

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 24 January 2022
SUBJECT:	Response to consultation: Purley Pool
LEAD OFFICER:	Sarah Hayward, Acting Corporate Director – Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery Kristian Aspinall, Interim Director - Culture & Community Safety
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Oliver Lewis, Cabinet Member for Culture & Regeneration
WARDS:	Purley & Woodcote
COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2020-2024 The decision taken by Cabinet in October 2021 to close Purley Leisure Centre is supporting the Council to live within our means, balance the books and provide value for money for our residents.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT Due to the current financial position of the Council it does not provide value for money to residents to continue to support an aging leisure facility in Purley that also operates at a significant deficit. The effect of this decision contributes to balancing the Council's budget by removing the net revenue cost of the facility and avoids significant capital investment that would have associated borrowing costs.	
FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: N/A	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 Note and give due regard to the findings from the public consultation set out in the report.
- 1.2 Confirm the decision taken at 18th October 2021 Cabinet to not reopen Purley Leisure Centre.
- 1.3 Accommodate leisure centre users in Waddon, New Addington and Monks Hill, including disability sport provision and swim schools in Waddon Leisure Centre.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Due to the current financial position of the Council it does not provide value for money to residents to continue to support an aging leisure facility in Purley that also operates at a significant deficit. The effect of this decision contributes to balancing the Council's budget by removing the net revenue cost of the facility and avoids significant capital investment that would have associated borrowing costs.
- 2.2 Following the decision at the 18th October 2021 Cabinet meeting to not reopen Purley Leisure Centre at that time, a six week consultation with residents on the impact of a decision for Purley Leisure Centre to remain closed and mitigations of using alternative leisure facilities at Waddon and New Addington was undertaken to gather feedback and support the decision making process.
- 2.3 By the deadline 1,132 responses have been received, alongside a 3,097 signature petition to re-open the leisure centre, providing feedback from residents on a number of specific impacts and general feedback. Cabinet requested this consultation feedback come back to Cabinet when complete.
- 2.4 It is clear from the consultation feedback that resident who live in the area valued Purley Leisure Centre, for a variety of reasons outlined below. A number have expressed that they will be using alternative facilities in light of the closure, with 54% requesting that the venue be reopened. With only just over half of respondents requesting the venue be re-opened this shows that a significant number of residents in the area are willing to look at alternatives for leisure provision.
- 2.5 Although feedback was clear from residents that their preferred options were to invest in new leisure facilities or re-open the pool, given the long-term financial position of Purley Leisure Centre and the capital works required to bring it back to full operation, it is recommended that residents use alternative leisure facilities at Waddon, New Addington, and Monks Hill, as well as other venues across the borough. A new community leisure facility, with swimming pool, is a requirement of the Local Plan 2018 for redevelopment of the site.
- 2.6 Residents also raised concerns about the impact on their ability to travel to alternative leisure facilities on public transport, the impact on swim schools and users with a disability. These activities have been able to be accommodated into the existing capacity in Waddon Leisure Centre. Schools interested in using Council owned vehicles to access leisure centres can contact the Independent Travel team for more information.
- 2.7 Following the six-week public consultation it is recommended that Purley Leisure Centre closes permanently.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The decision was taken at 18th October 2021 Cabinet to not reopen Purley Leisure Centre at that time, with a six week consultation with residents on the

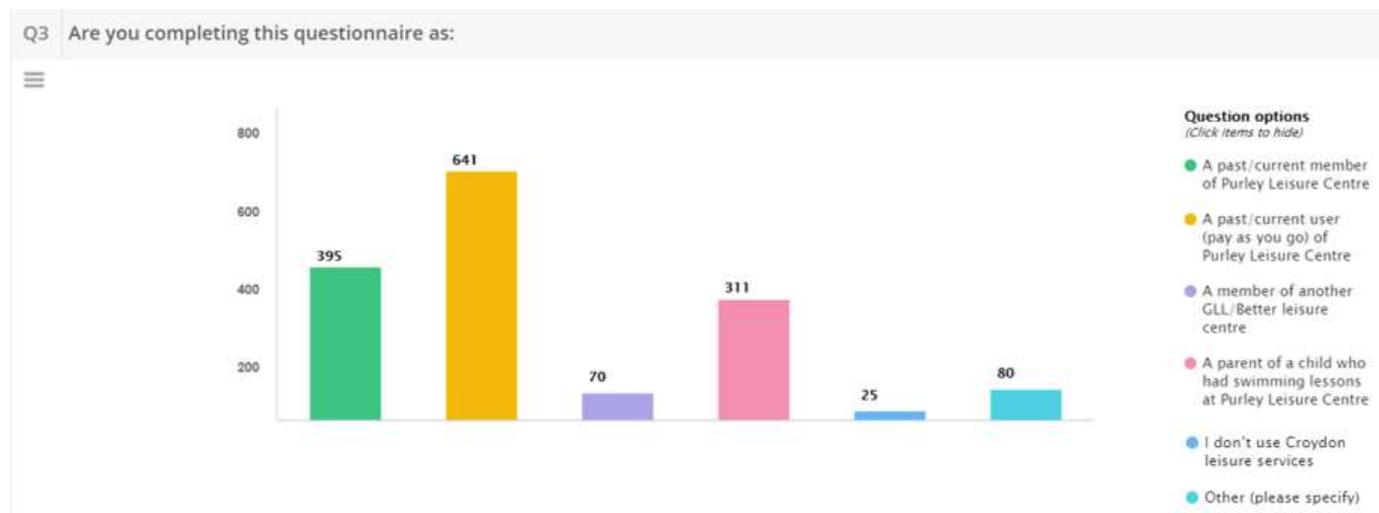
impact of a decision for Purley Leisure Centre to remain closed and mitigations of using alternative leisure facilities at Waddon and New Addington.

- 3.2 The facility requires significant repair and maintenance in the region of £3m. In addition, Purley Leisure Centre has operated at a loss of £186,803 in 2018/19 and £123,139 in 2019/20.
- 3.3 In 2014 the Council commissioned Interserve to undertake an independent building condition survey of Purley Leisure Centre to identify arising issues and cost estimates of the future maintenance of the facility. It was estimated that £866,525 needed to be invested between 2015/16 and 2017/18.
- 3.4 In 2019 Darton B3 Building Services were commissioned to give an independent assessment of the mechanical and electrical plant equipment. Their estimate identified £1,597,000 was required for the mechanical and electrical plant equipment replacement, excluding contingency.

4. CONSULTATION

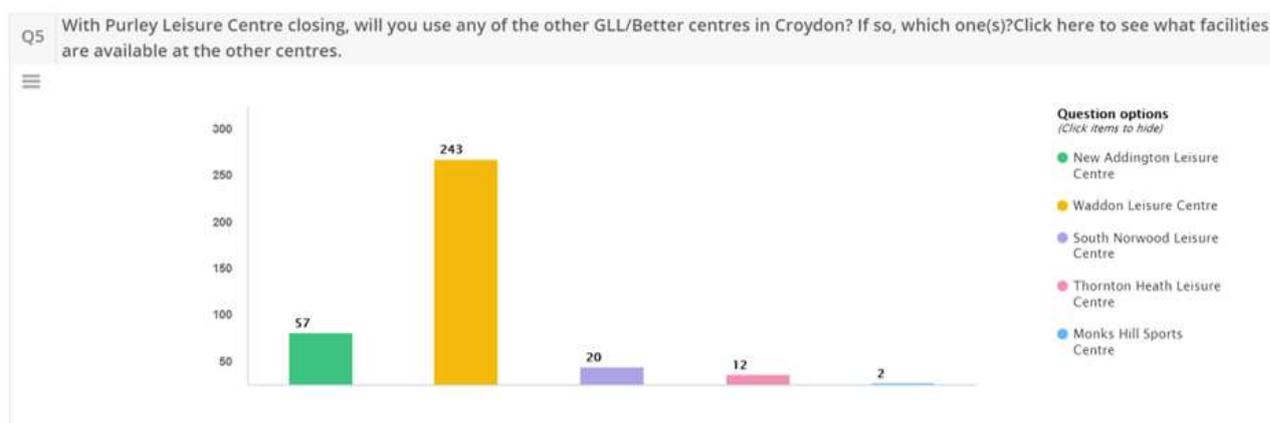
- 4.1 A six week consultation with residents began on the 11th October on the impact of a decision for Purley Leisure Centre to remain closed and mitigations of using alternative leisure facilities at Waddon and New Addington.
- 4.2 The consultation was held online using the Council's Get Connected website to allow residents to provide their feedback on how the Council can provide mitigating actions to minimise the impact to residents.
- 4.3 During the consultation period there were 10,937 visits to the webpage, with 1,132 responses to the survey. In addition, a petition from 2020 signed by 3,097 people asked for the facility to reopen has been taken into account, as well as concerns previously raised with regard to closure of Purley Leisure Centre.
- 4.4 From the consultation, the majority of respondents identified as being from the CR2 (246 replies) and CR5 (196 replies) and CR8 (428 replies) postcodes. These postcodes represent the localities surrounding Purley Leisure Centre.
- 4.5 Of 1,078 responses to the question "Which Croydon leisure centres did you use prior to the Covid-19 pandemic?" 1,039 replied that they used Purley Leisure Centre. A further 163 stated Waddon Leisure Centre, 43 New Addington, 25 South Norwood, 17 Thornton Heath, and 9 Monks Hill.

4.6 From the 1,115 responses to the question regarding how the respondents used Croydon leisure facilities, the results showed:



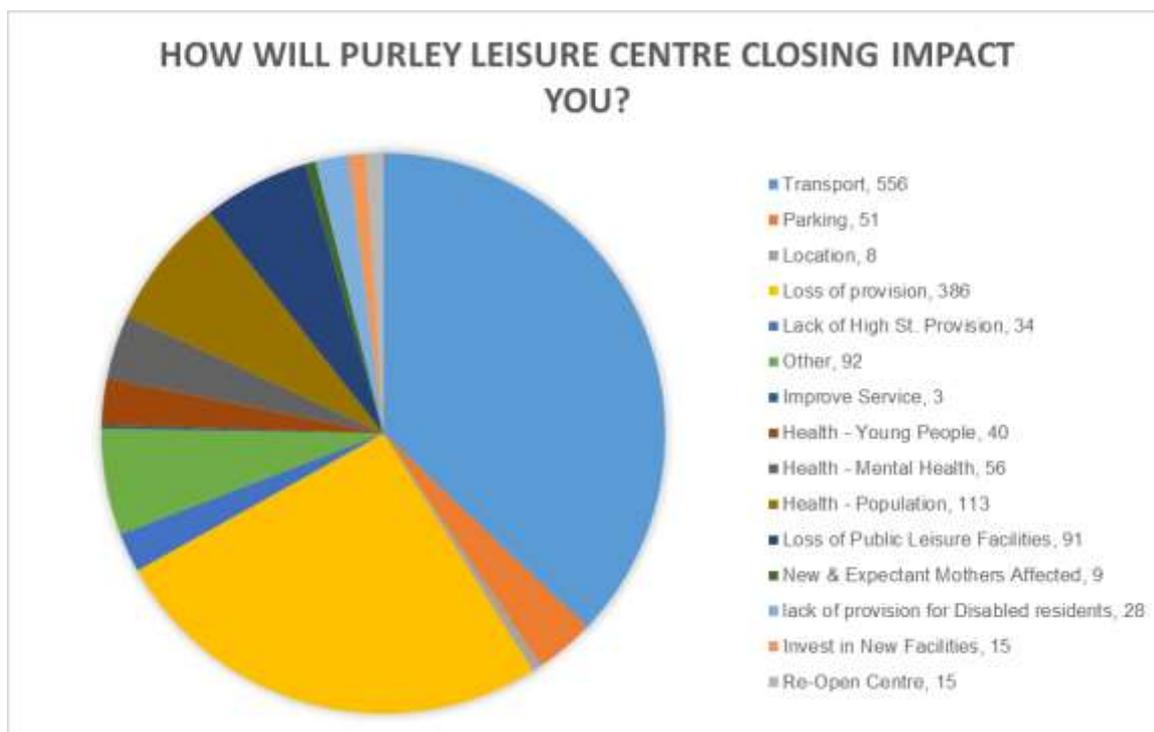
4.7 There were 1,118 responses to the question “What facilities did you use at Purley Leisure Centre?”. Respondents were able to select multiple answers, with 340 using the gym facilities, 1,985 responses for swimming or water based activities, and 72 other.

4.8 When asked which other leisure facilities that respondents would use after the closure of Purley Leisure Centre:



4.9 There were 607 responses to the question “With Purley Leisure Centre closing will you use other facilities in Croydon? If so, which one(s)?”. Of the responses received, 274 said that they would use parks, 230 private facilities, 132 public facilities, and 101 would use other facilities.

4.10 When asked about the impact of the closure of Purley Leisure Centre on them, 1,065 respondents said:



“It is our local leisure centre that is walking distance from our house: all my children have had swimming lessons there and we have used it for recreational swimming too. If it closes, the closest local pool is waddon, to which we would have to drive. Waddon had limited and very expensive parking.”

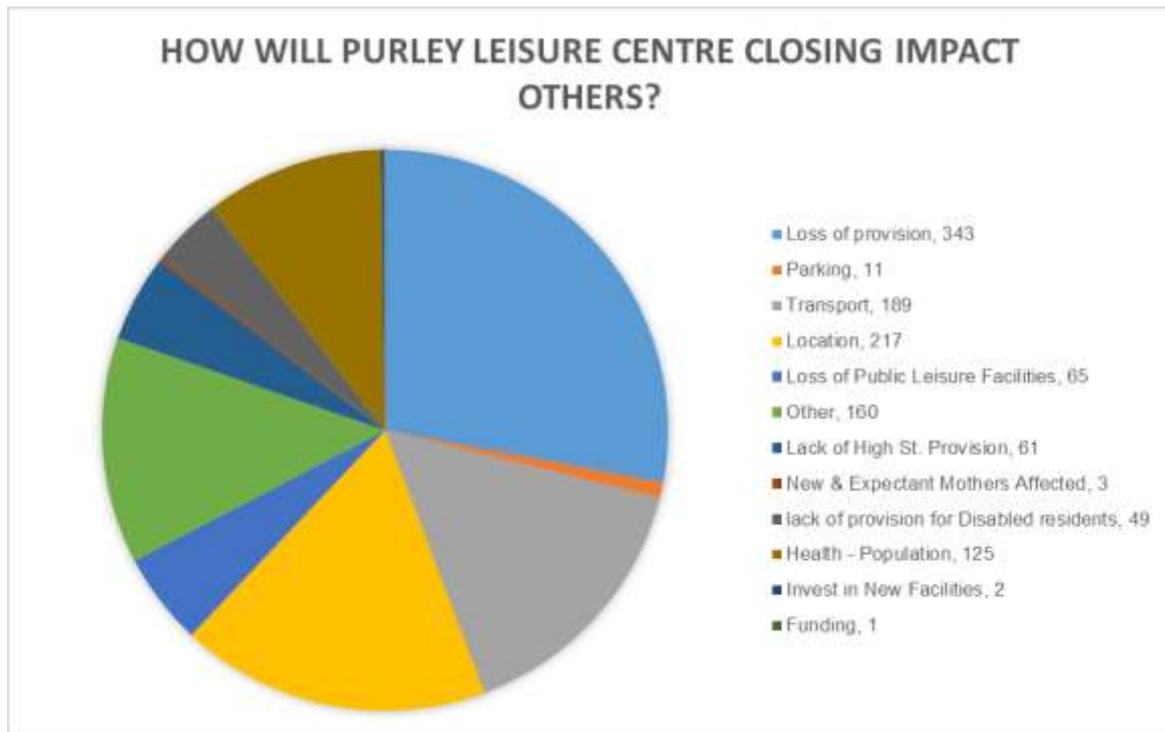
“My children are no longer swimming at present- my eldest would have been able to get the bus independently to Purley but Waddon is too far to let them do this. They were swimming for fitness. My youngest was having weekly lessons - they are not having lessons now as we don't have any other pools as close and convenient as Purley was. We were able to get the bus easily to Purley.”

“Purley pool is within walking distance to me and if I couldn't walk had a number of busses I could take to reach. The waddon centre is not as close to walk and has no easy public transport link for me to reach. This concerns me as I tend to swim in the evening and do not feel safe walking home from the waddon swim centre. I do feel safe walking from Purley pool as it is just along the well lit Brighton road.”

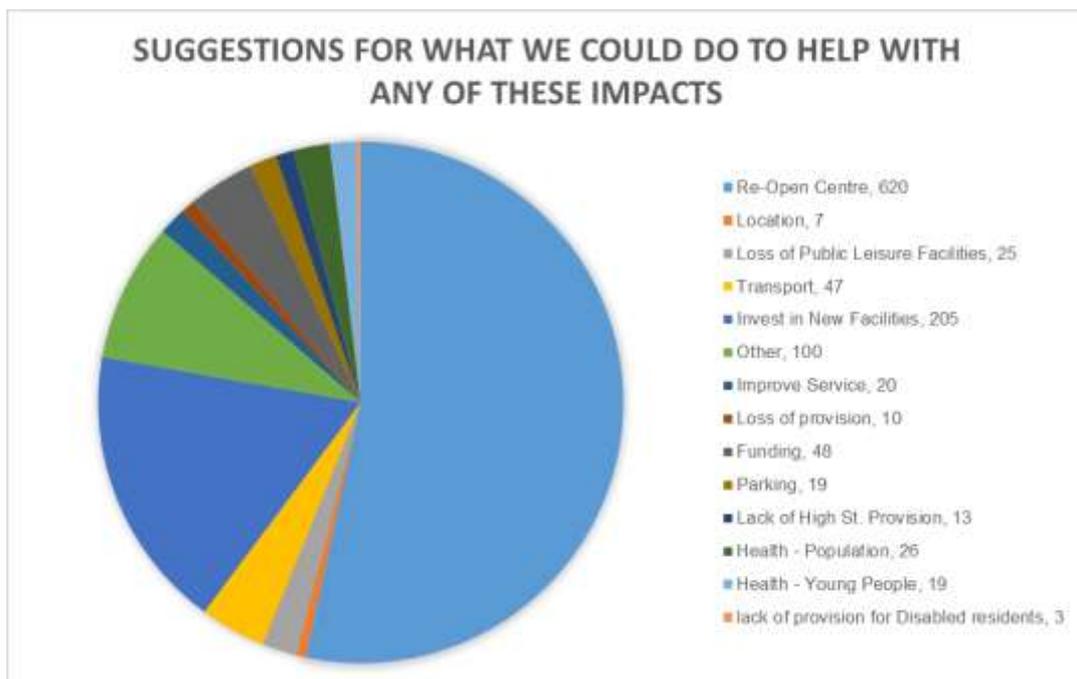
It is recognised that not re-opening Purley Leisure Centre will cause disruption to local residents because of the increased travel times. It should, however, be noted that the increased public transport times for residents close to Purley Leisure Centre will be similar to those for residents in other parts of the borough. The table below demonstrates the estimated public transport travel times from different locations in the borough.

	South Norwood LC		Thornton Heath LC		New Addington LC		Monks Hill SC		Waddon LC	
Starting Location	Travel Time	Public Transport	Travel Time	Public Transport	Travel Time	Public Transport	Travel Time	Public Transport	Travel Time	Public Transport
Shrublands	35 mins	2 buses	39 mins	1 bus, 1 train	45 mins	1 bus, 1 tram	43 mins	1 bus, 1 tram	50 mins	2 buses
Thornton Heath	37 mins	2 buses	9 mins	1 bus	56 mins	1 bus, 1 tram	58 mins	1 bus	29 mins	1 bus
Waddon	41 mins	2 buses	33 mins	2 buses	43 mins	1 bus, 1 tram	45 mins	1 bus, 1 tram	N/A	N/A
Purley	18 mins	1 train	16 mins	1 train	45 mins	1 train, 1 tram	33 mins	1 bus	12 mins	1 bus
Selsdon	36 mins	2 buses	46 mins	2 buses	32 mins	1 bus	10 mins	1 bus	29 mins	2 buses
Kenley	33 mins	2 trains	26 mins	1 train	60 mins	2 buses	45 mins	1 train, 1 tram	25 mins	2 buses

4.11 When asked about the impact of the closure of Purley Leisure Centre on others, 1,004 respondents said:



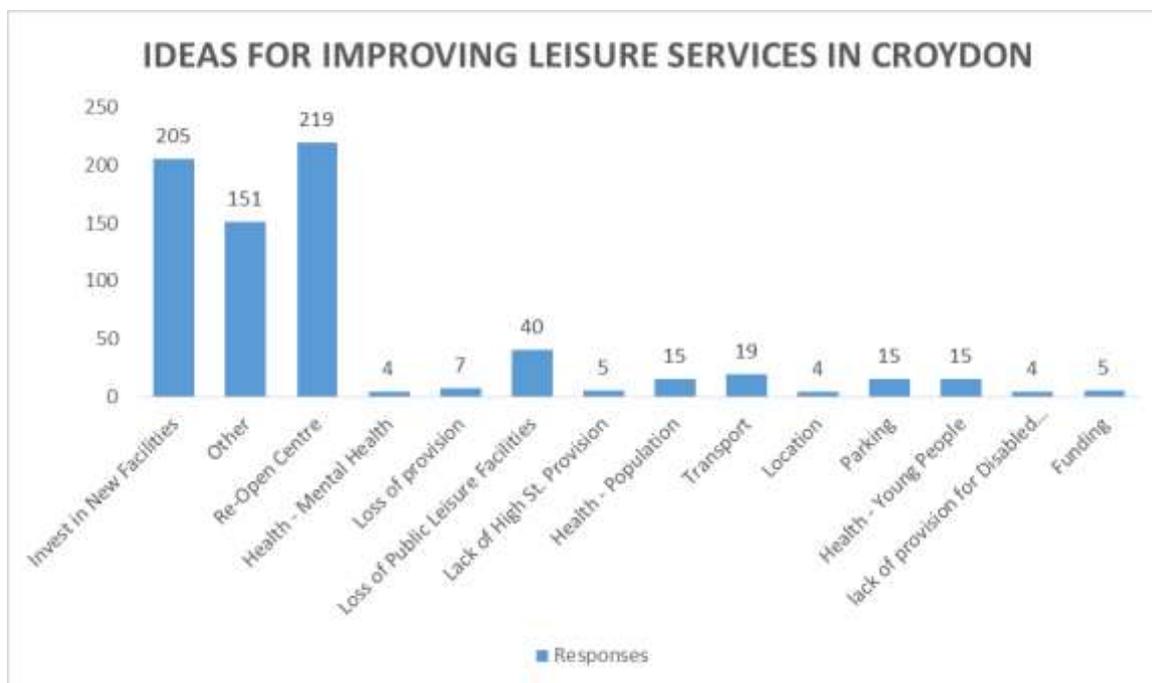
4.12 Respondents were asked for suggestions on how the Council could mitigate against the impact of closing Purley Leisure Centre, 912 respondents said:



One resident said, “Modernise Purley Pool, or build a new facility close by. The existing ones are too inaccessible in high traffic areas, and it is short sighted when the population in these areas is set to expand significantly due to planned development intensification.”

Another resident remarked, “I understand Central Government squeeze on Councils affects the budget. However, I can remember when Sainsbury’s bought the site the council made it conditional on the provision of a 25 metre pool as part of the development. I suggest the present council does something similar. Sell the site for housing on condition a 25 metre pool is included in the contract.”

4.13 Residents were asked for their ideas on how leisure facilities in the borough could be improved. There were responses from 676 residents.

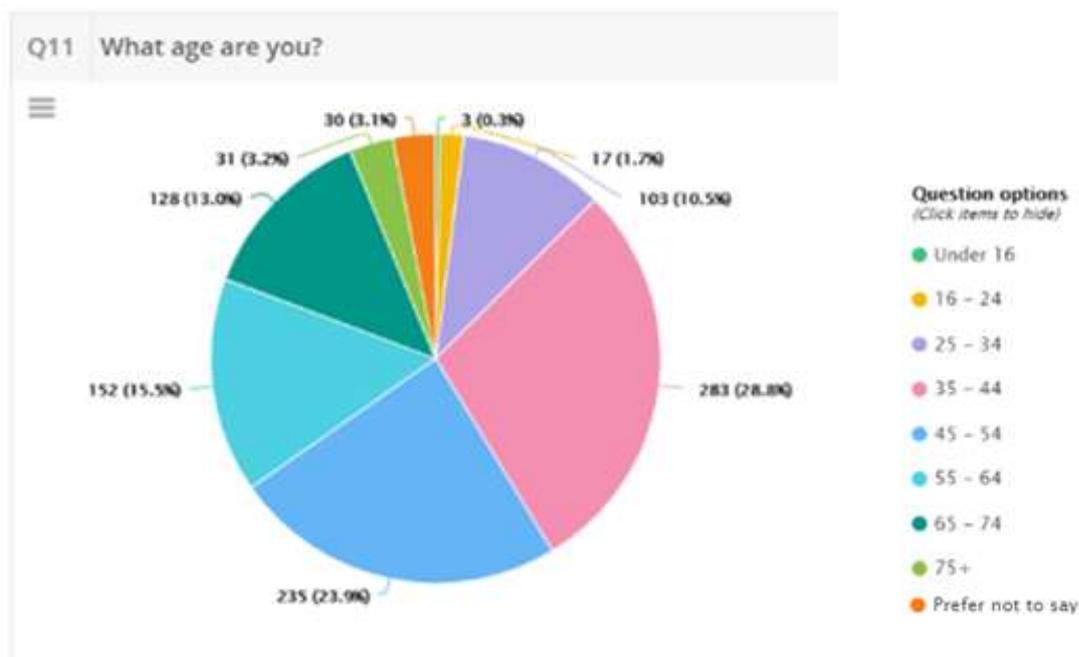


Specific feedback from residents said, “It would be great to have an outdoor pool/lido facility for fitness and leisure. The nearest outdoor pools are a long way away. It would also be good to have a "fun" leisure pool like the Water Palace with water slides. The nearest is in Tandridge or Bromley. Children and teens need fun places to socialise and exercise.”

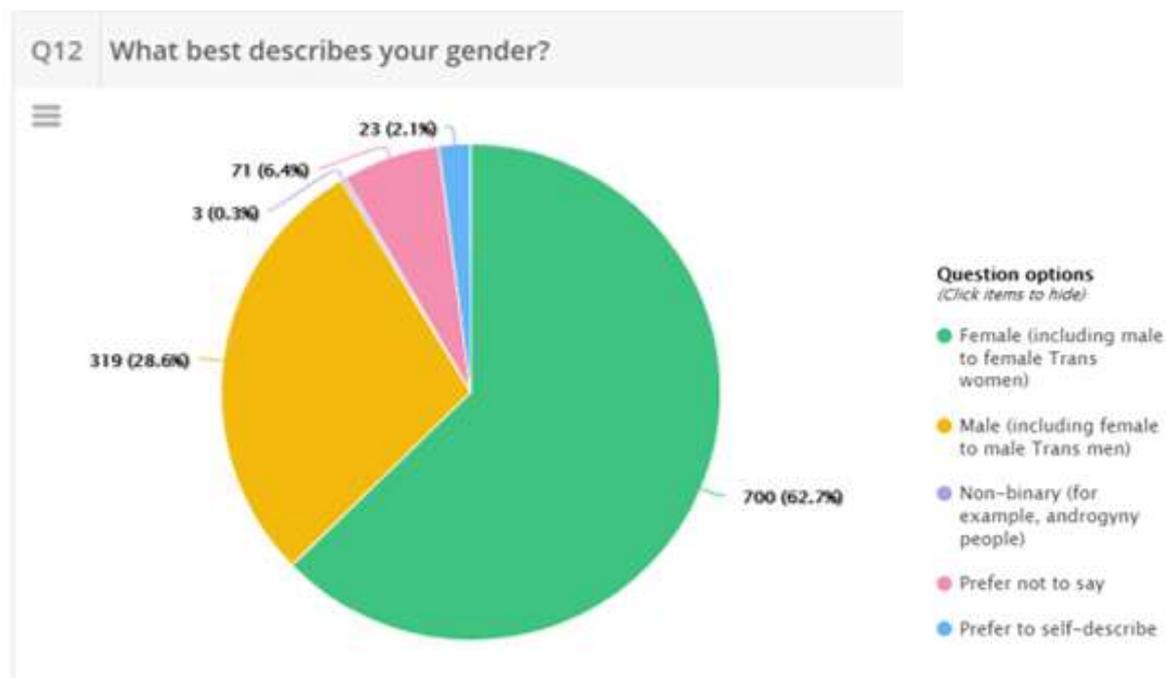
“Investment! Physical health is so important, more so now than ever before. It directly impacts mental health and obesity is a proven additional danger to Covid.”

“Use funding from Community Infrastructure Levy, or CILs, and Section 106 contributions to provide the facilities that the South of the borough needs to sustain healthy population of residents. The initial costs should consider the long-term financial benefits of having healthier and happier residents.”

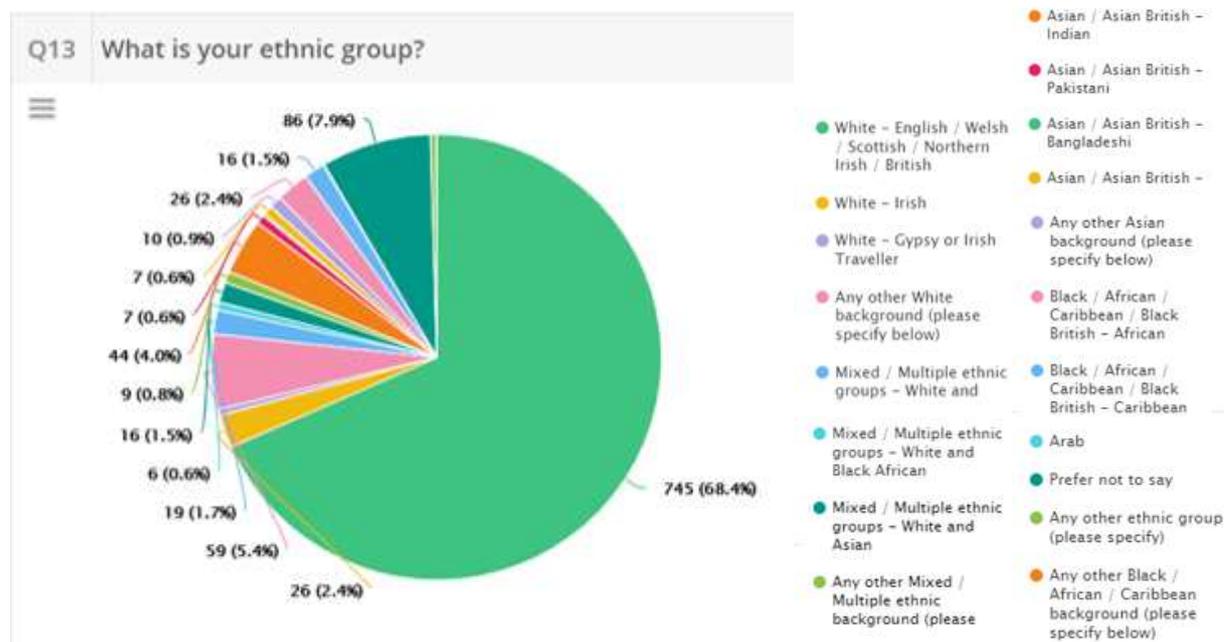
4.14 Respondents were asked to provide details of their age band. There were responses from 982 residents:



4.15 Respondents were asked to provide details on their gender identity.

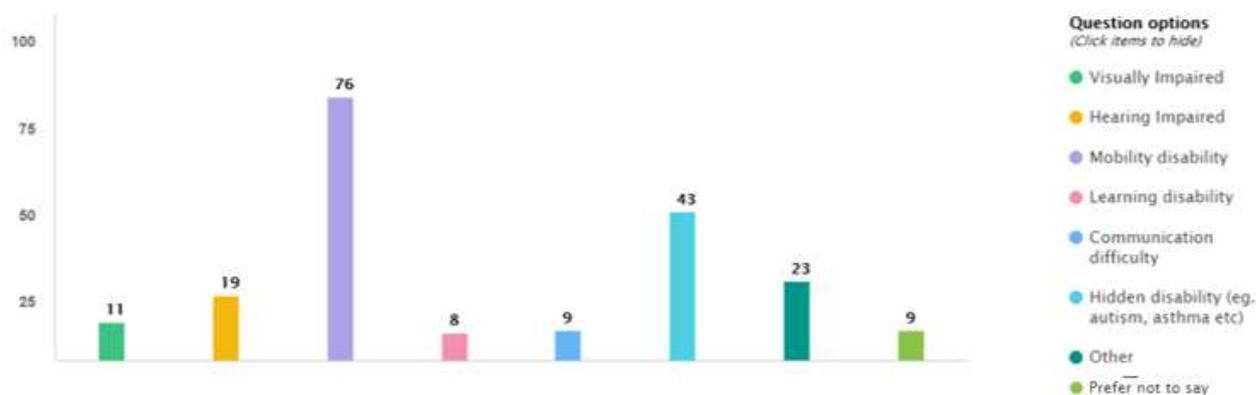


4.16 Residents were also asked about their ethnicity, with 1,089 responding.



4.17 When asked “Do you have a disability?”, of 1,114 responses, 151 said ‘yes’, 887 said ‘no’, and 76 preferred not to say.

4.18 When asked about their disability(ies) 149 residents provided the following information:



4.19 When asked the above questions residents were presented with an opportunity to provide free text responses. The Council have collated, reviewed and themed these comments to include in the feedback.

4.20 Many comments received simply stated that the leisure facility should be re-opened. As described above, the air handling unit has broken and needs to be replaced to meet post-Covid ventilation guidance for public buildings. Replacement of the mechanical and electrical plant equipment is also required. It is not possible to re-open the leisure centre without undertaking this work first. The cost of repair is estimated at £2,000,000.

- 4.21 Residents have provided feedback to say that the Council should invest in the facility to replace the mechanical and electrical plant equipment, including the air handling unit. In addition, many also mentioned refurbishing the site. The Council have considered this option but the estimated £3,000,000 total cost for this work does not provide value for money because the facility operates at a deficit.
- 4.22 Another option presented in the feedback was for the leisure centre to be rebuilt, with some suggesting that it include additional facilities such as café, library, cinema, etc. Others suggested a new leisure facility in a different part of the south of the borough. The Croydon Local Plan 2018 confirms that a new leisure facility, with swimming pool, will need to be included in any redevelopment of the existing site. More detail is provided in 5.7.
- 4.23 It was also suggested that an alternative provider be found to run the leisure centre and undertake the repairs and refurbishment. Purley Leisure Centre is currently part of the Leisure contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), who are a social enterprise operating on a not-for-profit basis. It is unlikely that the site would be attractive to an alternative provider because of the high repair and refurbishment costs, and the operating deficit of the facility.
- 4.24 It was also suggested by some individuals that the community could run the leisure centre as an asset of community value. No applications have been received to make the facility an asset of community value. The high repair and refurbishment costs and the operating deficit of the facility make this option unfeasible. Members of the Leisure service met with Councillors and interested local residents to view the leisure centre on 19th November. No proposal has been received from the community regarding a community run leisure facility.
- 4.25 Several comments asked that payments from developers be used to pay for the refurbishment of Purely Leisure Centre. The Council have considered this option but the estimated £3,000,000 total cost for this work does not provide value for money because the facility operates at a deficit. As per 5.7, a new leisure facility, including swimming pool, is included in the Croydon Local Plan 2018 for any redevelopment of the site.

5. MITIGATING ACTIONS

- 5.1 Feedback from residents clearly shows that Purley Leisure Centre is a much valued facility within the south of the borough and that there is demand for leisure provision in Purley and surrounding areas.
- 5.2 The responses received regarding the activities that members and pay as you go users of Purley Leisure Centre use show that there is demand for both gym and swim facilities in the local area.

- 5.3 Residents have voiced concerns about the impact on their ability to use public transport to get to alternative facilities. As stated in 4.10, it is acknowledged that the public transport travel times for residents of Purley and surround areas will increase as a result of this decision. However, the travel times are in keeping with public transport travel times to leisure facilities for residents from other parts of the borough.
- 5.4 A new gym facility is being developed at Monks Hill Sports Centre to increase gym capacity in the south of the borough. The new £100,000 facility will see a 30 station gym added to the existing venue. The gym will increase fitness capacity in a modern and welcoming environment in the south of the borough.
- 5.5 The majority of respondents said that they had used Purley Leisure Centre for water based activities. There is current capacity in Waddon and New Addington Leisure Centres to accommodate the swim users of Purley Leisure Centre. As stated in 4.10, it is acknowledged that the public transport travel times for residents of Purley and surround areas will increase as a result of this decision. However, the travel times are in keeping with public transport travel times to leisure facilities for residents from other parts of the borough.
- 5.6 Enterprise Swim School have been operating from Purley Leisure Centre for a number of years to provide disability swimming activities for residents. Through discussions with Enterprise, the Council and GLL have been able to find a suitable time for the group to meet at Waddon Leisure Centre. Additional RAP scheme activities will be programmed in the south of the borough to increase disability sport participation without the need for residents with a disability to travel.
- 5.7 Residents identified that they were concerned that swim schools would be affected by the closure of Purley Leisure Centre. Waddon and New Addington Leisure Centres have been able to accommodate the demand for swim schools within their existing capacity. Schools interested in arranging direct travel can contact the Independent Travel team in the Council to discuss this option.
- 5.8 From the feedback from residents on the need to replace the existing leisure centre with a new facility, the Croydon Local Plan 2018 (page 333) clearly states that Purley Leisure Centre, car park, and former Sainsbury's supermarket are suitable for redevelopment. The Plan's site allocation explains that the options for the site include:

“Mixed use redevelopment incorporating public car park, new leisure facilities, including a swimming pool, and other community facilities, healthcare facility, creative and cultural industries enterprise centre, retail or residential accomodation.”

To meet the requirements of the Local Plan 2018 it is expected that any future development of the site will need to incorporate the re-provision of a community and / or leisure facilities.

This site allocation is also proposed to be retained in the current Local Plan Review.

6. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

6.1 The decision has not been taken to Pre-Decision Scrutiny for consideration.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The decision to not re-open Purley Leisure Centre avoids the need to spend £3m on capital investment in the facility.

7.2 Purley Leisure Centre was operating at a deficit of between £123,000 and £186,000 per year before the impact of the Covid pandemic. Avoiding these losses will improve the overall performance of the contract, with 20% of surplus to be re-invested back into the service.

7.3 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

	Current year	Medium Term Financial Strategy – 3 year forecast		
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Budget available				
Expenditure				
Income				
Effect of decision from report				
Expenditure				
Income				
Remaining budget	_____	_____	_____	_____
Capital Budget available				
Expenditure				
Effect of decision from report				
Expenditure				
Remaining budget	_____	_____	_____	_____

7.4 The effect of the decision

The Council will avoid costs of circa £3m in repairs and maintenance at Purley Leisure Centre.

Closing Purley Leisure Centre will remove a £123,000 to £186,000 annual operating deficit from the Leisure contract. This will likely increase the opportunity for a surplus to be generated. Once the loan has been repaid the Council will receive 40% of any surplus, with 20% to be re-invested in other Council owned leisure facilities in the borough.

Other mitigations are at no cost to the Council because they are within the existing operating envelope of the venues.

7.5 **Risks**

A successful challenge against the Council's decision will delay the decision to close the facility.

7.6 **Options**

Do Nothing – No support provided to local residents and groups to find alternative solutions.

Re-open Purley Leisure Centre – undertake repair and maintenance to allow the facility to re-open to the public. This is estimated to cost £2,000,000 for the replacement of the mechanical and electrical plant equipment, plus an estimated £1,000,000 for refurbishment to bring facility to modern standards.

Accommodate users in neighbouring facilities – Use existing capacity in neighbouring Waddon and New Addington Leisure Centres to accommodate members and users from Purley Leisure Centre. In addition, a new gym 30 station gym facility at Monks Hill Sports Centre will increase fitness provision in the south of the borough.

7.7 **Future savings/efficiencies**

Through the closure of Purley Leisure Centre there will be a reduction of a £123,000 to £186,000 deficit in the Leisure contract. This will improve the opportunity for the contract to generate a surplus, of which 20% will be re-invested into leisure facilities.

Approved by: Matthew Davis, Interim Director of Finance (Deputy S151)

8. **LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1 The Head of Litigation and Corporate Law comments on behalf of the Director of Legal Services that:

8.2 There is no statutory duty to consult in relation to the closure of a leisure centre.

8.3 Notwithstanding 8.2 the Council consulted with residents on the impact of a decision for Purley Leisure Centre to remain closed and mitigations of using alternative leisure facilities at Waddon and New Addington, as set-out in the body of the report.

8.4 The consultation process followed the Gunning principles, which are as follows:

- The consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.
- The proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response. Those consulted should be aware of the criteria that will be applied when considering proposals and which factors will be considered decisive or of substantial importance at the end of the problem.

- Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
 - The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any statutory proposals.
- 8.5 Any ongoing or permanent closure of Purley Leisure Centre will require an amendment in the contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited through a contract variation.
- 8.6 External legal advice has been provided in this matter by Browne Jacobson.

Approved by Sandra Herbert, Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the Director of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 9.1 There are no staffing implications or any other HR impact arising from this report or from this decision. If any issues arise these will be managed under the Council policies and procedures.

Approved by: Jennifer Sankar, Head of HR, Housing and Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Development Directorates, for and on behalf of Dean Shoesmith, Interim Chief People Officer

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1 An equalities impact assessment was carried out ahead of the public consultation in October. This has been updated following the feedback from residents (Appendix B).
- 10.2 Of the respondents, 13% identified as having a disability which is slightly lower than the borough average of 14.6% who have a long term health condition. An assessment of parking confirms that at Waddon Leisure Centre there are four disabled bays out of 34, and New Addington Leisure Centre has two disabled bays out of 45. This is sufficient parking provision at both sites for disabled users and non-disabled persons who attend in a supporting capacity.
- 10.3 Enterprise Swim School have been operating from Purley Leisure Centre for a number of years to provide disability swimming activities for residents. Through discussions with Enterprise, the Council and GLL have been able to find a suitable time for the group to meet at Waddon Leisure Centre.
- 10.4 Residents identified that they were concerned that young members would be unable to learn to swim if Purley Leisure Centre was closed. Waddon and New Addington Leisure Centres have been able to accommodate the demand for swim schools within their existing capacity.
- 10.5 Waddon and New Addington leisure centres are more modern and accessible for users with a disability.

10.6 Both Waddon and New Addington leisure centres offer gender neutral changing facilities, which is more accommodating for non-binary gender identifying users.

10.7 Purley and surrounding areas have a higher than borough average white population.

Approved by: Denise McCausland – Equality Programme Manager

11. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT

11.1 The existing mechanical and electrical plant equipment is mainly from the original installation and is at the end of its operational life. It has been estimated that the air handling unit was working at 50-60% efficiency before the leisure centre was put into hibernation during the Covid pandemic. By not re-opening Purley Leisure Centre there will be a reduction in emissions associated with not operating inefficient plant equipment.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

12.1 There is no impact by this decision.

13. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

13.1 Members and casual users of Purley Leisure Centre use alternative gym and swimming facilities at Waddon and New Addington Leisure Centres.

13.2 Enterprise Swim School relocate to Waddon Leisure Centre.

13.3 Swim school users relocate to Waddon and New Addington Leisure Centres.

13.4 The Council work with any potential developers to ensure that any redevelopment of the site included a new leisure facility, including swimming pool.

13.5 Residents have voiced concerns about the impact on their ability to use public transport to get to alternative facilities. As stated in 4.10, it is acknowledged that the public transport travel times for residents of Purley and surround areas will increase as a result of this decision. However, the travel times are in keeping with public transport travel times to leisure facilities for residents from other parts of the borough.

14. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

14.1 **Do Nothing** – no support provided to local residents or activity groups.

14.2 **Re-open Purley Leisure Centre** – undertake repair and maintenance to allow the facility to re-open to the public. This is estimated to cost £2,000,000 for the replacement of the mechanical and electrical plant equipment, plus an estimated £1,000,000 for refurbishment to bring facility to modern standards.

15. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

15.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?

NO

15.2 HAS A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) BEEN COMPLETED?

NO

CONTACT OFFICER:

Robert Hunt, Interim Head of Culture, Leisure & Libraries, 0208 726 6000 ext. 63309

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Appendix A - PLC Consultation Topline Summary

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[October 2021 Cabinet Paper](#)

[Croydon Local Plan 2018](#)