

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Environment and Community Panel		
DATE:	22 nd September 2026		
TITLE:	Leisure and Culture Service Impact Update		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Update		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Cllr Ring - Business, Cllr Rust - Communities, Cllr Lintern - Culture		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Interim Assistant Director of Leisure and Culture		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
To update the Panel on the reach, performance and impact of the Council's in-house Alive leisure and culture service during 2025/26, and outline its principal priorities and decision points for the next six months. The report enables members to review the service's contribution to prevention, reduced health inequalities, community participation, inclusion, local resilience and place.
KEY ISSUES:
• Alive is delivering at scale, with 1.5 million attendances, £9 million+ income and £7.1 million social value. • Active Wellbeing is supporting prevention, with 1,450 participants referred through 35 health and community partners. • Community programmes are reaching residents across 1,697 sessions, 18 programmes and 23 venues. • Children and families remain a major focus, with 41,000 child engagements and 30,000+ holiday attendances. • Independent assurance confirms strong service quality, with health and safety and Quest scores above benchmark. • Customer advocacy is strong, with Corn Exchange and leisure NPS results ahead of sector benchmarks. • External recognition confirms the service's growing reputation and impact. • The forward programme will deliver the Racket and Community Sports Hub and progress recommendations for a new Lynnsport pool. • Planned improvements will support key leisure and cultural assets across the borough.
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
The report is presented to the Environment and Community panel for oversight and scrutiny.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
1. Note Alive's 2025/26 performance, reach and impact. 2. Note its contribution to prevention, health inequalities, access, inclusion, quality and social value.

3. Endorse the service's outcome-focused direction and next six-month priorities.
4. Note forthcoming decisions on the Racket and Community Sports Hub and Lynnsport Pool, including the March 2027 pool business case.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The reported results demonstrate substantial reach, income generation and social value, alongside targeted support for residents facing health, confidence or access barriers.
- The service is increasingly aligned with Council priorities for prevention, reduced health inequalities, resilient communities and place.
- Independent assurance, customer advocacy and external recognition provide evidence of service quality

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

This report provides a brief update on the performance, reach and impact of the Council's in-house Alive leisure and culture service during 2025/26.

Over the next six months, the service will focus on mobilising the West Norfolk Racket and Community Sports Hub, progressing the Lynnsport Pool business case, completing planned site improvements and supporting the continued development of key cultural assets, including Custom House and the Guildhall.

2. Monitoring Report

2.1 This monitoring report shows how far the Leisure and Culture service has developed since being brought back in-house to the Council. What was once a more traditional leisure and theatre operating model is now maturing into a broader, more connected service that supports health, wellbeing, participation, prevention, culture, learning and community connection across West Norfolk.

2.2 The figures in this report are important, but they only tell part of the story. Behind the attendances, income, social value, health referrals, events, school engagement and cultural participation is a service that is increasingly focused on outcomes - what our work means for residents, families, communities and partners. Since insourcing, we have been able to shape the service around local priorities and align it more closely with the Council's corporate objectives. This has allowed us to think differently about the service's scope and potential impact, linking our work more strongly to prevention, health inequalities, community resilience, place-making and the development of a local outcomes framework. This report marks an important step in that direction, moving from reporting what we deliver to demonstrating the difference we make.

2.3 Overall performance remains strong. The service recorded 1.5 million attendances, generated more than £9 million income and reported £7.1 million social value. Membership levels stood at 6,208 gym, swim and class members and 3,210 sports lesson members. .

2.4. 1,450 Active Wellbeing participants were supported through 35 referral partners, including cancer rehabilitation, falls prevention, inclusive activity, health checks and screening. Future monitoring should show performance against participation, referral and outcome targets, with trend information on participation levels, repeat engagement and progression into wider activity. Where possible, this should be benchmarked against comparable health referral, active wellbeing or public leisure prevention programmes.

2.5 The service delivered 41,000 child engagements, 1,475 PE lessons and activities, worked with more than 40 schools and recorded over 30,000 holiday attendances.

2.6 Independent assurance and customer feedback remain positive. The service achieved a 97% average health and safety score against an 83% national average, all leisure sites achieved "Very Good" through Quest, with "Excellent" ratings for Driving Participation, and customer advocacy was strong, with NPS 88 for the Corn Exchange against a UK performing-arts benchmark of 74 and NPS 45 for leisure against an England public-leisure benchmark of 28.

2.7 Community reach also remains significant, with 17,000 attendances across 1,697 sessions, 18 programmes and 23 venues, including rural and deprived communities. Future monitoring should continue to show how this reach changes over time, where provision is targeted, and how participation aligns with the Council's prevention, inclusion and health inequalities objectives.

2.8 The forward programme includes mobilisation of the £2.2 million West Norfolk Racket and Community Sports Hub, and completing the full feasibility work and bringing recommendations to Council on the delivery of a new Lynnsport pool. Other priorities include site refurbishments at Downham, KASET, Lynnsport Barn and Oasis, alongside Custom House go-live and Guildhall mobilisation.

3. Issues for the Panel to Consider

The Panel is invited to consider whether the reported performance provides sufficient assurance that the Alive leisure and culture service is delivering against the Council's priorities for prevention, health and wellbeing, inclusion, community access and place.

Members are invited to identify any specific issues, proposals or areas of focus that they would like officers to consider when future projects, investment proposals or service development reports are brought forward.

4. Corporate Priorities

This update supports the Council's corporate priorities by demonstrating how the in-house leisure and culture service contributes to healthier, more active and more resilient communities. The service supports prevention, reduces health inequalities and improves access to opportunities for residents across the borough, including children and families, older residents, people with long-term health conditions and communities facing barriers to participation.

The report also supports priorities around place, community wellbeing and value for money. The service generates significant income, delivers measurable social value, supports town centre and cultural activity, and provides trusted local facilities and programmes that help residents to stay active, connected and independent. Future projects, including the West Norfolk Racket and Community Sports Hub and Lynnsport Pool proposals, will continue to be developed in line with these priorities, ensuring investment is focused on resident outcomes, community benefit and long-term sustainability.

5. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial decisions arising from this update report. The report highlights the scale of the in-house service, including more than £9 million income and £7.1 million reported social value during 2025/26. Future projects and investment proposals, including the West Norfolk Racket and Community Sports Hub and Lynnsport Pool, will be subject to separate financial appraisal, business case development and approval through the Council's governance processes.

6. Any other Implications/Risks

The principal risks relate to demand, affordability, asset condition, delivery capacity and the ability to sustain service quality in a challenging operating environment. There are also risks associated with major project delivery, including cost inflation, programme delays and

benefits realisation. These risks will continue to be managed through service planning, performance monitoring, project governance and future decision reports where required.

7. Equal Opportunity Considerations

The service has a positive equality impact by supporting access to leisure, culture, health and wellbeing opportunities across the borough. This includes targeted work with children and families, older residents, people with long-term health conditions, disabled residents, rural communities and communities experiencing disadvantage. Future proposals will consider equality impacts in more detail where service changes, investment decisions or new projects are brought forward.

8. Environmental Considerations

There are no direct environmental implications arising from this update report. Future capital projects, refurbishments and service developments will need to consider environmental impact, energy efficiency, sustainability, climate resilience and whole-life operating costs as part of their business case and delivery planning.

9. Consultation

Alive Head Of Performance and Development, Alive Head of Health and Wellbeing, Alive Extended Management team.

10. Conclusion

The report demonstrates that the Alive leisure and culture service is delivering significant reach, income, social value and community impact, while supporting the Council's wider priorities for prevention, health and wellbeing, inclusion and place. The Panel is asked to note the update and identify any areas where further detail or future consideration would support Member oversight and service development.

11. Background Papers

Alive Annual Impact report 2025-2026 (Draft)