

REPORT TO: CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 22 SEPTEMBER 2025

REPORT ON: STRATEGIC REVIEW OF LEISURE AND CULTURE DUNDEE

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 289-2025

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report presents the strategic review of Leisure and Culture Dundee (LACD), conducted by EKOS. This comprehensive review was commissioned by Dundee City Council (DCC) to ensure that LACD meets the current and future needs of our local communities, aligns with best practices, maximises resource utilisation, is financially sustainable, and provides value for money.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that members:

- i) consider the contents of the full report attached as Appendix 2;
- ii) note the proposed key actions summarised in Appendix 1 which will be discussed and developed more fully in conjunction with LACD; and
- iii) remit officers (DCC and LACD) to develop a prioritised action plan with timescales and include any additional recommendations proposed by LACD.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no immediate financial consequences arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Following consideration of report 171-2024 at the meeting on 26 June 2024 of the Scrutiny Committee, the Convener agreed to refer the executive summary of the internal audit report on LACD Financial Sustainability to the City Governance Committee for review by all elected members.

4.2 The subsequent report 210-2024 to City Governance Committee on 19 August 2024 (Article X of the minute refers) considered additional context and recommended working with Leisure and Culture Dundee that the Chief Executive be remitted to undertake a fuller review of agreements, priorities, funding and options for Leisure and Culture Dundee. It was also agreed that external support for the review would be sought.

4.3 The high-level remit set out was that a comprehensive review of leisure and cultural services be carried out to ensure these offerings are aligned with current and future community needs. The driving factors behind the review were the growing financial pressures on public services, the need to optimise resources, and the importance of ensuring services are sustainable, cost-effective, and aligned with the city's priorities. Additionally, the Council and LACD were looking to identify new opportunities for revenue generation and service improvement.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

5.1 The strategic review was conducted by EKOS (supported by Integratis Consulting, and Creative Services Scotland) between November 2024 and June 2025. The consultants employed a comprehensive and systematic approach to ensure the review was thorough and aligned with best practices. The review considered the full cost of delivery of leisure and cultural services, including the costs borne by Dundee City Council, in addition to core management fee.

5.2 The key processes they undertook to complete the review are summarised as follows:

- Inception: Establishing a shared understanding of the review's aims, objectives, and expectations through an inception meeting with DCC and LACD.
- Data Collection: Gathering and reviewing all available data and background documentation related to LACD's plans and performance over an agreed time. This included contextual review and data collection. The analysis included a detailed examination of income and expenditure trends, service area performance, and usage patterns across various facilities.
- Consultation and Engagement: A critical component of the review was consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. This included DCC officers and elected members, LACD officers and trustees, and external partners and stakeholders. The consultants conducted interviews, focus groups, and surveys to gather insights and feedback on LACD's operations, governance, and service delivery. This engagement ensured that the review captured diverse perspectives and identified key areas for improvement.
- Benchmarking: Using a wide range of data for comparator organisations and services to benchmark LACD's performance against measures such as income generation, cost management, and service usage.
- Analysis and Assessment: Conducting a thorough analysis of the data to identify inefficiencies and opportunities. This includes financial analysis, service utilisation assessment, and exploration of new revenue streams.
- Option Development and Appraisal: Developing and appraising a series of options for cost-saving measures, revenue generation, and changes in governance and management practices.

5.3 The key data provided to EKOS was for all financial years up to and including 2023/24, with LACD providing their financial, staffing and usage information and DCC providing the property other costs that are borne by the Council, to allow understanding of the full cost of delivering these services. Other background information e.g. strategy plans was also provided by DCC.

5.4 The output of this review is a detailed report attached as Appendix 2. The report includes the following sections:

Executive Summary (page i)

Section 1: Introduction – review objectives, process and limitations (page 1)

Section 2: About LACD – core services provided, governance, finance and monitoring (page 5)

Section 3: Operational and Policy Context – socioeconomic snapshot and policy drivers (page 11)

Section 4: Review of Current Operations – financial overview, service performance and usage, memberships, accessibility and KPIs (page 21)

Section 5: Governance – management and governance structures (page 46)

Section 6: Strategic Realignment – role of leisure and culture in Dundee and strengthening the services agreement (page 52)

Section 7: Operational Improvements – options for consideration (page 55)

Section 8: Conclusions (page 86)

Appendix A: Description of LACD Services

Appendix B: Strategies, Policies and Documents reviewed

Appendix C: LACD Customer Surveys

Appendix D: Data Tables

6. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Financial Overview

6.1 One of the primary findings of the review is the financial performance and cost of delivery of services of leisure and culture services. Section 4 of the full report sets this out more fully over pages 21-28.

6.2 The total expenditure has increased by £2.2 million (9.7%) from £22.67 million in 2019-2020 to £24.87 million in 2023-2024, driven by rising staff costs (up 19% to £15.27 million) and property costs (up 69% to £5.24 million). The core Management Fee provided by the council has risen from £7.18 million in 2019-2020 to a projected £9.68 million in 2025-2026, a 34.9% increase.

6.3 Income, on the other hand, has declined by 4.1%, indicating a need for financial restructuring. The review highlights the significant financial challenges faced by LACD, including reliance on DCC funding and additional financial support.

Service Area Performance

6.4 The review provides a detailed analysis of the performance of LACD's core service areas: Sport and Leisure, Libraries, and Culture. This is set out in detail in the full report covering usage, expenditure, incomes and deficits.

6.5 LACD's usage performance in 2023-2024 reflects a mixed recovery from the challenges posed by COVID-19, with visitor numbers showing signs of improvement in Sport and Leisure while Libraries and Culture have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

- Sport and Leisure: usage is up 3.64% compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- Libraries: usage remains below pre-pandemic levels, with total visits at 692,650 in 2023-2024, down 36% from 2019-2020. The Central Library (391,635 visits) remains the busiest facility, accounting for 56% of total library visits, but it is still 21% below its 2019-2020 levels.
- Culture: venue visits reached 281,800 in 2023-2024, showing improvement but still 18% below 2019-2020 levels. McManus (122,078 visits, -27%) and Caird Hall (113,909 visits, -10%) remain the most visited cultural venues, together accounting for 83% of all cultural visits.

6.6 The financial performance of these areas varies, with some showing mixed recovery post-COVID and others yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. The review also highlights the growth potential in health and fitness memberships, with LACD's fitness membership penetration rate currently at 4.5%, below the national benchmark of 6.5%.

6.7 Financial performance per service area is summarised below:

- Sport and Leisure: This is the largest service area for both income at £6.06m (73% of the total) and expenditure at £14.4m (59%).
- Libraries: The second largest area by expenditure is the libraries service, £4.8 million (20% of total expenditure). Income reduced from £340k to £189k. This has led to the net costs of the service increasing by 13% (£538k).
- Culture: The smallest area by expenditure at 14% of the total. Expenditure rose significantly by 37% to £3.4 million. Income increased from £762k to £837k.

6.8 Financial performance varies across different service areas, with some venues operating at significant deficits. The largest operating deficits in 2023-2024 were at the Central Library (-£2.57m), Ice Arena (-£2.31m), Olympia (-£2.10m) and McManus Galleries (-£1.75m).

Governance and Strategic Realignment

6.9 As part of this work, DCC should take the opportunity to set out more clearly its expectations of LACD in terms of the services that will be provided, but more importantly the outcomes that should be achieved aligned with the priorities set out in the City Plan 2022-32 (1 to 3) and the Council Plan 2022-27 (1 to 5) below:

1. Reduce child poverty and inequalities in incomes, education and health.
2. Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth.
3. Tackle Climate Change and reach Net Zero emissions by 2045.
4. Build resilient and empowered communities.
5. Design a Modern Council.

6.10 This can then feed into a revised Services Agreement which can strengthen the governance and accountability between DCC and LACD. The review emphasises the need for strategic realignment to enhance LACD's financial sustainability and service quality. Key recommendations include:

- revising the Services Agreement between DCC and LACD;
- monitoring and review processes to be clear; and
- performance management framework to be developed.

6.11 Implementing the recommended improvements will enhance operational efficiency, strengthen accountability, and ensure the long-term sustainability of services. A revised approach - aligned with DCC's strategic priorities and Scotland's public sector objectives - will ensure that LACD services continue to contribute meaningfully to community wellbeing, economic sustainability, and cultural enrichment. With that in place, LACD could then implement workforce realignment, explore investment opportunities, consider alternative delivery models, adjust pricing policies, and improve marketing and business development.

Operational Improvements

6.12 Section 7 of the report suggests several operational improvements, expanding fitness facilities at key locations, exploring community asset transfer or commercial operation for specific centres, and adopting a more commercial approach to sports classes and swimming lessons.

6.13 Additionally, changing marketing services and establishing a Development Unit for fundraising and business development are recommended to enhance operational efficiency and increase external funding.

Staffing Changes

6.14 Due to this being the highest of LACD's costs, the EKOS report suggests there could be staffing re-alignment and/or reductions in staffing levels as result of service changes. However, they highlight the importance of noting that the top-level figures in the report are indicative rather than definitive at this stage, and care will be required to ensure that any realignment does not prevent genuine areas for service and income growth and improvement. It should also be noted that the staffing costs provided and discussed in the EKOS report do not include the cost of casual workers, which was circa £0.5m in 2023/24.

6.15 Any changes to the operating models would also be dependent on what options, service changes and/or efficiencies suggested in the report were ultimately taken forward. Aligning staffing, operating hours and usage of services across sports, libraries and cultural services is a key area to be explored further.

7. OTHER WORK LACD IS PROGRESSING

7.1 As noted in the EKOS report, LACD had senior management changes during 2024 so has only been at its full complement since then but noted that the new management team have been working to make changes alongside the EKOS review being carried out. This section sets out the updates provided by LACD on the progress being made.

Cultural and Library Services

7.2 A summary of work being developed in this area is detailed below:

Caird Hall

- Business plan prepared by independent consultancy IPW.
- Restructure of staffing including replacing the manager and deputy manager with an operations manager and programme manager, ensuring that the venue has a clearer and more income focused future.
- Tender being developed for a new food and beverage offer which will enhance the venue and increase income.
- New signage inside to update the interior, new bar in Marryat Hall which will increase bookings.
- Developing new partnerships and programming relationships to improve the offer at the Caird Hall including Scottish Album of the Year.
- New marketing support to increase attendances and to ensure that it remains competitive in the city.

McManus

- New ambitious exhibition programme for next two years and beyond.
- Increased focus on income generating events such as weddings, parties, talks.
- New café provider which will increase footfall with a refreshed offer and lower prices for customers.
- New McManus Monday offer which will include paid for craft and creativity sessions while also giving a home to the Dundee choir, Loadsaweemin Singing to rehearse.

Libraries

- Working with each library to identify individual strengths that will allow us to clearly focus on key areas (climate change, democracy) and develop USPs for each.
- Develop new areas for key user groups in Central Library including new products such as the Dundee Book Festival to reconnect with lost audiences and bring them back to Central Library.
- Continue a focus on the new community libraries at Kirkton and Drumgeith and to be a key resource for schools across Dundee, including new library resources for children with additional needs.
- Work with partners to strengthen the offer across the city.

General

- Develop new national partnerships across all venues including with the Southbank Centre (June 2026, Poetry in Every Port) and the National Gallery in London (Art for All, across the city in 2027). Also Scottish partnerships such as Jupiter Artland coming to the city (September 2025) and Scottish Album of the Year (November 2025).
- Increase visibility across the organisation with awards such as finalist in Chambers Business Awards (September 2025) and Courier Business Awards (October 2025).
- Increased marketing and social media – e.g. Mills Observatory.

Sports, Leisure and Physical Activity Services

7.3 Since 1 April 2025, the strategic focus for 2025/2026 has been to transition Active Dundee from recovery to growth. This shift prioritises financial sustainability, innovation, and community well-being, all underpinned by clear functional plans that ensure alignment and accountability across every team and individual.

7.4 This direction is guided by the Leisure & Culture Dundee Strategic Plan 2025–2029, developed collaboratively with input from managers and staff. The aim is to deliver high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable leisure and physical activity services across Dundee. The key priorities stated:

- Our Offer: Develop sustainable leisure and physical activity opportunities, contribute to city plans, refresh strategic approaches, and explore new revenue streams.
- Our Infrastructure: Maintain facilities, update health and safety policies, enhance digital services, and strengthen cross-team collaboration.
- Our People: Promote staff engagement, learning and development, flexibility, well-being, and build a robust volunteer network.
- Our Brand: Strengthen brand identity, improve customer communications, and introduce a customer charter.
- Our Finances: Deliver savings, review pricing and concessionary schemes, manage performance, and invest in innovation.

7.5 Each section of Active Dundee is developing its own functional plan, tailored to support these priorities. There are currently 15 functional plans covering areas such as arenas, business development, outdoor centres, sports, aquatics, health & wellbeing, school facilities, and more. Progress is tracked using business-critical KPIs, enabling regular review by the Board and Dundee City Council.

7.6 Several recommendations from the EKOS report have already been incorporated into these plans. Below is a summary of recent developments:

Ancrum Outdoor Centre

A staffing structure review has led to a new operating model. A formal paper outlining the revised structure, anticipated efficiencies, and mitigation strategies is under development for the next LACD Board meeting.

Sport and Leisure Venues – Management Structure Review

A comprehensive review has been completed to align leadership frameworks with operational needs and service goals. Phase one of structural changes is underway, with phase two scheduled later this financial year to further refine the model.

Camperdown Wildlife Centre

Strategic options are being assessed to improve operational sustainability and visitor experience. A paper is under development for the next LACD Board meeting.

Membership Growth and Service Expansion

Following a strategic revision in January, membership has grown by nearly 30%, reflecting strong community engagement. A recent change launched ACTIVE 9BX, is a HYROX-affiliated training facility at RPC, and initiated a feasibility study for additional gym space.

Learn to Swim Programme

A multi-phase expansion is underway to increase access and inclusivity:

- Phase 1: Expanding capacity at Grove, St Paul's, and Olympia, including enhancements to the Learn to Dive offer.
- Phase 2: Extending access to additional wetside venues, prioritising underserved areas.

Douglas Sport Centre

Developing and evaluating sustainable operational models for Douglas Sports Centre that respond to the needs of the local community, align with strategic priorities, and remain financially viable. The aim is to ensure the centre continues to deliver meaningful impact while adapting effectively to future challenges. This will form part of the options being considered when considering the options for Douglas Community Centre which will now be progressed.

Dundee Ice Arena (DIA)

- 7.7 An independent review has been commissioned by Dundee City Council (DCC) and Leisure & Culture Dundee (LACD) to undertake a feasibility study to consider how the existing Dundee Ice Arena (DIA) offer can be developed to grow audiences for ice sports and ensure that all Dundee Ice Arena functions and services can take advantage of this growth. This will explore improving the overall commercial performance of DIA, including maximised use of the ice, catering and bar facilities and the potential to widen the offer.
- 7.8 LACD are finalising their 2024/25 Annual report for the Board and this will be reflected in the annual report on LACD's performance and impact presented to City Governance Committee later this year.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The key areas to explore further from the report are summarised into a draft high level Action Plan attached as Appendix 1, including the areas where EKOS provided options to be considered further. Officers from LACD and DCC would need to explore these further and prioritise any that were being recommended for implementation. This may require additional resources.
- 8.2 An officer's working group is to be set up and will review the high-level action plan and this further work is to ensure that any proposed changes are well-informed, viable, and aligned with our strategic goals. This approach should also mitigate risks, optimise resource utilisation, and enhance the overall effectiveness of leisure and culture services in Dundee.
- 8.3 As part of any implementation of agreed actions the appropriate DCC and LACD officers will also ensure that all actions agreed within the internal audit report on LACD Financial Sustainability originally reported in June 2024 are also completed.
- 8.4 Any strategic change and/or investment proposals would need to be brought back for committee approval. There may also need to be public consultation on changes to service provision.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding, so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The Council Leadership Team was consulted in the preparation of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

GREGORY COLGAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE: 10 SEPTEMBER 2025

ANDREA CALDER
HEAD OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SERVICE

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HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN

1. STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT

1.1 Strengthening the Services Agreement

- **Action:** Revise the Services Agreement to focus on outcomes based on city priorities (poverty, health and wellbeing, inclusive economic growth and net zero).
- **Objective:** To articulate clearly DCC's priorities and expectations of leisure and culture services to be provided by LACD including clarifying and agreeing roles and responsibilities and decision making, and empowering LACD.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD

1.2 Performance Management

- **Action:** Develop and implement a performance management framework aligned with the revised Services Agreement. This would be linked to action 1.3 also.
- **Objective:** Align to the revised Services Agreement and the outcomes that it targets and also to enable more effective financial and operational management and planning.
- **Responsible:** DCC senior officers

1.3 Data Management and Performance Measurement

- **Action:** Assess the feasibility of implementing a comprehensive data and performance measurement model for both LACD and DCC to use. This would look at the model EKOS used.
- **Objective:** Enhance the accuracy and consistency of data to support strategic decision-making and ongoing performance monitoring.
- **Responsible:** DCC senior officers

2. OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

2.1 Possible Expansion Opportunities

- **Action:** Explore more fully the expansion of fitness facilities at one or more of the following: Douglas Sports Centre, Regional Performance Centre, and/or Menzieshill Community Hub. This would involve developing an appropriate business case for any options.
- **Objective:** To determine the potential return on investment, community benefits, and alignment with strategic priorities.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD

2.2 Alternative Delivery Models

- **Action:** Explore other options for Camperdown Wildlife Centre, Ancrum Outdoor Centre and the Ice Arena. This may include community asset transfer or commercial operation.
- **Objective:** Assess the financial sustainability, community engagement, and potential risks associated with alternative delivery models.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD

2.3 Commercialisation and Pricing

- **Action:** Do an option appraisal of the commercialisation and pricing strategies for sports classes, swimming lessons, and membership models.

- **Objective:** Identify the most effective pricing strategies to increase revenue while maintaining accessibility for the community.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD

2.4 Libraries

- **Action:** Consider further consolidation into more efficient library hubs (for example, Drumgeith).
- **Objective:** Identify a modern and sustainable library provision for the City. This would reduce operational costs as there are limited income generation options. This may include better alignment of operating hours and usage.
- **Responsible:** LACD Management

2.5 Cultural Services

- **Action:** Consider the report findings alongside the work being undertaken by LACD in relation to Caird Hall, McManus, Mills Observatory and Broughty Ferry Castle.
- **Objective:** Ensuring that the operating models within each venue are efficient to reduce running costs and any subsidy needed, particularly if commercialisation and revenue generation is more limited.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD

2.6 Improved Operations

- **Action:** Explore the options of adapting the current marketing services and/or establishing a Development Unit for fundraising and business development.
- **Objective:** Determine the potential benefits, cost savings, and impact on operational efficiency.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD

2.7 Capital Projects

- **Action:** Update the list of proposed capital projects in line with the revised strategy and operational plans and conclusion of 2.1 & 2.3.
- **Objective:** Ensure that capital projects align with strategic objectives and provide value for money.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD

2.8 Workforce Realignment

- **Action:** Assess the impact of workforce realignment on operational efficiency and cost savings.
- **Objective:** Ensure that workforce changes do not negatively impact service delivery and that the proposed savings are achievable.
- **Responsible:** DCC and LACD



Strategic Review of Leisure and Culture Dundee

Report for Dundee City Council
June 2025

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Contents

Executive Summary	i
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Context	1
1.2 Review aims and objectives	2
1.3 Review process	3
1.4 Limitations	3
2 About LACD	5
2.1 The establishment of LACD	5
2.2 Core service areas	6
2.3 Governance and management and delivery structure	8
2.4 Funding and finance	9
2.5 Monitoring and review	9
3 Operational and Policy Context	11
3.1 Introduction	11
3.2 Socioeconomic snapshot	11
3.3 Policy drivers	13
4 Review of Current Operations	21
4.1 Introduction	21
4.2 Financial overview	21
4.3 Service area performance	25
4.4 LACD usage performance overview	29
4.5 Health and fitness membership	33

4.6	Accessibility	34
4.7	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	38
4.8	Overall conclusion	44
5	Governance	46
5.1	Management and governance structures	46
5.2	Performance against the service agreement	47
6	Strategic Realignment	52
6.1	Introduction	52
6.2	Reasserting the role of leisure and culture in Dundee	52
6.3	Strengthening the Services Agreement	53
7	Operational Improvements	55
7.1	Options for consideration	55
7.2	Efficiency measures	56
7.3	Investment opportunities	59
7.4	Alternative delivery models	66
7.5	Commercialisation and pricing	70
7.6	Improved operations	76
8	Conclusions	86
	Appendix A: Description of LACD Services	i
	Appendix B: Strategies, Policies, and Documents Reviewed	v
	Appendix C: LACD Customer Surveys	vii
	Appendix D: Data Tables	xx

Executive Summary

Introduction

Leisure and Culture Dundee (LACD) was established in 2011 to deliver Leisure and Sports Services, Library and Information Services, and Cultural Services on behalf of Dundee City Council. A Services Agreement between the Council and LACD sets out the activities that LACD must deliver on behalf of the Council in exchange for a Management Fee. The Council also meets costs relating to property repair and maintenance for the buildings under LACD's management.

LACD's activities include the management of 21 sports and leisure facilities, a wide range of sports and physical activity classes, including injury and illness rehab services, 14 libraries and a library outreach service, a range of culture and heritage venues and facilities and cultural programmes in the community.

In light of the growing financial constraints facing local authorities across Scotland, Dundee City Council (DCC) commissioned a strategic review of LACD to ensure the organisation meets the current and future needs of local communities, aligns with best practice, maximises resource utilisation, is financial sustainable, and provides value for money.

The review work combined very detailed analysis of financial and performance data with consultation with LACD staff and board members, DCC officers and elected members and a range of external partners. Key findings are summarised below.

Financial Performance

LACD's financial performance reflects increasing reliance on DCC funding, rising operational costs, and shifting income patterns. The core Management Fee has risen from £7.18 million in 2019-2020 to a projected £9.68 million in 2025-2026, a 34.9% increase.

Since 2021-2022, additional financial support averaging £1.4 million per year has been crucial in addressing financial pressures, particularly post-COVID and in response to the temporary closure of facilities such as Olympia.

Total revenue declined by 4.1% between 2019-2020 and 2023-2024. The largest sources of income in 2023-2024 were:

- Fees (£1.88 million, 22.7% of total income) - down 27% from 2019-2020.
- Membership Fees (£1.25 million, 15%) - down 14%.
- Other Grants (£1.08 million, 13%) - up 63%.

- DCC Education Income (£678k, 8.2%) - up 12.5%.

While casual facility usage (-27%) and membership fees (-14%) remain below pre-pandemic levels, external grants (+164%) and coaching programme fees (+203%) have grown significantly, indicating a shift toward funding through partnerships and structured programmes.

Key income-generating venues include the Ice Arena (£697k), Regional Performance Centre (£578k), and Active Schools (£555k). Active Schools, however, is grant funding for delivery of those services.

Total expenditure in 2023-2024 reached £24.87 million, an increase of £2.2 million (9.7%) compared to 2019-2020 levels (£22.67 million). The main areas of expenditure growth are:

- Property Costs - increased by £2.1m (68%) to £5.2 million in 2023-2024 (21% of total expenditure) likely due to increased utility costs, maintenance, and asset management expenses associated with LACD facilities. As noted, these costs are borne by DCC.
- Staff Costs - increased by 19% to £15.27m (80.2% of LACD costs).
- Supplies and Services - increased by 3% to £3.05m (12% of total expenditure).

LACD's financial performance has been impacted by a difficult period as a result of the pandemic and post-COVID recovery, the closure of key facilities like Olympia, loss of senior management staff and the post-pandemic period of high inflation. New appointments at senior management level are having a positive impact, along with a strengthening of the Board of Trustees.

However, this is not a sustainable trajectory, and points towards a need for transformational change.

Service Performance

The review found LACD's overall recovery from the pandemic to be mixed with significant disparities between service areas. While some sports venues and libraries have rebounded strongly, others, particularly Olympia (which was closed for an extended period but has been operational again since May 2024), Development Services, and the main cultural venues have further to go to reach pre-pandemic levels. Core venues are now operating with significant financial challenges.

Library footfall remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels, indicating shifts in user behaviour, and this is consistent with wider trends across the sector.

LACD's fitness membership base (a key driver of revenue) is strong but falls short of national population penetration benchmarks (4.5% compared to 6.5%), presenting a clear opportunity for expansion.

Overall, LACD is emerging from a difficult post-COVID five-year period where it has shared the national characteristics of increased operational costs, reduced income, variable levels of participation and usage, and a consequent increasing financial reliance on DCC at a time of difficulty for public services generally. This combination of circumstances has placed additional pressure on the relationship between LACD and DCC and, consequently, has revealed some stress-lines in current practice and communications.

On the positive side, the services still retain reasonable (and in some areas excellent) levels of usage and a generally high level of customer/user satisfaction. However, there is a need for more efficiency across the organisation and, arguably more importantly, an acknowledgement that some re-focusing of operational practice and skillsets is required to make the service provision more effective and future-facing.

Some of this will be achieved by staff re-training and/or redeployment, some through investing to grow income, and some through introducing new working practices both frontline and in terms of operational support. A more developmental ethos needs to be introduced and supported in some working areas to maximise and grow income streams and, primarily, to improve the quality of service to users.

Governance Review

While recent appointments to the Board and senior management team of LACD have been beneficial, the review found scope for improvements in the governance arrangements for the organisation.

In particular, the review identified questions around management, leadership and accountability culture and the relationship between DCC and LACD relationship is at times challenging particularly in relation to property issues. At the same time, DCC could be clearer about its expectations for culture and leisure in the city, and more direct in its requirements of LACD.

The current Service Agreement is out of date and lacks alignment with public sector reform principles (prevention, partnership and outcomes) and with Council priorities. It also lacks flexibility to review and change service provision.

There is also scope to improve data collection and monitoring and to improve digital strategy, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

There is an opportunity to reassert the role that culture and leisure play in the future of the city - a refreshed vision for Dundee, and for LACD. This should assert clearly the contribution that leisure and culture can make to key city priorities such as poverty and deprivation and health and wellbeing, but also as a driver of civic pride and quality of life.

One option proposed in the review is to reframe membership as citizenship in which all citizens of Dundee, from birth to death, are automatically members of Leisure and Culture Dundee – no signup, no barriers - with a view to:

- Embedding culture and leisure as a civic right, not a consumer choice.
- Making public services feel personal, social, and lifelong.
- Encouraging early and sustained engagement (from birth, rather than later life).
- Strengthening LACD's legitimacy and visibility as a civic institution, not a contractor.

Membership would entitle citizens to specific services, summarised as:

- Free core access to public cultural services: libraries, archives, exhibitions, parks, observatories, and digital collections.
- Tiered or discounted access to enhanced services (e.g. premium classes, ticketed events, facility hire).
- Participation rights in civic cultural planning, feedback, and community-led programming.

This is an illustrative idea for a different approach at this stage and would require further development.

Agenda for Change

The overarching conclusion is that change is needed at LACD. How dramatic the change is, or how quickly it needs to be achieved, will be driven by DCC priorities. If savings are a priority, then the review has indicated where these can largely be found. Similarly, there are recommendations to improve current operations with positive financial and social impact. There are also positive and potentially exciting developments for the city and for LACD.

At its root, there are some practical elements that need to be addressed, and getting these right should have a short- and medium-term impact on both service quality and financial sustainability. The current Service Agreement is at the heart of this - there is a suggestion for a strategic refocussing of how this is framed, however, even if that is not favoured, a mutually negotiated new Service Agreement with key objectives, specific KPIs, and a clear process for monitoring and reporting is essential. Some communication routes between DCC and LACD seem to have been disrupted in the post-COVID period, which may have led to tension and misunderstanding - again, greater clarity in this area is a prerequisite going forward.

The opportunity for much greater inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral operation needs more attention, not only for cost-effective reasons, but more importantly as a means of addressing policy issues such as health and poverty more effectively. This extends beyond LACD-DCC services (although there are still areas there to exploit) to health providers and the third sector in the city.

One intangible aspect that requires cultivation is a corporate one of development – the ethos of innovation that characterised much of LACD’s work had dissipated post-COVID due to capacity issues. A Development Unit within LACD could help drive and support some of these ambitions, but ultimately the culture of entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged from the Board and senior management.

It is worth saying that LACD is not an organisation with terminal difficulties – it has had a particularly challenging five-year period for macro and micro reasons, and it now appears to be more stable than it perhaps had been during that period. There are significant assets within the organisation – staff skillsets, experience, and commitment; a generally good and varied built estate; goodwill from users and public – but these have not been, and require to be, exploited to a much greater extent.

In relation to an agenda for change, these are split into the strategic and the operational.

Strategic

- DCC should articulate clearly its expectations of culture and leisure for the city, and subsequently for LACD including clarifying and agreeing roles and responsibilities and decision making, and empowering LACD. This should also seek to develop a refreshed vision for culture and leisure services that is firmly rooted in the future ambitions for Dundee.
- the Services Agreement should be revised to focus on outcomes based on civic priorities (poverty, health and wellbeing, net zero, inclusive economic growth) – perhaps underpinned by the Civic Membership model.
- governance and leadership structures and arrangements should be reviewed and revised to improve clarity, communications and transparency and enable the Board of LACD to focus on strategic rather than operational matters.
- performance measurement should be improved both to align to the revised Services Agreement and the outcomes that it targets and also to enable more effective financial and operational management and planning.
- there may be merit in establishing a Working Group or Transition Board – a small group comprising officers from DCC and LACD, to work through the governance and revised Services Agreement.

- all LACD activities should then be refocused and targeted around civic priorities and the outcomes specified in the Services Agreement.

Operational

In relation to the operational opportunities that have been identified, some decisions will be needed as to the priorities and relative emphasis between short term savings and longer term investment. We have grouped these as follows:

- **efficiency savings:** workforce realignment creating opportunities for efficiencies of circa £1.5-£3.5m (depending on other decisions made in relation to facilities).
- **alternative delivery models:** alternative delivery for Wildlife Centre (or closure) and Ancrum Outdoor Centre.
- **Investment opportunities:** fitness facilities at Douglas Sports Centre, Regional Performance Centre and Menzieshill; marketing and programming and food and beverage offer at Caird Hall.
- **Commercialisation:** commercialising sports classes and swimming lessons and reviewing membership models and wider pricing structures.
- **Operational improvements:** outsourcing marketing, establishing a Development Unit with clear fundraising and business development targets (and possibly identifying new flagship projects where opportunities arise).

1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of a strategic review of Leisure and Culture Dundee (LACD) to ensure the organisation meets the current and future needs of local communities in Dundee City, aligns with best practice, maximises resource utilisation, is financially sustainable, and provides value for money. The strategic review was commissioned by Dundee City Council (DCC) in partnership with LACD and was undertaken by EKOS together with Integratis Consulting and Creative Services Scotland between November 2024 and April 2025.

1.1 Context

LACD was established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in 2011 and is responsible for the delivery of a range of services which are at the very heart of local communities in Dundee City. This includes Leisure and Sports Services, Library and Information Services, and Cultural Services. In addition to the three core service areas LACD is funded by DCC to deliver or oversee other initiatives and agreements on behalf of the Council and Dundee Partnership, including Active Schools, Outdoor Education, and the School Library Service.

A Services Agreement (see **Appendix A**) between DCC and LACD has been in place since 2011 which sets out the activity that LACD must deliver on behalf of the Council in exchange for a management fee. The Services Agreement has not changed in any material or significant way over the last 14 years with the exception of some recent updates, including updates to the opening hours of facilities and to reflect current activity.

It is widely recognised that there is an urgent need to transform how councils in Scotland deliver services - DCC, like all councils in Scotland, face a challenging situation. Local government budgets are constrained and increasing demand and cost pressures continue to put council finances under strain. DCC has made, and will continue to make, significant savings and take difficult decisions about spending priorities to ensure financially sustainable service provision over the long-term.

[The Best Value: DCC report](#) (Audit Scotland, 2023) notes that the Council has reported savings of over £147 million including through its transformation programme since 2008 but that DCC has a projected cumulative funding gap of £38 million for the period 2024-2027. The Council's transformation programme is currently in its sixth phase of delivery - this has a focus on property rationalisation, digital service provision, service re-design, shared services, and payments and income generation - and will result in further savings for the Council over the next few years.

The recent [Internal Audit Report on LACD Financial Sustainability](#) (2024¹), notes that the Services Agreement is out of date and recommended, among other things, that a fuller external review should be undertaken of LACD agreements, priorities, funding and options for the future. Indeed, other authorities are undertaking, or have recently undertaken, similar reviews.

It is within this wider context that the current review has been commissioned - DCC recognises that most value and insight will come from a comprehensive strategic review of the whole organisation rather than considering individual LACD service areas in isolation.

1.2 Review aims and objectives

The overall aims of the review were to assess LACD's delivery of services against the Services Agreement with the Council, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies to optimise costs while maintaining or enhancing service quality. As such, the review is intended to provide actionable recommendations for service improvement, cost efficiencies, growth opportunities, and a sustainable operational model which delivers on the city, Council and LACD priorities.

The detailed objectives of the strategic review were to:

- assess LACD's performance against the Services Agreement identifying the extent to which the organisation is meeting its obligations to the Council and/or over- or under-performing.
- provide an evaluation for each service LACD provides (whether part of the Service Agreement or additional to it) considering:
 - utilisation including the number of users and their demography.
 - the cost of delivering the service and how this is funded.
 - the staffing required to support the service.
 - the extent to which the service supports delivery of the [Dundee City Plan](#).
 - how the service benchmarks against comparator providers.
- identify opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery including in relation to property, staffing, management, and charging.
- provide recommendations for LACD to maintain services at a reduced cost.

¹ The internal audit was undertaken during 2023 and the report was considered by the Council Scrutiny Committee in 26 June 2024 and by the City Governance Committee on 19 August 2024.

- identify potential revenue-generating opportunities, including partnerships, sponsorships, and innovative service offerings including spend to save proposals, to support increased footfall, use and income.
- propose services that could be delivered for less cost by reducing service standards or services that should stop (that is, not contributing to city/Council priorities and/or are too expensive to deliver).
- propose marketing and communication strategies to maximise outreach, attract diverse audiences, and increase revenue streams.
- identify a suite of appropriate measures against which the future performance of LACD against the City Plan can be assessed.
- develop an implementation roadmap outlining prioritised recommendations, cost-saving initiatives, and timelines for executing strategic changes.

1.3 Review process

The review process comprised a number of interconnected stages, as follows:

- an initial inception meeting with DCC to agree the review objectives and methodology and arrange access to relevant background information and documentation.
- early engagement with LACD and DCC staff to arrange access to necessary financial and performance data.
- extensive analysis of financial and performance data and the development of a data model that can be used by LACD and DCC to inform future decision making (this is provided as a separate output of the review).
- consultation with a range of stakeholders, including DCC staff and elected members, LACD staff and trustees and external partners and stakeholders.
- initial feedback meeting and discussion with DCC to review emerging findings and identify any areas of concern.
- production of draft and final review reports.

1.4 Limitations

Throughout the LACD review process, several data-related limitations emerged, impacting the strategic insight and planning capabilities. The central system, MRM, provided inconsistent and erratic data, necessitating manual intervention and coding to achieve any meaningful analysis.

Notably, the lack of uniformity in system usage – such as some venues bypassing MRM entirely for club bookings – complicated efforts to obtain an accurate picture of venue utilisation and performance.

Additionally, critical information gaps such as detailed hour-by-hour usage data for major venues, including the Regional Performance Centre and McTaggart Gymnastics Centre, severely restricted the ability to understand actual demand patterns. The complete absence of detailed usage and staff rota data across all Cultural and Library venues further exacerbated this issue, preventing an evidence-based assessment of staffing alignment with actual service demand.

Consequently, strategic decisions on operational efficiency, service provision, and access are hindered by inadequate and fragmented data.

Lastly, the absence of comprehensive condition surveys for LACD venues creates uncertainty regarding long-term asset management and investment planning. Without this foundational information, DCC faces constraints in effectively prioritising capital investment and proactively managing maintenance liabilities, potentially leading to unforeseen reactive expenditure and reduced strategic agility.

2 About LACD

2.1 The establishment of LACD

LACD was established as an arms-length external organisation (ALEO) of the Council and SCIO in 2011, primarily to benefit from charity relief from non-domestic rates.

The inaugural meeting of the LACD Board was held on 1 July 2011. It is an independent Scottish Charity with responsibility for the delivery of Leisure and Sports Services, Library and Information Services, and Cultural Services in the city of Dundee.

The [constitution of LACD](#) sets out the charitable purposes of LACD as to:

- advance the arts, heritage, culture, and science.
- advance public participation in sport.
- provide recreational facilities and organise recreational activities with such facilities/activities available to members of the public with the object of improving their conditions of life.
- advance education.
- advance health.
- advance citizenship and/or community development (which may include the promotion of civic responsibility, volunteering, the voluntary sector and/or the effectiveness or efficiency of charities).
- relieve those in need by reason of age, ill health, disability, financial hardship, or another disadvantage.
- promote, establish, operate and/or support other similar schemes and projects which further charitable purposes.

The constitution notes that LACD delivery against its charitable purposes would be achieved through the provision of services (including those entrusted to it by DCC), which contribute to advancing wellbeing, primarily the wellbeing of residents of Dundee, including:

- the operation, management and development of galleries, museums and other facilities which provide public access to collections of works of art, antiquities, and objects of scientific interest.
- the development and delivery of arts and cultural activities and events, artistic programmes, and educational projects.

- the operation, management and development of libraries and provision of library and archive services.
- the operation, management, and development of indoor and outdoor sports facilities (including arrangements to facilitate access to such facilities by those on lower incomes or having special needs and to encourage wider participation in healthy exercise).
- the development and delivery of sports activities and events directed towards wider participation in sport.
- the development and delivery of community learning and adult learning initiatives.
- the delivery of services focused on social renewal and the needs of young people.

The LACD [Purpose Statement](#) notes that the role of LACD is:

"To deliver, for the citizens of Dundee, and those who visit the city, high quality Leisure, Sporting, Cultural and Learning Experiences which contribute to their quality of life."

2.2 Core service areas

Each of the three core service areas has its own statement of principles which sit below the overarching organisational values of LACD which include commitments to: service quality and excellence; being empowered and accountable; actively share knowledge and skills; ensure equality and promote diversity; and practice corporate and social responsibility.

Appendix A sets out a high-level description of services based on latest version of the Services Agreement. A critical review of the Services Agreement is provided at **Chapter 5**.

Overview of Services

In terms of sport and leisure, LACD operates the following:

- **Sport and leisure venues** - LACD manages 21 public facilities on behalf of DCC. This includes gyms and swimming pools to wellbeing programmes and leisure spaces. The main venues include Ancrum Outdoor Centre, Olympia, Douglas Sports Centre, Dundee Ice Arena, The Regional Performance Centre and Lochee Swimming and Leisure Centre.
- **Activities** - a wide range of sports and physical activities including fitness classes, Learn to Swim, gymnastics, dance, racket sports, netball, athletics, disability sports and holiday activities.

- **Active Schools** - LACD delivers the Active Schools programme in Dundee. Active Schools is a nationwide sportscotland-led partnership with all 32 Scottish local authorities that places dedicated coordinators in every school cluster. Since 2003 it has created free or low-cost sport and physical activity sessions before, during and after school, linking pupils to community clubs and volunteers so they stay active for life.
- **Health and wellbeing** - LACD also work in partnership to provide a range of prehab and posthab activities and services targeting those with existing medical conditions. In addition they also provide antenatal programmes, health walks and exercise referral programmes.
- **Training opportunities** - LACD also offer a range of training courses including First Aid, National Pool Lifeguard and Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport courses.

LACD operates a network of libraries across Dundee, offering:

- **Public libraries** – including the Central Library (based in The Wellgate Centre), which is a major hub for lending books, archives, digital resources, and community learning.
- **13 community libraries** – smaller branches that provide local access to books, digital resources, public computers, free Wi-Fi, and community programmes.
- **Digital services** – including eBooks, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers, and access to research tools and databases.
- **Local and family history services** – based in the Central Library, offering archives, maps, directories, and expert support for heritage research.
- **Children and young people's services** – reading schemes like the Summer Reading Challenge, Bookbug sessions for early years, and homework clubs.
- **Outreach services** – including home delivery for people unable to visit a library in person.

LACD also manages several key cultural facilities and services, including:

- **Caird Hall** – the city's main concert and events venue, hosting a wide range of cultural performances from classical music to popular concerts.
- **McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum** – collections of fine and decorative art, natural history, archaeology, local history and special exhibitions.
- **Broughty Ferry Castle** – displays on military and social history, as well as the whaling industry.
- **Mills Observatory** - Britain's first purpose-built public astronomical observatory, designed to make astronomy accessible to the public.
- **Exhibitions and Galleries** – LACD coordinates visual arts programmes in civic spaces, libraries, and community venues.
- **Cultural outreach and community programmes** – supporting participation in the arts, creative industries development, and events across the city.

In addition to direct service delivery, LACD plays a role in the citywide cultural strategy, partnership working (including with V&A Dundee, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee Rep and Dundee Heritage Trust), and helping implement Dundee's status as a UNESCO **City of Design**.

2.3 Governance and management and delivery structure

Governance structure

The Board of LACD, which meets on a bi-monthly basis, sets the overall strategic direction for LACD and is responsible for monitoring and controlling the financial position of LACD. The Board can comprise 13 charity trustees, including three elected members, two DCC officers, and eight independent trustees. The roles of Chair and Vice Chair are to be held by an independent trustee and a Council appointee.

The LACD Board now has its full complement of 13 members. This includes three elected members nominated by the Council (two from the Administration and one major opposition). There are also two executives being the Director of Leisure and Culture and Executive Director of Corporate Services.

The governance structure was reviewed during 2019, and three sub-committees in place continued with delegated authority to deal with business issues on behalf of the Board. In 2023, the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee was established. The current structure includes a:

- Finance Committee (meets quarterly).
- HR and Equalities Committee (meets every third month).
- Health and Safety and Property Committee (meets every third month).
- Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee (meets five times per year).

Staffing structure

The Senior Management Team of LACD comprises the:

- Director (reports to the DCC Chief Executive).
- Head of Corporate Services.
- Head of Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Services.
- Head of Library and Cultural Services.

The Director of Leisure and Culture is a council employee and reports to the DCC Chief Executive - costs with this post are met by the Council.

There are a number of managers responsible for specific service areas, as detailed in the LACD Purpose Statement referred to earlier.

Volunteers

The LACD [Business Plan 2019-2024](#) notes that at any given time LACD supports on average 600 volunteers. Active School Coordinators and the Library and Information Service Volunteer Coordinator, among others play a key role in providing support for volunteers.

2.4 Funding and finance

The Services Agreement between DCC and LACD sets out the activity that LACD must deliver on behalf of the Council in exchange for a management fee.

The management fee has increased in recent years but is now a flat funding position. The council has also provided LACD with additional funding to deal with impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the organisation experienced considerable shortfalls in income as a result of lockdowns and operating restrictions. LACD has had to delivery savings each to balance its budget.

Table 2.1: DCC financial support to LACD

Financial year	Management fee	COVID support	Total funding from DCC
2019-2020	£7,180,939	£0	£7,180,939
2020-2021	£7,327,378	£0	£7,327,378
2021-2022 (actual)	£7,896,000	£1,313,369	£9,996,000
2022-2023 (actual)	£8,476,000	£1,298,974	£9,290,000
2023-2024 (projected)	£9,176,000	£1,581,602	£10,764,000
2024-2025 (planned) ¹	£9,796,000	£0 agreed as yet	£9,796,000
2025-2026 (forecast)	£9,683,000	-	£9,683,000

Source: LACD

1 DCC agreed to underwrite LACD to 30 June 2025. Loss of income for closure of Olympia for Q1 is £244k which DCC should cover. There may also be additional management fee for the year as a result in the increase in the pay award of around £243k. No agreement with DCC has been made yet but figures have been submitted to DCC.

In addition to the management fee, DCC also meets the building maintenance and energy costs, and capital costs for the properties under LACD management. This is covered in more detail in the financial analysis in **Chapter 4**. LACD also generates income by charging for the provision of services and the operation of leisure and cultural facilities.

2.5 Monitoring and review

LACD must also comply with the performance reporting requirements identified by the Council. In addition, LACD provides an annual performance report to DCC which is focussed on a limited range of performance indicators which includes Cost Per Visit, Satisfaction Rates, Attendance, and Volunteering Hours (Cultural Services). The report also provides a summary narrative which explains how each service area contributes to DCC strategic priorities which are outlined within the City Plan.

The Internal Audit Report on LACD Financial Sustainability (2024) notes that

"The scope of the performance monitoring arrangements which are in place currently encompass only a small part of the overall activity of LACD, being primarily concerned with attendance at facilities as opposed to the efficiency and effectiveness of the services being provided. Accordingly, they provide only limited assurance as to LACD performance, the value for money obtained in exchange for the management fee, and how LACD activity contributes to achievement of the Council's priorities and objectives".

3 Operational and Policy Context

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the context in which LACD operates, including the prevailing policy priorities and guidance at city level. This helps identify and consider the:

- main challenges (and opportunities) facing culture and leisure services.
- ways in which culture and leisure services play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals, fostering social cohesion, and contributing to the overall development of people and places.

Appendix B provides wider list of documents reviewed, including weblinks.

3.2 Socioeconomic snapshot

The Dundee City local authority is the smallest in Scotland by geographic area, covering just 60 square kilometres. With a population of just over 150,000, Dundee is second only to Glasgow in population density, with 2,375 people per square km - the Scottish average is 70 people per square km. While the city population is ageing, this is less stark than the national trend, and the working age population is growing. Combined with a higher than average student population, this gives the city a **younger overall demographic profile**.

The city has made significant progress in **regeneration** following the decline of traditional industries. The city adopted a plan to reinvent itself as a cultural centre, and in 2001 began the 30 year, £1 billion Waterfront Regeneration project to reconnect the city centre with the River Tay. The arrival in 2018 of the V&A Dundee provided the Waterfront project with its centrepiece. At the same time, the city has developed international strengths in technology, medicine and life sciences, and became in 2014 the UK's first UNESCO City of Design, recognising design excellence in computer games and medicine.

Over a period of 40 years, the city has prioritised signature capital developments to raise its profile nationally and amenity locally. This began with the return of the Discovery in 1986, the development of Dundee Contemporary Arts in 1999, redevelopment of the McManus in the noughties, arrival of the V&A in 2018, and the proposed siting of the Eden Project in 2020s/30s, amongst others.

This tradition of flagship investment has sometimes appeared at odds with the city's prevailing economic health. However, it has contributed significantly to the re-framing of the city as a contemporary destination for visitors, businesses, and students, and should not be overlooked when considering how LACD might contribute to this.

Throughout this period, the tertiary education sector has often been the key driver for new developments, employment, and economic growth, and the student body consistently rates the city as providing the best student experience in Scotland.

However, Dundee continues to face significant issues with **poverty** and **deprivation**. Economic activity in Dundee is 3.7 percentage points lower than the national average, with a higher proportion of people in Dundee unemployed, and a lower number in employment, than across Scotland.

Economically Active

Dundee: **72.9%**
Scotland: **76.6%**



In Employment

Dundee: **66.6%**
Scotland: **74.0%**



Unemployed

Dundee: **5.0%**
Scotland: **3.3%**

Source: [ONS Annual Population Survey \(2024\)](#)

Gross weekly earnings in Dundee are approximately 9% lower than across Scotland, and there is a greater proportion of workless households than nationally. Dundee also has the second highest rate of child poverty in Scotland with 28.2% of children living in poverty after housing costs. This compares to a national average rate of 21.8%, with only Glasgow having a higher rate of child poverty than Dundee.



Child poverty after
housing costs in 2022/23
Dundee = 28.2%
Scotland = 21.8%

Source: [LGBF \(2024\)](#)

A significant portion of the city falls within some of the most deprived areas in Scotland. According to the 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Dundee City had the 5th highest proportion of deprived areas among Scotland's local authorities, with 38% of its data zones falling within the 20% most deprived in Scotland. Life expectancy is also lower, and more children are at risk of having poor physical health.

Successive Cultural and Sports Strategies for the city have consistently identified as a major priority the connection between those activities and their benefits for physical and mental health and wellbeing. However, the city's health challenges are endemic and generational and require to be addressed cross-sectorally. In that regard, while there have been some examples of good and successful one-off projects and initiatives that bring together the cultural and sports sectors with those of social work and health - there is no consistent approach or integrated services.

Addressing inequalities is likely to remain a city priority for many decades to come, so there is an opportunity to consider how a more effective inter-disciplinary infrastructure could be established that roots leisure and culture provision more centrally within their collective agendas. The city has relatively recent precedent to indicate how this might work in practice: the two bids for City of Culture status in the last 12 years brought together planning and delivery oversight groups that comprised the private, public, academic, and third sectors to devise programmes that would meet a broad range of social and economic objectives. The scale of the city enables it to work in this cross-sectoral way arguably more effectively than any other in Scotland as many of the key partners and individuals are known to one another and there is a collegiate feel to how the city operates.

3.3 Policy drivers

The social challenges summarised above are very much at the heart of the [Dundee City Council Plan 2022-2027](#). The Plan identifies five main priorities for the city, namely to:

- reduce child poverty and inequalities in incomes, education and health.
- tackle climate change and reach net zero emissions by 2045.
- deliver inclusive economic growth (including Community Wealth Building).
- build resilient and empowered communities.
- design a modern council.

These priorities are intended to drive all council activity, including the work of LACD.

Reducing poverty and inequality

Tackling poverty (in particular child poverty) and inequality remains a top priority at all levels, and there is recognition that some population groups and families have a far greater risk of poverty (for example, lone parents, low-income families, disabled people, etc.). Poverty, of course, can act as a significant barrier to an individual's access to, and engagement in, cultural and leisure activities.

Evidence from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) indicates that:

- rates of cultural engagement were lower among households with lower net annual household income, adults living in the 20% most deprived areas, disabled adults, and older people. The most frequently cited factors limiting or preventing people from attending cultural events and places, were a 'lack of time' and the 'cost of tickets' (both are higher in Dundee City).
- rates of participation in a cultural activity were also lower among households with lower net annual household income, adults living in the 20% most deprived areas, men, and older people. The most frequently cited factor limiting or preventing people from participation in a cultural activity was a 'lack of time'.
- participation rates in physical activity and sport were lower among adults living in the 20% most deprived areas, women, older people, and disabled adults. Again, a 'lack of time' was the most common factor that made participation challenging.

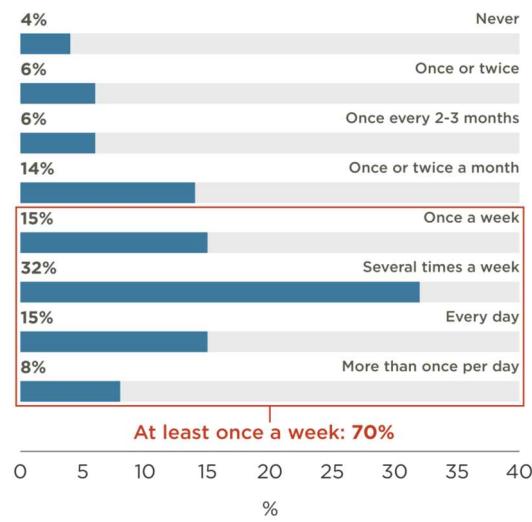
At the same time, there is growing evidence to demonstrate the individual and community benefits of engaging in culture and in sport and leisure in terms of health and wellbeing, education, employability and prosocial behaviour². Thus, targeting participation within those groups in the community most at risk from poverty and deprivation can be a powerful tool for tackling inequality.

Specifically, the role of greenspaces may currently be underestimated. NatureScot's most recent Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANS)³ quantifies the level of engagement of different demographic groups with their local greenspace.

² Scottish Government, [Cultural engagement in Scotland: what is it and why does it matter?](#) (2024); and COSLA, [The Positive Contribution of Physical Activity and Sport to Scotland](#).

³ Stewart, D. and Eccleston, J. 2024. SPANS Scotland's People and Nature Survey 2023/24 - headline report. NatureScot Research Report 1361.

Figure 3.1: Frequency of Visiting or Passing Through Local Greenspace in the last 12 months



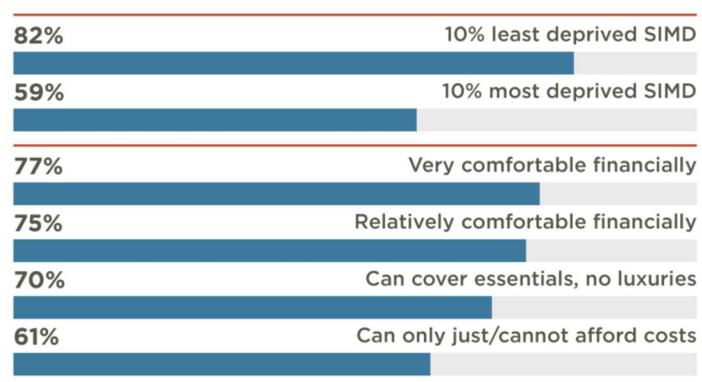
SPANS data underlines the importance of local greenspaces: 96% of people stated that they had either visited or passed through (for example, on their way to work or shops) their local greenspace areas at least once during the last 12 months, with 70% normally doing so at least once a week. There is a relatively consistent spread across age ranges who are accessing the spaces.

Figure 3.2: Proportion of Population Visiting Local Greenspace in last 12 Months: Age



When attendance is broken down further, it suggests that many of the 'hard-to-reach' groups are disproportionately drawn to use of local greenspace. Economically, almost 6 in 10 people from the lowest SIMD decile currently use local greenspace, with a similar percentage for those who 'can only just/cannot afford costs'.

Figure 3.3 Proportion of Population Visiting Local Greenspace in last 12 Months: Income



In terms of health, almost 50% of those in 'bad or very bad health' access their local greenspace, which suggests there are opportunities for some services (DCC, LACD, and other public providers) to consider a more direct presence and intervention in these spaces as a means of engaging with some often-elusive demographic categories, including racial diversity.

Figure 3.4: Proportion of Population by Visiting Local Greenspace in last 12 Months: Health

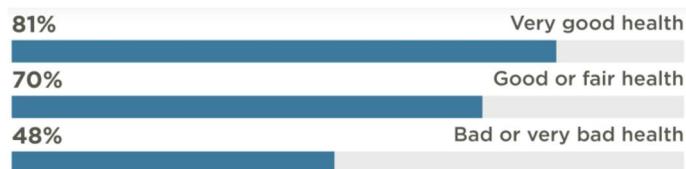


Figure 3.5: Proportion of Population Visiting Local Greenspace in last 12 Months: Diversity



Greenspace, therefore, is an asset for the city that is well used by the citizens but, arguably, could be exploited to a greater extent by public agencies (such as DCC and LACD) to help them meet health and access objectives more effectively.

Tackling climate change and transition to net zero

Tackling the climate emergency is a top priority of the Scottish Government – the focus is to reduce emissions and the country's vulnerability to the future impacts of climate change and restore the natural environment. The long-term vision set out in the Council Plan 2022-2027 is for Dundee to become a Sustainable City that plays a leading role in Scotland's goal to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 or sooner. The city's culture and leisure organisations and its facilities have an important contribution to make towards the DCC and Scottish Government ambition to transitioning to a net zero emissions economy, for example, by reducing emissions from energy use, transport, and waste, not least as some of the assets operated by LACD may be significant contributors to emissions.

Inclusive Economic Growth and Community Wealth Building

Culture and sport and leisure are of course important components of the city economy in their own right (LACD is a significant employer) and extend far beyond the facilities and services provided by DCC and LACD. However, LACD has a wider role in economic development through, for example:

- ongoing development of the visitor offer and visitor economy of Dundee – a growing part of the city's economic development.

- enhancing individuals' employability through the skills and aptitudes developed through volunteering and participation in culture and sport.
- improving health and wellbeing, which in turn contributes to economic activity rates and economic productivity.

One area of LACD's portfolio that could arguably be exploited to a greater economic extent is its **UNESCO designation**. Currently, a very small team work on an interesting but comparatively 'under-the-radar' range of projects and exchanges. However, the rarity of such a designation, and the positive association with an established international brand, do not appear to be fully exploited - either to broker trade and services exchange with an established global network of cities, or in basic marketing of the city and contributing to its international profile. Later, we will explore areas in which current skills and assets can be redeployed or enhanced to have greater overall beneficial impact on the city, and on LACD, and UNESCO designation is certainly one that has this potential.

Community Wealth Building (CWB), which supports the Scottish Government and DCC priority of inclusive economic growth, is a people-centred approach to local economic development which redirects wealth back into the local economy and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. At a national level, the Scottish Government in its [Programme for Government 2024-2025](#) made a commitment to bringing forward a CWB Bill and develop a local authority led practice network to aid consistency and practice sharing. Some examples of the CWB in practice identified with the Council Plan 2022-2027 includes the role of anchor organisations including DCC and LACD in:

- creating entry level employment opportunities by supporting employability programmes aimed at different population groups, especially those left behind by the current labour market.
- ensuring that the procurement of goods and services supports CWB principles.

Communities and 20-minute neighbourhoods

The premise of [local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods](#) is to provide people with the opportunity to meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home (that is, a 20-minute walk, wheel, or cycle from home). This includes to safely access and participate in cultural and leisure activities, spend time outdoors, etc. By doing so this can help to deliver the healthy, sustainable, and resilient places, as well as support a good quality of life and balance environmental impact. In Dundee, the 20-minute neighbourhood concept is being incorporated into the forthcoming Local Development Plan (LDP) and it will require to be taken into account when the Council considers any development proposals, in line with the fourth [National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#).

Council transformation programme

The Council Plan 2022-2027 outlines DCC's ongoing commitment to more radical transformational change across all its services, including culture and leisure - to meet the current and future needs of the city while also maintaining the financial sustainability of its services. The Council Plan recognises that the city needs to re-design services to meet changing demographics/demands, environment and technology, community empowerment and embracing new ways of working. It also indicates that ongoing savings and efficiencies will be largely driven by transformation and service prioritisation and that resources will be prioritised to improve outcomes for all.

The Council's current transformation programme - Transforming Dundee - identifies five areas of focus over the period to 2027, including:

- **property rationalisation** - savings from the disposal of surplus assets, operational cost savings from vacant buildings and income from accommodation rented to third parties. The Council will implement the 365 schools' model (now referred to as Community Hubs) to redesign the delivery of support, education, and leisure to local communities to achieve better outcomes for communities, to deliver city priorities and to rationalise the cluster of other buildings in a community.
- **digital Council** - accelerating the move towards being a digital by default council, increasing the scope of customer services and improving the range and accessibility of online services and reducing the need for face-to-face contact.
- **service re-design** - including the structure of the Council, Children and Families Service - Waste Services, and LACD (see below for more detail).
- **city and regional shared services** - working with neighbouring councils, partners and the third sector on collaborative projects, initiatives, and opportunities to deliver efficiencies across the city and region.
- **payments and income generation** - the Council will review all third-party payments in light of the new city and Council priorities, as well as explore any new or additional income generating opportunities.

While LACD does not itself have a transformation plan, the following Council transformation projects are of relevance:

- **Kirton Community Hub** - as part of the council's aspirations to implement a Community Hubs model, consultation and planning was undertaken in relation to the development of an enhanced Community Hub model in Kirton to improve community access to facilities. An agreement has subsequently been reached between DCC and Kirkton Community Centre SCIO. Following the closure of the current ageing Kirkton Community Centre, the charity intends to build and run a new centre on the same site. The activities and services

being delivered from that location will complement the city council's Community Hub model for the area, which will be based at the nearby Baldragon and St Paul's academies. The Hub model will see community activities provided at the two local secondary schools, including the relocation of Kirton Library to St Paul's Academy.

- **Drumgeith Community Campus** - the circa £100 million community campus is scheduled to open in August 2025. It will allow for two secondary schools to merge and create a modern school and community facility. A consultation was undertaken on proposals to relocate services from existing buildings in Whitfield, Linlathen, and Douglas to the new Community Campus (if they are deemed surplus to requirements) as part of the council's Community Hub model, and which could combine community sports and activities, advice services, digital inclusion, adult learning, and community development as well as health related services to integrated care for children and families. This includes both council and LACD run services from the following facilities:

- The Hub Library and Community Facilities.
- Whitfield Library (The Crescent).
- Douglas Community Centre and Library.
- Douglas Sports Centre.

The consultation explored options for the future of the above properties and views on whether any are deemed surplus to requirements. Options explored included: using them for other purposes; transferring them to community organisations; selling the buildings; and closing the buildings. The consultation closed on 15 December 2024, analysis completed early in 2025, and findings shared with the Officer Oversight Group, and a [report](#) shared with the Committee in April 2025 to consider any recommendations.

The Committee: approved the closure of The Hub Library and Community facility and redistribution of services within a timeframe of six months for the services and building to be closed after the opening of the Drumgeith Campus; approved the closure of Whitfield Library (The Crescent) and redistribution of services with a timeframe of six months after the opening of the Drumgeith Campus; and deferred a decision on the closure of Douglas Sports Centre remitting the Chief Executive to further review the operations and report back to a future committee meeting.

- **School swimming pools** - this was one of circa 40 options which formed part of the DCC budget consultation which closed on 29 December 2024. The school swimming pools proposal considered was the closure of the swimming pools in Baldragon Academy, Grove Academy, Harris Academy, St Johns RC High School, and St Pauls RC High School. This

could result in possible savings of £180,000 (2025-2026) and £440,000 (2026-2027). This option was not taken forward for 2025/26 budget setting.

4 Review of Current Operations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary review of LACD's operations and performance based on data provided by LACD and DCC. The analysis compares current performance against pre-COVID levels and considers:

- financial performance and changes in income and expenditure overall and by service area.
- trends in usage and membership.
- performance of individual facilities.
- accessibility of facilities across the service areas.

The analysis provides a series of insights which are developed further in the sections that follow.

4.2 Financial overview

The LACD financial accounts are structured around distinct categories of income and expenditure, reflecting the wide range of activities and services provided. Income is recorded through numerous individual codes, each representing specific sources such as memberships, bookings, grants, and sales. However, the current structure includes an excessive number of detailed income codes that are not effectively grouped around major activity areas. This scattered approach complicates the analytical process, making it challenging to accurately assess and manage revenue streams strategically.

Expenditure accounts are similarly structured but categorised clearly into major groups such as capital charges, staffing costs, property maintenance, supplies and services, transport costs, and miscellaneous expenses. This categorisation facilitates more straightforward monitoring and control of operational spending, aiding in effective budgeting and financial management.

As noted earlier, the costs relating to the maintenance of LACD managed facilities along with related insurance and energy costs are met directly by DCC and are therefore not included within LACD's own accounts. However, in order to provide a more complete analysis we have included the relevant DCC costs to provide an analysis of the total costs of delivering LACD's services.

LACD financial performance overview

LACD's financial performance has been shaped by increasing reliance on DCC funding, rising operational costs, and shifting income patterns. The core Management Fee has risen steadily from £7.18 million in 2019-2020 to a projected £9.68 million in 2025-2026, reflecting a 34.9% increase.

Since 2021-2022, additional financial support averaging £1.4 million per year has been crucial in addressing financial pressures, particularly post-COVID and in response to facility closures such as Olympia. However, with no additional support confirmed for 2025-2026, financial sustainability remains uncertain.

LACD financial position

Summary

Table 4.1 provides a summary including all DCC property related costs but excludes the current contract management fee. LACD's overall expenditure has increased from £22.67 million in 2019-2020 to £24.87 million in 2023-2024, driven by staff costs (+19%) and property costs (+68%), largely due to inflation, pay awards, and rising utility expenses. Some reductions in professional fees and capital charges have provided partial mitigation. Income overall has reduced by 4.1%.

Table 4.1: Summary of Financial Performance

Cost Centre	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2019/20 v 2023/24
Income	£8,677,515	£7,276,867	£7,315,827	£7,295,494	£8,319,411	-4.1%
Expenditure	£22,672,407	£17,252,111	£19,951,744	£20,987,280	£24,869,018	9.7%
Net	£13,994,892	£9,975,244	£12,635,917	£13,691,786	£16,549,607	18.3%

Income

From an income perspective, total revenue declined by 4.1% between 2019-2020 and 2023-2024. The largest sources of income in 2023-2024 were:

- **Fees** (£1.88 million, 22.6% of total income) - down 27% from 2019-2020.
- **Membership Fees** (£1.25 million, 15%) - down 14%.
- **Other Grants** (£1.08 million, 13%) - up 63%.
- **DCC Education Income** (£678k, 8.2%) - up 12.5%.

Areas in which revenues have declined include:

- Booking Fees: down £136k (36%).
- Artificial Pitch Fees: nearly eliminated.

- Sponsorship Income: down 41% (£20K to £8K).

Areas of revenue growth include:

- Other Grants: up £421k (63%).
- Events Income: up 86%. (mainly due to UNESCO)
- Public Skating: up 17%.

While casual facility usage (-27%) and membership fees (-14%) remain below pre-pandemic levels (the closure of Camperdown Golf Course in April 2020 impacted memberships), external grants (+164%) and coaching programme fees (+203%) have grown significantly, indicating a shift toward funding through partnerships and structured programmes.

Key income-generating venues include the Ice Arena (£697k), Regional Performance Centre (£578k), and Active Schools (£555k). Active Schools, however, is grant funding for delivery of those services. However, Olympia's revenue has plummeted by 86% due to closure, significantly impacting overall income. Perhaps notable by its absence is the Caird Hall - given the scale of the building and its revenue-generating opportunities, it should be a net income contributor but currently is not.

Expenditure

Total expenditure in 2023-2024 reached £24.9 million, an increase of £2.2 million (9.7%) compared to 2019-2020 levels (£22.7 million).

The most significant increases are in property costs, professional fees, and capital charges, indicating rising facility-related expenses, and in staff costs (which account for almost 80% of LACD's direct costs (that is, not including the DCC property related costs)).

It should be noted that staff costs as reported here do not include casual staff. Based on information provided by LACD, the cost of casual staff in 2023/24 was c.£0.564m, the majority of which relates to Sport and Leisure.

Expenditure fell sharply in 2020-2021 due to COVID-19 closures but has since rebounded beyond pre-pandemic levels.

The main areas of expenditure growth are:

- **Property Costs** - increased by £2.1m (68%) to £5.2 million in 2023-2024 (21% of total expenditure) likely due to increased utility costs, maintenance, and asset management expenses associated with LACD facilities. As noted, these costs are borne by DCC.
- **Staff Costs** - increased by 19% to £15.27m (80.2% of LACD costs).

- **Supplies and Services** - increased by 3% to £3.05m (12% of total expenditure).

Areas in which expenditure has reduced include:

- **Professional Fees Paid** - reduced by £2.91 million (75%) compared to 2019-2020 (£3.87 million).

Implications

The message from the summary analysis of LACD's financial performance is clear. Costs have been rising substantially, particularly in relation to property and staffing, while income has fallen (particularly when the impact of inflation is considered).

Over this period there has been a significant increase in core funding from DCC (see **Chapter 2**), as well as additional costs borne by the Council particularly in relation to building costs (LACD has been partly protected from inflationary pressures in relation to building costs, although the cost of staff and supplies and services have risen). The LACD Management Fee has increased by 34.9% since 2019/20, reflecting rising costs in service delivery and staffing.

There is also evidence of some reliance on additional support. Since 2021-2022, LACD has required an average of £1.4 million per year in additional funding, highlighting financial pressures that may not be fully covered by the core Management Fee, although much of this will be related to the pandemic and the recovery period.

There are mitigating factors here. In particular, the consultation identified a consistent view that LACD was emerging from a difficult period as a result of the pandemic and post-COVID recovery, the closure of key facilities like Olympia, loss of senior management staff and the post-pandemic period of high inflation. In particular, new appointments at senior management level were seen as having a positive impact, along with a strengthening of the Board of Trustees.

However, in a financial sense this is not a sustainable trajectory, and points towards a need for transformational change. This was also recognised by those that we interviewed. This means effort in relation to diversifying income streams, improving operational efficiency, and reducing reliance on ad-hoc financial support.

There are also areas of financial under-performance that could be addressed with better management (for example, Caird Hall) and more focussed activity (for example, fundraising from independent sources for development work and capital projects). Both of these could help significantly offset some of the current additional expenditure burden.

4.3 Service area performance

This section looks in more detail at LACD's financial performance in each of its service areas: Culture, Libraries, Special Projects, Sport and Leisure and Support Services.

Table 4.2: Financial Performance by Service Area (includes DCC costs)

Service	Cost Centre	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Culture	Income	-£761,897	-£205,594	-£707,440	-£765,099	-£837,258
	Expenditure	£2,653,204	£2,445,117	£3,146,407	£3,037,406	£3,424,423
	Net	£1,891,307	£2,239,523	£2,438,967	£2,272,307	£2,587,165
Libraries	Income	-£340,198	-£154,027	-£203,347	-£204,417	-£188,702
	Expenditure	£4,493,543	£3,803,005	£4,113,496	£4,276,533	£4,879,839
	Net	£4,153,345	£3,648,978	£3,910,149	£4,072,116	£4,691,137
Special Projects	Income	-£174,752	-£295,651	-£401,026	-£460,980	-£670,680
	Expenditure	£252,517	£208,891	£327,284	£452,240	£653,257
	Net	£77,765	-£86,760	-£73,742	-£8,740	-£17,423
Sport & Leisure	Income	-£7,084,050	-£1,941,471	-£4,894,226	-£5,626,170	-£6,061,384
	Expenditure	£14,734,992	£10,126,478	£11,036,841	£12,157,992	£14,443,825
	Net	£7,650,942	£8,185,007	£6,142,615	£6,531,822	£8,382,441
Support Services	Income	-£316,618	-£4,680,124	-£1,109,788	-£238,828	-£561,387
	Expenditure	£538,151	£668,620	£1,327,716	£1,063,109	£1,467,674
	Net	£221,533	-£4,011,504	£217,928	£824,281	£906,287
Total		£13,994,892	£9,975,244	£12,635,917	£13,691,786	£16,549,607

Source: LACD/ DCC

Sport and Leisure

Sport and Leisure is the largest service area by both income (73% of the total) and expenditure (58%). The net cost of the service (deficit) has increased since 2019-2020 by £732k (10%) to £8.4 million. This has been driven by a reduction in income of £1.02 million (-14%) since 2019-2020, highlighting the financial pressure on leisure operations and ongoing competition. It also reflects the closure of Olympia.

Libraries

The second largest area by expenditure is the libraries service at £4.9m (20% of total expenditure). A reduction in income over the period since 2019-2020 has been combined with an increase in expenditure over the same period, mainly driven by increased staff costs. This has led to the net costs of the service increasing by 13% (£538k).

Culture

Culture accounts for 10% of LACD's total income (£837K) and 14% of expenditure (£3.42m). The net cost of the service has increased by 37% since 2019-2020 due mainly to an increase in costs of 29% (£771K).

Special Projects

Income from special projects has increased significantly since 2019-2020 (£496K, 284%) while expenditure has also grown by £401k (159%), reflecting investment in special initiatives.

Support Services

Support services costs have more than doubled since 2019-2020 and now account for 6% of overall expenditure (£1.47m). This reflects significant increases in financial charges, legal and insurance and staff costs. Income has also increased but at a lower rate than costs leading to a net cost increase of £685K (309%).

Observations

The overall rise in expenditure (particularly in Culture and Support Services) suggest a need for operational efficiencies and rising property-related costs mean that a strategic review of facilities and asset utilisation is also required. However, we also found areas (for example, McManus) where reductions could actively harm the visitor experience and limit the operation, so the picture is nuanced.

Venues and Facilities

Expenditure

Table 4.3 sets out the top 10 venues and services by expenditure between 2019-2020 and 2023-2024. The supporting data model gives a detailed breakdown of the expenditure lines.

Table 4.3: Top 10 Venues/ Services by Expenditure

Venue/Service	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	% of Total Expenditure	Change to Pre Covid
Ice Arena	£1,244,634	£956,763	£1,266,302	£1,682,602	£3,007,308	11.9%	142%
Central Library	£2,571,054	£2,326,430	£2,287,634	£2,297,358	£2,731,693	10.8%	6%
Olympia	£2,674,172	£1,985,417	£2,008,979	£1,553,554	£2,382,370	9.4%	-11%*
McManus Galleries	£1,474,081	£1,433,981	£1,529,040	£1,360,127	£1,877,836	7.4%	27%
Regional Performance Centre	£390,485	£734,730	£652,101	£1,071,557	£1,129,106	4.5%	189%
Support Services	£233,281	£481,918	£1,083,190	£832,022	£1,118,265	4.4%	379%
Camperdown - Wildlife Centre	£796,518	£723,196	£833,073	£937,454	£1,019,341	4.0%	28%
Overheads	£866,078	£1,014,166	£635,422	£759,100	£905,547	3.6%	5%
Ancrum Outdoor Centre	£653,230	£537,048	£697,908	£893,744	£888,951	3.5%	36%
Menzieshill Community Hub Sports Facility	£137,364* *	£137,665	£224,599	£231,422	£292,834	1.2%	113%

*Olympia significant reduction in expenditure compared to pre-covid is attributed to the impact of closure.

**2019-20 figures for Menzieshill include £3.26m of professional fees that are not repeated in future years, therefore we have removed these from this analysis.

The top five venues and service areas by total expenditure in 2023-2024 were:

- Ice Arena - £3,007,308 (11.9% of total expenditure) - 142% increase from 2019-2020.
- Central Library - £2,731,693 (10.8%) - 6% increase.
- Olympia - £2,382,370 (9.4%) - 11% decrease.
- McManus Galleries - £1,877,836 (7.4%) - 27% increase.
- Regional Performance Centre for Sport - £1,129,106 (4.5%) - 189% increase.

Together, these five venues account for 37% of total expenditure, highlighting their major cost contributions.

Deficits

Table 4.4 sets out the top 10 venues and services by deficit between 2019-2020 and 2023-2024.

Table 4.4: Top 10 Venues/ Services by Deficit

Venue/ Service	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	% of Total Deficit	Change to Pre Covid
Central Library	£2,395,808	£2,173,865	£2,135,363	£2,134,756	£2,570,682	10.2%	7%
Ice Arena	£684,543	£799,926	£729,837	£1,074,357	£2,310,099	9.1%	237%
Olympia	£674,618	£1,834,244	£1,588,144	£1,491,409	£2,098,830	8.3%	211%
McManus Galleries	£1,305,414	£1,369,313	£1,475,201	£1,213,130	£1,751,493	6.9%	34%
Support Services	£124,542	-£3,989,296	£373,075	£819,875	£1,062,730	4.2%	753%
Overheads	£727,553	£986,765	£512,906	£668,340	£852,837	3.4%	17%
Camperdown-Wildlife Centre	£409,125	£558,653	£403,629	£472,111	£625,259	2.5%	53%
Caird Hall	£343,220	£513,115	£808,600	£527,150	£597,228	2.4%	74%
Regional Performance Centre	£221,092	£694,192	£266,763	£415,882	£550,661	2.2%	149%
Creative Services	£447,866	£400,916	£471,161	£444,151	£470,165	1.9%	5%

The largest operating deficits in 2023-2024 were at the Central Library (£2.57m), Ice Arena (£2.31m), Olympia (£2.10m) and McManus Galleries (£1.75m), collectively comprising 51% of total deficits. The most significant deficit increases since 2019-2020 include Support Services (753%), Ice Arena (237%) and Olympia (211%), highlighting cost escalations and reduced income streams. Expenditure growth at the Regional Performance Centre (149%) further underscores the challenge of balancing rising costs with sustainable revenue.

Culture is clearly under increasing financial strain, but there is scope to improve income generation particularly at the Caird Hall and work is already underway to do so.

The turn-around in visitor numbers at Mills Observatory now has demonstrated how quickly and effectively positive results can be achieved through changing several aspects of how it is managed and promoted. This type of operational change is likely to be possible in other properties.

4.4 LACD usage performance overview

LACD's usage performance in 2023-2024 reflects a mixed recovery from the challenges posed by COVID-19, with visitor numbers showing signs of improvement in Sport and Leisure while Libraries and Culture have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Table 4.5: Summary of Service Usage

Service	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Pre and Post Covid Difference
Sport & Leisure	1,569,754	185,171	1,104,289	1,392,714	1,626,906	3.64%
Libraries	938,312	32,229	243,993	517,520	692,650	-26.18%
Culture	342,866	54,267	251,030	279,440	281,800	-17.81%

Sport and Leisure

Table 4.6 shows the usage across sport and leisure facilities from 2019-2020 to 2023-2024.

Table 4.6: Usage at Sport and Leisure Facilities

Venue	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Pre and Post Covid Difference
Ancrum	33,612	0	32,537	35,549	35,849	6.66%
Baldragon	26,883	3,910	33,584	49,193	59,464	121.20%
Craigie	4,742	0	14,652	17,490	17,310	265.04%
Craigowl	3,440	0	7,000	11,190	8,630	150.87%
Development	66,658	3,859	21,507	16,827	16,272	-75.59%
DISC	218,355	19,536	114,449	141,812	172,510	-21.00%
Douglas	81,800	11,860	50,098	84,638	113,627	38.91%
Fintry	2,164	0	4,320	6,260	5,010	131.52%
Grove	34,912	0	24,938	40,351	50,515	44.69%
Harris	40,066	0	20,174	34,065	32,427	-19.07%
Ice Arena	132,524	25,059	129,320	174,161	197,024	48.67%
Lochee	65,316	7,702	44,581	95,253	104,559	60.08%
McTaggart	95,145	0	51,868	64,333	73,787	-22.45%
Menzieshill	26,877	6,170	27,528	50,163	65,660	144.30%
Olympia	463,141	38,508	113,671	12,130	72,232	-84.40%
RPC Dundee	154,220	36,395	274,410	398,883	442,879	187.17%
St. Andrew's	1,750	0	5,180	6,730	7,252	314.40%

St. John's	7,718	0	23,752	22,793	29,140	277.56%
St. Paul's	36,674	0	25,487	53,066	57,188	55.94%
WLC	73,757	32,172	85,233	77,827	65,571	-11.10%
Total	1,569,754	185,171	1,104,289	1,392,714	1,626,906	3.64%

Total usage across sport and leisure facilities reached 1.63 million in 2023-2024, reflecting mixed recovery trends. The Regional Performance Centre saw the highest increase in visits (442,879, +187%), benefitting from its relatively new status since opening in 2019 (it should be noted that a significant proportion of reported usage is spectators rather than participants). Other facilities showing strong growth include Baldragon (+121%), Craigie (+265%), and St. John's (+278%), suggesting renewed demand for sports participation.

In contrast, Olympia (-84%) saw a major decline due to its period of closure, while Development Services (-76%) and DISC (-21%) also reported lower numbers. The closure of Olympia likely displaced demand to other facilities, while some sites, such as McTaggart (-22%) and Harris (-19%), have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

LACD sport and leisure participation data (see **Table 4.7**, below) shows that sports halls (25.1%), Astro/3G pitches (14.6%), and swimming (12.6%) account for over half of total usage, though swimming is likely underrepresented due to the closure of Olympia pool.

Fitness-related activities, including gym usage (7.3%) and fitness/coaching classes (9.4%), make up only 16.75% of participation – less than half of what is typically seen in other sport and leisure trusts – suggesting potential limitations in facilities, programming, or pricing structures.

Notably, swimming lessons do not rank among the top 10 activities, an unusual trend given their prominence in other trusts, indicating possible capacity or accessibility issues.

Table 4.7: Sport and Leisure Usage by Activity

Activity Group	% of Usage	Cumulative %
Sports Hall	25.13%	25.13%
Astro / 3G Pitches	14.58%	39.71%
Swimming	12.61%	52.32%
Activity/Fitness/Coaching Classes	9.44%	61.76%
Gym	7.31%	69.08%
Ice Hockey	5.42%	74.49%
Athletics Track (Indoor & Outdoor)	3.89%	78.38%
Ice Skating	3.30%	81.68%
General Admission (inc. Reward)	3.25%	84.94%
Meeting Rooms	2.96%	87.90%

These insights highlight growth opportunities for LACD, particularly in expanding fitness programmes and reinstating a robust swimming lesson programme to align with sector trends and community demand.

Libraries

As shown in **Table 4.8**, below, Library usage remains below pre-pandemic levels, with total visits at 692,650 in 2023-2024, down 36% from 2019-2020. The Central Library (391,635 visits) remains the busiest facility, accounting for 56% of total library visits, but it is still 21% below its 2019-2020 levels. Other well-attended libraries include Broughty Ferry (78,775 visits, -30.6%), Blackness (47,811, -16.2%) and Lochee (27,355 visits, -63.4%).

While some libraries continue to struggle, several have demonstrated strong recovery, including Menzieshill, Coldside, and Blackness compared to their pandemic-era lows. However, the potential closure or relocation of libraries such as Douglas, Hub, and Whitfield could significantly impact accessibility, particularly for early years literacy programmes, digital services, and vulnerable communities. Additionally, concerns exist around relocating libraries into school buildings, as this may create accessibility barriers for some residents.

Table 4.8: Usage at Libraries

Venue	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Pre and Post Covid Difference
Ardler	14,469	308	3,915	10,969	13,968	-3.5%
Arthurstone	31,272	330	4,562	8,890	11,596	-62.9%
Blackness	57,084	1,247	20,514	37,203	47,811	-16.2%
Broughty Ferry	113,471	2,883	33,679	66,996	78,775	-30.6%
Central	495,512	23,380	123,736	267,183	391,635	-21.0%
Charleston	36,745	360	5,384	12,872	14,263	-61.2%
Coldside	11,436	720	6,432	15,841	21,114	84.6%
Douglas	16,081	354	4,410	11,928	14,936	-7.1%
Fintry	11,702	446	5,603	11,788	11,635	-0.6%
Hub	18,338	184	6,867	12,361	14,403	-21.5%
Kirkton	15,516	174	3,344	8,178	10,247	-34.0%
Lochee	74,690	951	13,225	26,116	27,355	-63.4%
Menzieshill	20,645	892	7,537	17,977	25,282	22.5%
Mobile	4,916					n/a
Whitfield	16,435	0	4,785	9,218	9,630	-41.4%
Total	938,312	32,229	243,993	517,520	692,650	-26.2%

Overall, while there are positive signs of recovery, library engagement remains well below pre-pandemic levels, reinforcing the need for sustained investment and strategic planning to maintain their role as vital community resources.

Indeed, our consultation suggests a clear need for a refreshed strategic approach to libraries that reimagines the library service for the present day. We return to this later in the report.

Culture

Cultural venue visits reached 281,800 in 2023-2024, showing improvement but still 18% below 2019-2020 levels. McManus (122,078 visits, -27%) and Caird Hall (113,909 visits, -10%) remain the most visited cultural venues, together accounting for 83% of all cultural visits.

Broughty Castle (39,132 visits, -7%) has nearly recovered, while smaller venues like Mills Observatory (6,654 visits) and the Collections Unit (27 visits) continued to see low engagement. The Steeple recorded no visitors, suggesting an ongoing challenge in accessibility or programming. The latter two venues are not open to the public on a regular basis.

Table 4.9: Usage/ Attendance at Cultural Venues

Venue	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Pre and Post Covid Difference
Broughty Castle	42,149	0	11,008	35,513	39,132	-7.2%
Caird Hall	126,959	33,887	146,386	103,544	113,909	-10.3%
Collections Unit	353	0	0	0	27	-92.4%
McManus	167,702	20,380	88,766	132,891	122,078	-27.2%
Mills Observatory	5,601	0	4,870	7,424	6,654	18.8%
Steeple	102	0	0	68	0	n/a
Total	342,866	54,267	251,030	279,440	281,800	-17.8%

We are aware that recent changes in management for culture (and Caird Hall) are already highlighting opportunities and areas for improvement and our recommendations reflect this progress. This is discussed later in the report.

Observations

LACD's overall recovery is mixed with significant disparities between service areas. While some sports venues and libraries have rebounded strongly, others, particularly Olympia (which was closed for an extended period but has been operational again since May 2024), Development Services, and the main cultural venues have further to go to reach pre-pandemic levels.

Library footfall remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels, indicating shifts in user behaviour, and this is consistent with wider trends across the sector. Strategic investment in high-growth venues, targeted support for underperforming facilities, and efforts to attract users back to libraries and cultural spaces will help sustained recovery and long-term engagement.

Public affection demonstrated in surveys and TripAdvisor reviews for the McManus and the library service is not yet reflected in their visitor numbers. While this is consistent with national trends, it suggests that a different approach to both these services is required which anticipates the post-COVID public appetite or expectation for what a 21st century library or cultural venue should provide, where it should be located, or what it should look like. This challenge certainly creates an opportunity for LACD and DCC to be more strategic and longer-term in their thinking. Cultural venues, and libraries in particular, remain one of the most trusted public services and perceived safe spaces - both these qualities could be explored and capitalised on to a greater extent with a new approach.

4.5 Health and fitness membership

Regular participation in health and fitness activities is a key driver of improved public health outcomes, supports income generation for LACD, and presents a significant opportunity for future growth as demand for these services continues to rise. Fitness memberships are a core element of LACD's offering, providing sustained engagement with users and contributing to financial sustainability. Understanding membership levels, penetration rates, and latent demand is critical for shaping strategic investment and marketing efforts to expand participation.

4.5.1 Membership penetration rate

LACD currently has 7,717 active health and fitness members, with the vast majority residing in Dundee City (82.88%). Despite this strong local base, the overall membership penetration rate is 4.5%, which falls significantly below the 6.5% national benchmark. This highlights a substantial opportunity for growth through facility improvements, expanded services, and targeted marketing.

Variation by ward

Looking at membership by ward, the highest penetration rate is in the East End Ward (5.83%) - the only ward approaching the national benchmark. The lowest penetration rate is the West End, which at 2.94% is significantly below the city and national averages. Other key areas such as The Ferry (4.94%) and Maryfield (4.75%) perform relatively well, while Coldside (3.84%) and Lochee (4.59%) remain below the city average.

Latent demand

If all Dundee City wards achieved the 6.5% benchmark penetration rate, membership would increase to 9,238, revealing a latent demand of 2,842 additional members. This is a significant opportunity both for driving up participation and improving health outcomes and for increasing income.

Wards with the highest growth potential

The wards with the greatest growth potential are:

- **West End:** +649 members.
- **Coldside:** +491 members.
- **Lochee:** +368 members.
- **Strathmartine:** +355 members.

These areas represent the greatest opportunities for investment in facility expansion, service enhancements, and promotional campaigns to attract new members.

Comment

LACD's fitness membership base is strong but falls short of national penetration benchmarks, presenting a clear opportunity for expansion. By investing in high-growth areas, improving facility offerings, and enhancing engagement strategies, LACD can significantly increase participation, drive income generation, and contribute to improved community health outcomes. Unlocking this latent demand will be crucial for the long-term sustainability and impact of LACD's health and fitness services.

4.6 Accessibility

Ensuring equitable access to swimming pools, sportshalls, fitness facilities, and libraries is crucial for promoting physical activity, improving health outcomes, and supporting community engagement. Accessibility levels vary across Dundee depending on transport mode and location, with school facilities playing a key role in supplementing public provision. This analysis highlights trends in accessibility across different service areas and the impact of changes in facility availability. The supporting data model allows for analysis across multiple transport modes and times but the examples in this report are all based on a 15 minute travel time.

Swimming pools

Access to swimming pools in Dundee is generally high for those who drive or cycle, with nearly universal coverage within 15 minutes. However, access for those relying on walking and public transport is significantly lower, with only 34% of residents able to reach a swimming facility within 15 minutes on foot and 48% within 15 minutes via public transport.

Impact of school pools: The removal of school swimming pools drastically reduces accessibility. Walking access within 15 minutes drops from 34% to 15%, while public transport access within 10 minutes falls from 48% to 23%. Cycling access within 15 minutes also drops from 99% to 73%,

highlighting the importance of school pools in providing equitable access, especially for those without private transport.

Sportshalls

Access to sportshalls is similarly strong for those who drive, with 100% of residents able to reach a facility within 15 minutes. Cycling access is also high at 99.7% within 15 minutes, but walking and public transport access remain limited.

Impact of school sportshalls: The exclusion of school sportshalls significantly reduces accessibility in that:

- walking access within 15 minutes drops from 32% to 13%.
- public transport access within 15 minutes declines from 40% to 20%.
- cycling access within 15 minutes falls from 99.7% to 76.6%.

The most affected areas are Strathmartine, The Ferry, and the West End, where public sportshall provision is lower, making school facilities essential for maintaining accessibility.

Fitness facilities

Fitness facility access varies across Dundee, with 100% of residents able to drive to a facility within 15 minutes. However, only 50.9% can walk to a facility within 15 minutes, and just 57.7% can reach one using public transport.

Impact of the Regional Performance Centre: Although the Regional Performance Centre has fitness facilities, these are not available to the public. This means that accessibility figures may overstate actual public access, particularly in North East (DC).

Potential improvements: developing new fitness facilities at the Regional Performance Centre and Menzieshill Community Hub would significantly enhance accessibility, particularly for those relying on walking and public transport. For example:

- Lochee's public transport access within 15 minutes would increase from 53.3% to 82.6%.
- walking access in Lochee would increase from 31.3% to 76%.
- overall public transport access within 15 minutes would improve from 11.1% to 19.7%.

Libraries

Library access is high for those who drive or cycle, with nearly universal access within 10-15 minutes. However, public transport and walking access vary significantly by ward. When compared

to other cities however Dundee's levels of accessibility for libraries is one of the highest as shown in

Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Libraries Accessibility

	% Population Accessibility					
Transport Time/Mode	Aberdeen City	City of Edinburgh	Dundee City	Glasgow City	Stirling	
10 Minutes Cycling	93%	99%	99%	100%	85%	
10 Minutes Driving	97%	99%	100%	100%	88%	
10 Minutes Walking	23%	31%	41%	33%	34%	
15 Minutes Cycling	100%	100%	100%	100%	88%	
15 Minutes Driving	100%	100%	100%	100%	96%	
15 Minutes Walking	63%	62%	74%	60%	55%	
20 Minutes Cycling	100%	100%	100%	100%	90%	
20 Minutes Driving	100%	100%	100%	100%	97%	
20 Minutes Walking	67%	84%	87%	84%	70%	

Impact of removing Whitfield and Hub Libraries:

- public transport access within 15 minutes drops from 83.6% to 76.8%.
- walking access within 15 minutes declines from 73.7% to 66.7%.
- East End Ward sees the largest impact, with 15-minute walking access falling from 70.1% to 42.8%.

This highlights the critical role of these libraries in maintaining accessibility, particularly for those without private transport.

Conclusion

Accessibility across LACD facilities is generally strong for those who drive but varies significantly for those reliant on walking, cycling, and public transport. School facilities play a vital role in maintaining access, and their removal disproportionately affects low-mobility populations.

To ensure equitable access, investment in alternative public facilities, active travel routes, and public transport improvements is recommended. Targeted interventions in areas with lower accessibility – such as North East (DC), West End, and The Ferry – could help bridge gaps and improve access to essential sport, fitness, and library services.

4.7 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Sport and Leisure KPIs

The analysis of sport and leisure venue KPIs provides key insights into financial sustainability, operational efficiency, and service delivery.

While some venues demonstrate strong financial performance, others face significant challenges in generating income relative to expenditure. The closure of Olympia has notably skewed some figures, and "School Facilities" is an outlier in this dataset due to its significantly different operating model. These insights have critical implications for the future sustainability and strategic planning of LACD and its relationship with the Council. The data is presented in **Table 4.11**, over.

Table 4.11: Sport and Leisure KPIs

Venue	Income as a % of Expenditure	Venue	Income per user	Venue	Deficit per user	Venue	Staff Costs per user
School Facilities	429.74%	Ancrum	£12.21	Olympia	£29.06	Ancrum	£17.61
Douglas	137.50%	WLC	£6.01	Ice Arena	£13.59	Olympia	£17.48
Harris	109.41%	Ice Arena	£4.86	Ancrum	£12.59	WLC	£8.37
Grove	99.69%	Lochee SC	£3.96	WLC	£9.54	Lochee SC	£4.68
St. Paul's	96.83%	Olympia	£3.93	Menzieshill SC	£8.10	Ice Arena	£3.65
DISC	76.99%	Douglas	£3.04	McTaggart	£3.48	Grove	£2.25
Lochee SC	59.10%	Menzieshill SC	£2.84	Lochee SC	£2.74	DISC	£2.16
RPC Dundee	51.23%	DISC	£2.78	RPC Dundee	£1.24	Menzieshill SC	£2.10
Ancrum	49.23%	Grove	£2.32	DISC	£0.83	St. Paul's	£2.05
WLC	38.66%	Harris	£2.10	St. Paul's	£0.07	Harris	£1.75
McTaggart	37.29%	McTaggart	£2.07	Grove	£0.01	RPC Dundee	£1.58
Ice Arena	26.35%	St. Paul's	£2.01	Harris	-£0.18	McTaggart	£1.56
Menzieshill SC	25.94%	RPC Dundee	£1.31	Douglas	-£0.83	Douglas	£1.40
Olympia	11.90%	School Facilities	£1.16	School Facilities	-£0.89	School Facilities	£0.16

Financial performance (income as a proportion of expenditure)

- Douglas (137.5%) and Harris (109.41%) generate income exceeding their expenditure, indicating strong financial sustainability.
- Grove (99.69%), St. Paul's (96.83%), and DISC (76.99%) are close to financial self-sufficiency but may require additional efficiencies or revenue enhancement.
- Venues like Regional Performance Centre Dundee (51.23%) and Lochee SC (59.10%) operate with a significant funding gap, suggesting a need for revenue diversification or cost control.
- Olympia (11.90%) shows extremely low income generation, largely due to its closure, making year-on-year comparisons unreliable.

Income per user

- Ancrum (£12.21) has the highest income per user, suggesting strong revenue streams through its specialist provision. However, this has to be balanced against their relatively low level of usage and very high costs.
- WLC (£6.01) and Ice Arena (£4.86) perform moderately well, reinforcing their value as revenue-generating facilities.
- Venues like Lochee SC (£3.96), Douglas (£3.04), and DISC (£2.78) have lower income per user, indicating affordability but potential revenue improvement areas.
- Regional Performance Centre Dundee (£1.31) has the lowest income per user, highlighting underutilisation and an operating/ pricing model that does not align with operational costs.

Deficit per user

- Olympia (£29.06), Ice Arena (£13.59), and Ancrum (£12.59) show the highest deficits per user, with Olympia's figures heavily impacted by its closure.
- Menzieshill SC (£8.10) also records a high deficit, but this figure may be influenced by property cost allocations.
- conversely, Douglas (-£0.83) and Harris (-£0.18) operate with a small or no deficit, reinforcing their financial viability.
- Grove (£0.01) and St. Paul's (£0.07) have near break-even figures, positioning them as more cost-efficient operations.

Staff costs per user

- Ancrum (£17.61) and Olympia (£17.48) report the highest staff costs per user, suggesting a higher resource intensity.
- WLC (£8.37) and Lochee SC (£4.68) have moderate staffing costs, aligning with their income per user figures.

- venues like Regional Performance Centre Dundee (£1.58), McTaggart (£1.56), and Douglas (£1.40) operate with significantly lower staff costs per user, reflecting leaner operational models or venue specific staffing requirements.

Implications for LACD and the Council

- high-performing venues such as Douglas and Harris should be leveraged as examples of models for operational efficiency.
- venues with lower financial performance (for example, Regional Performance Centre Dundee, Lochee SC, Menzieshill SC) require intervention to improve sustainability through cost control, additional income generation, pricing strategies, or service diversification.
- the impact of Olympia's closure on previous financial performance must be considered. The remaining estate did not have the capacity to accommodate Olympia users and therefore the previous closure meant total loss of income and a larger financial impact.
- venues with lower revenue per user should explore pricing adjustments or new programming to enhance financial performance.
- investment in cost-efficient venues such as Douglas and Harris can maximise service accessibility while maintaining financial viability.
- staff costs per user vary significantly across venues, suggesting the potential for workforce optimisation to align resource allocation with usage patterns.
- facilities with high deficit per user should undergo operational reviews to assess potential cost-saving measures without compromising service quality.
- a targeted approach to improving underperforming venues will help reduce reliance on council subsidies while maintaining community access.

Conclusion

The KPI analysis highlights a diverse financial and operational landscape across LACD's sport and leisure venues. While some venues demonstrate strong performance, others operate with significant financial challenges. Improving cost recovery, optimising staffing models, and exploring new revenue opportunities will be crucial in ensuring long-term sustainability. Strategic decisions should focus on enhancing financially viable venues, addressing operational inefficiencies, and making data-driven investments to ensure that leisure services remain accessible and financially sustainable for the City of Dundee.

Library KPIs

The analysis of KPIs for library venues in Dundee highlights significant variations in financial performance, staff costs, and user engagement. Understanding these disparities is critical for LACD and the Council to inform strategic decisions on service sustainability, resource allocation, and operational efficiency.

Table 4.12: Library KPIs

Venue	Deficit per user	Venue	Staff Costs per user	Venue	Users per Opening Hours
Arthurstone	£14.12	Whitfield	£11.16	Central	142
Whitfield	£11.92	Arthurstone	£8.51	Douglas	58
Coldside	£10.11	Kirkton	£8.43	Broughty Ferry	30
Kirkton	£9.33	Coldside	£5.47	Blackness	22
Ardler	£9.15	Ardler	£5.43	Menzieshill	13
Charleston	£8.70	Charleston	£5.01	Lochee	11
Fintry	£7.36	Lochee	£4.78	Coldside	10
Central	£6.56	Central	£4.55	Ardler	7
Hub	£6.31	Fintry	£4.37	Hub	7
Lochee	£6.22	Menzieshill	£3.85	Charleston	6
Menzieshill	£4.17	Hub	£3.33	Fintry	6
Blackness	£3.03	Blackness	£1.79	Arthurstone	5
Broughty Ferry	£2.10	Broughty Ferry	£1.48	Kirkton	5
Douglas	£0.38	Douglas	£0.33	Whitfield	5

Financial performance: deficit per user

- the highest deficit per user is recorded at Arthurstone (£14.12), Whitfield (£11.92), and Coldside (£10.11), indicating these libraries are operating at a substantial financial deficit.
- the lowest deficits are seen at Douglas (£0.38) and Broughty Ferry (£2.10), suggesting better financial viability relative to levels of usage.
- the variance in financial performance suggests that some libraries may require restructuring or alternative delivery models to improve cost-effectiveness.

Staff costs per user

- Whitfield (£11.16) and Arthurstone (£8.51) have the highest staff costs per user, potentially due to low footfall relative to staffing levels.
- Douglas (£0.33) and Broughty Ferry (£1.48) have the lowest staff costs per user, indicating better alignment between staffing and usage.
- libraries with high staff costs per user may need efficiency reviews, including staffing adjustments or service model changes to enhance cost-effectiveness.

Usage: users per opening hour

- Central Library (142 users per hour) dominates usage, reinforcing its role as the primary library service hub.
- Douglas (58 users per hour) and Broughty Ferry (30 users per hour) also show strong usage levels, highlighting their importance within their communities.
- libraries such as Arthurstone, Kirkton, and Whitfield (five users per hour each) have significantly lower footfall, raising questions about their long-term viability and the need for service model adaptations.

Implications for LACD and the Council

- the significant variations in deficit per user indicate that some libraries may require targeted interventions or alternative delivery models to reduce operational costs or increase user engagement.
- some (Coldside, Blackness) have bucked the trend and increased substantially their visitor numbers, while others (Arthurstone) have gone from one of the highest to lowest performing post-COVID. These disparities would benefit from additional research to better understand the causes that could account for this
- high-cost, low-usage libraries (for example, Whitfield, Arthurstone) may also need to consider alternative service delivery models, such as part-time hours, community partnerships, or digital service expansion.
- libraries with consistently low users per hour may benefit from resource reallocation to higher-traffic locations or central hubs.
- investing in high-performing libraries like Central, Douglas, and Broughty Ferry could enhance overall service efficiency while maintaining accessibility.
- exploring hybrid models that combine physical and digital services could improve accessibility while managing costs.
- community outreach and targeted engagement strategies should be considered to boost usage at underperforming locations.

- partnership opportunities, such as co-locating libraries with other community services, may improve financial sustainability while maintaining service provision.

Conclusion

The KPI analysis highlights key challenges in financial sustainability, efficiency, and service accessibility within Dundee's library network. While some libraries perform well, others operate at significant cost with low usage. LACD and the Council must consider strategic interventions, including efficiency improvements, alternative service delivery models, and targeted investment to ensure long-term viability and equitable access to library services - informed by more detailed research to better understand the disparities in performance between libraries post-COVID.

Cultural Services KPIs

The analysis of KPIs for cultural venues in Dundee is limited due to the variability and quality of the data available. However, from what information that was available we have collated the following indicators.

Table 4.13: Cultural KPIs

Venue	Income as a % of Expenditure	Income per user	Deficit per user	Staff Costs per user
Caird Hall	42%	£2.72	£5.26	£4.92
Mills Observatory	23%	£1.64	£5.04	£2.06
McManus	7%	£1.48	£19.14	£14.23
Broughty Castle	26%	£0.21	£0.65	N/A

Implications for LACD and the Council

- The quality and quantity of data makes it hard to have meaningful comparisons to draw trends and conclusions from. A focus on ensuring data is collected for all cultural venues would allow more meaningful analysis in the future.
- The lack of income generating opportunities impact the KPI's and mean that many of the indicators perform poorly when compared to other service areas.

4.8 Overall conclusions

LACD is emerging from a difficult post-COVID five-year period where it has shared the national characteristics of increased operational costs, reduced income, variable levels of participation and usage, and a consequent increasing financial reliance on DCC at a time of difficulty for public

services generally. This combination of circumstances, has placed additional stress on the relationship between LACD and DCC and, consequently, has revealed some stress-lines in current practice and communications.

On the positive side, the services still retain reasonable (and in some areas excellent) levels of usage and generally retain a high level of customer/user satisfaction. However, there is a need for more efficiency across the organisation and, arguably more importantly, an acknowledgement that some re-focusing of operational practice and skillsets is required to make the service provision more effective and future-facing.

Some of this will be achieved by staff re-training and/or redeployment, some through investing to grow income, and some through introducing new working practices both frontline and in terms of operational support. A more developmental ethos needs to be introduced and supported in some working areas to maximise and grow income streams and, primarily, to improve the quality of service to users. Later, we will suggest that these changes be reframed by introducing a different philosophical framework for the trust's activities, which is given material form in a renegotiated SLA between DCC and LACD, and an improved system of monitoring and reporting against agreed KPIs.

5 Governance

5.1 Management and governance structures

LACD is established as an independent charitable body and is a SCIO. The structure of the SCIO consists of:

- the Members who have the right to attend members' meetings (including any annual members' meeting) and have important powers under the constitution; in particular, the members appoint people to serve on the Board and take decisions on changes to the constitution itself. DCC is the sole member.
- the Board holds regular meetings and generally controls the activities of the SCIO and is responsible for monitoring and controlling the financial position of the SCIO. The people serving on the Board are referred to as Charity Trustees.

The Board consists of 13 trustees, of which three are elected members appointed by DCC. There are also two executives on the board – the Director of Leisure & Culture and Executive Director of Corporate Services. The remaining trustees are all independent, including the Chair.

The Director of Leisure and Culture is supported by a management team responsible for:

- Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity.
- Culture and Libraries.
- Corporate Services.

Our consultation identified that previous changes at senior management levels within LACD has contributed to the challenging period for the organisation, not least as they coincided with the pandemic. However, recent appointments in culture and in sport and leisure have been well received and appear to be making good progress in service development and improvement.

Similarly consultees also noted that recent board appointments had also helped to strengthen the range of experience and expertise available to the organisation.

However, the consultation also identified concerns with leadership, management, and the culture of accountability and suggested room for improvement in communication, performance monitoring and financial planning.

5.2 Performance against the service agreement

Critical review of the Services Agreement

As part of the broader review of Dundee's leisure, culture, and library services, this section evaluates the Services Agreement between DCC and LACD. This agreement establishes the framework for delivering sports, leisure, cultural, and library services on behalf of the Council, ensuring residents have access to high-quality public services that promote community wellbeing, inclusivity, and lifelong learning. As such, it is a key mechanism in the organisation's governance.

This review assesses the agreement's effectiveness, identifies key issues, and provides recommendations for improvement. The analysis is structured around contractual obligations, financial sustainability, governance, performance measurement, and alignment with local and national policy objectives. Areas of focus include outcome measurement, financial resilience, governance, and service flexibility.

The Services Agreement between DCC and LACD is a key document that governs the provision of sports, leisure, cultural, and library services across the city. Given the evolving landscape of public service delivery, financial pressures, and changing community needs, it is essential to critically assess how well this agreement facilitates effective, sustainable, and outcome-driven services.

This section evaluates the agreement's alignment with public sector priorities, financial sustainability, governance mechanisms, performance measurement, and service flexibility. The aim is to identify key strengths and areas for improvement to ensure the agreement continues to support high-quality service provision while adapting to future challenges.

Alignment with public sector priorities

The Services Agreement does not sufficiently align with Scotland's broader public sector reform principles, which prioritise:

- prevention - reducing long-term inequalities through early intervention.
- partnership working - collaboration between public, private, and third-sector bodies.
- outcome-based performance - ensuring measurable improvements in health, wellbeing, and social participation.

DCC's Council Plan focuses on reducing poverty and inequality while improving community wellbeing. However, the Services Agreement lacks clarity on how LACD will contribute to goals around:

- health and sport: the Scottish Government promotes increased physical activity as a preventive health measure, yet the agreement lacks defined outcome targets related to participation growth and impact.
- culture and libraries: Scotland's Culture Strategy emphasises inclusive access to cultural services, but the agreement does not track how LACD services improve participation among disadvantaged communities.

Financial sustainability and funding stability

The Services Agreement relies heavily on DCC funding, creating long-term financial vulnerability for LACD. There is no contingency plan to protect services in the event of budget cuts or economic downturns. Alternative financial models, including public-private partnerships, targeted grant funding, and structured revenue reinvestment, could strengthen LACD's financial position. Performance-based funding, where a portion of income is linked to strategic outcomes, could incentivise innovation and efficiency. Benchmarking against similar agreements in Scotland suggests that multi-year funding commitments improve financial sustainability.

Performance measurement and outcome focus

The Services Agreement primarily measures outputs (for example, attendance, revenue) rather than outcomes (for example, health improvements, literacy gains, social cohesion). Best practice in public service agreements includes measurable KPIs such as:

- increased physical activity levels among disadvantaged groups.
- improvements in mental health and wellbeing through leisure participation.
- higher library engagement rates among children and digitally excluded adults.

Without a structured outcome-based performance framework, assessing LACD's impact is difficult.

Governance and accountability mechanisms

The Services Agreement provides significant oversight to DCC, but decision-making authority is unclear, particularly regarding service changes. LACD is required to provide quarterly performance reports, yet there is no identified formal process for adjusting services based on findings.

The relationship between LACD's Board and DCC requires clearer governance protocols to align strategic priorities. Best practice governance models include a joint oversight board to ensure financial and strategic alignment.

Service flexibility and adaptability

Points to note on service flexibility and adaptability include that:

- the agreement lacks built-in flexibility, limiting LACD's ability to adapt services dynamically based on emerging community needs.
- there is no provision for strategic service reviews to adjust priorities based on social, economic, or technological changes.
- five-year service reviews would allow for greater responsiveness to evolving policy priorities.

Areas for improvement

Suggestions on areas for improvement to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the Services Agreement between DCC and LACD are captured in the section on Strategic Realignment (**Chapter 6**).

However, underpinning this we believe there is an opportunity to change the nature of the conversation between DCC and LACD, and LACD and Dundee citizens, and that this will in turn inform the content of the Services Agreement. This kind of civic framing could strengthen both the relationship between Dundee's citizens and their cultural infrastructure and give real meaning to public service in the 21st century.

Outlined below is an illustration of an approach to re-framing of the Services Agreement between DCC and LACD around a "**Citizenship as Membership**" principle. It should be noted that this is an idea only at this stage and would require further development and refinement.

Civic Membership for Life

All citizens of Dundee, from birth to death, are automatically members of Leisure and Culture Dundee – no signup, no barriers – with a view to:

- Embedding culture and leisure as a civic right, not a consumer choice.
- Making public services feel personal, social, and lifelong.
- Encouraging early and sustained engagement (from birth, rather than waiting until later life).
- Strengthening LACD's legitimacy and visibility as a core civic institution, not a peripheral contractor.

Their membership would entitle them to specific services, summarised as:

- **Free core access** to public cultural services: libraries, archives, exhibitions, parks, observatories, and digital collections.
- **Tiered or discounted access** to enhanced services (e.g. premium classes, ticketed events, facility hire).
- **Participation rights** in civic cultural planning, feedback, and community-led programming.

Reframed Services Agreement – Approach

1. Shift from "Service Provider" to "Civic Partner"

Reword the agreement so that LACD is not just a contractor delivering services on behalf of the Council, but the steward of lifelong cultural and leisure participation for every citizen. For example, *"LACD is entrusted with providing and evolving a lifelong cultural, learning, and well-being pathway for all citizens of Dundee, in accordance with the principle of Civic Membership for Life."*

2. Embed "Universal Membership" in the Service Framework

A clear statement in the agreement would define:

- **automatic membership** – all Dundee citizens are entitled to be members from birth, no action required.
- **membership rights** – clear definition of what is included (core access, digital access, civic engagement rights).
- **Membership responsibilities** – encouragement of stewardship, participation, and feedback.

3. Define Service Categories Around the Membership Model

Under an approach such as this, there could be a balance to strike between offering some free access, particularly for specific target groups, while also using universal membership to drive up income through paid for services, again focussing particularly on those with the ability to pay. This is, of course, not without risk, as offering some services free will lower income at least initially, albeit with the expectation of future growth. What is more important here is the principle of universal membership. Building ownership of and commitment to these services as a core part of civic life.

4. Align Funding and Reporting to Membership Outcomes

Rather than just reporting on service "units" (for example, number of loans, visits, tickets), LACD could be tasked with reporting on:

- membership engagement rates (how many citizens are actively using services each year).
- lifelong engagement journeys (tracking retention and participation over life stages: childhood, young adult, midlife, later life).
- impact metrics (health, well-being, social connection, creative skill acquisition).

5. Reposition LACD in Public Communications

DCC and LACD communications would shift away from marketing services as "optional extras" toward reinforcing the idea of entitlement and belonging.

6. Legal and Governance Implications

The Services Agreement would also formalise:

- membership rights as part of the Service Specification.
- equal access safeguards for all citizens regardless of demographic or location.
- a commitment to regularly review and expand the scope of civic membership as new services, spaces, or digital platforms emerge.

This is illustrative only, but provides an example of how LACD's services might be reframed within a citizen-based philosophy and approach. This could then be reflected in the process of strategic realignment described in the following section.

6 Strategic Realignment

6.1 Introduction

Before turning to more operational measures that can drive greater efficiency, increase income and/ or improve outcomes, there are some more strategic changes that should be considered. Here we set out some of the issues and opportunities for strategic change that can help direct and focus the work for LACD.

6.2 Reasserting the role of leisure and culture in Dundee

Throughout the consultation there was a clear view that LACD is starting to emerge from a challenging period, and credit is due to the organisation for reaching this point. The current review, and the fact that the organisation may be approaching a more stable position, creates the opportunity to consider the strategic direction and priorities for its future.

The first step here is to reassert the role that culture and leisure play in the future of the city - a refreshed vision for Dundee, and for LACD. These services have long played a central role in Dundee's regeneration and reinvention, but as the organisation moves into a new phase, it is worth reassessing their strategic role in the current, changed environment.

This should be led by DCC and should seek to assert clearly the contribution that leisure and culture can make to key city priorities such as poverty and deprivation and health and wellbeing, but also as a driver of civic pride and quality of life. In so doing it can redefine the roles of leisure and culture in a modern city (possibly using the citizen centred approach set out earlier), and within this there is a specific opportunity to reimagine the libraries service.

Libraries remain a trusted and safe civic space and are at the very forefront of community engagement. However, changes in user behaviour (as outlined earlier) suggest that their role is becoming less clear. Dundee was an early pioneer in the use of libraries in supporting digital literacy and inclusion and access to digital services but has arguably not reinvented the service for a time of ubiquitous digital access. This is a key strategic opportunity both to reinvent the service and to create again a sense of wider vision for leisure and culture services.

As part of this wide strategic visioning work, DCC then has the opportunity to set out more clearly its expectations of LACD in terms of the services that will be provided, but more importantly the outcomes that should be achieved. This can then feed into a revised Services Agreement which can strengthen the governance and accountability between DCC and LACD.

6.3 Strengthening the Services Agreement

While the current Services Agreement provides a structured framework for delivering leisure, sports, culture, and library services in Dundee, it lacks a strong focus on outcomes, financial resilience, and adaptability.

The following recommendations are designed to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the Services Agreement between DCC and LACD. They focus on enhancing performance measurement, financial resilience, governance, service flexibility, and public engagement to ensure that LACD continues to deliver high-quality services aligned with public sector priorities and community needs and could, for example, be framed within the **Citizenship as Membership** principle, outlined above.

Strengthen outcome-based performance framework

- shift performance measurement from outputs to outcomes, with KPIs focused on:
 - community health improvements via increased sports participation.
 - literacy, educational and digital inclusion outcomes through library engagement.
 - cultural participation growth among low-income households.
- introduce annual impact assessments incorporating data on user demographics, participation trends, health benefits, and educational outcomes.

Improve financial stability and revenue generation

- while it would be desirable to establish a long-term funding commitment with DCC through multi-year agreements, this is made difficult by annual funding settlements from the Scottish Government to local authorities.
- implement indexed funding mechanisms to adjust financial support based on inflation or service demand growth.
- set clear expectations and, where appropriate, targets for cost management (for example, in relation to property cost and energy usage).
- develop a commercial income strategy, allowing LACD to reinvest surplus revenue.

- incentivise the attraction of funding - development and capital - from external sources currently not available to DCC.

Strengthen governance and strategic oversight

- conduct mid-year service reviews to ensure responsiveness to community needs.
- provide LACD with sufficient operational autonomy (as now), while maintaining Council oversight on key strategic decisions.

Enhance service flexibility and periodic reviews

- embed a five-year service review cycle to assess effectiveness and responsiveness to policy changes.
- encourage LACD to pilot innovative service models, such as AI-driven customer engagement.

Enhance public transparency and community engagement

- publish an annual impact report detailing:
 - participation rates in sports, cultural, and library activities.
 - improvements in literacy and digital skills.
 - the role of leisure services in enhancing physical and mental health.
- establish community advisory panels to ensure service development reflects user needs.

While the current Services Agreement provides a structured framework for delivering leisure, sports, culture, and library services in Dundee, it lacks a strong focus on outcomes, financial resilience, and adaptability.

Implementing the recommended improvements will enhance operational efficiency, strengthen accountability, and ensure the long-term sustainability of services. A revised approach - aligned with DCC's strategic priorities and Scotland's public sector objectives - will ensure that LACD services continue to contribute meaningfully to community wellbeing, economic sustainability, and cultural enrichment.

7 Operational Improvements

7.1 Options for consideration

This chapter considers specific approaches across the service areas to address current inefficiencies of operation, opportunities for development and investment, income stream development, and changes in management systems and policy.

These can be combined in various permutations depending on the principal objectives of DCC and LACD. For example, if the objective was primarily around financial savings, then staffing reduction would be one of the primary areas for consideration; if social objectives are of greater importance, then the emphasis would be on redeploying existing budget in re-skilling, improved policy alignment, and greater focus of activities.

These options are on a spectrum that ranges from what might be perceived as radical cuts to more focussed (and equally radical) intervention and development. LACD has demonstrated in the last six months how some areas of its operation can be turned around positively, and relatively quickly, with the latter approach. Further, although we have not applied it, we are aware that any future decisions will be taken through a political as well as operational prism and that there will be areas of sensitivity that will come into consideration when considering the appropriate and most effective permutation to proceed with.

The following sections, therefore, set out the areas we believe can be achieved. Further consideration will be required around which of these it is most practical to deliver, and many would require further option appraisal and feasibility work.

It is also worth noting that some of these measures cut across service areas (for example, workforce realignment) while others are more specific (individual venue plans). In identifying these we have also assumed that planned rationalisation (for example, of libraries) will be considered as part of the DCC's wider asset rationalisation plans and we have not sought to add to these other than the specific opportunities identified below.

Finally, we are conscious that work is already underway within LACD on multiple fronts to identify and implement improvements and many of these should be given time to demonstrate their potential. This includes, for example, improvements to the operation of Caird Hall and the recent revisions to the membership structures for health and fitness.

7.2 Efficiency measures

7.2.1 Option 1: Workforce realignment

LACD is currently operating within a highly constrained financial environment, driven by rising operational costs, declining income in some service areas, and increasing financial dependency on DCC. In this context, there is an opportunity for LACD to realign its workforce to reflect its revised operational focus, reduce duplication, renew or replace skillsets with those more relevant to current and future service provision and operation, and deliver greater efficiencies across its portfolio of services. This is not simply a cost-reduction initiative, but a strategic intervention to safeguard the long-term sustainability and service delivery capacity of LACD.

The current establishment totals **354.6 full-time equivalents (FTE)** across all service areas (causal staff are in addition). One option for consideration involves a realignment that results in an overall headcount reduction equivalent to **88.54 FTE**. These reductions have been informed by detailed analysis, participation and usage trends, performance benchmarking, and organisational design considerations. The associated savings are estimated to be **£2.95 million**, rising to **£3.54 million** when including on-costs. These savings would help bridge the existing financial gap and reconfigure LACD into a more agile and efficient organisation.

Key findings from workforce analysis

Service area overstaffing and declining demand

- overstaffing is evident in areas such as performance sport (e.g. RPC), corporate services (e.g. creative services), and administrative support functions.
- visitor numbers to libraries have declined by 20%-40% across many venues post-pandemic, and usage remains below historic levels. This has created misalignment between service demand and current staffing levels.
- cultural and heritage venues such as McManus have experienced reductions in footfall, yet staffing levels remain unchanged.

Disproportionate staffing in specific functions

- Corporate Services functions (Finance, HR, Marketing, and Creative Services) have higher-than-required staffing given the scale of the organisation (based on the experience of the team from other culture and leisure services organisations).
- there are clear opportunities to automate or digitise back-office processes and reduce the scale of centralised functions.

- alternative delivery models (for example, transferring financial/HR services to the Council or outsourcing creative services) may yield substantial efficiencies.

Limited public engagement at certain venues

- facilities such as the Ancrum Outdoor Centre operate at significant deficits and deliver low levels of community access. Several support roles at this centre have been proposed for removal.
- the Regional Performance Centre, was established for use by clubs and squads, and not for the wider public and posts linked to supervisory structures are considered for reduction.

Digital transformation and Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

- the potential for using automation and AI across finance, marketing, customer services, and administration supports a leaner staffing model.
- AI-based content generation, customer service chatbots, and automated financial reporting can significantly reduce the need for clerical, creative and administrative posts.

Workforce reduction strategy

The proposed FTE reductions focus on ensuring that staffing levels are aligned with current and projected levels of activity, while maintaining compliance with health and safety standards and protecting frontline service delivery and income generation in high-performing and high-demand areas:

- **Corporate Services:** reduction in Finance Officers, Clerical Assistants, Employee Support roles, and creative services roles where automation or outsourcing is viable.
- **Libraries:** reduction of FTE in locations with reduced visitor numbers and consolidation into more efficient library hubs (for example, East End Campus). Central Library management and assistant roles have also been identified for streamlining.
- **Cultural Venues:** Visitor Assistants and Curatorial roles at McManus are subject to reductions based on a 27% decline in visitor numbers.
- **Performance Sport:** complete removal of this function is proposed, with responsibility returned to national agencies, governing bodies, and clubs.
- **Outdoor and Low-Use Facilities:** roles at Ancrum Outdoor Centre and Camperdown Wildlife Centre are proposed for removal or transfer in light of operational deficits and reduced strategic alignment.
- **Golf Facilities:** Proposed changes are consistent with LACD/DCC plans due to the closure of Caird Park Golf Course earlier this year.
- **Supervisory Roles:** reductions are proposed in supervisory posts at the Regional Performance Centre and other venues where leadership layers can be streamlined.

Implementation and mitigation considerations:

There are some areas of under-performance for which there will be specific mitigating circumstances, including:

- **Health and Safety:** staffing reductions should be aligned with minimum safe operating models, particularly at pool and fitness venues.
- **Service Continuity:** phased implementation will support business continuity and avoid disruption to public services.
- **Staff Engagement and Redeployment:** a comprehensive engagement/consultation plan with affected staff and unions will be implemented, along with redeployment options within LACD or the Council.
- **Digital Infrastructure Investment:** investments in technology and AI solutions will be required to underpin service transformation and efficiency gains.
- **Curbing Development/Income Growth Opportunities:** the opportunity to invest to develop (such as the Caird Hall) or recover lost footfall (McManus).

Conclusion

The proposed workforce realignment is a strategic response to the financial pressures and participation trends facing LACD and should be viewed as part of a wider programme of organisational transformation. The potential reduction of 88.54 FTE, including alignment with the closure of Caird Park Golf Course, provides a sustainable model to improve operational effectiveness, reduce costs, and future-proof the organisation. It will enable LACD to prioritise resources on high-demand, high-impact services and create a more efficient, adaptable structure aligned with its core mission and financial limitations.

However, it is important to note that these top-level figures are indicative rather than definitive at this stage, and care will be required to ensure that any realignment does not prevent genuine areas for service and income growth and improvement that have been hindered by past practice or under-investment to be reduced if those areas can be turned around if either practice or investment were addressed.

It is also important to note that there will be legitimate HR and legal issues to consider alongside valid sensitivities and concerns relating to any options which include workforce reduction measures. For all of these reasons, this proposal would need further testing and development, but we do believe that there is a genuine opportunity to develop a more sustainable operating model for the services.

7.2.2 Staffing resource alignment

As part of the review, we have developed a comprehensive data model which pulls together information on staffing rotas, usage information, financial performance, and facility location from all areas of the service. In terms of staffing resource alignment, we have been able to look at an analysis of the sport and leisure team staffing deployment against customer usage levels to seek potential areas that could drive potential efficiencies.

We have not been able to do this for libraries and cultural services due to either a lack of data or data provided not being sufficient to allow the analysis.

From the data model, we have undertaken a detailed analysis of customer usage and staffing allocations to look for opportunities for further efficiency. The output of this is a proposed change of levels of staffing across The Olympia, Lochee Swimming and Leisure Centre and Dundee International Sports Centre. The combined effect of these suggestions could bring an annual saving of up to £93,000 per annum, although these would need to be amended should the decision be made to proceed with some or all of the workforce realignment plans above.

The main proposed changes are:

- reduction in lifeguarding numbers at end of day due to low customer numbers
- closure of DISC to the public up to 2pm to reflect the priority use of the facilities by Morgan Academy

The details of these savings are included in the appendices.

7.3 Investment opportunities

7.3.1 Option 2: Douglas Sport Centre redevelopment

Overview

Douglas Sports Centre is a well-established and strategically located community asset serving the east of Dundee. With significant latent demand for health and fitness services (2,084 potential members within a 15-minute drive) and an additional revenue potential of £387,322 per annum, there is a strong case for expanding the existing fitness provision. This investment would enhance financial sustainability, increase participation in physical activity, and support population growth in the North East of the city.

Financial and strategic rationale

- the centre currently operates at a £106k annual surplus (2023-2024), recovering well from the impacts of Covid as shown in Table 4.13, whilst operating at various levels of loss over the last few years, the current growth trend makes financially viable to expand operations.
- the existing small gym and studio space limit participation, contributing to Dundee's lower-than-average fitness penetration rate compared to other sport and leisure trusts.
- the facility is ideally placed to serve the growing population in the North East of Dundee, ensuring long-term demand.
- expanding fitness provision aligns with DCC's health and wellbeing priorities, promoting increased physical activity and improved public health outcomes.

Table 4.13

Douglas Sports Centre	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Income	£309,282	£57,448	£204,562	£321,039	£390,892
Expenditure	-£207,580	-£173,683	-£212,968	-£317,856	-£284,288
Net	£101,702	-£116,235	-£8,406	£3,183	£106,604

Development options

- Sportshall Conversion - a cost-effective approach repurposing the existing four-court sportshall into a large-scale gym and fitness studio space:
 - benefits: lower capital investment, quicker implementation.
 - indicative investment: estimated at £2-£2.5 million, offering a payback period of approximately seven years.
 - mitigation: existing sportshall users could be relocated to the new East End Campus School or DISC, maintaining access to indoor sports provision.
- New build extension - constructing an extension to the existing building to accommodate a dedicated large-scale fitness space:
 - benefits: retains the sportshall while expanding fitness capacity.
 - challenges: higher capital investment and longer project timeline.

Impact and benefits

- increases financial resilience for LACD by diversifying income streams.
- addresses latent demand, improving Dundee's fitness penetration rate and supporting community health objectives.

- enhances accessibility to modern, high-quality fitness facilities for residents in the East and North East of the city.
- future-proofs Douglas Sports Centre, ensuring it remains a key hub for health and wellbeing in Dundee.

Conclusion

Investing in expanded health and fitness facilities at Douglas Sports Centre presents a clear financial and strategic opportunity. The preferred route – either through sportshall conversion or a new build extension – should be assessed based on capital costs and long-term return on investment. With growing demand, strategic location, and strong revenue potential, this development would significantly benefit LACD, DCC, and the wider community.

7.3.2 Option 3: Regional Performance Centre

Overview

The Regional Performance Centre is a key sporting facility in Dundee, primarily serving clubs and performance squads. However, it is underutilised by the wider local community and operates at a significant annual deficit of £550k (2023-2024), which is exceptionally poor for a dryside facility. There is latent demand for health and fitness services within a 15-minute drive of the venue, estimated at 2,627 potential members, representing a potential additional income of £488,397 per annum. Developing a large-scale fitness facility would help broaden community engagement, improve financial sustainability, and enhance overall usage.

Financial and strategic rationale

- financial performance: the venue's £550k annual deficit highlights the need for income diversification and improved financial performance.
- latent demand: with 2,627 potential members in the area, a well-designed fitness facility could generate £488k per annum, helping significantly reduce the operating deficit.
- underutilised space: the first floor of the facility consists of large circulation areas, meeting rooms, and offices that contribute little to revenue generation and could be repurposed into a large-scale gym and fitness space.
- strategic location: the Regional Performance Centre is well-positioned to serve communities across central Dundee, filling a key gap in LACD's health and fitness provision.

Development options

- conversion of first-floor space – the most practical and cost-effective approach, repurposing underutilised circulation spaces, meeting rooms, and offices into a modern fitness facility:
 - benefits: utilises existing infrastructure, minimises construction costs, and ensures efficient use of space.
 - indicative investment: estimated at £2.5-£3 million, with a payback period of approximately eight years.
 - impact: expands the venue's user base beyond clubs and squads, increasing public participation and revenue generation.
- new build extension – a more capital-intensive approach, adding an entirely new fitness facility to the Regional Performance Centre:
 - benefits: retains existing space functionality while creating a purpose-built fitness hub.
 - challenges: higher capital investment, longer timeline, and planning considerations.

Impact and benefits

- reduces the operating deficit of £550k per annum, improving financial sustainability.
- increases accessibility to health and fitness for the wider community, expanding LACD's user base.
- strengthens the centre's role as a central hub for both elite and community-level sport.
- optimises existing space, repurposing areas that are currently underutilised.
- Supports DCC's health and wellbeing objectives, encouraging more active lifestyles.

Conclusion

Developing a large-scale health and fitness facility at the Regional Performance Centre presents a clear financial and strategic opportunity. The conversion of the first-floor space is the most viable and cost-effective solution, leveraging existing infrastructure while delivering significant financial and community benefits. With growing demand for fitness services, this investment would enhance LACD's offering, reduce reliance on subsidy, and create a more inclusive, financially sustainable facility.

7.3.3 Option 4: Menzieshill Community Hub

Overview

Menzieshill Sports Facilities, part of the Menzieshill Community Hub, is a well-positioned local asset serving the West of Dundee, including some of the city's most deprived areas. The venue currently features two four-court sports halls, which are underutilised, presenting a strong opportunity for redevelopment. This business case outlines the potential benefits of converting one of the sports halls into a large-scale health and fitness facility to meet latent demand of 2,632 potential members within a 15-minute drive and generate up to £489,265 in additional annual income.

Financial and strategic rationale

- the venue is well-located to serve communities across the West of Dundee, including those in high-priority areas for health and wellbeing interventions.
- existing fitness provision within the area is limited, and the overall fitness penetration rate in Dundee is lower than the national benchmark, highlighting a need for additional high-quality facilities.
- the facility has underutilised indoor sports capacity, with two full-sized sports halls, making it possible to repurpose one hall for fitness without significantly impacting existing users.
- expanding fitness provision aligns with DCC's health and wellbeing priorities, supporting increased physical activity and improved public health outcomes.

Development options

- conversion of a sportshall into a large-scale gym and studio space:
 - benefits: cost-effective, maximises existing space, provides a significant revenue stream.
 - indicative Investment: estimated at £2-£2.5 million, with a payback period of approximately 7 years.
 - mitigation strategy: existing sportshall users can be relocated to the second sports hall within the venue or to alternative sportshall facilities across the city, ensuring continued access to indoor sports provision.

Impact and benefits

- generates substantial additional revenue, improving the financial sustainability of Menzieshill Sports Facilities and reducing its reliance on subsidy support.
- addresses unmet demand for health and fitness services in the West of Dundee, particularly in communities with lower-than-average participation rates.

- provides high-quality fitness facilities, encouraging greater engagement in physical activity and contributing to improved community health outcomes.
- maximises the use of existing infrastructure, ensuring that the facility remains a key asset within the community hub while optimising financial performance.

Conclusion

Investing in expanded health and fitness facilities at Menzieshill Sports Facilities presents a clear financial and strategic opportunity. Converting one of the underutilised sports halls into a modern fitness centre offers a cost-effective solution with significant revenue potential, while still ensuring that sportshall users have access to alternative venues. With strong latent demand, a strategic location, and the potential for a significant financial return, this development would deliver long-term benefits for LACD, Dundee City Council, and the wider community.

Cumulative effect

Whilst the 3 sport & leisure development options above each make significant growth opportunities it should be noted that these would require sensitivity analysis if multiple projects were taken forward. The data model allows this profiling to happen and shows that if all 3 projects were to be undertaken a potential membership growth of 3,700 members would be achievable generating an additional £687,700 of income per annum.

7.3.4 Option 5: Caird Hall

Overview

The analysis discussed previously indicates that Caird Hall has been under performing in several respects. Attendances have been static or reducing over time and while there has been some modest income growth, cost have risen faster, increasing the annual deficit to its current position of circa £400K. A recent study into the venue attributes this to reactive programming, underperformance of the food and beverage offer and limited marketing.

However, it also concludes that there remains a viable opportunity for a mid-sized venue in the city and that with some relatively modest improvements the venue could remove its deficit within a five year period.

Although a private developer has now opened a multi-purpose mid-scale venue (circa 3,500 capacity) in Dundee, and this could potentially be seen as competition, the Caird Hall can still create a viable future based on a differentiated programme and offer.

Financial and strategic rationale

- the venue has a good catchment and population size (circa 550.000 within a 45-minute drivetime) compared with other cities/ towns that run similar scale venues
- while there are a number of entertainment facilities in Dundee City Region of varying capacities, Caird Hall is the premier venue currently in terms of capacity - Perth Concert Hall and Whitehall Theatre would be seen as competition in terms of content, but their size and layouts place them within the small-scale category of venues
- level of engagement to attend events across relevant activity types in line with national average suggesting potential for growth.
- improved programming can drive up attendances and income, contributing to longer term sustainability of the venue and of LACD.

Development options

- more proactive approach to promoters to attract a greater and more diverse range of shows and events.
- invest in improvements to the food and beverage offer to drive up income per attendee and improve customer experience.
- upgrade seating to improve customer experience.
- upgrade stage provision to increase appeal to touring acts.
- improve box office (in particular digital offer).
- initiate more aggressive marketing, including stronger use of digital and social media channels.
- encourage more community use in the quieter months and reinvest in the conferencing offer (linked to improved food and beverage offer).

Impact and benefits

- generates substantial additional revenue, improving the financial sustainability of Caird Hall and reducing its reliance on subsidy support.
- addresses demand for cultural events which is currently being met by venues outside the city.
- increases overall engagement with culture and increases the diversity of the city's cultural offer, potentially increasing its visitor appeal.
- maximises the use of existing infrastructure, ensuring that the facility remains a key civic asset while optimising financial performance.

7.4 Alternative delivery models

7.4.1 Option 6: Ancrum Outdoor Centre

Background

Ancrum Outdoor Centre has long played a crucial role in providing educational and community-based outdoor activities, enriching the lives of many individuals in the local community. However, the centre currently faces significant financial challenges. Operating deficits have grown steadily, rising from £266,945 in 2019-2020 to £451,337 in 2023-2024. These increasing deficits are driven mainly by rising staffing expenses, growing maintenance costs, and the continued provision of activities with limited participation. It is critical to address these issues promptly to ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of the centre.

Strategic refocus

To overcome these financial challenges, Ancrum Outdoor Centre could strategically refocus its resources on activities demonstrating high demand and financial viability. Activities such as Active Travel Initiatives, Archery, Hillwalking, Multi Activity Days, and Beginner Ski Lessons at the centre's Dry Ski Slope consistently attract large numbers of participants. Investing in these core activities will allow the centre to maintain strong community engagement and optimise income potential.

In contrast, several current activities do not deliver the required levels of participation or financial return. Equipment hire services, River Paddling, Sea Kayaking, Beginner Snowboarding, and certain Summer Mountain activities (including Climbing, Mountaineering, Scrambling, and various National Governing Body courses) have very limited or no participation. These services generate significant operational costs due to staffing requirements, inventory maintenance, and ongoing upkeep. It is, therefore, advisable to discontinue or significantly reduce these low-performing services, particularly the equipment hire service, given its high operational costs relative to its infrequent use.

Staffing and operational efficiency

In conjunction with rationalising activities, Ancrum Outdoor Centre should initiate a detailed staff review aimed explicitly at reducing staffing costs and ensuring optimal allocation of human resources. The review will align staffing levels more effectively with the streamlined scope of core activities, contributing significantly to achieving financial sustainability.

Revenue enhancement through pricing adjustments

Implementing strategic pricing adjustments, as proposed for 2025-2026, will also be vital to improving revenue streams. These adjustments align the centre's pricing structure with local

market standards and competitor rates. Specifically, increasing prices for high-demand services, such as Birthday Packages, Watersport Sets, and Skiing sessions, reflects market conditions and competitive benchmarks. Moderate price increases for essential, high-volume activities like Archery and Multi Activity Days will balance affordability with enhanced financial performance.

Anticipated benefits

The implementation of these strategic adjustments will deliver substantial benefits. Primarily, these measures will significantly reduce the financial deficit through targeted operational savings and improved revenue generation. By concentrating resources on core activities, the centre will enhance service quality and customer experience, leading to greater customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, realigning the staffing structure will ensure organisational efficiency and responsiveness to community needs, securing the centre's financial future.

Next steps

The strategic refocus will involve ceasing the equipment hire service, conducting a comprehensive staff review for cost reductions, and proactively communicating these changes to stakeholders. Communication efforts will clearly explain the rationale and expected positive outcomes, ensuring stakeholder engagement and support. Freed-up resources will be strategically redirected towards strengthening core activities, improving service quality, and enhancing overall customer satisfaction. Financial performance will be closely monitored and evaluated regularly, enabling informed decision-making and adjustments to sustain long-term community value and financial health.

7.4.2 Option 7: Camperdown Wildlife Centre

Context and current situation

Camperdown Wildlife Centre offers valuable leisure, educational, and conservation experiences, greatly appreciated by the community.

Nevertheless, it faces substantial financial challenges, with operational deficits increasing significantly, reaching £625,259 in 2023-2024. These deficits are primarily driven by escalating property maintenance costs, rising staffing expenses, and animal care costs, compounded by declining visitor numbers (falling from 85,233 in 2021-2022 to 65,570 in 2023-2024). Given the broader financial pressures confronting DCC and LACD, and the need to prioritise core statutory responsibilities, ongoing direct operation of the centre has become financially unsustainable.

Strategic alignment and considerations

While Camperdown Wildlife Centre provides significant community benefits through leisure, education, and conservation activities, these services are predominantly discretionary rather than statutory. Consequently, the facility does not closely align with the core responsibilities or highest-priority objectives outlined in Dundee's City Plan, making continued public funding increasingly difficult to justify in the current economic climate. However, the recent external assessment of Caird Hall has demonstrated how change in operation, marketing, and some limited initial investment can turn around a major facility significantly, so this remains one alternative for consideration.

Analysis of strategic options

Option 1: Redevelopment

External research commissioned to explore the detail of a redeveloped site and its capacity to significantly address the current annual shortfall. If such a scenario were possible, the redevelopment is likely to enable:

- retention of part of a distinctive part of the city's cultural heritage.
- in time, reduced pressure on LACD finances.

However, redevelopment also requires:

- a level of capital investment to improve the current site.
- a three to five year period of diminishing operational losses to transition to a cost-neutral position.

Option 2: Community Asset Transfer (CAT)

Transferring the Wildlife Centre to a community organisation could offer:

- a sustainable route for maintaining the centre without direct council subsidy.
- increased local engagement, empowerment, and volunteer involvement.

Key challenges associated with a CAT include:

- identifying and strengthening a community organisation with adequate capacity, which may require substantial training and mentorship in areas such as financial management, operational planning, fundraising, marketing, governance, and volunteer management.
- ensuring financial sustainability and effective long-term operational management.
- mitigating potential risks of organisational failure or financial distress that could revert liabilities back to the Council.

Option 3: Transfer to a Commercial Operator

Engaging a commercial operator presents a financially sustainable approach, potentially enabling:

- enhanced operational efficiency and professional management expertise.
- greater revenue generation through improved commercial strategies and visitor experiences.

Risks and considerations for commercial transfer include:

- potentially reduced public accountability and possible shifts away from current educational and conservation priorities.
- necessity to structure robust contractual obligations with clearly defined performance metrics for educational programming, conservation activities, accessibility, and community involvement, ensuring public benefit alongside profitability.

Option 4: Closure

Closure would deliver reductions in both operational liabilities and financial expenditure, resulting in:

- significant cost savings over a period of time.
- freed-up resources for essential statutory services and council priorities.

However, closure also presents critical risks and challenges, including:

- loss of a valued local attraction, with potential negative community and reputational impacts.
- costs associated with redundancy, animal relocation, and facility decommissioning.
- ongoing management of site liabilities post-closure.

Recommended strategic direction

Given the substantial financial pressures, ongoing direct operation by DCC is not a sustainable option. Therefore, the recommended strategic approach is to:

- initially explore a) commissioning a feasibility assessment of redevelopment, and b) the feasibility of a CAT, proactively engaging community organisations and providing necessary capacity-building support.
- simultaneously evaluate market interest and feasibility for transferring to a commercial operator as a robust contingency measure.

- proceed with transparency towards closure should neither transfer option prove viable, employing sensitive stakeholder management, clear and consistent communication, and ensuring reallocation of saved resources to core statutory obligations.

This approach balances community value with financial sustainability and effectively aligns Council resources with statutory obligations and strategic priorities.

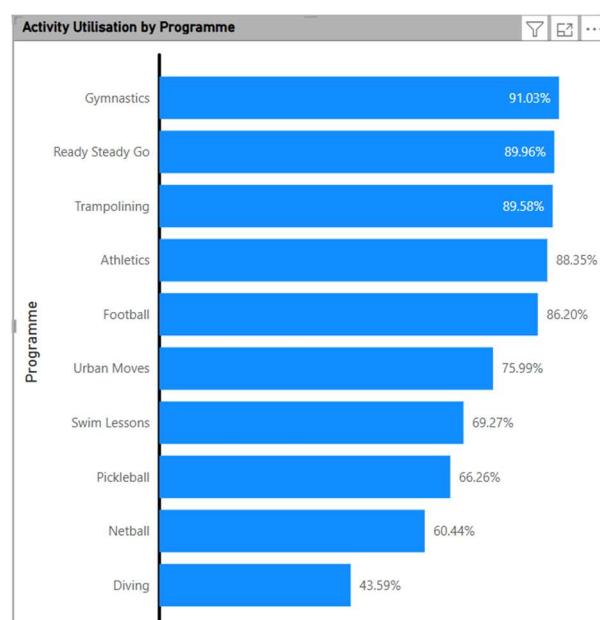
7.5 Commercialisation and pricing

7.5.1 Option 8: Commercialisation of sports classes

LACD operates on what is seen as a standard delivery model with a programming and pricing policy that seeks to keep prices low with a view to using this to increase inclusion and accessibility.

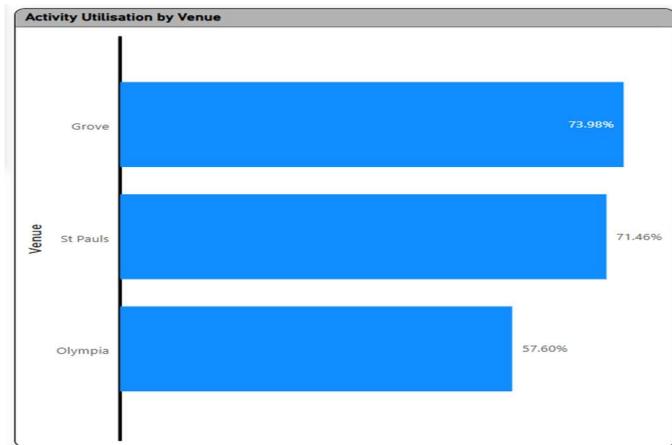
As shown in the figure below, while a wide range of sports classes are delivered across the sport and leisure estate, they are not particularly well utilised with an average occupancy of 54%. The exceptions to this are Gymnastics, Ready Steady Go and Trampolining that have 90% plus occupancy levels.

The following approach requires a more commercialised approach and adjustment of pricing policy and ratios accordingly. Profits could then be used on the delivery of a more targeted intervention programmes to reach priority target groups. As an example of the opportunity, we have profiled how a more commercial approach using the Learn to Swim programme.

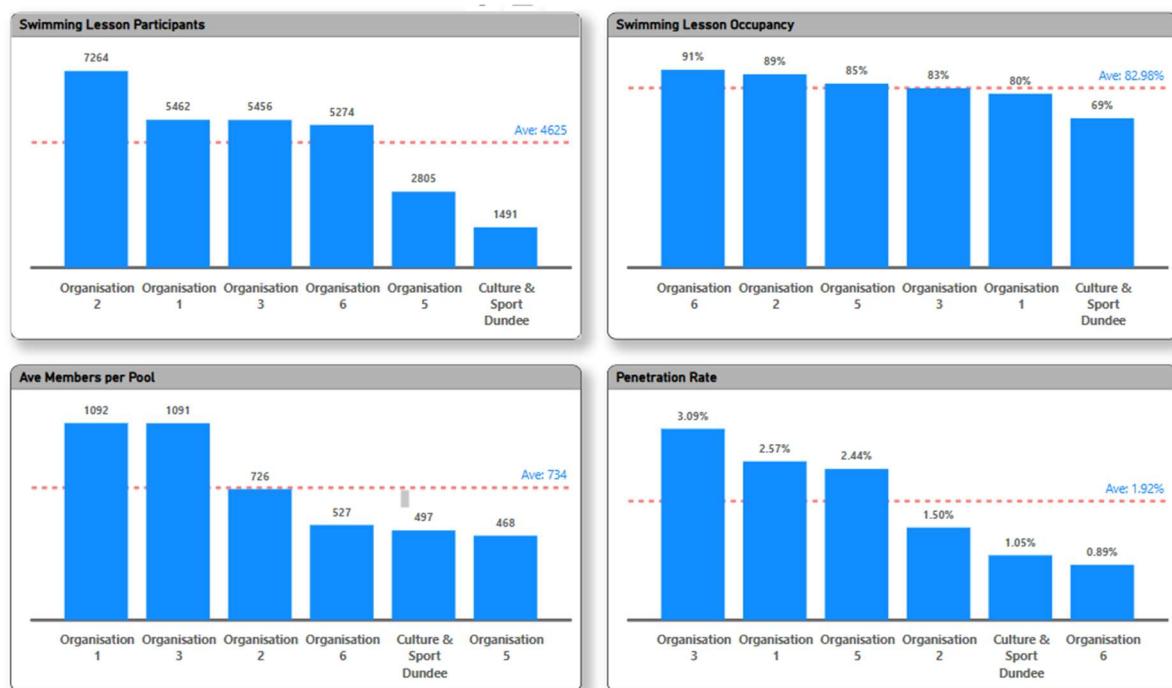


7.5.2 Option 9: Learn to Swim commercialisation

LACD operates eight swimming pools across the city, and the current Learn to Swim programme operates across three pools of which two are school sites at an average occupancy of 69%.



While focus needs to be given to increasing overall occupancy levels up to the benchmark average of 83%, the income growth potential being £60,610 per annum, more focus should be given to the expansion of the programme to other pools within the LACD estate which could bring an additional 3,670 based on the average participants per pool based on benchmarking, effectively tripling the size of the current programme and generating a potential additional £786,004 at current rates.



When looking at the demographic profile of those attending swimming lessons, we can see that the majority (60%) come from SIMD quintiles 3-5 as shown in the diagram below. Therefore, our proposal looks at maximising the price point to those that come from the higher quintiles and reducing the charge from those from lower quintiles. In order to maximise this opportunity a targeted pricing structure should be put in place to give cheaper access to lessons for those from low income families and a higher price for those from higher income families to encourage more participation from SIMD quintiles 1 and 2.

Swimming Lesson Members						
Member Council Ward	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q2	SIMD Q3	SIMD Q4	SIMD Q5	Total
Strathmartine	70	33	34	30	24	191
The Ferry		5	8	27	140	180
Lochee	55	29	16	23	32	155
North East (DC)	47	49	2	36		134
Coldside	65	19	11	26	9	130
Maryfield	28	41	17	39		125
East End	82	9	7	21	1	120
West End	11	20	11	20	46	108
Monifieth and Sidlaw			11	47	39	97
	93					93
Tay Bridgehead		8	8	24	24	64
Howe of Fife and Tay Coast				1		1
Total	93	358	213	125	294	315
						1398

This allows a maximisation of income generation while still maintaining equality and accessibility for all. The data model accompanying this report provides an interactive tool to model this. However, based on comparisons with commercial providers of swimming lessons, who charge the equivalent of £52/month we have modelled the opportunity.

Based on the current level of participants, this proposal reduces the financial burden on those from SIMD 1& 2 Quintiles by creating a £10 per month Direct Debit (DD) and increasing income by up to £263,455 per annum based on a £45 per month DD. If the DD level is set to £40 per month the growth is £208,555 and at £35 per month further reduces to £153,655.

7.5.3 Option 10: Memberships

The LACD Leisureactive membership scheme has recently been updated to simplify options, improve access, and reflect current usage trends. The previous "Full Fit" membership is now "Active Unlimited", providing wider access to adult classes and facilities, with a standard subscription increase of 10.4%. The concessionary rate eligibility has changed from age 60 to 66,

matching broader concession updates. Couples' memberships have been replaced with a flexible "Bolt On" option, allowing households to add extra adults at reduced costs.

The former "Gen Fit" and "Off Peak" memberships are combined into one simpler "Active Saver" option, removing previous age restrictions. Youth memberships have also been simplified: "Youth" and "Teen" memberships are now "Junior Unlimited" and "Teen Unlimited", offering more access to coach-led sessions and added benefits like guest passes and membership freezes. The previous lower-cost junior and teen options linked to adult memberships have ended, but a new flexible "Active Young Adult" membership is now available.

There are no price increases for Community and Off Peak memberships, with Off Peak members gaining additional benefits. The "Bolt On" scheme encourages family participation and improves overall affordability and inclusivity.

Comparison with other cities

To assess the value and viability of LACD proposed membership pricing, we can consider typical membership costs from public sports and leisure facilities across Scotland. From analysis, individual membership pricing is varied across the country and the table below shows the minimum, maximum and mean Direct Debit for a single adult membership.

Minimum	Maximum	Mean
£21.70	£59.99	£33.35

Analysis of LACD proposed pricing

- **Standard Adult Membership (£32):** this rate is competitive, considering the inclusion of new features like access to athletic tracks and velodromes. As can be seen from the table above, the proposed price is slightly lower than the mean of £33.35 and consideration should be given to this in relation to the amount of activities included compared to other providers.
- **Concession Changes (From £25 to £27 with age eligibility increase):** this adjustment aligns with broader demographic trends but could affect accessibility for seniors who are a significant user group in leisure facilities. Consideration should be given to moving away from age eligibility to an assessment based on ability to pay.
- **Couples to "Bolt On" Transition:** this can be seen as both a flexible option and a potential price increase, as individual costs might rise when the combined couples' discount is removed.

- **Youth and Teen Pricing (£16 to £23):** the adjustment and additional 'Bolt On' features need to be appealing enough to justify the price increase, especially in a competitive family market.

Due to the recent launch of these new membership packages, time should be given to assess the impact of the changes. As part of this review process consideration should be given to the core pricing level and ensure regular benchmarking with other similar suppliers to ensure it remains in line with the sector.

7.5.4 Option 11: Pricing

Through an analysis of current LACD pricing and benchmark data across the sector the following section gives an overview of where current process sit and makes recommendation for potential changes. The analysis has been based on the annual **sportscotland** price benchmarking report to allow for an assessment of LACD pricing compared to other leisure trusts and local authorities across Scotland. The analysis looked at benchmarking against minimum, maximum and mean pricing across core products across the country. From this we have highlighted below areas for consideration where there are variances against the mean price.

1. **Large Sports Hall (Adults):**

- Dundee's price (£48.00) is below the mean (£58.65) but still on the higher end of the range.
- **opportunity:** consider increasing prices closer to the mean to capture higher revenue from adult bookings, while closely monitoring the impact on demand.

2. **Large Sports Hall (Juniors/Over 60's):**

- Dundee's price (£36.00) is lower than the mean (£38.57) and significantly higher than the minimum (£23.90).
- **opportunity:** evaluate whether the pricing is justified based on facility usage and customer satisfaction. A minor adjustment to bring it closer to the mean could attract more users without significant revenue loss.

3. **Large Sports Hall (Individual Entry):**

- Dundee's price (£11.00) is above the mean (£5.79) but still in the mid-range of the price spectrum.
- **opportunity:** a price reduction to be closer to the mean could potentially increase the number of users while still maintaining a profitable margin.

4. **Meeting Rooms (Small & Medium):**

- Dundee's prices for both small and medium meeting rooms are near or slightly above the mean.
- **opportunity:** expand marketing efforts targeting small businesses or community groups that would benefit from these affordable spaces. Consider discounts for frequent bookings or long-term contracts.

5. **Swimming (Adult Swim):**

- Dundee's price (£4.00) is lower than the mean (£5.81), offering potential for an increase.
- **opportunity:** a small price increase to align with the mean could improve revenue without pricing out customers. Additionally, offering membership packages could increase retention.

6. **Swimming (Junior/Over 60's):**

- Dundee's price (£3.10) is relatively close to the mean (£3.42).
- **opportunity:** maintain this pricing or consider minor adjustments based on customer feedback and demand patterns.

7. **Swimming Lessons (Adult and Junior):**

- Dundee's pricing for swimming lessons is below the mean (£8.24 and £7.16) and offers potential for an increase.
- **opportunity:** increase prices moderately while offering bundled packages (for example, book five lessons, get a discount) to increase revenue from regular users.

8. **Parent and Child Class:**

- Dundee's price (£5.70) is fairly close to the mean (£6.08).
- **opportunity:** consider bundling this with other services or introducing family packages to increase bookings.

9. **Pool Hire:**

- Dundee's price (£95.00) is close to the mean (£87.09), but the minimum price (£25.00) shows there may be flexibility to adjust based on demand.
- **opportunity:** explore offering different tiers for pool hire (for example, off-peak rates) to attract a wider range of users, or offer loyalty discounts for regular bookings.

10. **Gym:**

- Dundee's pricing for adults (£5.30) and juniors (£4.00) is lower than the mean (£7.63 and £4.42, respectively).
- **opportunity:** a slight increase in gym prices for adults, or introduce loyalty programmes and memberships that encourage more frequent use, could help boost income.

11. **Fitness Activity Classes:**

- Dundee's price (£5.50) is lower than the mean (£7.42).
- **opportunity:** consider increasing the price to the mean or offer discounts for package bookings to encourage regular attendance.

Key opportunities for growth

- **minor price increases** in areas like swimming, gym services, and adult entry to sports halls could boost revenue without significantly affecting demand.
- **explore promotional offers or off-peak pricing** for facilities like pool hire and meeting rooms, which could attract more business outside peak hours.
- **package deals** for families (for example, parent-child classes) and group bookings (for example, meeting rooms) could create more value and drive additional income.

7.6 Improved operations

7.6.1 Option 12: Outsourcing of marketing services

LACD currently has a dedicated marketing and creative services department comprising 8.7 FTE which provides a traditional marketing and communications service. Through our stakeholder engagement there were views that improvements were needed to how marketing and communications are delivered in the future. Currently the Creative Services budget is £494,061 per annum, with the majority (82%) of this staffing costs.

By engaging with an external agency there would be the possibility to improve the quality and scope of marketing services in a more cost-efficient manner. Companies such as Big Wave marketing have extensive experience of 'being your marketing team' and getting exceptional results in the sector.

Benefits of outsourcing

- overall savings and efficiencies.

- actual team size is expanded but in a different way across a wider skillset.
- fixed delivery with guaranteed output and timescales.
- easily scalable as the business grows or reduces.
- full team of dedicated resources across all business areas (with back up team during any absence).
- no downtime due to annual leave.
- potential savings on print and advertising spend via agency rates, so efficiency on overall marketing spend.
- continuity / consistency.
- reduction in on costs (NI, pension, kit, sick pay, expenses, etc.).
- following industry benchmarks.
- staying up to date with industry insights.
- utilising best practice and shared learning.
- continued development of marketing output.

7.6.2 Option 13: Development Unit

Alternatively, LACD could look at transitioning the resource currently allocated to the Creative Services team to create a Development Unit that would undertake some of the support areas currently under-developed - this would include fund-raising for capital projects and a range of projects and service initiatives.

LACD currently does not fully exploit the ability it has to generate and attract money from trust and private sources - for example, for focussed programmes of work that specifically target young people in poverty, or geographical areas.

The Special Initiatives budget is the only one in LACD which currently has an excess of income over expenditure. A Development Unit could be targeted to increase its turnover by 100-200%, greatly adding to the opportunity to trial new programmes of activity. The Unit could be more focussed on terms of developing the digital marketing capability of LACD, utilising assets such as the UNESCO status and the various cultural and sporting venues to raise profile and attendance.

Purpose and Rationale

Leisure and Culture Dundee (LACD) has the potential to become a more entrepreneurial and resilient organisation, strengthening its long-term sustainability while extending its social and cultural impact. At present, much of its effort is concentrated on service delivery, with limited capacity to develop new funding streams, build strategic partnerships, and innovate in how audiences are engaged.

Creating a **Development Unit** could address this gap, transitioning existing resources (such as those allocated to the Creative Services team) into a more focused, multi-disciplinary unit with a clear remit to:

- **Maximise external funding** from trusts, foundations, corporate partners, and individual giving.
- **Develop new service models** that increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Grow visitor numbers and audience participation across all venues and programmes.
- **Embed entrepreneurial practice** within LACD's culture and operations.

Functions of the Development Unit

The Development Unit could focus on the following interlinked areas of activity:

1. Fundraising and Resource Development

- Proactive identification and application to trusts, foundations, and philanthropic sources.
- Targeted fundraising for capital projects (venue upgrades, new facilities) and programme initiatives (particularly around youth, poverty alleviation, and health and wellbeing).
- Exploration of new giving models (membership schemes, legacy giving, crowd-funding for specific projects).

2. Special Initiatives Growth

- The Special Initiatives budget already generates a net surplus. With a dedicated team, turnover could realistically increase by 100-200%.
- Growth in this area would create a financial base for piloting new programmes, testing innovative models, and scaling successful projects.

3. Digital Marketing and Audience Development

- Expansion of digital marketing capability to reach wider and more diverse audiences.
- Use of Dundee's **UNESCO City of Design** status, as well as LACD's cultural and sporting venues, to strengthen brand recognition and profile.
- Development of data-driven marketing campaigns, enhanced CRM systems, and digital content strategies to increase both physical and virtual attendance.

4. Strategic Partnerships and Place-making

- Position LACD as a key partner in city-wide regeneration, culture-led development, and wellbeing initiatives.
- Work with Dundee City Council, Scottish Government, NHS Tayside, universities, and creative industries to co-design programmes.
- Leverage LACD's venues and cultural assets as testbeds for innovation in community engagement, wellbeing, and design-led practice.

5. Entrepreneurship and Innovation

- Embed entrepreneurial thinking within LACD's culture, encouraging staff to identify income-generating opportunities.
- Pilot new business models for leisure, sport, and cultural services.
- Strengthen commercial returns from venues, events, retail, and catering, while maintaining LACD's social mission.

Structure and Resourcing

- The Development Unit could be formed by **repurposing the Creative Services team** and recruiting specialist roles where necessary (e.g. fundraising officer, digital marketing manager, partnerships coordinator).
- It should sit strategically, reporting directly to the senior management team and working across all LACD service areas.
- A clear set of **KPIs** should be established: external income secured, new partnerships formed, digital reach, visitor growth, and surplus generated for reinvestment.

Impact and Benefits

- **Financial sustainability:** diversifying income sources and reducing reliance on core public funding.
- **Social impact:** securing funding to address inequalities, improve access for young people in poverty, and support under-served communities.
- **Reputation and profile:** stronger positioning of LACD locally, nationally, and internationally.
- **Innovation:** greater ability to experiment and adopt new service models.
- **Audience growth:** improved digital presence, targeted campaigns, and fresh programming to attract new participants and retain loyal visitors.

3-Year Growth Trajectory for the Development Unit

Year 1: Establishment and Foundation

Focus: Building infrastructure, processes, and credibility.

- Income Generation:
 - Secure £150k-£200k in new external funding (trusts, foundations, corporate partnerships).
 - Grow Special Initiatives income by 25%.
 - Pilot at least 1 crowdfunding or community-giving campaign.
- Audience Development:
 - Increase leisure attenders and cultural visitors by 3-5% through improved digital marketing.
 - Establish baseline audience analytics using CRM/data tools.
- Organisational Development:
 - Recruit/transition core team (fundraising officer, digital marketing specialist, partnerships coordinator).
 - Introduce staff training in fundraising and entrepreneurial practice.
 - Develop a 3-year fundraising and marketing strategy.
- Innovation:
 - Pilot 1-2 new income-generating initiatives (e.g. design-themed festival, heritage-led leisure offer).
 - Launch digital marketing campaigns linked to Dundee's UNESCO City of Design status.

Year 2: Expansion and Growth

Focus: Scaling successful models, diversifying income, and widening participation.

- Income Generation:
 - Secure £400k-£500k in external income (mix of multi-year grants, partnerships, and donations).
 - Increase Special Initiatives turnover by 75% compared to baseline.
 - Develop at least one capital fundraising campaign (e.g. refurbishment, new venue investment).
- Audience Development:
 - Increase attendance across leisure and culture venues by 8-10%.
 - Expand digital reach (followers, subscribers, online participants) by 20-25%.

- Deliver targeted programmes for young people in poverty and under-represented communities, with external funding support.
- Organisational Development:
 - Formalise a **partnership network** (universities, NHS Tayside, Dundee City Council, creative industries).
 - Introduce an annual **entrepreneurship challenge** within LACD to encourage income-generating ideas from staff.
 - Strengthen governance: quarterly monitoring of income, impact, and risk.
- Innovation:
 - Trial hybrid event models (in-person + digital) to expand audiences.
 - Test 1-2 social enterprise initiatives (e.g. wellbeing programme linked to leisure services, design-led merchandise lines).

Year 3: Consolidation and Leadership

Focus: Establishing the Unit as a recognised driver of innovation, income, and impact.

- Income Generation:
 - Secure £750k-£1m in external income.
 - Double Special Initiatives turnover compared to baseline (100-200% increase).
 - Build a pipeline of long-term major donors and corporate sponsors.
- Audience Development:
 - Achieve 15-20% growth in visitor numbers and leisure attenders compared to Year 1 baseline.
 - Establish LACD as a regional/national leader in digital cultural marketing.
 - Deliver 3 flagship externally funded programmes addressing inequality, wellbeing, and access.
- Organisational Development:
 - Fully embed entrepreneurial practice across service areas.
 - Establish Development Unit as a permanent, core function within LACD.
 - Publish an annual **Impact and Innovation Report** to stakeholders and funders.
- Innovation:
 - Launch 1-2 large-scale signature initiatives (e.g. Dundee-wide cultural participation programme, digital innovation hub).
 - Share learning nationally, positioning LACD as a model for other leisure and culture trusts.

Outcomes by Year 3

- **Financial:** £750k-£1m per annum in external funding; Special Initiatives doubled in size.
- **Social:** Significant new programmes tackling poverty, health inequalities, and participation gaps.
- **Cultural and Economic:** 15-20% audience growth, stronger visitor economy, and enhanced Dundee brand.
- **Organisational:** Development Unit recognised as a strategic driver of resilience, innovation, and entrepreneurialism.

Roles and Functions

Director of Strategy and Development (senior post, reporting to CEO)

- Provides strategic leadership for the Unit.
- Coordinates external relationships with major funders, Council, and national partners.
- Oversees impact reporting, risk management, and entrepreneurial growth strategy.

Fundraising and Partnerships Team

Fundraising and Partnerships Lead

- Designs overall fundraising strategy (trusts, foundations, individuals, corporates).
- Leads on capital fundraising and large multi-year bids.
- Works closely with programme managers to align bids with LACD's priorities.

Funding and Trusts Officer

- Researches and writes grant applications to public and private sources.
- Tracks deadlines, reporting requirements, and compliance.
- Special focus on projects tackling inequalities, young people, and place-based work.

Corporate and Donor Officer

- Builds sponsorships and donor relationships with Dundee-based and national businesses.
- Develops membership/"friends of LACD" schemes.
- Coordinates fundraising events and donor stewardship.

Marketing and Digital Team

Marketing and Digital Lead

- Oversees all marketing, brand, and communications.

- Focus on entrepreneurial campaigns that convert marketing into income and visitor growth.
- Works with leisure, culture, and sport venues to build coherent digital presence.

Digital Marketing Officer

- Runs campaigns across social media, web, and newsletters.
- Builds audience segmentation and CRM data strategy.
- Drives online engagement and ticket sales.

Audience Development Officer

- Develops initiatives targeting underrepresented groups and new audiences.
- Works with schools, communities, and partners to widen participation.
- Tracks visitor/audience growth KPIs.

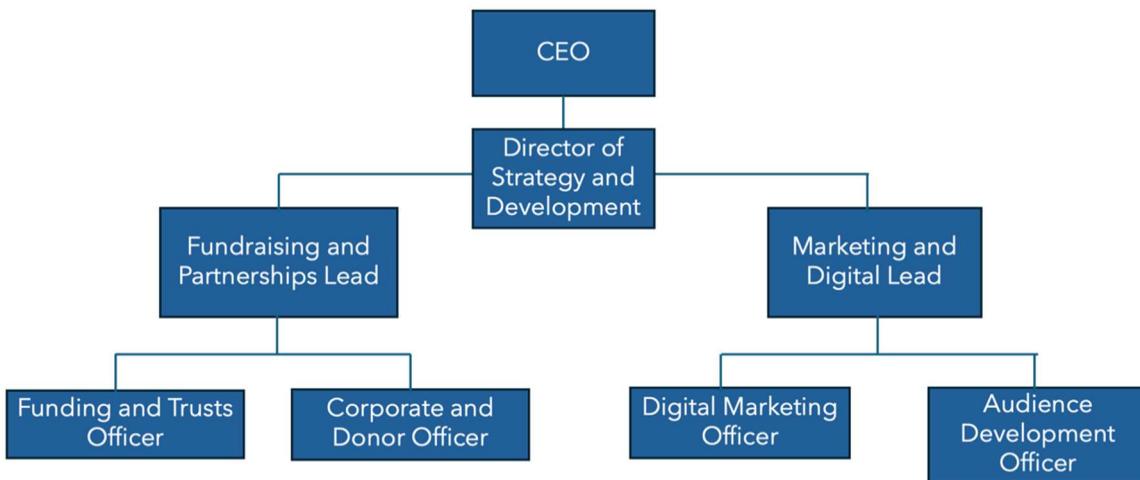
Integration with LACD

- **CEO:** maintains ultimate accountability for public funds and organisational strategy.
- **Director of Strategy & Development:** member of LACD's Senior Management Team, ensuring the Unit is embedded in decision-making.
- **Close links:** with Heads of Cultural Services, Leisure Services, Venues, and Finance.
- **Cross-functional support:** Development Unit staff work with programme leads to co-design fundable projects, ensuring operational needs shape fundraising bids.

Scaling Over 3 Years

- **Year 1:** Start lean (Director + 2 officers, likely one in fundraising and one in digital).
- **Year 2:** Add second officer in fundraising + audience development post.
- **Year 3:** Fully staffed unit as shown above, with 6-7 dedicated posts.

Once fully established, the Development Unit might look like this:



Next Steps

1. Develop a **business case** outlining the resourcing, projected income, and cost-benefit analysis of the Development Unit.
2. Agree on **transition arrangements** for Creative Services staff and clarify new roles.
3. Pilot one or two **flagship fundraising campaigns** to test the model (e.g. youth engagement programme, digital infrastructure upgrade).
4. Establish a **governance and monitoring framework** to ensure accountability and value for money.

7.6.3 Option 14: Investing for change

As outlined earlier, over the past 40 years the city has consistently demonstrated its ambition and commitment to leisure through investment in signature cultural and sporting infrastructure, both as a means to improve local amenity for citizens but also as a way of addressing an external perception of a city broken by successive economic hammer-blows from the 1970s-90s. That image has to a large extent been successfully turned around, although the city's underlying endemic issues of poverty, addiction, and poor health remain.

The challenge, therefore, for any new leisure infrastructure should be how best to meet those social issues in a way that makes meaningful change. Most of the current institution types – the library, museum, gallery, theatre, concert hall – have their origins in the Victorian era and their approach and purpose have changed little in the intervening 150 years. It seems overdue for new models to be developed that better reflect the contemporary and likely future needs of citizens.

DCC's planned community hubs intend to do that, blending several services in one campus, with statutory education at its heart. Such hubs have demonstrated in other communities how successful they can be in the sphere of lifelong learning, even if 'school-led community hubs' might not always attract those who believe its emphasis to be on 'school' rather than 'community'. One of the great assets of the cultural and leisure estate is that public perception of the buildings, whether swimming pool or library, are generally considered 'for everyone'. The concept of the library, for instance, is still one held to be a safe space and with a deal of public affection, even by those who do not use the service.

For culture and leisure to play its part in addressing the city's social issues it is likely a new type of civic space is required – one that capitalises on these good public perceptions but creates space for connection – a quality that many communities, and individuals, find increasingly challenging.

During our discussions, an embryonic concept arose for a new kind of public space – designed for the 21st century – where people can explore shared knowledge, engage with cultural heritage, experiment with new ideas, and actively shape the future of their community. A space that could blend the democratic values of libraries, the collective memory of archives, the inspiration of art collections, and the creative energy of the digital industries into one open, welcoming place.

Inspired by DCC's existing approach, this might be better considered as a **Civic Commons Hub** - a hybrid public space that blurs the lines between traditional libraries, museums, digital studios, archives, coworking spaces, and civic forums. It could reflect the way modern communities live, learn, create, and share – combining the past, present, and future under one roof. Financial sustainability could be sought through partnering with like-minded commercial entrepreneurs. The Waters Edge development has shown that attractive space for digital start-ups can be affordable for tenants, profitable for owners, and create a cross-fertilising digital community. Libraries in North Lanarkshire have introduced immersive rooms that create learning experiences more usually found in costly visitor attractions.

There is a model to be developed, and Dundee has shown itself supremely adept in the past at finding the right people and the right ideas to do just that. While this review of LACD services has been born out of challenge, it is worth remembering that there is also opportunity and ambition, and the right vision can often attract the investment and the people to deliver it. Some of that experience and skillset currently lies within both DCC and LACD, and the rest is within the city's other sectors.

One of the over-riding themes of our consultation was the genuine affection consultees had for the city, for belief in the power and importance of public services, and for the desire to do the right thing for the city and its people. We would recommend that spirit is also considered when this review's other aspects are also being reflected on.

8 Conclusions

The overarching conclusion is that change is needed at LACD. How dramatic the change is, or how quickly it needs to be achieved, will be driven by DCC priorities. As mentioned earlier, if savings are a priority, then we have indicated where these can largely be found. Similarly, we have indicated where we believe current operations can be improved and turned around in the medium-term with positive financial and social impact. We have also suggested areas where we believe there could be positive and potentially exciting developments for the city and for LACD.

At its root, there are some practical elements that need to be addressed, and getting these right should have a short- and medium-term impact on both service quality and financial sustainability. The current Service Agreement is at the heart of this – we have suggested a strategic re-focussing of how this is framed, however, even if that is not favoured, a mutually negotiated new Service Agreement with key objectives, specific KPIs, and a clear process for monitoring and reporting is essential. Some communication routes between DCC and LACD seem to have been disrupted in the post-COVID period, which may have led to tension and misunderstanding - again, greater clarity in this area is a prerequisite going forward.

The opportunity for much greater inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral operation needs more attention, not only for cost-effective reasons, but more importantly as a means of addressing policy issues such as health and poverty more effectively. This extends beyond LACD-DCC services (although there are still areas there to exploit) to health providers and the third sector in the city. The greenspace asset, for example, is one such area to develop.

One intangible aspect that requires cultivation is a corporate one of development – the ethos of innovation that characterised much of LACD’s work has dissipated post-COVID. We have suggested the creation of a Development Unit that could help drive and support some of these ambitions, but ultimately the culture of entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged from the Board and senior management.

It is worth saying that LACD is not an organisation with terminal difficulties – it has had a particularly challenging five-year period for macro and micro reasons, and it now appears to be a more stable organisation than it perhaps had been during that period. There are significant assets within the organisation – staff skillsets, experience, and commitment; a generally good and varied built estate; goodwill from users and public – but these have not been, and require to be, exploited to a much greater extent.

In relation to an agenda for change, we have split the options into the strategic and the operational and have repeated these here for clarity – more detail is provided in the preceding sections.

Strategic

- DCC should articulate clearly its expectations of culture and leisure for the city, and subsequently for LACD including clarifying and agreeing roles and responsibilities and decision making, and empowering LACD. This should also seek to develop a refreshed vision for culture and leisure services that is firmly rooted in the future ambitions for Dundee.
- the Services Agreement should be revised to focus on outcomes based on civic priorities (poverty, health and wellbeing, net zero, inclusive economic growth) - perhaps underpinned by the Civic Membership model outlined in **Chapter 5**.
- governance and leadership structures and arrangements should be reviewed and revised to improve clarity, communications and transparency and enable the Board of LACD to focus on strategic rather than operational matters.
- performance measurement should be improved both to align to the revised Services Agreement and the outcomes that it targets and also to enable more effective financial and operational management and planning.
- there may be merit in establishing a Working Group or Transition Board - a small group comprising DCC officers, LACD Trustees and management staff - to work through the governance and revised Services Agreement.
- all LACD activities should then be refocused and targeted around civic priorities and the outcomes specified in the Services Agreement.

Operational

In relation to the operational opportunities that have been identified, some decisions will be needed as to the priorities and relative emphasis between short term savings and longer term investment. We have grouped these as follows:

- **efficiency savings:** workforce realignment creating opportunities for efficiencies of circa £1.5-£3.5m (depending on other decisions made).
- **alternative delivery models:** alternative delivery for Wildlife Centre (or closure) and Ancrum Outdoor Centre.
- **Investment opportunities:** fitness facilities at Douglas Sports Centre, Regional Performance Centre and Menzieshill; marketing and programming and food and beverage offer at Caird Hall.
- **Commercialisation:** commercialising sports classes and swimming lessons and reviewing membership models and wider pricing structures.
- **Operational improvements:** outsourcing marketing, establishing a Development Unit with clear fundraising and business development targets (and possibly identifying new flagship projects where opportunities arise, for example, Civic Commons Hub).

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Appendix A: Description of LACD Services

Table A1: Library and information services

Manage the network of buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a network of libraries across the City.
Provide access to high quality resources for reading and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a comprehensive selection of books and other material including an extensive collection of out-of-print material and titles in alternative formats. Request service.
Provide access to high quality information resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of an extensive information and enquiry service through a comprehensive selection of reference books, newspapers, and online databases. ICT training and support. Provision of materials that support genealogical and local history research. Provision of community information and access to exhibition space.
Provide access to services which promote inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housebound and sheltered housing service and Mobile library service. Provide targeted services that meet the needs of individuals and groups affected by social exclusion, including access to specialised material. Opportunities for work placements.
Deliver outreach activities for adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events to stimulate enjoyment of reading and learning including a network of reading groups across the city. Active participation in community events.
Provide outreach activities for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bookbug provision. Support the development of reading groups for children. Seasonal and themed talks and activities including the Summer Reading Scheme.
Deliver partnership activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Library Services. Family History Centre. External Agencies and Council Departments. Out of Hours Telephone Service

Table A2: Cultural services

<p>Provide high quality, consistent and customer focussed access to cultural services and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to and engagement with the City's Fine and Decorative Art, Archaeology, History, Natural Sciences and World Cultures object collections. Provide retail facilities at The McManus, Broughty Castle Museum and Mills Observatory. Strengthen the permanent collections through acquisition.
<p>Provide and promote access to the cultural heritage of Dundee in a national and international context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the City's collections of Museums and Art Galleries maintain standards to retain their fully accredited status. Ensure that the Fine and Decorative Art and Whaling Collections continue to be recognised as a collection of national significance. Provide a high standard of collections, management and care, conservation, and collections storage. Provide creative learning opportunities through: Schools, Youth Action, and Community Programmes. Provide access to the collections through loans. Ensure professional support for cultural providers (artists/musicians).
<p>Provide information to support and promote cultural and creative learning activities, improving people's quality of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a range of access/engagement opportunities including exhibitions, displays, events and activities. Provide a wide range of marketing and publicity materials both physical and electronic, for all Cultural Service-learning programmes, events, and collections. Provide a range of volunteer and placement opportunities. Deliver an enquiry service.
<p>Provide venues and associated cultural programmes to support and promote cultural and creative learning activities, improving people's quality of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a professionally managed Caird Hall for the staging of a high-profile programme of arts and entertainment events and conferences. Continue to offer and develop cultural programmes to support and promote cultural and creative learning activities at: McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum; The Collections Unit; Mills Observatory; Broughty Castle Museum; Camperdown House; Caird Hall; Burgh Halls. Provide a comprehensive programme of music development activities.

Table A2: Cultural services (continued)

Work in partnership to offer cultural services to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with cultural organisations including National Museums Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland, V & A Dundee, V & A, NGS, Creative Scotland and Universities. • Develop a Science Engagement programme at Mills Observatory with Dundee Science Centre. • Develop a comprehensive range of Creative Learning opportunities for Schools in partnership with DCC Education Department. • Deliver partnership opportunities in association with local organisations.
Support cultural services towards realising their full potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate an effective system of monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the work of the service team. • Ensure that staff development opportunities are offered, and that staff develop expertise in relation to the specialist service area practice. • Maximise potential of available resources by identify and developing external funding opportunities.

Table A3: Leisure and sport services

Provide high quality public 18- and 9-hole golf courses at Caird Park and 18-hole golf course at Camperdown Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain courses to a high standard in keeping with established green-keeping practice and principles. • Manage courses to ensure that the visitor experience is challenging and enjoyable for all. • Provide an efficient customer friendly journey from booking to completion of round. • Ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly and feedback is provided clearly. • Maximise the number of visitors. • Maximise the number of members.
Provide management of the City's Wildlife Centre at Camperdown Park delivering a first-class visitor experience, educational and conservation role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Centre and collection to a high standard in keeping with good animal husbandry practices. • Sustain external evaluation and quality standards e.g. VisitScotland Star rating. • Maximise public access to the facility within available resources. • Ensure pricing policy is compatible with maximising public access and meeting income targets. • Develop and deliver educational programmes for targeted groups. • Ensure that the facility is secure and fully complies with the requirements of Zoo Licence and other statutory regulations.

A3: Leisure and sport services (continued)

<p>Provide quality and progressive sport and physical activity and community programmes for the City of Dundee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide term-time, holiday, and alternative activities in Dundee's eight community planning areas. Provide development programmes to nurture and develop talented coaches and athletes ensuring a complete sporting pathway exists. Develop community sports initiatives such the Hubs project, ClubDundee, and diversionary activities for young people. Lead the development of the local sporting infrastructure, policies and governance; ensuring strategy and partnerships exist to provide the best sporting opportunities for all Dundee's citizens. Attract external funding to develop activities and complement the existing sport development structure. Provide a wide range of marketing and publicity materials both physical and electronic for sports development programmes and events.
<p>Provide high quality leisure facility management for DCC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate Olympia Swimming and Leisure Centre. Operate Lochee Swim and Leisure Centre. Operate DISC. Operate of Douglas Sports Centre. Programme and operate PPP Schools (St Paul's/Grove). Support community use of schools for sport and swimming activity.

Source: DCC, Service Specification Comparison Document.

Appendix B: Strategies, Policies, and Documents Reviewed

National

[National Performance Framework](#), Scottish Government.

[Programme for Government 2024-2025](#), Scottish Government, September 2024.

[National Planning Framework](#), Scottish Government, February 2023.

[Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods: planning guidance](#), Scottish Government, April 2024.

[A Culture Strategy for Scotland](#), Scottish Government, March 2022.

[Active Scotland Outcomes Framework](#), Scottish Government, July 2018.

[A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan](#), Scottish Government, July 2018.

[Review of Culture and Leisure Services in Scotland](#), EKOS Ltd for Community Leisure UK, Creative Scotland and sportscotland, August 2024.

[Sport for Life](#), sportscotland, 2019.

[The positive contribution of physical activity and sport to Scotland](#), COSLA, Public Health Scotland and sportscotland.

[Equality and Sport Research](#), Counsel Ltd for sportscotland, 2020.

[Sports participation in Scotland: trends and future prospects](#), Nicholas F Rowe for the Observatory for Sport in Scotland, June 2019.

Local

[City Plan for Dundee 2022-2032](#), Dundee Partnership.

[Council Plan 2022-2027](#), Dundee City Council.

[Our Future City Centre - Strategic Investment Plan 2050](#), Dundee City Council.

[Dundee's Cultural Strategy 2024-2034](#), Dundee Partnership.

[Dundee Physical Activity Strategy](#), LACD, 2017.

Appendix C: LACD Customer Surveys

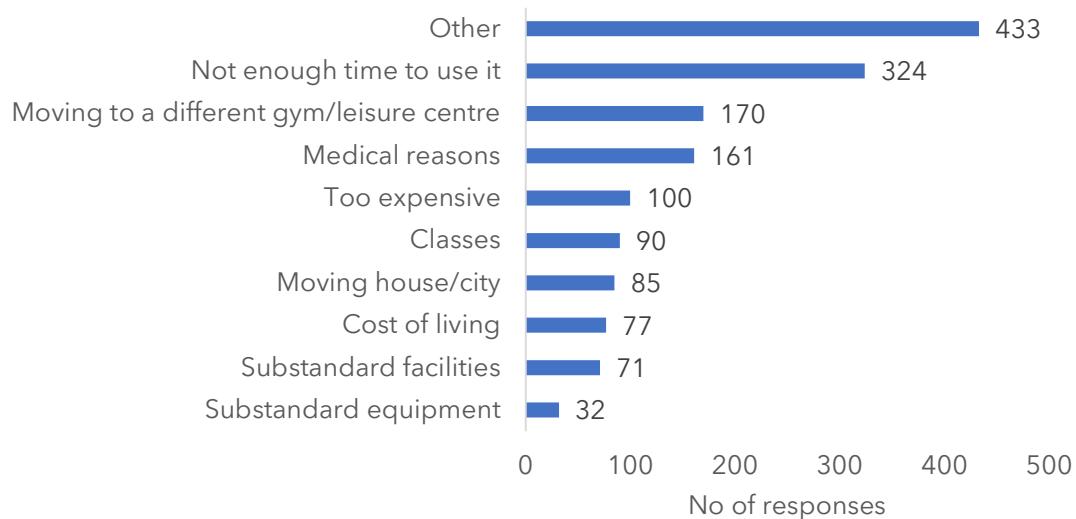
LACD has carried out various customer surveys with a focus on its sport facilities. A summary of the responses that were received are set out in the following appendix.

Membership cancellation

Respondents who had cancelled their membership were asked why they had done so, with the top response, excluding 'Other', 'Not Enough time to use it' and 'Moving to a different gym/leisure centre', **Figure C.1**.

Several respondents highlighted issues with facilities maintenance, particularly with steam rooms, saunas and general equipment upkeep. There were also concerns about parking and the affordability of the offer, particularly for certain demographics e.g., seniors. Respondents specifically mentioned switching to competitors like "The Gym Group at Stack Park" due to better facilities.

Figure C.1: Reasons for cancelling membership



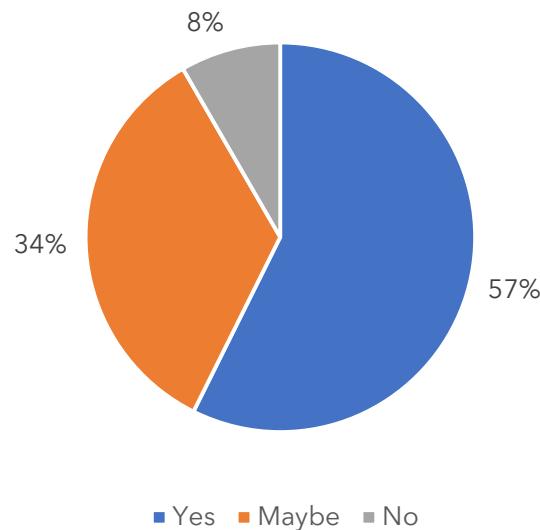
Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

Notes: Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question.

N= Unknown

A significant majority of former members would consider rejoining in the future, **Figure C.2**.

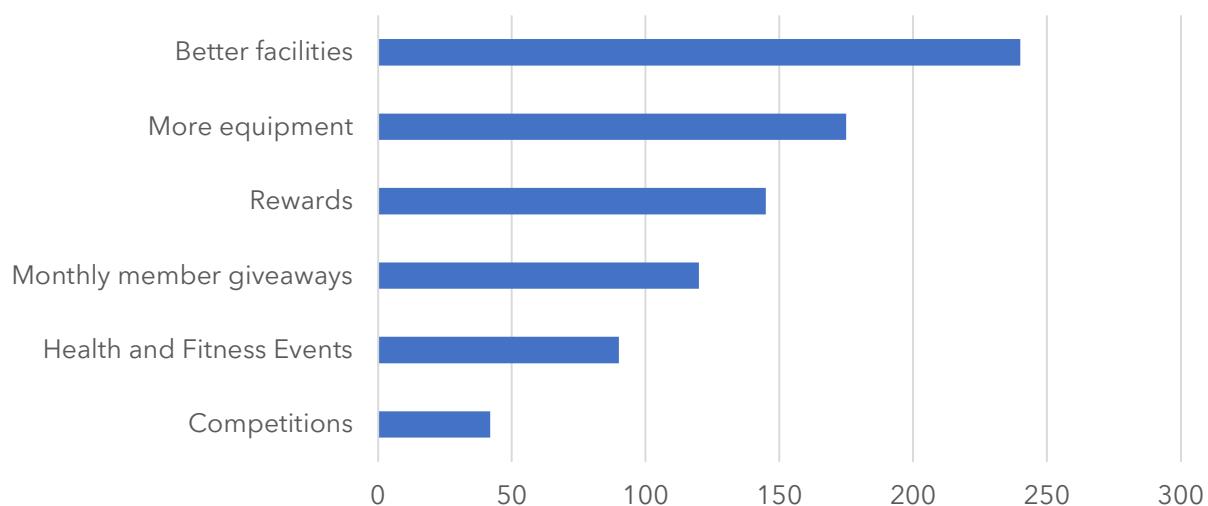
Figure C.2: Would you consider rejoining?



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N= 1,020

The most common factors that would encourage former members to rejoin were 'Better facilities', 'More equipment' and 'Rewards', **Figure C.3**. Some respondents mentioned more flexible opening hours and more variety in classes as factors that would also influence their decision to return.

Figure C.3: What would encourage you to rejoin?



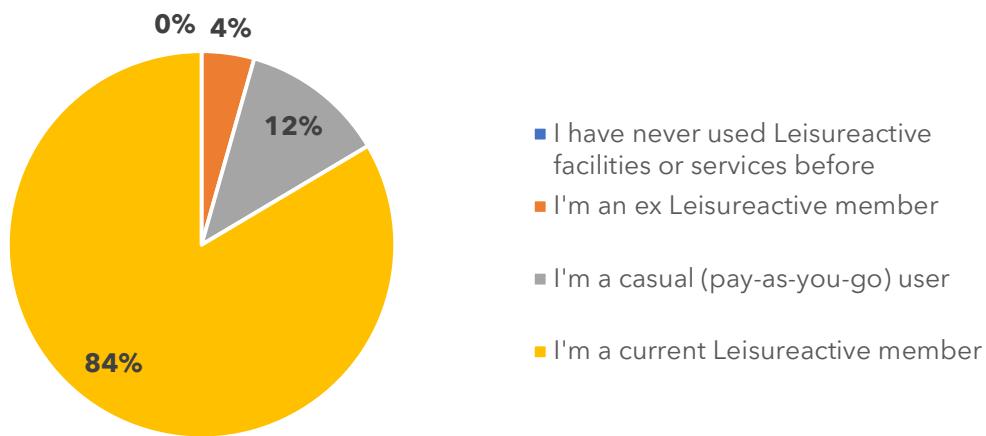
Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
Notes: Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question.
N= Unknown

Always Active

The following sub-section sets out Always Active members opinions (predominantly older members) on LACD sports facilities.

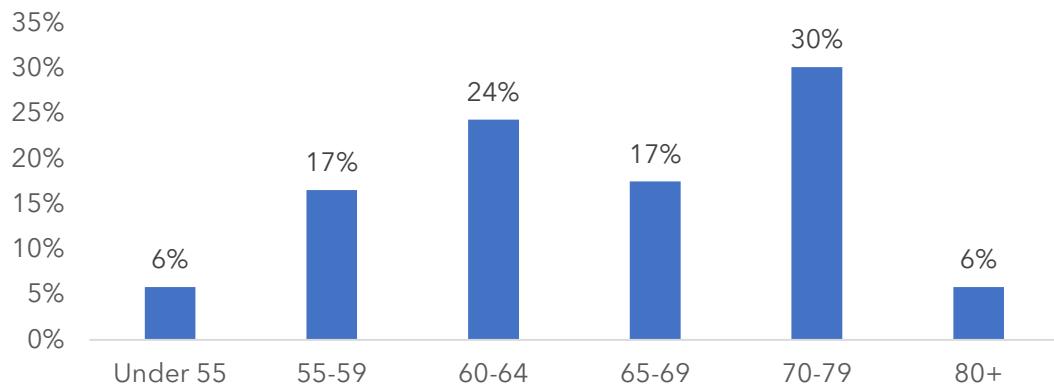
Most respondents to the survey are current Leisureactive members (84%), with 77% of respondents over the age of 60, indicating the Always Active programme predominantly caters for those of an older age - see **Figure C.4** and **C.5** below.

Figure C.4: Membership Type Distribution



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N=91

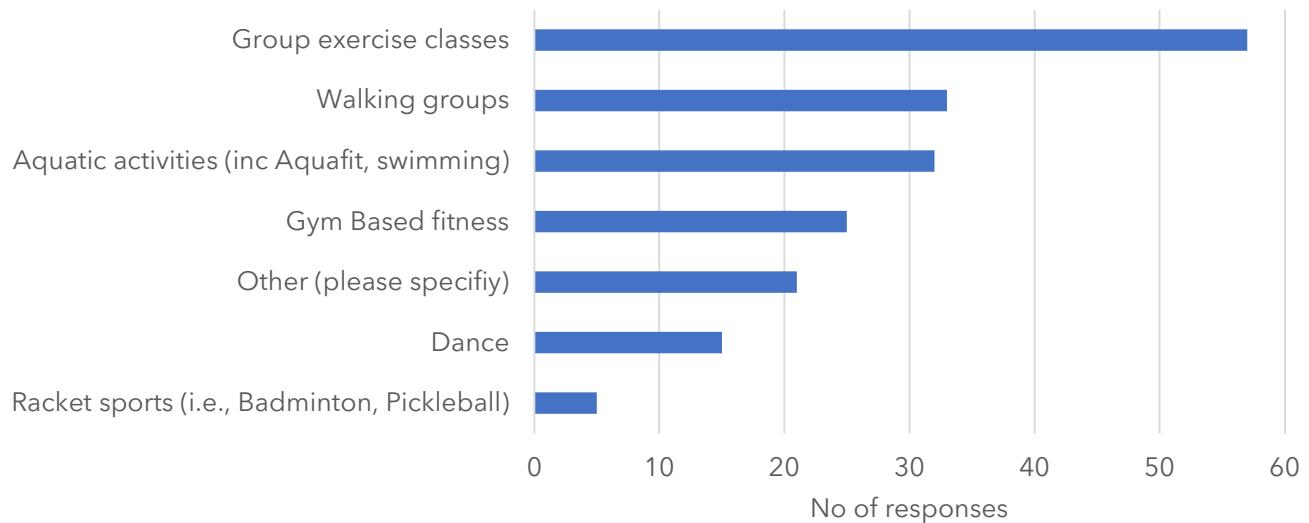
Figure C.5: Respondent Age Distribution



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N=103

The most common activities in which Always Active members participate include 'Group Exercise Classes', 'Walking Groups' and 'Aquatic Activities', **Figure C.6**.

Figure C.6: Participation in different activities



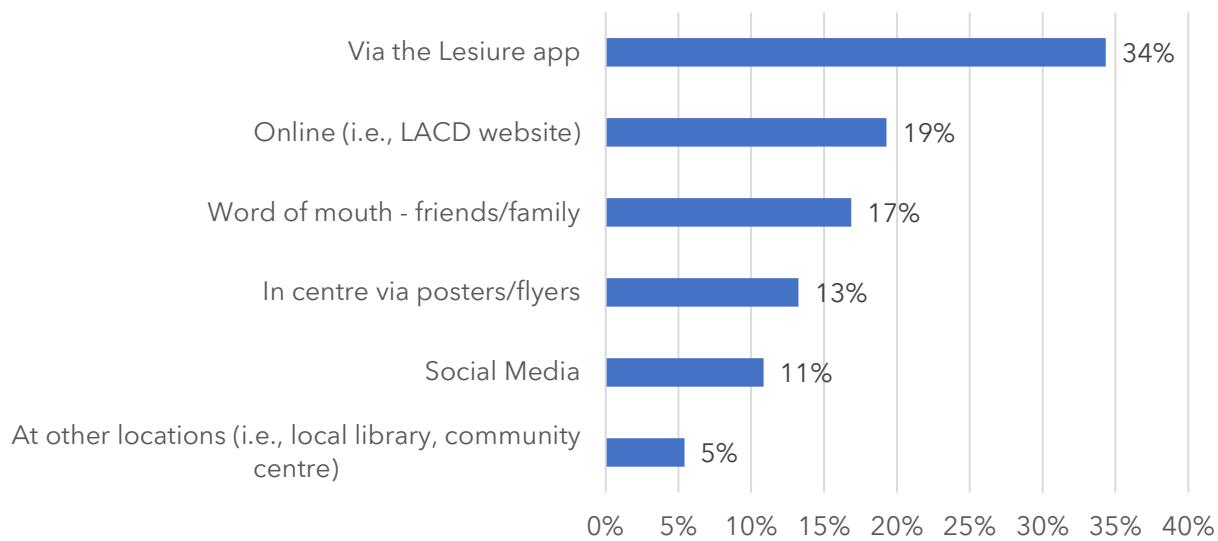
Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

Notes: Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question.

N= Unknown

In terms of how members would like to be kept in touch about new activities, the most common preferred option was 'Via the Leisure app' (34%), followed by 'Online (19%) and simply by 'Word of mouth (17%) - friends/family', **Figure C.7**.

Figure C.7: Preferred Communication Methods for New Activities



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

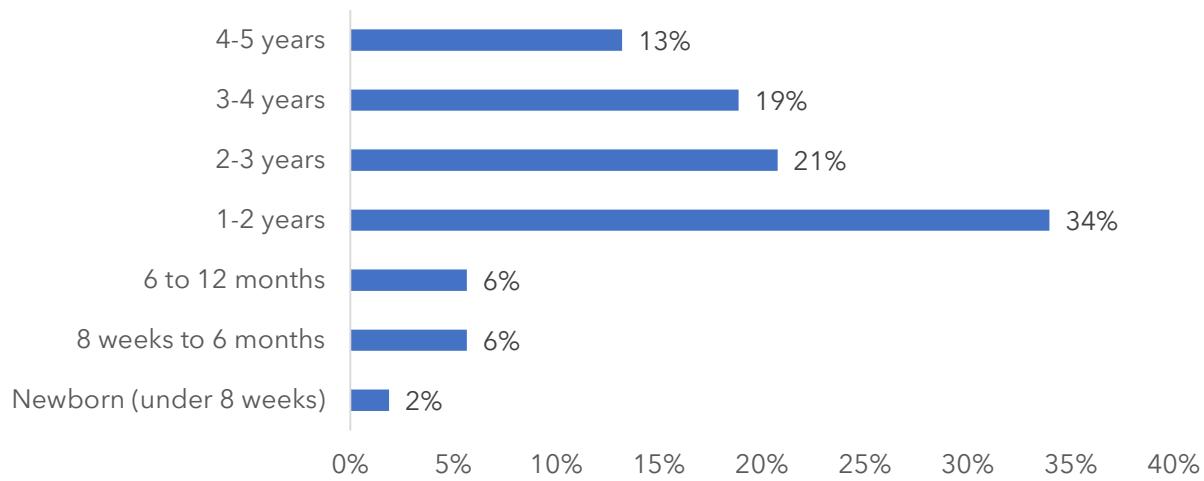
N= 166

Early years survey

The early year survey focused on those taking their children to use sporting facilities, although a majority of respondents indicated that their child has never used Leisureactive facilities.

Of those that had used the facilities, there was a relatively even age distribution of children, with the largest group of respondents having children aged 1-2 years (34% of respondents), **Figure C.8**.

Figure C.8: Age Distribution

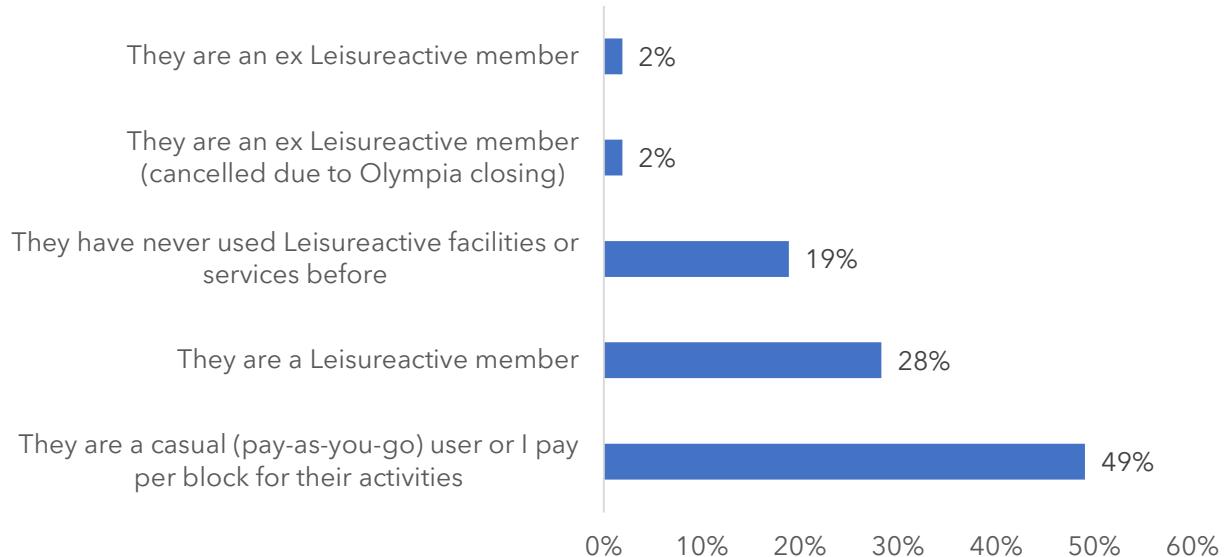


Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

N=53

Around half of respondents to the survey were 'Pay-as-you-go or pay per block' participants, with 28% Leisure active members, **Figure C.9**.

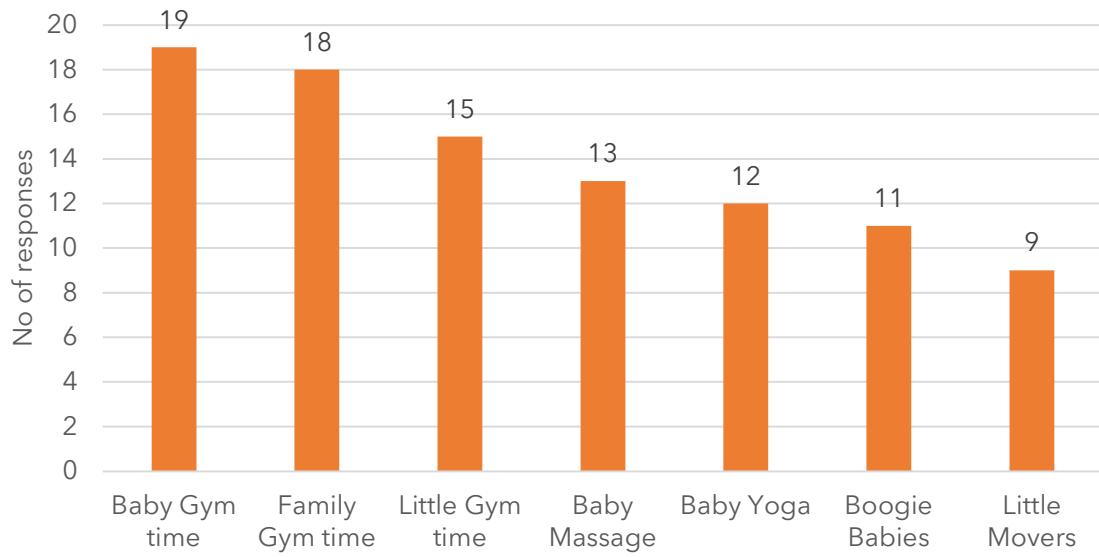
Figure C.9: Participation Type



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N=53

Respondents and their children had participated in a variety of different early year activities, most commonly 'Baby Gym time' (19 responses) and 'Family Gym time' (18 responses), **Figure C.10**.

Figure C.10: Participation in Different Early Years Activities

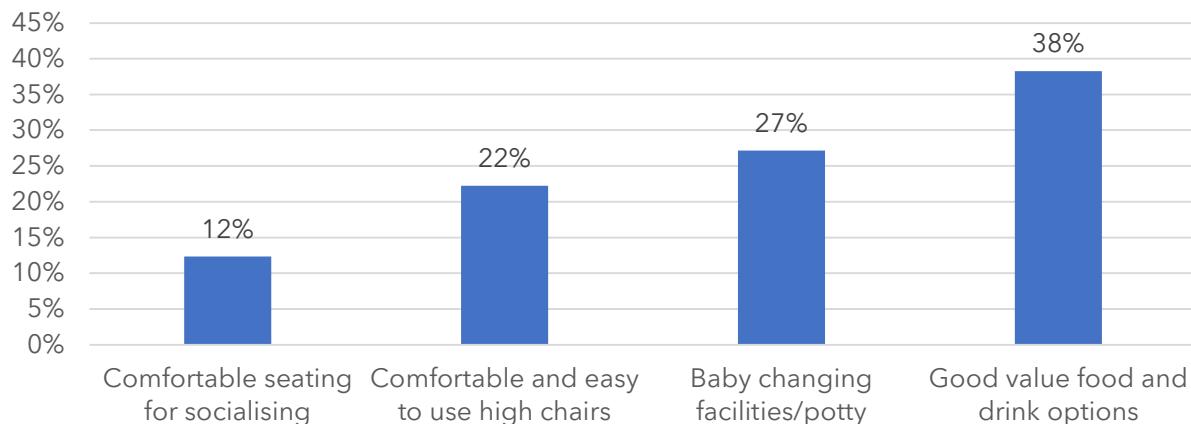


Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
Notes: Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question.
N=Unknown

In terms of preferences for the facilities, 38% of the total responses signalled that 'Good value food and drink' was a preference for them when visiting/using one of the facilities, **Figure C.11**.

Respondents also fed back that baby-friendly facilities, such as baby-changing stations, food choices, and highchairs as areas that were important to them.

Figure C.11: Facility Preferences



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

Notes: Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question.

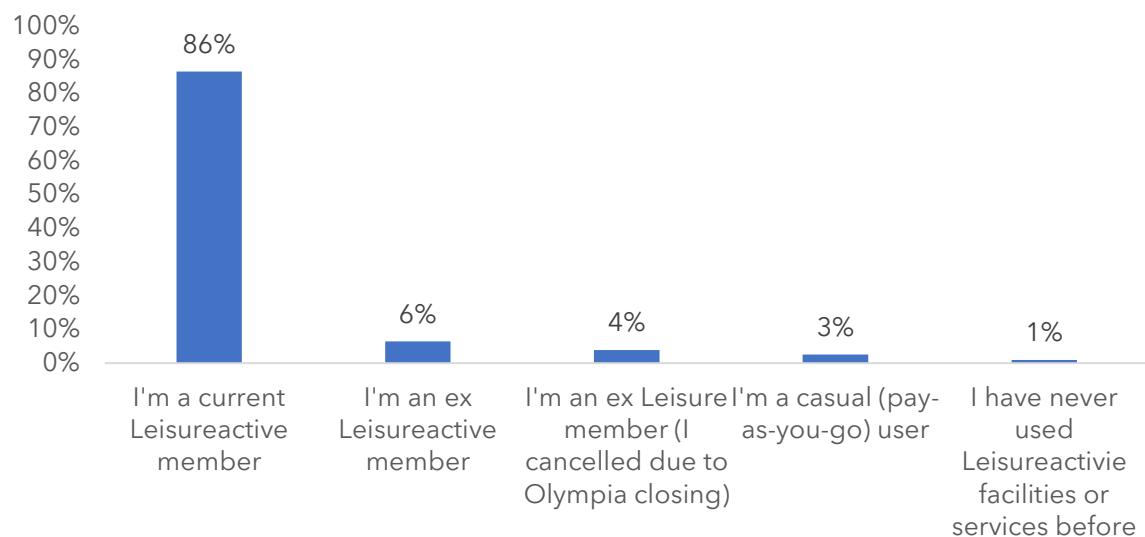
N=Unknown

Gym user survey

The following sub section focuses on the responses to the Gym User survey.

Most respondents (86%) to the survey were current Leisureactive members, **Figure C.12.**

Figure C.12: Gym membership type

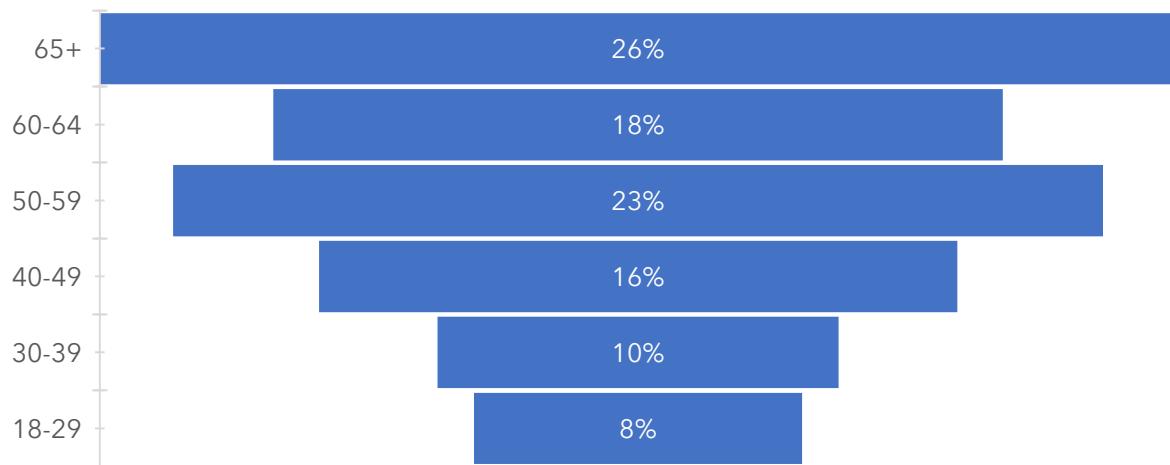


Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

N=236

The age profile of respondents was relatively mixed, with the largest group of respondents those aged 65 or older (26%), **Figure C.13**.

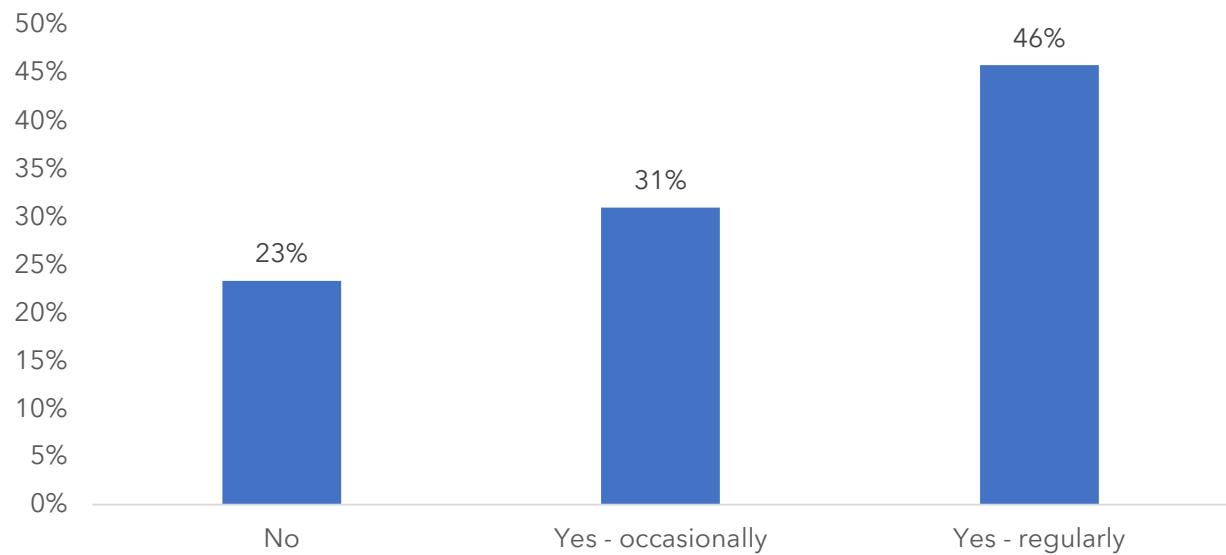
Figure C.13: Age distribution of Gym Users



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N=225

In terms of the frequency of visits, 46% of respondents to the survey stated they 'regularly' visit the gym(s), with 31% saying they only visit 'occasionally', while 23% stated they don't attend the gym(s) at all, **Figure C.14**.

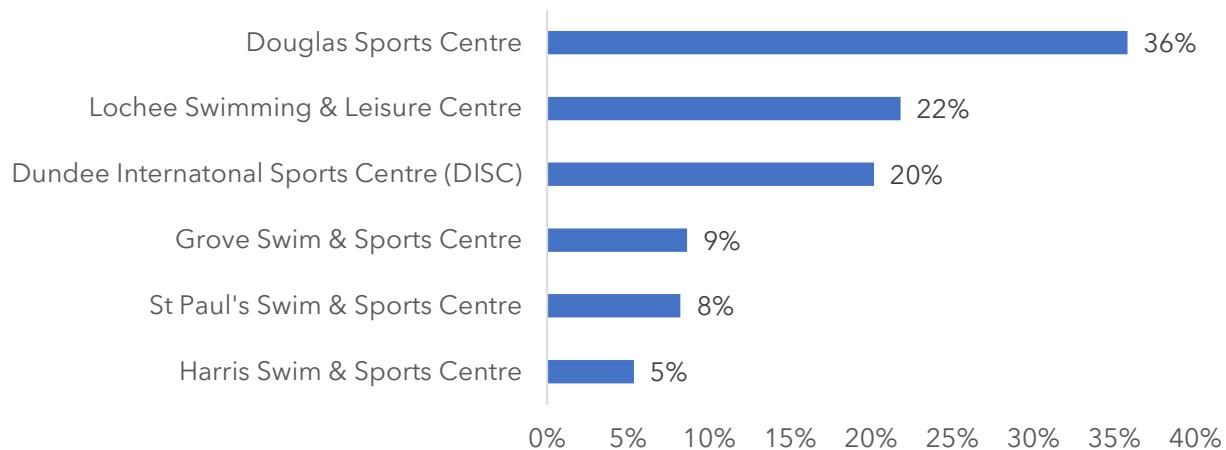
Figure C.14: Frequency of Gym Visits



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N=236

The Douglas Sports Centre was the most used facility, followed by Lochee Swimming & Leisure Centre, and then Dundee International Sports Centre, **Figure C.15**.

Figure C.15: Most Frequently Used Gym Locations

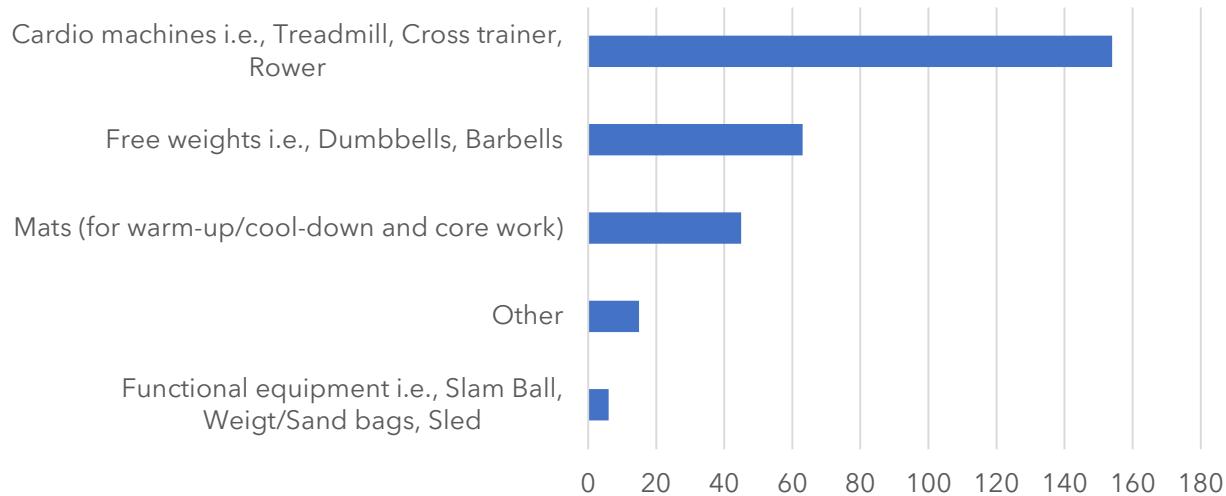


Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

N=243

The most used gym equipment was 'Cardio machines', followed by 'Free weights', **Figure C.16**.

Figure C.16: Most Used Gym Equipment

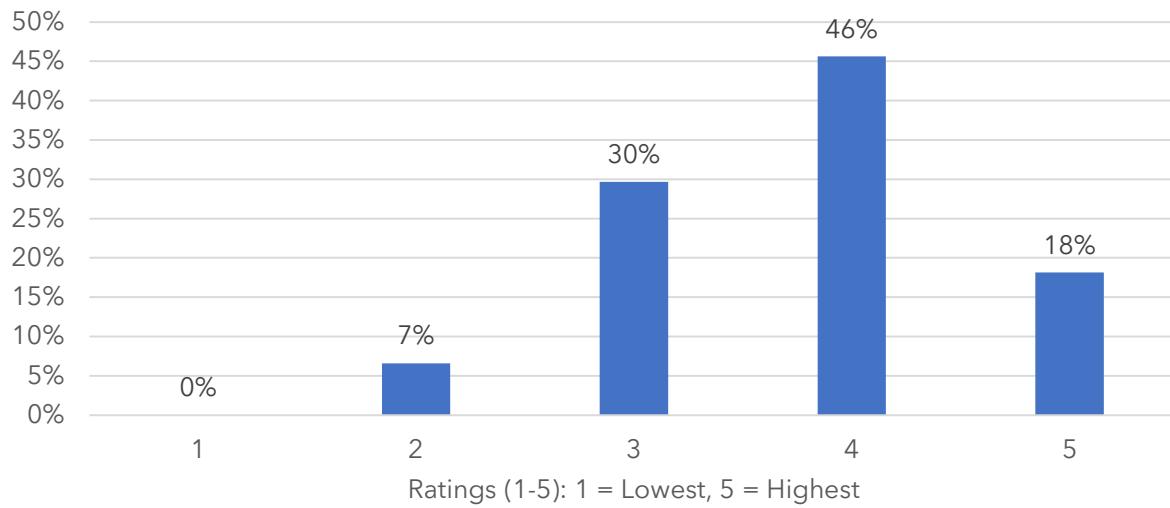


Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

N=283

The gyms received a mix of ratings, although generally positive, with 64% rating them either as Good (4) or Very good (5), **Figure C.17**.

Figure C.17: Gym Ratings



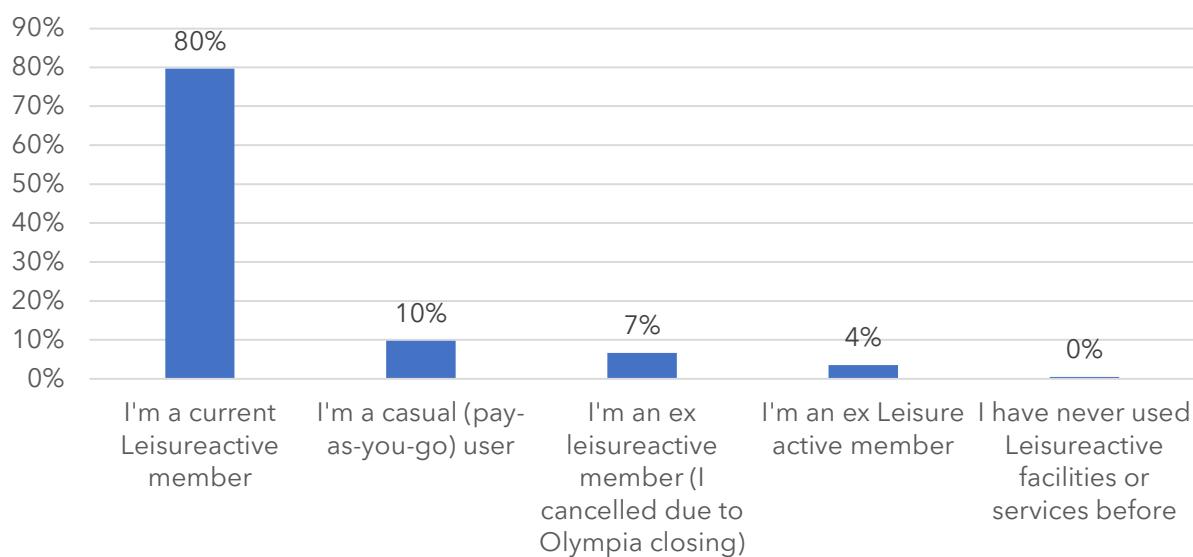
Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N= 182

Swimming pool user survey

The following section sets out the findings from the Swimming Pool Survey.

The vast majority (80%) of respondents are current Leisureactive members, with 10% casual pay-as-you-go users, **Figure C.18**.

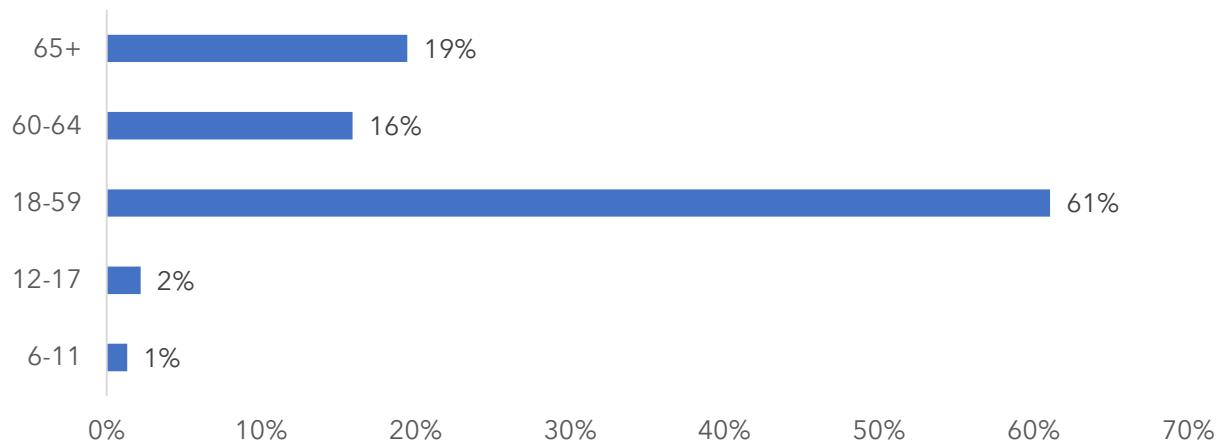
Figure C.18: Swimming Pool Membership Type



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N= 226

In terms of the age profile of respondents, most (61%) were aged between 18 and 59, with 19% over the age of 65, **Figure C.19**.

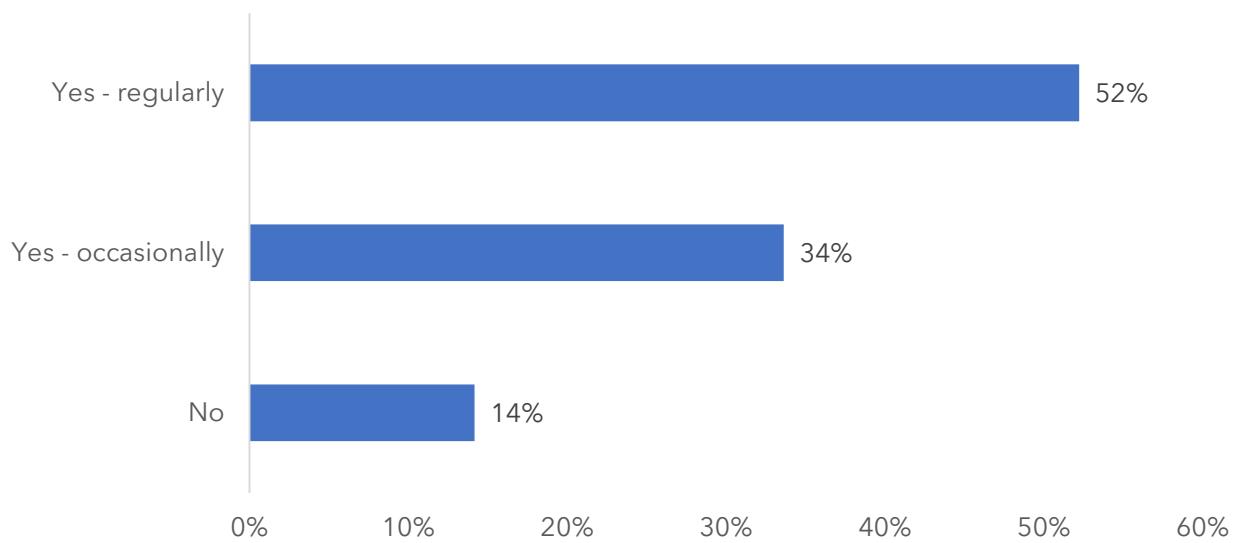
Figure C.19: Age distribution of Swimming Pool Users



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N= 226

Just over half (52%) of respondents said they use the pool(s) regularly (i.e., multiple times a week), with 14% saying they don't use the swimming pool(s), **Figure C.20**.

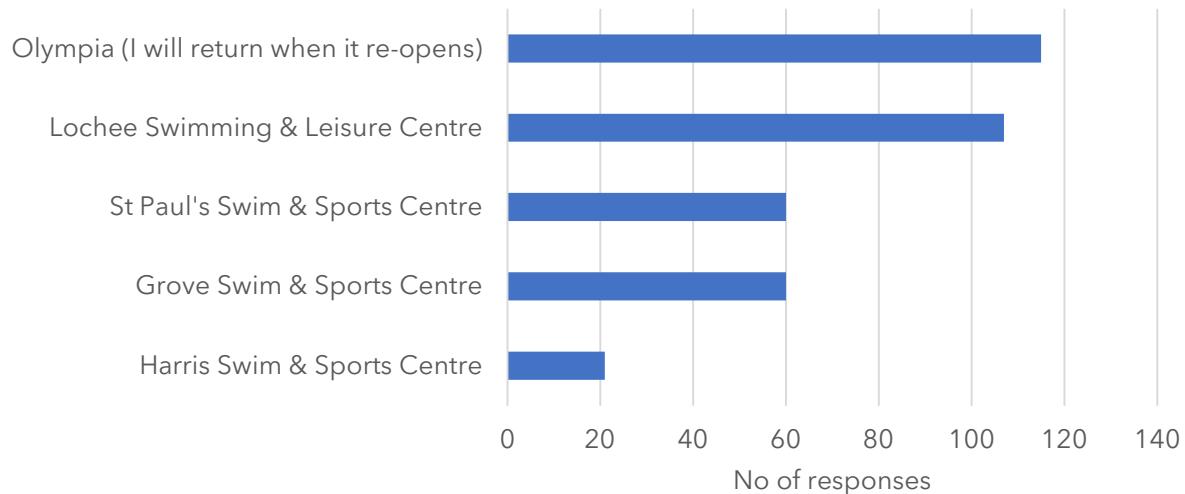
Figure C.20: Frequency of Swimming Visits



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N= 226

Most used pools were the Olympia (although it is currently closed), Lochee Swimming and Leisure Centre and St Paul's Swim & Sports Centre, **Figure C.21**.

Figure C.21: Most Frequently Used Swimming Pool Locations



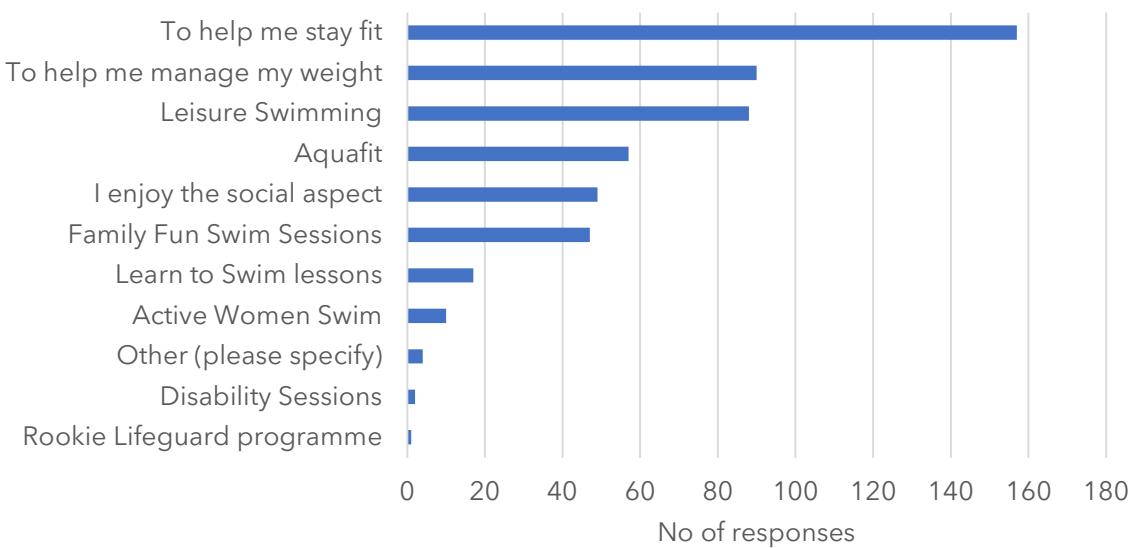
Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

Notes: Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question.

N=Unknown

The most common reason for participating in swimming was simply 'To help me stay fit', followed by 'To help me manage my weight' and thirdly as 'Leisure', **Figure C.22**.

Figure C.22: Participation in Different Swimming Activities



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)

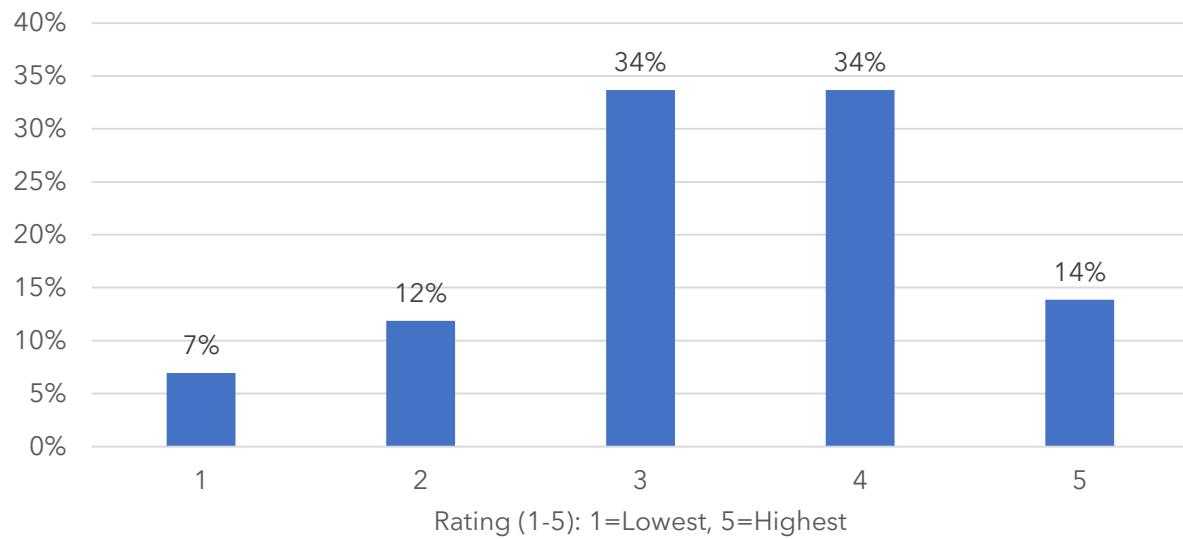
Notes: Respondents could provide multiple responses to this question.

N=Unknown

Respondents were asked to provide a rating for the swimming pools within LACD's ownership, with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 the highest. Responses were fairly mixed, although more positive than negative, with 48% of responses 4 or above, as opposed to 19% of responses being 1 or 2,

Figure C.23.

Figure C.23: Overall Swimming Pool Ratings



Source: LACD Customer Survey (2024)
N=202

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Appendix D: Data Tables

Table D.1: Life expectancy by local authority (2021-2023) (ranked female - low to high)

Local Authority	Females	Male
Glasgow City	78.3	73.6
East Ayrshire	78.6	75.2
North Lanarkshire	78.7	74.9
West Dunbartonshire	79.2	74.3
Dundee City	79.2	74.6
North Ayrshire	79.3	74.9
Inverclyde	79.6	75.5
Falkirk	79.7	76.2
Clackmannanshire	80	75.8
South Lanarkshire	80.3	76.3
Renfrewshire	80.6	76.1
Fife	80.7	77.1
West Lothian	80.7	76.8
Dumfries and Galloway	80.9	76.9
Aberdeen City	80.9	76.9
South Ayrshire	81.1	76.7
Na h-Eileanan Siar	81.2	76.4
Angus	81.2	78.2
Midlothian	81.6	77.8
Argyll and Bute	81.8	78.3
Stirling	81.9	78.3
Highland	81.9	77.4
City of Edinburgh	82	77.8
East Lothian	82	78.8
Moray	82	77.5
Scottish Borders	82.6	78.7
Perth and Kinross	82.6	78.8
Aberdeenshire	82.7	79.3
Orkney Islands	82.7	78.7
Shetland Islands	83.9	78.6
East Dunbartonshire	83.9	80.3
East Renfrewshire	84.5	81
Scotland (National Records of Scotland)	80.8	76.8

Table D.2: Primary 1 Body Mass Index statistics by local authority (School Year 2023-2024)

Local Authority	Healthy	At risk of underweight	At risk of overweight or obesity
Aberdeen City	77.3%	0.7%	22%
Aberdeenshire	78.9%	0.5%	20.6%
Angus	71.7%	0.7%	27.6%
Argyll and Bute	77.4%	1.4%	21.2%
City of Edinburgh	80.8%	2.8%	16.4%
Clackmannanshire	80.1%	2.6%	17.3%
Dumfries and Galloway	75.6%	1.4%	23.0%
Dundee City	74.3%	0.6%	25.1%
East Ayrshire	75.8%	0.3%	23.9%
East Dunbartonshire	81.7%	0.6%	17.7%
East Lothian	78.4%	0.6%	21.0%
East Renfrewshire	81.5%	1.5%	17%
Falkirk	76.3%	2.8%	20.9%
Fife	74.7%	1.1%	24.2%
Glasgow City	74.8%	1.5%	23.7%
Highland	74.9%	0.7%	24.4%
Inverclyde	74.0%	0.9%	25.1%
Midlothian	75.7%	1.4%	22.9%
Moray	77.7%	1.2%	21.1%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	74.4%	1.2%	24.4%
North Ayrshire	74.8%	1.3%	23.9%
North Lanarkshire	74.5%	0.6%	24.9%
Orkney Islands	67.9%	0.5%	31.6%
Perth and Kinross	75.6%	1.0%	23.4%
Renfrewshire	77.2%	0.8%	22.0%
Scotland	76.5%	1.2%	22.3%
Scottish Borders	78.1%	0.7%	21.2%
Shetland Islands	72.3%	1.9%	25.8%
South Ayrshire	75.9%	1.3%	22.8%
South Lanarkshire	76.2%	0.9%	22.9%
Stirling	79.5%	2.7%	17.8%
West Dunbartonshire	74.1%	0.3%	25.6%
West Lothian	77.0%	1.4%	21.6%

Source: Public Health Scotland