



Subject:	Leisure Transformation Programme Phase 1b – Operational Update
Date:	21 st February 2020
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services Noel Munnis, Partnership Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members' on the mobilisation and opening of Lisnasharragh and Brook leisure centres and to highlight the successes and challenges to date.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the information provided below
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The capital build programmes were delivered on time leading to the opening of Lisnasharragh LC on 2 nd December and Brook LC on 4 th December 2019. Both centres

operated on the basis of a 'soft opening' for the month of December and moved to full opening hours and programmes from the start of January 2020.

3.2 The centres were formally opened by the Lord Mayor on 8th January (Lisnasharragh) and 17th January (Brook).

3.3 Mobilising staff and resources to open two substantial new centres while simultaneously decommissioning two others ahead of closure (Avoniel LC and Brook AC) was a major undertaking. While the challenges were anticipated and included in the planning process, the actual impact was more difficult to manage than expected, largely due to the unprecedented level of enquiries, membership sales and daily customer footfall.

3.4 Dealing with record user numbers at both centres in the first two months has been compounded by (a) largely new centre teams, (b) a number of building/technology issues and (c) the need to build staff familiarity with the characteristics of brand new facilities.

3.5 Notwithstanding the challenges, both centres have been launched with outstanding successes in many operational, programming and business performance areas. However, there have been a number of operational issues that have required review and remedial actions to be put in place.

Headline successes:

3.6 **LISNASHARRAGH**

1. Achieving in excess of 40,000 visits per month. Almost double the next highest recorded monthly footfall recorded at Olympia LC.
2. Over 3,200 live pre-paid memberships. More than doubling the transferred total from Avoniel since opening.
3. Over 700 GLL swim school members, 13 aquatics clubs with weekly bookings and 16 different schools sending circa 1,500 pupils for swimming lessons every week.
4. Highest January sales figure (in excess of 900) on record for GLL in Belfast.
5. Group exercise programme with double the number of classes previously delivered in Avoniel plus 14 additional classes recently added in response to attendance and demand.
6. 40+ new staff recruited to launch the centre.

3.7

BROOK

1. Over 1,600 live pre-paid memberships. Grown by over 1,000 since opening. Still growing rapidly and approaching the second largest centre membership totals currently at circa 2,000 in Olympia and Better Gym Connswater.
2. Circa 250 GLL Swim School members from zero at the start of December.
3. 18 clubs with weekly bookings.
4. 7 different schools with weekly bookings.
5. 3G pitches (6 X 5-a-side and 2 full size) operating at maximum capacity at peak times.
6. Exceptional 'community buy in' through Mind-skills workshops, soccer tournaments pool parties (at maximum capacity), Celebrity football challenge, Family days and future bookings secured for Championship boxing and Wellbeing workshops.
7. 20+ new staff recruited to launch the centre.

3.8

It is fully acknowledged that there have been issues to resolve. Some have been fully resolved, others are in process and we are confident that we are aware of all areas where continual reviews and improvements are required.

Headline challenges:

3.9

LISNASHARRAGH

1. Car park capacity is not meeting demand. Some traffic management and safety issues have emerged since opening.

Action taken: The car park capacity is limited by the site footprint. There is currently 60 spaces plus 12 accessible spaces. By the end of February the car park will be completely resurfaced and remarked to include improve speed signage, a 'one way system, speed ramps enhanced signage to improve safety at the entrance and exit gates, parking controls (including physical features to stop parking on bends and planted areas). By adding a few additional spaces into the main car park layout and moving staff car parking to the rear compound we will be able to increase public parking capacity by circa 25%.

2. No spa facilities.

Update: The facility mix was approved by Council within the LTP planning process. There is no spa pool, sauna or steam room facilities at Lisnasharragh. Citywide members can access spa facilities at other sites across the city. Spa facilities for East

Belfast have been included in the approved facility mix for the new Templemore Baths which is due to open in 2022.

3. Cleanliness. Cleaning standards have not been at an acceptable level.
Action taken: BCC monitoring highlighted this issue. GLL senior management team took immediate action to rectify the problem. These issues were quickly and effectively addressed. Recent unannounced check visits have confirmed considerable improvements. Additional checks will continue on a weekly basis until the Council can be assured that cleaning standards have settled at the expected high level.
4. Pool programme
Update: Pool programmes have been balanced to cater for a wide range of user groups and different aquatics activities. These include public swimming, GLL swim school, swimming and water polo club training, swimming and water polo competitions, fitness lane swimming, school swimming, diving, scuba diving, canoeing, etc. The view is that the start up programme is balanced, fair and has as worked well. BCC and GLL will continue to monitor demand and the programme will remain under review and will always be subject to change. Following a few construction issues, the diving pool will open for public/casual board sessions at the end of February. These will be published as part of the pool programme.
5. Ticketing and entry control. During the initial few weeks, lengthy queues developed at the reception desk and at the entry gates. Alongside a few minor technical issues the main cause was exceptionally high throughput and unfamiliarity with the system by both staff and customers.
Action taken: Entry gates, fast pay kiosks, GLL member APP and reception/online bookings are all now fully operational. Front of house staff now have key fobs to remotely activate the gates if problems arise. Customer flows have settled significantly during February and frequent management observation sessions confirm that customers are using the fast entry options. This has significantly speed up access, reduced queues and substantially reduced the number of related complaints received.
6. Communications. A substantial number of complaints were received, particularly during December, in relation to difficulties contacting the centre by phone, poor query

response times and the provision of accurate and consistent information not being relayed by centre staff.

Action taken: These issues have been partly resolved and it is acknowledged that there is still work to be done in this area. There is no single action that can fully resolved these issues. Solutions lie in how a number of different changes are put in place as each in turn will have a positive impact on the overall customer communications experience. Changes to the phone system have been made to provide a divert option for known customer services. The gate system, fast pay kiosks and GLL APP are now fully functioning and have reduced demand on reception to manageable levels. Staff training has been reviewed and a more robust process for disseminating information should address the accuracy and consistency of customer messaging.

7. Public WiFi access. Due to technical difficulties, public access WiFi was not available when the centre opened.

Update: This has now been resolved and WiFi is now available. A new high speed fibre broadband service is currently being installed across the Council estate. This will further enhance the download speed and coverage when it goes live later in 2020.

8. Group exercise class access. A number of complaints were received in relation to the range and number of group exercise classes available. Including the number of customer spaces available.

Update: The 'start up' group exercise programme launched in December was always intended to develop and grow. At the start of January, Lisnasharragh had more than double the number of classes previously offered at Avoniel. A further 14 classes have been added during February. It is anticipated that the programme will continue to grow to utilise and justify the three excellent group exercise studios available.

3.10

BROOK

1. Noise complaints regarding external alarms and announcements. Early morning alarm testing is required within H&S legislation and industry best practice.

Action taken: Necessary alarm testing has been moved from 6.45am to 10.00am to avoid noise nuisance for local residents in the early part of the day. Further reductions have been made to the number and type of announcement relayed to

external areas at the centre. This will remain under review until an acceptable compromise has been reached.

2. Public WiFi access. Due to technical difficulties, public access WiFi was not available when the centre opened.

Update: As above for Lisnasharragh

3. Lights to original (Old Brook) 3G pitch. During the first few Weeks after opening the flood lights to the original 3G pitch were operated from the old building. In addition to this a number of flood light units were cutting out. This was unrelated to the new build.

Update: Relocating the control panel to the new building took a little time to design and plan. The lights are now controlled from the new building and the system allows for the lights to be switched on and off without the need for staff to walk 200m to the old building for each booking. The flood light maintenance issue has been investigated and BCC facility maintenance section will be replacing the faulty units.

4. IT connectivity issues. Technical teething problems resulted in problems related to accessing membership details, gate access operations and booking platforms.

Update: This has now been resolved and the system is fully operational. This has significantly speeded up customer enquiry and sales processes and reduced the number of related complaints received.

3.11

Next steps

Through contract governance systems and performance monitoring programmes already in place, the Council has the processes and means to continue to monitor performance at all BCC leisure facilities. Council officers work closely on a daily basis with GLL. We will continue to independently monitor service outputs and customer feedback and we are confident that as issues arise they will be quickly and effectively addressed.

3.12

Communications & Public Relations

Some of the challenges and issues highlighted above have been circulating on social media and the Council has received some formal complaints. These are being dealt with jointly by GLL and BCC as they arise.

3.13	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None
3.14	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None