have been brought together under the 'Everyone is Family' programme, offering a range of selected activities at £2 per person, helping to create accessible opportunities for new users and families to engage with the centres.

1.17 From a membership perspective, the fitness membership base decreased by 312 users in 2025, from 10,421 at the end of 2024 to 10,109 in 2025. The 2024 figure was inflated by the transfer of approximately 800 users from dual use sites (Fanshawe and Leventhorpe) into Grange Paddocks, with not all these members continuing at the centres in 2025.

1.18 The reduction has also been influenced by operational factors, including issues with shower and changing facilities at Hartham, and disruption associated with the gym refurbishment at Grange Paddocks.

1.19 The annual report covers two main components:

- Performance against contract specifications
- Qualitative achievements and service improvements.

## **2.0 Annual report**

2.1 The following sections present the contractual performance, covering key areas such as customer throughput, satisfaction, health and safety, social value contributions and utilities summary.

### **2.2 Customer throughput**

2.2.1 East Herts Council continues to provide high quality leisure facilities that promote inclusive access to sport and physical activity opportunities, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or ability level. Promoting active lifestyles remains central to the Council's commitment to improving community health and wellbeing.

2.2.2 Customer throughput refers to the total number of visits and users engaging with the centres, and the following data sets out the key performance figures used for monitoring and reporting purposes.

### **2.3 Attendance**

2.3.1 A key indicator of EA's performance is overall facility usage. In 2025, total attendance reached 1,512,757 visits, representing a reduction of 135,667 visits (8.2%) compared with 2024. Activities included in the data are:

- Gym
- Casual swim
- Group exercise classes
- Swimming lessons (including one to one and school)
- Tennis (Hartham leisure centre)
- Soft play (Hartham leisure centre)
- Football (3g pitch)

### 2.3.2 Swimming attendance

- The swimming participation data reflects the impact of including dual use sites in the 2024 totals, which were not present in 2025. As a result, there is a year-on-year reduction of 35,794 visits, equivalent to a 15.2% decrease.
- When comparing only Hartham and Grange Paddocks on a like for like basis, the reduction is significantly smaller at 2,187 visits, or 1.1%. Within this, the data shows that most of the decline occurred between January and May, where attendance at the two sites ranged from a 2.1% to 7.4% decrease. From June onwards, performance improved, with summer months showing growth following changes to pool programming and timetable reconfiguration.
- A variation in programming, including swim club provision, learn to swim capacity, and increased aqua activity, mean the 2024 and 2025 datasets are not fully like for like. In addition, demographic shifts have influenced junior and adult swimming participation, driven in part by increased allocation to learn to swim programmes and changes to booking systems for under 5s, which now require dedicated accounts.

### 2.3.3 Under 16 swim attendance

- Under 16 participation shows a reduction of 7,865 visits; however, on a like for like basis across Hartham and Grange Paddocks, the decrease is significantly smaller at 2,187 visits, equivalent to a 1.1% reduction.
- As outlined in the total swimming section, improvements to the booking system in the latter part of 2025 have enhanced data accuracy, addressing previous issues where a proportion of swimmers were not correctly captured within demographic profiling. Under the previous EA app, adult users were able to assign juniors and other adults without appropriate classification, which has now been corrected during the summer period, resulting in a more accurate dataset going forward.

### 2.3.4 Learn to swim attendance

- At the end of 2025, there were 3,952 participants enrolled in the learn to swim programme, 158 fewer than in 2024. Hartham reached a peak of 1,607 swimmers in 2024, ending 2025 with 1,498 participants. Performance remained strong, with Grange Paddocks recording growth of 132 participants compared with 2024.

### 2.3.5 Gym attendance

- From a gym attendance perspective, EA have continued to see the impact of a growing membership base, with increased gym usage across the remaining centres.
- At the end of 2025, total gym visits were 518,769, compared with 536,950 in 2024. This represents a reduction of 18,181 visits, equivalent to a 3.4% decrease year on year. This headline reduction reflects the inclusion of Fanshawe and Leventhorpe in the 2024 figures, which accounted for 36,082 and 642 visits respectively.
- On a like-for-like basis, however, performance at Hartham and Grange Paddocks shows growth, with gym usage increasing by 3.7%, equating to 18,550 additional visits year on year. It is also noted that the Grange Paddocks gym refurbishment in September resulted in approximately 8,000 fewer visits during the affected period, which partially offset an otherwise strong performance.

### 2.3.6 Senior gym attendance

- Senior gym participation has also continued to strengthen, supported by the expansion of community wellbeing initiatives, including exercise referral schemes and quiet gym sessions.
- In 2025, senior gym usage reached 43,735 visits, an increase of 5,385 visits year on year (14%). When adjusted to exclude Fanshawe's 2024 activity, this increase rises to 8,678 visits, representing growth of 24.8% across Hartham and Grange Paddocks. Highlighting a particularly strong engagement from older users.

## 2.4 Membership

- The overall fitness membership base has reduced by 312 users, from 10,421 at the end of 2024 (which included an estimated uplift of around 800 users transferred from dual use sites into Grange Paddocks) to 10,109 at the end of 2025. The adjustment reflects that not all the transferred Leventhorpe and Fanshawe members continued their memberships across to Hartham and Grange Paddocks. Alongside operational pressures including issues with changing facilities at Hartham and disruption associated with the Grange Paddocks gym refurbishment in September.

## 2.5 Group exercise participation

2.5.1 Group exercise participation has been the most significant driver of fitness engagement and overall growth across the contract over the past three years. This has been supported by the expansion of studio capacity and an increased volume of programmed activity, strengthening both the timetable and instructor led offer. In 2025, group exercise recorded 216,155 visits, an increase of 29,547 visits (15.8%) compared with the previous year, demonstrating continued strong demand.

## 2.6 Health and wellbeing initiatives

2.6.1 In 2025, East Herts made significant progress in supporting residents experiencing health inequalities to become more active, both within the leisure facilities and out in the community.

2.6.2 EA's Exercise Referral Scheme, designed for individuals living with long term health conditions, received 152 referrals from local healthcare professionals, demonstrating the growing recognition of exercise as an important part of health and wellbeing support.

2.6.3 EA also introduced new classes and community health walks for new parents, helping to tackle post-partum social isolation, while supporting mental health and physical wellbeing.

2.6.4 Working closely with local Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and physiotherapy teams, EA developed follow-on opportunities such as a Pulmonary Rehabilitation continuation class. This ensured that patients completing NHS interventions had accessible ways to continue exercising and maintain the progress they had achieved.

## 2.6.5 Supporting the community

- East Herts continued to support and celebrate local talent in 2025 by sponsoring several sporting champions, competing at both national and international level. Athletes across a wide range of sports, including judo, triathlon, athletics, karate and swimming, received support through the scheme. In total, 10 residents at each leisure centre were provided with free access to our facilities to help them train and develop in their chosen sport.
- Alongside this, EA selected Grove Cottage as their Community Champion charity for the year. Grove Cottage is a local organisation supporting people with learning disabilities and complex needs, along with their families and carers. As part of the partnership, EA provided free toddler swimming sessions for nursery

children and hosted twice yearly inclusive fun swim events. Therefore, giving carers, parents and service users the opportunity to come together for enjoyable family activity days in a welcoming environment.

#### 2.6.6 Partnership working

EA works in partnership with a wide range of local organisations and community groups to support health, wellbeing, inclusion, and physical activity opportunities across East Hertfordshire.

- Alzheimer's Society UK - EA are working in partnership to promote accessible opportunities for people living with dementia and their carers within East Herts Leisure Centres. Dementia friendly training sessions have been delivered to colleagues, and both centres are working towards achieving dementia accreditation in 2026.
- Local social media partnerships - EA collaborate with 'I Love Hertford' and 'thisisbscm23', to support local engagement and community promotion through social media channels.
- Community voice and police partnerships - EA work alongside Community Voice and local policing teams in Hertford and Hartham, to strengthen local community connections and support initiatives.
- Primary Care Network (PCN) Partnerships - EA work closely with local PCNs, including:
  - Stort Valley and villages PCN
  - New River Health PCN

Through these partnerships, EA deliver community outreach activities and support patients through referrals into our GP Exercise Referral Scheme.

- Herts Sports partnership - EA partnered to deliver holiday activities and food (HAF) programmes at Grange Paddocks and Hartham Leisure Centres. During the summer, a six-week programme provided eligible young people aged 11-15 with free gym access and meals.
- Weight Watchers partnership - As part of EA's corporate partnership, Grange Paddocks provides free community space for Weight Watchers meetings. This supports individuals beginning their health and wellbeing journey who may not yet feel ready to participate in physical activity programmes.
- Hertfordshire Community Trust pulmonary physiotherapy team - Since July 2025, EA have partnered to provide a follow-on exercise group at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre for pulmonary rehabilitation patients. The programme is now well established and continues to grow.

- Table Tennis England - EA have partnered with Table Tennis England to deliver two junior table tennis sessions each week, alongside a popular 'Bat and Chat' social session for adults.

## 2.7 Social value

2.7.1 As part of the National Leisure Recovery Fund, the leisure industry partnered with Sport England and 4global to improve the collection and reporting of participation and financial data across the sector. This led to the development of the Moving Communities platform by 4global and DataHub, which helps measure participation trends and community impact.

2.7.2 A key feature of the project is the social value calculator, developed with Sheffield Hallam University, which quantifies the wider health, wellbeing, and social benefits generated through leisure and physical activity services.

2.7.3 Over the rolling 12 months of 2025, East Herts leisure centres generated a total social value of £6.96 million. This represents an overall increase of £180,563, despite reductions in social value at Fanshawe (£376k) and Leventhorpe (£163k). Individually, Grange Paddocks achieved a 10% increase in social value, equating to £342,327, while Hartham saw a 13% increase, generating an additional £377,614 in social value.

## 2.8 Customer satisfaction

2.8.1 Regular post user surveys are used to gather feedback from leisure centre users. New users receive an email survey after two weeks of attendance and then every six months thereafter, helping to avoid overcommunication. Although there is limited influence over the responses received, the feedback provides valuable insight into customer experiences and has helped inform the development of quality action plans and wider service improvement strategies. Overall customer satisfaction is split between sites below.

YTD	responses	How satisfied are you with your overall visit to the centre ?	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Grand Total		Very Good to Good	Poor to Very Poor	Comments
2025	1566	All Sites	16.45%	59.38%	18.69%	4.34%	1.15%	100.00%		75.83%	5.48%	
2025	798	GPP	19.42%	60.90%	15.16%	3.76%	0.75%	100.00%		80.33%	4.51%	
2025	768	HAR	13.41%	57.94%	22.14%	4.95%	1.56%	100.00%		71.35%	6.51%	

2.8.2 EA continuously reviews feedback from post user surveys to inform service improvements. Parking arrangements at Hartham remain under review, following significant customer feedback before and after changes to parking management.

2.8.3 Feedback has also highlighted ongoing issues with showers and changing facilities, resulting in the need for a further refurbishment. To improve consistency and customer experience, the Grange Paddocks Customer Service Manager now oversees both sites.

## 2.8.4 Gym and group exercise experience

- Gym and group exercise satisfaction levels remained strong overall, although scores fell slightly from 85.2% in 2024 to 83.2% in 2025. Grange Paddocks saw a larger decrease from 88.8% to 82.1%, largely due to disruption and negative feedback linked to the gym refurbishment. However, lower levels of post user feedback during Quarter 4 limited the ability to fully reflect the refurbishment's impact.
- Key themes identified through feedback included waiting lists for group exercise classes, gym overcrowding, parking concerns, and negative perceptions of teenage gym sessions, all of which are being managed more proactively.

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2019	2018	2017
How would you rate the overall gym and group exercise experience in the leisure centre?	Very Good to Good	Very Good to Good	Very Good to Good	Very Good to Good	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied
All Sites	83.2%	85.2%	77.3%	78.3%	83.9%	81.8%	82.8%	87.2%
GPP	82.1%	88.8%	85.8%	89.1%	91.9%	77.3%	71.8%	85.3%
HAR	84.2%	87.4%	76.3%	72.9%	82.3%	84.2%	92.6%	92.4%

## 2.8.5 Swimming experience

- Year to date 2025 customer satisfaction scores have declined in a similar pattern to gym and group exercise feedback, with site specific operational issues having a significant impact on customer experience.
- At Hartham, satisfaction scores fell from 80.9% in 2024 to 67.7% in 2025, largely due to ongoing issues with the shower boiler systems. The units installed during refurbishment proved unreliable and required frequent repairs before being fully replaced in June as part of a new shower installation. In addition, the changing village closed for one month in October due to delayed contractor availability, which further impacted customer experience.

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2019	2018	2017
0.5.How would you rate the overall swimming experience in the leisure centre?	Very Good to Good	Very Good to Good	Very Good to Good	Very Good to Good	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied	% very satisfied or fairly satisfied
All Sites	76.1%	82.4%	81.7%	84.1%	78.2%	80.2%	81.8%	80.8%
GPP	81.4%	83.4%	84.4%	88.7%	85.0%	73.8%	58.1%	72.1%
HAR	67.7%	80.9%	76.6%	83.7%	81.7%	80.4%	84.1%	82.9%

## 2.8.6 Key feedback and enquiry patterns

- Recurring themes in monthly customer feedback are reviewed at site level to help improve services and systems. FAQs on the website and single customer view links are regularly updated to better manage enquiries and feedback. Automated responses are used for common enquiries, such as membership freezes or pauses, providing customers with clear guidance while significantly improving response times. Although automated, these responses mirror the information staff would typically provide directly.

## 2.9 Health and safety

2.9.1 There was one major incident recorded across the contract during 2025. This related to a non RIDDOR (reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations) incident at Grange Paddocks, linked to a pre-existing medical condition.

2.9.2 Accident performance is monitored using a benchmarking measure of accidents per 10,000 visits, allowing comparison across sites. EA's group threshold is set at 3 accidents per 10,000 visits.

2.9.3 During 2025, a total of 128 accidents were recorded, including 14 in Quarter 4. This represents a slight increase from 114 accidents in 2024. Increased participation and attendance levels also contributed to the accident rate rising from 0.64 to 0.79 accidents per 10,000 visits across the full calendar year, although this remains well below EA's company threshold.

2025 Accident Analysis												
Contract	Site	Total Site Attendance	Total Accidents	Natural Causes	Sporting Injury	Other type of Injury	No of Customer Accidents	No of SLIPS (Non-Sporting)	No Of Accidents involving	No of Contractor Accidents	No of Colleague Accidents	Monthly Accident Rate per 10,000 Visits
2025	Grange Paddocks	845552	51	6	8	37	49	0	0	0	4	0.5795
	Hartham Leisure Centre	668205	77	7	15	54	71	2	0	0	7	1.0625
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1513757</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0.7927</b>

## 2.9.4 Inspections

In addition to EA's internal monitoring processes, East Herts Council officers undertake a programme of both announced and unannounced monthly inspections across the sites. These reviews assess key areas including service delivery, cleanliness and communications, health and safety compliance, and adherence to operational monitoring procedures. Findings are formally recorded and used to support continuous improvement, maintain service standards, and ensure ongoing compliance across the contract.

## 2.10 Utilities

- During 2025, key operational challenges centred around managing building efficiency, maintaining effective environmental controls, and reviewing system set points to ensure appropriate air temperature and lighting levels across the facilities.

- Significant issues were experienced with the air source heat pump at Hartham, which led to a temporary unit, that was replaced in January. In addition, the combined heat and power (CHP) unit experienced issues during the first half of the year, limiting its operational efficiency.

2.10.1 EA continues to perform quarterly building inspections to review core energy management measures, including temperature set points and time clock settings. This ensures systems operate efficiently and unnecessary energy consumption is minimised. Small operational adjustments, such as aligning exterior lighting times with seasonal daylight changes, have also been implemented to support improved energy efficiency.

#### 2.10.2 Renewable energy

- Across Hartham and Grange Paddocks, renewable and alternative energy systems continue to support energy efficiency, including PV solar installations at both sites, and a combined heat and power unit at Grange Paddocks. This uses gas to generate an alternative source of power and reduce reliance on grid electricity.
- During the first full 12-month period of operation in 2025, PV solar performance improved steadily over the summer months in line with increased daylight hours. Performance reduced temporarily in August when the solar panels were removed to allow further investigation into roofing leaks at Hartham.

#### 2.10.3 Electricity consumption

Overall, energy consumption increased by 1.16% between 2024 and 2025, equating to an additional 17,316 kWh. A key contributing factor was the change in energy usage at Hartham, where the refurbished areas are now primarily operated through an air source heat pump system that relies solely on electricity. As a result, Hartham recorded a 66% year on year increase in electricity consumption, reflecting the significant change in the size and operational mix of the facility. Further reviews by EA are ongoing to identify where additional efficiencies can be achieved.

#### 2.10.4 Gas consumption

- As previously noted, there has been a shift in gas consumption patterns across the sites. Grange Paddocks operates a combined heat and power unit, which uses gas to generate power as a more cost-effective alternative to electricity.

- Overall gas consumption increased by 4.71% during 2025. Consumption trends differed from 2024, with significantly higher usage during Quarter 1 before reversing between April and July. As part of ongoing energy management reviews, further investigations are being undertaken into boiler performance and efficiencies during colder periods to identify potential improvements.

### 2.10.5 Water consumption

Year on year water consumption has stabilised, delivering an overall saving of 3.65%. However, Quarter 4 showed higher than expected usage, with each month recording an increase in consumption compared to the same period in 2024. This trend will continue to be monitored as part of ongoing utility and efficiency reviews

### 2.10.6 Recycled waste

Using data from the Veolia management platform, waste performance has been monitored across two key areas. Pure recycling rates, measured by waste volume rather than annual averages, increased from 29.1% in 2024 to 34.9% in 2025, demonstrating positive progress towards the long-term target of 40%. The data also shows a gradual improvement in recycling performance throughout the year, with Quarter 4 recording particularly positive net growth.

	Column Labels				
Values	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total waste weight (Tonnes)	14.00	28.95	31.09	29.73	27.74
Landfilled Weight (Tonnes)	10.70	22.19	21.30	21.08	18.07
Recycled weight (tonnes)	3.30	6.76	9.79	8.65	9.67
Recycling %	23.6%	23.4%	31.5%	29.1%	34.9%
Non Recycling	76.4%	76.6%	68.5%	70.9%	65.1%

## 3.0 Performance summary

3.1 Overall performance during 2025 remained strong. Although headline attendance figures were lower than the previous year, this primarily reflected the reduction in available facilities rather than a fall in customer demand.

3.2 A like-for-like comparison of activity at Hartham and Grange Paddocks showed increased participation across several key areas. Investment in both centres by EA enhanced the quality of the facilities and improved the overall customer experience, although refurbishment works resulted in some temporary disruption during the year.

3.3 Community health and wellbeing programmes also continued to grow, with increased exercise referral activity, strengthened partnerships with healthcare providers, and a broad range of initiatives aimed at engaging inactive residents and

promoting healthier lifestyles. These programmes contributed to a further increase in the overall social value.

3.4 Performance within fitness and group exercise was particularly strong, with sustained participation and continued growth in activities that support long term health and wellbeing. Swimming participation was impacted by the loss of pool capacity following the closure of the dual use sites; however, attendance at the remaining facilities remained broadly stable, with senior participation increasing during the year.

3.5 The service also maintained its commitment to workforce development, supporting colleagues through internal progression opportunities, while continuing to focus strongly on customer experience and community impact.

## **4.0 Implications/Consultations**

### **Community Safety**

Nothing arising from this report.

### **Data Protection**

Nothing arising from this report

### **Equalities**

East Herts Council continues to liaise with Everyone Active regarding accessible gym and physical activity classes and ensure that this is reviewed regularly. Everyone Active is committed to removing barriers to allow participation for all. To support this Everyone Active have a National Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager, who supports sites with inclusivity, diversity and belonging.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

The Council's operations team continue to work with Everyone Active and other internal teams to reduce carbon emissions where possible. This is a priority workflow, which is ongoing.

### **Financial**

Nothing arising from this report.

### **Health and Safety**

Everyone Active have robust health and safety in place, this is reviewed monthly by Council Officers who are supported by the Council's Health and Safety Officer.

### **Human Resources**

Nothing arising from this report.

## **Human Rights**

Nothing arising from this report.

## **Legal**

Nothing arising from this report.

## **Specific Wards**

Nothing arising from this report.

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