	Cabinet 8 September 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy
	Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure (Councillor Neil Nerva)
Tri Borough Leisure Contract Procurement	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Eugene Minogue, Interim Head of Active Wellbeing (Leisure) 07355 611719 eugene.minogue@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for Brent to withdraw from the current Tri-Borough leisure procurement with Ealing and Harrow and instead commence a standalone procurement for Vale Farm Sports Centre. The new procurement will be based on a five-year agency agreement until 2031 to ensure continuity of service and strengthen local control.
- 1.2 This approach aligns with the Council's strategic direction to move from a traditional leisure model towards an integrated Active Wellbeing approach, placing Brent at the forefront of this national shift and preparing the ground for a single, borough-wide model from 2031.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to withdraw Brent from the current Tri-Borough leisure procurement with Ealing and Harrow.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees to commence a standalone procurement for Vale Farm Sports Centre, based on a five-year agency agreement model until 2031.

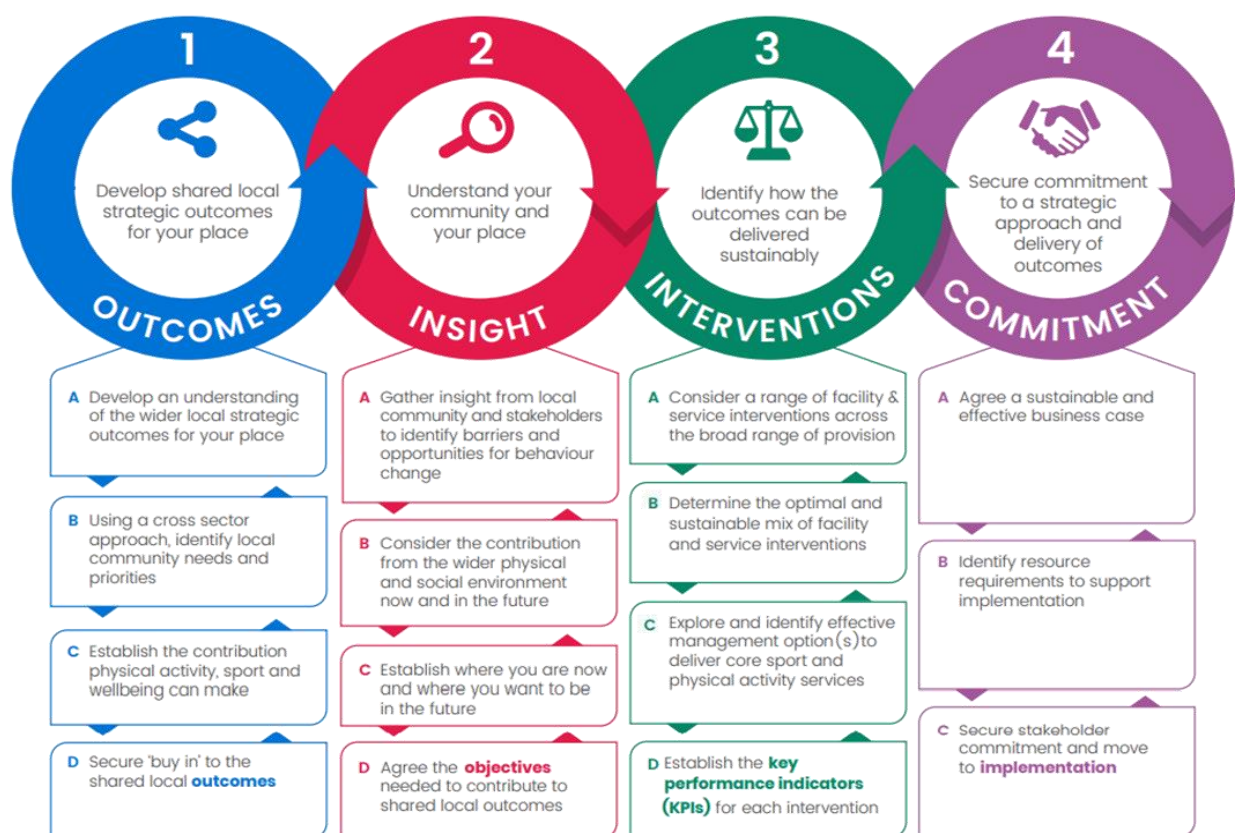
- 2.3 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure, to finalise the procurement process and award the contract, subject to legal advice and the Council's governance procedures.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

- 3.1.1 Providing high-quality, affordable opportunities to be active is central to Brent's vision for a healthier borough. These services help residents of all ages to be and stay active, support physical and mental wellbeing, and bring communities together.
- 3.1.2 The Council's strategic ambition is to move beyond a traditional leisure contract towards a broader Active Wellbeing approach, where facilities are integrated with health, prevention and community priorities. The Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM), including Sport England's Leisure Services Delivery Guidance (LSDG) and other strategies, will provide the evidence base for this shift. Through this process, all future delivery models - including insourcing - will be fully appraised so Members can make an informed decision on the best long-term operating model from 2031 for Brent's residents and communities.
- 3.1.3 This report sets out a clear way forward for Vale Farm Sports Centre. By moving from the Tri-Borough procurement to a standalone procurement, we can ensure continuity of service for residents and communities, while strengthening local control over pricing, programming and investment. The standalone procurement will provide the stability needed while we prepare for an integrated borough-wide model from 2031, when Willesden and the new Bridge Park can be aligned with Vale Farm.
- 3.1.4 The proposal supports several Borough Plan 2023-27 priorities:
- A Healthier Brent, by ensuring continued access to leisure and physical activity infrastructure that contributes to physical and mental wellbeing, and supports Brent's long-term shift to a preventative, place-based approach to health;
 - Prosperity and Stability, through the opportunity to secure a financially sustainable Active Wellbeing offer that maximises income, improves operational efficiency, and aligns with wider strategic investment;
 - Thriving Communities, by shaping a more coherent, inclusive and community-responsive Active Wellbeing offer across the borough;
 - A Cleaner, Greener Future, by supporting future delivery models that prioritise energy efficiency, environmental sustainability and active travel integration.
- 3.1.5 The approach also aligns with Brent's Active Wellbeing ambitions, Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27, and Climate Emergency Strategy 2021-2030. It reflects the Council's strategic aim of integrating all major Active Wellbeing (leisure) facilities into a single borough-wide model from 2031, informed by the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM).

3.1.6 The Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) is Sport England's nationally recognised framework. It provides the evidence and structure needed to make coordinated, long-term decisions about what to invest in, where, why, and for whom.



3.2 Background

3.2.1 In June 2024, Cabinet approved Brent's participation in the Tri-Borough leisure procurement with Ealing and Harrow, covering Vale Farm Sports Centre for a new contract from Spring 2026. This approach was intended to secure economies of scale and share procurement resources.

3.2.2 Since that decision, it has become clear that the Tri-Borough procurement does not provide the necessary legal or contractual assurances for Brent. Specifically, the current procurement does not allow the Council to:

- include Willesden Sports Centre and/or the new Bridge Park Leisure Centre in the contract from 2031 (as set out in paragraph 3.2.11 of the June 2024 Cabinet report); and
- unconditionally exit the contract in 2031 without penalty (as set out in paragraph 3.2.12 of the same report), without incurring procurement law risk.

3.2.3 These constraints are significant. They prevent Brent from aligning all three major Active Wellbeing (leisure) facilities into a single, borough-wide model from 2031, coinciding with the expiry of the Willesden PFI and the planned opening of the new Bridge Park Leisure Centre.

- 3.2.4 The Tri-Borough procurement would also reduce Brent's autonomy. A joint contract awarded across three boroughs would limit Brent's influence on specification, pricing, programming, branding and income retention.
- 3.2.5 Since the original Tri-Borough arrangements were agreed more than a decade ago, the policy context has shifted. Brent is pursuing an Active Wellbeing approach focused on prevention, tackling inequalities, health equity and climate action, supported by the Borough Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Climate Emergency Strategy. Active Wellbeing goes beyond managing leisure facilities, by focusing on prevention, tackling health inequalities and supporting community outcomes through activity, inclusion and system partnerships. This places Brent at the forefront of the national shift from traditional leisure to Active Wellbeing, moving beyond a facility-based model to one that embeds prevention and equity in community life. It also reflects Cabinet's June 2024 requirement to secure flexibility for 2031, which now aligns with Brent's ambition to lead nationally on the transition to Active Wellbeing.
- 3.2.6 Brent's current leisure facilities are fragmented, with multiple operating arrangements. Vale Farm is the only site within the Tri-Borough procurement, limiting Brent's influence and leverage. A standalone procurement provides the opportunity to reduce this fragmentation over time and move towards a single, borough-wide model that can later incorporate other facilities.
- 3.2.7 Legal advice confirms that Brent may withdraw from the Tri-Borough process on strategic grounds and proceed with a new standalone procurement. Preparatory work already undertaken through the Tri-Borough process, including market insight and draft documentation, can be reused, reducing delivery risk. While some costs cannot be recovered, the work to date strengthens Brent's preparedness for a standalone procurement.
- 3.2.8 Importantly, a standalone five-year agency agreement aligns with Brent's strategic horizon to 2031, when the Willesden PFI expires and the new Bridge Park Leisure Centre is due to be open. This provides a clear pathway towards a single, borough-wide model across Brent's facilities from 2031 onwards.
- 3.2.9 Alongside this procurement, the Council has commenced a borough-wide strategic review of play, physical activity, leisure, sport and recreation provision, informed by a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM).

This will include the development of a new:

- Facility Planning Model (FPM)
- Built Facilities Strategy (BFS)
- Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)
- Play and Recreation Facilities Strategy (PFS)
- Supporting infrastructure and condition surveys

This work will fill critical gaps in the Council's evidence base, reduce strategic and investment risk, and unlock internal and external capital and revenue funding. The SOPM will also strengthen the Council's position in the upcoming Local Plan refresh, reduce the risk of Sport England or statutory objections to major planning applications, and support the borough's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

As part of the SOPM, the Council will apply Sport England's Leisure Services Delivery Guidance (LSDG) to appraise future delivery models. This will include consideration of insourcing, alongside agency, concession and hybrid approaches. This evidence-based appraisal will ensure Cabinet has clear options ahead of the 2031 decision on a single, borough-wide model.

3.2.10 This procurement is not simply about securing the continued operation of Vale Farm Sports Centre. It marks the first stage in Brent's five-year transition from traditional leisure to an Active Wellbeing model. The Council is therefore seeking an operator who can deliver continuity at Vale Farm while also demonstrating how their approach can help Brent prepare for a single, integrated model from 2031, when Willesden Sports Centre and the new Bridge Park will come into scope.

Bidders will be expected to show how they can:

- embed prevention, inclusion and health equity in day-to-day delivery;
- work in partnership with the Council, health and community stakeholders to support wider Active Wellbeing outcomes
- work as system partners with health, education and community services
- contribute ideas and innovation that will strengthen Brent's readiness for the integrated 2031 model; and
- contribute insight and operational learning that will inform the Council's future LSDG appraisal of delivery models.

This approach provides an immediate contract opportunity while signalling the Council's long-term ambition to establish Brent as a national leader in Active Wellbeing and giving operators the chance to shape this model ahead of 2031.

3.2.11 In summary, the Tri-Borough procurement no longer represents the best option for the Council. A standalone procurement provides legal certainty, stronger local control, better financial outcomes and alignment with the Council's strategic priorities to 2031.

It is the first step in a five-year transition towards the Council's ambition to establish a single, borough-wide Active Wellbeing model from 2031, incorporating Willesden and the new Bridge Park. The standalone procurement provides the sovereignty and flexibility required to facilitate this shift, allowing Brent to shape a new model of provision rooted in prevention, health equity and community outcomes, and to demonstrate national leadership in the move beyond traditional leisure, sharing Brent's learning with the wider Active Wellbeing network. This process will keep all delivery models, including insourcing, under active consideration through the SOPM and LSDG work.

3.3 Implementation and Timeline

3.3.1 If Cabinet approves a standalone procurement, Council will issue a tender notice in October 2025, with a target contract award in January 2026. This timetable allows a six-week mobilisation and a March 2026 contract start.

3.3.2 It is anticipated that the procurement will proceed using the Competitive Flexible Procedure. This route allows negotiation on the project detail including the

terms and conditions and provides the Council with the flexibility needed to finalise a robust contract.

- 3.3.3 Delivery of this timetable is contingent on delegated authority to award (see Recommendation 2.3), immediate legal and procurement input following Cabinet, and reuse of documentation already prepared under the Tri-Borough procurement process.
- 3.3.4 The overall timetable ensures a new contract is in place for March 2026, securing continuity of service at Vale Farm. The Council will also use this procurement to test and embed new ways of working that reflect Active Wellbeing principles, ensuring the operator contributes to the wider transition towards a single, borough-wide model from 2031.
- 3.3.5 There is a recognised risk to continuity of service if the procurement timetable were to slip. This risk will be managed through close programme oversight, early mobilisation planning, and the allocation of dedicated resources, with defined contingency arrangements in place.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The proposal in this report has been developed through engagement with senior internal stakeholders, including the Chief Executive, Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, other Corporate Directors and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure.
- 4.2 Wider engagement will commence as part of the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM). This will involve residents, community organisations, health partners and stakeholders across the borough, and will shape future service design, facility planning and alignment beyond 2026.
- 4.3 As part of the Vale Farm procurement process, engagement will also take place with current and potential users of the site to ensure their views inform the specification and delivery approach.
- 4.4 No ward-specific or statutory consultation has been required at this stage, as the proposal relates to a borough-wide procurement decision. Ward members will be engaged at appropriate points during the SOPM process and any future site-specific decisions.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 It is not anticipated that there will be any significant direct financial impacts arising from Brent withdrawing from the Tri-Borough procurement.
- 5.2 Some costs incurred to date through Brent's participation in the Tri-Borough process cannot be recovered, although the preparatory work undertaken strengthens the Council's preparedness for a standalone procurement.
- 5.3 The standalone procurement will be based on a five-year agency agreement. This model is expected to provide financial advantages compared to the concession contract approach used in the Tri-Borough procurement. These

include potential VAT benefits, greater retention of income, and improved financial oversight. Any efficiencies achieved will strengthen the Council's financial position and enable further reinvestment in prevention and community wellbeing, consistent with the Council's Active Wellbeing ambitions.

- 5.4 Detailed financial modelling, including assessment of affordability, mobilisation costs and any revenue implications, will be undertaken as part of the procurement process. The outcome will be reported through the Council's financial governance processes and confirmed prior to contract award.
- 5.5 In parallel, the Council is investing in the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) and supporting strategies as a spend-to-save initiative. This is designed to reduce financial and planning risk, support the Local Plan, and unlock potential external investment from Sport England and other partners. The SOPM process will also strengthen the financial case for future alignment across Active Wellbeing provision, supporting Brent's strategic shift away from a traditional leisure service towards Active Wellbeing model, rooted in prevention and proportionate universalism, and positioning the borough as an early adopter of the national Active Wellbeing agenda.
- 5.6 The LSDG options appraisal within the SOPM work will set out the comparative financial implications of different delivery models - including insourcing - to inform the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and a single, borough-wide model from 2031.
- 5.7 At this stage there are no direct implications for the Council's MTFS. Any amendments required as a result of the standalone procurement will be managed through the Council's established financial governance and budget-setting processes. Successful delivery of the standalone procurement is contingent on sufficient dedicated Legal, Procurement and Finance resourcing, alongside external specialist support already commissioned.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The Council has the legal power to enter leisure contracts under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the general power of competence in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 6.2 The Tri-Borough procurement is led by the London Borough of Harrow, using Harrow's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, as agreed by Brent Cabinet in June 2024.
- 6.3 Paragraph 3.2.11 of the Cabinet report dated 17 June 2024 stated that *"Officers will explore the possibility of including these two leisure centres in the scope of the Tri-Borough contract as options that the Council may exercise at some future time."* Paragraph 3.2.12 further stated that *"Officers will explore the potential for a break clause for Brent to facilitate the alignment in 3.2.11."*
- 6.4 The Tri-Borough procurement does not allow for the inclusion of the additional leisure centres as per paragraph 3.2.11, or for a break clause for Brent as per paragraph 3.2.12 of the June 2024 Cabinet report.

- 6.5 The standalone procurement for Vale Farm Sports Centre will constitute a high-value public services contract. It is anticipated that it will be conducted under the Procurement Act 2023 using the Competitive Flexible Procedure and will comply with Brent's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. External legal advisors have been appointed to ensure full compliance.
- 6.6 It is not anticipated that Brent's withdrawal would prevent the London Boroughs of Harrow and Ealing from proceeding with the current procurement. Any implications arising from Brent's withdrawal will be managed by Harrow and Ealing within their roles as contracting authorities.
- 6.7 The standalone procurement will be based on a five-year agency agreement. This requires clear legal structuring of roles, risk allocation, income treatment and VAT. External legal advisors are supporting the Council to confirm the robustness of the agency agreement model and compliance with all regulatory and tax requirements.
- 6.8 The legal risks associated with the likelihood of a legal challenge being made against Brent's withdrawal from the Tri-Borough procurement and of any such challenge being successful have been assessed and are considered low. The Council must also have regard to its best value duty under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999, demonstrating economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 6.9 The award of the new contract will be subject to legal review prior to completion, in line with the Council's governance procedures.
- 6.10 The LSDG appraisal will also consider the legal and governance implications of insourcing and other models, including employment, pensions, VAT and the capacity required by the Council to act as the direct client. This will include assessment of the resources, skills and systems needed to manage day-to-day operations, risk, compliance and performance, which would otherwise sit with an external operator.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 In exercising its functions the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010).
- 7.2 The proposal in this report relates to the procurement route for leisure and does not involve immediate changes to service provision or access. No adverse impacts are identified at this stage. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the procurement process to inform the contract specification.
- 7.3 The specification will therefore ask operators not only to provide inclusive services at Vale Farm, but to show how their approach over the next five years can reduce inequalities and build community capacity in line with Brent's Active Wellbeing ambitions.

- 7.4 The Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) will embed equity and inclusion as core principles, ensuring Brent's future Active Wellbeing offer is responsive to community needs and targeted at reducing inequalities in access, experience and outcomes, consistent with the principle of proportionate universalism - universal access with scale and intensity proportionate to need.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 The Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and is committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions from its operations by 2030. Leisure centres are a significant source of energy use and future contracts must support decarbonisation objectives.
- 8.2 The proposed standalone procurement for Vale Farm provides an opportunity to embed environmental performance requirements into the contract, including energy efficiency, building operation, sustainable transport access and waste reduction.
- 8.3 The Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) and supporting strategies will integrate sustainability and climate resilience in all future facility and service design. This includes alignment with the Local Plan, Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Climate Emergency Strategy, and will ensure facilities promote active travel, low-carbon operations and access to green and blue infrastructure.
- 8.4 Future investment at Bridge Park, Vale Farm and Willesden will be expected to deliver modern, low-carbon facilities that meet high environmental standards, contribute to climate resilience and align with Sport England frameworks.
- 8.5 The future specification for Active Wellbeing will also require operators to support the Council's wider environmental objectives. This will include participation in decarbonisation planning, energy benchmarking and integration with place-based sustainability initiatives.
- 8.6 Through Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund (Phase II), the Council has now secured approximately £180,000 (at no cost to the Council) for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels at Vale Farm Sports Centre. This investment will reduce the site's energy consumption and costs, improve its environmental performance, and make the facility more attractive to potential operators in the proposed standalone procurement.

9.0 Human Resources and Property Considerations

- 9.1 There are no immediate human resources implications arising from this report. Current leisure services are operated by an external contractor, and no changes to employment arrangements are proposed at this stage, with no redundancies arising. Should this change, appropriate consultation and legal advice will be undertaken in accordance with TUPE and Council procedures.
- 9.2 The standalone procurement relates specifically to the continued operation of Vale Farm Sports Centre, which is a Council-owned asset. Under an agency agreement model the operator may be granted a licence to occupy rather than

a lease. No changes to property ownership are proposed, and any property arrangements will be reviewed as part of contract development.

- 9.3 Future phases of the Council's Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) will inform investment decisions across Bridge Park, Willesden, and Vale Farm, including potential refurbishment or reprovision. These sites will be subject to further feasibility, legal and property advice as part of future business cases.

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 There are no statutory communication or consultation requirements arising directly from this report.
- 10.2 The decision to withdraw from the Tri-Borough procurement represents a change from a previously approved Cabinet position and may prompt questions from stakeholders. A clear communications narrative will be developed to explain the rationale, emphasising continuity of service, stronger local control, and alignment with Brent's Active Wellbeing objectives and the wider national shift away from traditional leisure. The narrative will make clear that this is not simply a contract change, but the start of the Brent's wider transition to Active Wellbeing, and that all future delivery options - including insourcing - will be evaluated through SOPM and LSDG work.
- 10.3 Internal and political engagement will continue throughout the procurement and SOPM development process. Ward members and senior stakeholders will be updated at key points, particularly where future decisions affect site-specific service design or capital investment.
- 10.4 Public messaging will emphasise continuity of service at Vale Farm and the Council's commitment to inclusive, sustainable and high-quality Active Wellbeing provision across the borough, positioning Brent as a leader in this national pivot and demonstrating the Council's commitment to inclusive, evidence-based decisions that support residents and communities.

Related document(s) for reference:

[Cabinet report 17 June 24 - Vale Farm Procurement Option](#)

Report sign off:

Rachel Crossley
Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy