



Plymouth Active Leisure Month Two Progress Report

Section One Background and Context

In August 2021, Plymouth City Council's Cabinet approved the establishment of a Local Authority Trading Company for the delivery of the Leisure Management Contract after being delivered for the previous ten years by Everyone Active.

This followed a detailed review of the options available and the development of Active Devon's 'Towards an Active Plymouth' report, which includes an aim for Plymouth to be the most active coastal city in England by 2034.

Within this context the establishment of the Local Authority Trading Company (Plymouth Active Leisure: PAL) was brought about to ensure a greater focus on:

- Making Plymouth the most active coastal city in England by 2034
- Tackling health inequalities and supporting our most vulnerable residents.
- Making the most of our natural environment with Tinside and Mount Wise Pools part of the National Marine Park vision for the waterfront.

Section Two Implementation

Following the Cabinet decision a Programme Team was established with a dedicated Programme Manager and representation from finance, human resources, procurement, legal, communications and DELT. Additional Support was brought in from Fathom Consultancy who had worked on the establishment of Leisure LATCs elsewhere and from TA6 who have extensive experience on Leisure website development and marketing.

The Programme Team oversaw a significant work programme that included:

- Human Resources- A work stream around the transfer of staff from Everyone Active to PAL in line with TUPE legislation. A large amount of due diligence was undertaken and extensive staff engagement, which included group and individual meetings, regular letters and FAQs. As part of this process an Admissions Agreement had to be developed for admitted body status of the Local Government Pension Scheme. In addition new contracts had to be drawn up for self-employed workers.
- Financial Systems- Ensuring financial processes were in place including VAT registration, Bank Accounts, Chip and Pin and Direct Debit Facilities etc.

- ICT- Extensive programme of works that included new ticketing/membership/ booking systems which involved procuring Gladstone MRM for the companies Leisure Management and Point of Sales System. Development of a new website www.plymouthactive.co.uk was also undertaken. Ensuring network hardware, Wi-Fi was in place and issuing and configuring devices such as laptops and mobile phones.
- Health & Safety- Development of new operating policies and procedures covering areas such as Emergency Action Plans, Fire Strategy, Risk Assessments and COSHH.
- Sales & Marketing- Development of the PAL name and brand. New website and the engagement of TA6 to develop a three stage marketing strategy; existing members, ex-members and new member acquisition.
- Procurement- Over 150 supplies and services needed to be procured covering such items as merchandise, pool and cleaning chemicals, catering and vending, servicing of lifts and equipment, and the purchasing of staff uniforms.
- Plympton Pop Up Gym- Transferred to PAL on the 17th March 2022 with submission of planning permission to support a two year lease.

As part of the transfer, Scrutiny undertook a review on the 2nd March 2022 and noted the progress but highlighted risks in the amount of activity still to be completed by the 31st March 2022. In response, the Programme team developed weekly sitrep reporting to both Plymouth City Council Corporate Management Team and PAL Board of Directors.

As planned the transfer of the Leisure Centres to PAL went live 1st April 2022. In total 225 staff transferred over from Everyone Active. All staff who were expected to transfer in line with the TUPE process did so. All centres opened in line with the agreed and existing opening times. New internal and external signage went up across the sites and reception at PLC had a revamp. On the weekend of the opening Plymouth Life Centre also hosted a Plymouth Leander gala. The website went live as planned a few days before, however on the day there were some initial issues with the configuration of members email addresses. This was resolved on the early afternoon of the 1st, but did initially lead to an increase in telephone calls and visits to the centres. The App did not go live on the day but followed a few days later.

Section Three
Two Month Review- Assurance and Governance

Prior to the transfer Plymouth Active Leisure was registered with Companies House and the Article of Associations were agreed. The Plymouth Active Leisure Board has now been established and initially has been meeting on a fortnightly basis. Ruth Harrell, has been appointed Chair with the other Directors being David Northey, Kim Brown and Holly Golden. Two non-executive directors who are industry experts are in the process of being appointed. In addition Louise Kelley has been appointed as Interim Chief Operating Officer and Julian Egan as Assistant Interim Chief Operating Officer.

It is recognised that PAL is a new company and so in addition to regular Board meetings both Plymouth City Council and PAL have ensured additional assurance measures are put in place. Several audits and inspections have taken place or are currently taking place.

Health and Safety Audit

A six-day external audit was carried out during early June at all sites, including the outdoor pools, by Right Directions (a nationally recognised sport and leisure body). PAL are still waiting for the final report but early feedback suggests all sites performed strongly and no business critical issues were raised. Areas of strength included safeguarding, staff training/ inductions and written procedures/ system of work. Some areas for improvement included; general housekeeping, contractors' access and control of ladders. Once the report is received an action plan will be developed with future reviews already commissioned.

Food Hygiene

The café at the Life Centre has received a food hygiene rating of 4 following a recent inspection. Recommendations have since been addressed and refresher training for the relevant staff has been scheduled.

Devon Audit Partnership review

In addition the Board has commissioned the Devon Audit Partnership to carry out an independent review of PAL. This review is being carried out in a phased manner and has already commenced with a desktop review of documentation in relation to governance and operational risks. This will be extended into an extensive review of on-site processes and checking that appropriate controls are in place and embedded across the organisation. Later in the year, a further review will focus on how PAL is delivering against strategic outcomes.

Section Four Two Month Review- Operational Activity
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Since the 1 April, PAL has achieved the following membership sales:

- 236 annual memberships
- 1,863 memberships of which 932 were new members

This brings the numbers of current members to:

Plymouth Life Centre	5,132 (of which 2,191 swim and dive lessons)
Brickfields Sports Centre	449
Plympton Pool and Gym	1,424 (of which 867 swim lessons)

A core aim of PAL's management of the City's leisure centres is for the service to be more agile and aligned to the City's priorities, which includes improving access for under-represented groups and targeting the most vulnerable members of the community. Initiatives have included the promotion of care leavers access to leisure, which is a first for the City's leisure facilities and is aligned to the Council's Statutory Corporate Parenting role. The programme is being launched as part of the Sky's The Limit week and will be operational from 1st of July 2022. In addition PAL has supported people from Ukraine with discounted access and have also supported a local FANS (Free Access for National Sportspeople) scheme helping the city's top athletes with their training requirements.

Of the 5 PAL operated leisure facilities, Brickfields has been the slowest to recover to pre-Covid attendance levels, and community engagement prior to the transfer of the service indicated that some aspects of the activity offer did not align to the community needs. Listening and understanding the community is at the forefront of a 6 month discovery phase, which will also include gathering insight data, and undertaking a facility mapping exercise. Using the data, there is a commitment to re-position a community leisure offer for Brickfields in the autumn, which supports the health and well-being outcomes of the community.

Section Five
Two Month Review- HR & OD

As over 225 staff joined the new organisation all staff have had to attend an extensive induction programme. PAL has also reviewed and implemented a new DBS policy and process. A new staff handbook has been put in place and several staff have attended additional training in safeguarding and food hygiene.

Although all eligible staff transferred over there was number of vacancies and PAL have been actively recruiting to those. These include Swim Teachers, Lifeguards, Cleaners and Reception staff. New hourly rates for swimming and diving teachers have been introduced to assist with recruitment as the rate had not been uplifted by Everyone Active and was below the market rates. In addition an apprenticeship programme is currently being developed with a view to initially supporting six level 2 NVQ apprentices in a number of different roles.

The PAL Board has now agreed a draft Trade Union Agreement and this is subject to further discussion with the Trade Unions at a scheduled meeting before the end of June. The Board has also been asked to consider a pay award which will be discussed at the same meeting.

Section Six
Finance

During the transfer PALs Bank Application was delayed and was not in place until February 2022, which had a number of consequences. Principally this was around PALs ability to complete Direct Debit runs. As such Everyone Active were asked to complete the run in April on behalf of PAL.

At month two the service is forecasting a break even position. However a number of risks have already been identified that will need to be monitored and mitigated as the year progresses. For example the electricity cost per kilowatt hour has more than doubled and, although this does not make up all of the electricity costs, it is a significant proportion of it. This could result in an over spend on utilities in the region of £0.400m.

Inflation has also increased significantly, with estimates expecting it to reach 11% in the near future, and already there has been an increase in the cost of pool chemicals that will have an adverse impact on the budget that was originally set. This inflationary increase will also affect all other areas of expenditure for the Leisure facilities.

Section Seven
Two Month Review Marketing and Communications

Website

PAL has received numerous comments regards how customer friendly and easy to navigate the website and online timetables are. However it has also received a number of comments from customers which have resulted in some early improvements including some additional pages and FAQs. Going forward there are plans to further develop the website and its content.

April – 100,652 individual views	75% of which were new views
May – 164,315 individual views	73% of which were new views

Marketing

PAL has delivered a successful launch and brand awareness campaign on-site and via social media. Paid and search adverts were targeted at three different audiences – Fitness Focussed, Non Exercisers and Active Seniors. The industry average CTR (link click through rate) for Google Search is around 5% and PAL achieved around 50%. The CPC (cost per link click) for a campaign like this, where the objective is to get people to the website, should be below £0.50 and PAL achieved around £0.04. The Industry average CTR for Facebook is around 1% and PAL achieved well above this for the Active Seniors and general audience they were targeting. The CPC was again well below the £0.50 industry average. In total the initial launch campaign reached 26,569 people.

PAL has also produced a promotional video, using local people, to showcase the facilities and activities on offer.

[We are here for you! - YouTube](#)

Social media

There are currently 1,668 followers to PAL's Facebook page. The average views per post are 98, with the highest being 391 views to date.

PAL has also set up an Instagram account (@plymouthactiveleisure), a Twitter account (@activeplymouth) and a You Tube channel.

The Plymouth Life Centre and Lido have been at the forefront of promoting Plymouth as a destination for hosting national and international sport and mass community engagement events. During the months of April and May Plymouth Active Leisure hosted; GB underwater hockey training camp; SW Regional Youth Swimming Championships and the International Futures Diving Cup with teams competing from 8 nations, whilst the Life Centre sports hall was hired for the Local Elections and Comic Con Festival. In particular the weekend of the 14th of May saw several thousand visitors to the Centre. More recently there was a mass community gathering at the Lido for a World Record attempt for the largest number of 'merfolk' in one place.

**Section Eight
National Marine Parks and Outdoor Pools**

The outdoor pools opened as scheduled for the early May Bank Holiday Monday. Although the weather was reasonable during May the water temperature at this time of year is still cold, which does affect attendances.

Tinside Lido – total attendances for May 2022	1,218 (average 40 per day)
Mount Wise Outdoor Pools – total attendances for May 2022	2,944 (average 98 per day)

As comparison May 2021 was the first time that the Pools had opened at the first May Bank Holiday in the 10 year contract. Lido attendances for May 2021 were 4805, and Mount Wise Pools 2537. So attendances for 2022 at Mount Wise is up whereas the Lido is down, however free swimming was offered during May 2021 as Plymouth Life Centre was closed.

During the 2022 season the Lido and Mount Wise Pools will play a pivotal role in the promotion of the National Marine Park, working with partners to attract new events and audiences. Tinside Lido and Cove offer great potential to better connect the city’s residents to the Ocean as exciting positive places for enjoyment and physical activity.

Since the beginning of May a significant focus has been the promotion and collaborative working to attract new events and audiences to the Lido. This summer over 24 events are planned at the Lido, ranging from come and try it activities such as snorkelling, SUP and scuba diving, and cultural events including open air cinema and live music. The Big Blue Splash and GB Sail Grand Prix are headline weekends packed full of activity, and for the first time ever, the Lido is set to become a music venue. Branded as ‘Live at the Lido’ the facility will welcome global artists and performers, spanning four weekend dates in July and August. They will be pioneering the use of the Tinside Lido Sun Terrace as never seen before.

**Section Nine
Risks and Issues**

Risk Description	Mitigations	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Rating
Rising Costs of Energy and Inflation Pressures , put financial pressures on PAL trading position.	Increase financial scrutiny through the appointment of additional financial support and quarter one and two budget reviews.	5	4	20

	Support sector in Lobbying Central Government for additional funding. Examine ways to increase income levels at all centres.			
Repairs and Maintenance- Difficulties in completing repairs and maintenance in a timely manner due to supply chain issues impact on the customer experience.	Ensure routine repairs and maintenance are completed in a timely manner. Weekly meetings to review outstanding repairs. Where possible put in temporary measures. Clear communications and messaging to customers.	4	4	16
Information Technology- Lack of timely IT support impacts on customer experience.	Regular meetings with DELT to ensure items are completed in a timely manner.	4	4	16

Section Ten
Priorities for the Next Six Months

It is acknowledged that Plymouth Active Leisure is still within the first quarter of its operation. Whilst progress has undoubtedly been made with some noticeable achievements there is still much to be done to develop the centres. Key priorities for the next 6 months of operation include:

- 1) Review of Memberships and prices to ensure that the strategic objectives for physical activity and sport for the City are met over the medium term and that the financial viability of PAL is maintained.
- 2) Implementation of Health and Safety Recommendations from the recent review
- 3) Commence review of organisational design review. This will cover such areas as structures, pay arrangements, culture, employee engagement, policies, career progression and development.
- 4) Development of PAL Business plan.
- 5) Progress the development of the Brickfields Centre to increase utilisation levels and promote greater inclusion and wellbeing opportunities.

- 6) Strengthen governance including establishing a stakeholder group which will be representative of the community, and appointing Non-Executive Directors.
- 7) Develop and grow good employee/industrial relationships.