5. Summary

This report provides a summary of operational activity at Aston-cum-Aughton Leisure Centre from its opening in September 2008 through to the end of January 2009.

6. Recommendations

Members receive the report and take note of current progress.
7. Proposals and Details

The first week of opening was extremely busy and throughput was greater than anticipated, as a result staff worked tirelessly to operate the facility and ensure there was adequate cover.

In terms of the activity programme, a considerable amount of effort has been focussed on the Swim Academy (learn to swim programme). Both the number of young people and the number of classes has increased but there remains a significant waiting list, which staff are working hard to reduce. Adult swimming lessons are also proving to be very popular.

Work with the local Early Years Learning Centre is facilitating lessons for parents and babies and sessions for people with special needs. These commenced on the 30th September and are well attended. Meetings with PCT representatives have been very positive, with several ideas being discussed including the development of a walking leader’s course and the possibility for a satellite venue for stop smoking sessions.

The fitness class timetable includes over 35 classes with a diverse programme from regular aerobics through to Aqua Pilates. There have been some issues with the fitness class timetable caused by a lack of available instructors and as such a few changes have had to be made. Based on customer feedback the number of evening classes has been increased and there has also been a significant increase in the number of Teen Gym sessions (specific gym sessions for teenagers), rising from three to eleven sessions. This again has been introduced following comments from customers.

Meetings have taken place with school staff to discuss how their needs can be met. The school used areas of the Leisure Centre to support their annual prospective sixth form parents evening and this helped to show case the facility to prospective sixth form pupils and their parents. Funding is being sought to provide vocational activities for pupils at Aston Comprehensive School, which will enable them to undertake qualifications relevant to the leisure industry, supporting future careers and providing a source of potential employment for the students at the Leisure Centre. School teaching staff continue to express satisfaction with the Sports Hall, access to the Fitness Suite & Dance Studio. They are also pleased with the provision of a school classroom for sports observation and similar activities overlooking the Sports Hall as well as having a dedicated staff room in the building. DC Leisure staff have worked closely with teaching staff in facilitating access to facilities.

Bookings in the sports hall are good and work with the RMBC Sports Development Team is supporting provision for wider community. This will help to target local residents who have previously not accessed the facilities and create a more diverse programme that will also satisfy the requirements of the NOF Community Agreement.

The Government Free Swimming initiative will start in April, which will mean all people aged under 16 or over 60, will be able to enter public/general swim sessions.
free of charge. The programme is funded by the Government for the next two years, DC Leisure have agreed to cap the charge to the funding available from Government even if as anticipated the free swimming programme results in additional throughput.

Of the members joining in October/November a significant amount came from outside the Borough, whilst many were from Sheffield a significant amount came from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Funding has been obtained from Aston Parish Council to facilitate additional sessions targeted at under 18s in the Sports Hall during school holidays.

There has been some very positive feedback relating mainly to how much customers have enjoyed the new facilities and the service they have received from staff.

There have been some minor snagging issues mainly around water temperatures and this is being monitored to ensure there is no long term problem. Various issues relating to the pool plant have also been identified and are being dealt.

Parking is an issue and in general relates to insufficient parking spaces causing some customers to park in inappropriate places. Staff in the Transportation Unit are currently looking at potential schemes to alleviate the problem and this will be subject to a report to the Cabinet Member of EDS. Discussions are also ongoing with the school to utilise school parking facilities during evenings, weekends and holidays. The further update will be brought to scrutiny on the issues resolved.

Actions being considered by the Council’s Transportation Unit include:

- Narrowing the carriageway to reduce the width of the pedestrian crossing outside the school, combined with build outs to provide sheltered parking on the residential side of Aughton Road. A narrower carriageway should reduce the speed of traffic.
- Relocating the bus stop north of the school entrance closer to the leisure centre and away from the pedestrian refuge.
- Building out slightly, the footway and entrance to the leisure centre to improve visibility. This would be combined with no waiting at any time restrictions. A further uncontrolled pedestrian crossing place could also be constructed here. (about 18m south west of the leisure centre entrance).
- Construction of a pedestrian refuge at Alexandra Road.

These ideas do not yet have Cabinet Member or Police approval so could be subject to change. Funding sources are being looked into and subject to obtaining the necessary approvals and the results of subsequent public consultations; it is possible that the project could progress sometime during the new financial year.
### Number of visits from opening to the end of January

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>visits to the facility</th>
<th>31,976</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitness (members and non-members taking part in fitness classes)</td>
<td>7,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Membership (Number of visits by members)</td>
<td>16,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Club Live (Current number of Kinetika members)</td>
<td>834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools (approx number of visits by schools)</td>
<td>24,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swim Academy (number of learners attending swimming lessons)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspections undertaken by Derrick Connelly (RMBC, Capital Project Development Manager, Culture & Leisure Services) whilst identifying a few minor issues have general been positive. An inspection by the NOF Officer was also very positive, commending the development of the programme at such an early stage of operations, and the quality of the facility throughout. He also commented on the Health and Safety system as being “the best he has seen.”

### 8. Finance
There are no financial implications to this report

### 9. Risks and Uncertainties
There are no risks and uncertainties relating to this report

### 10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications
None

### 11. Background Papers and Consultation
Regeneration Scrutiny Report 30th March 2008

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