

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Supplier Engagement - Leisure

Introduction

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) is transforming its leisure services, with the option to work in partnership with a dynamic and market focused supplier. The scope is significant, the opportunity more so. TWBC is open to proposals on facility mix, investment, management contract, lease, and other models.

Context

Tunbridge Wells Leisure Service manages 3 major leisure centres as detailed below. The centres are remarkably busy, popular and are already thriving – nevertheless further growth and a renewed focus on the emerging leisure market, leave the business well placed to generate significant surpluses.

That said, the centres were conceived and built in the century preceding this one and are not necessarily meeting the demands of the current market. This is of course a significant consideration & significant opportunity.

TWBC has considerable experience of working in partnership with leisure operators and is part way through an extended agreement with Fusion Lifestyle. Broadly, the expectations of TWBC are outputs as opposed to inputs/outcomes. Moving forwards with a new partnership, this may be different, embracing the active leisure agenda, yet in doing so taking advantage of the thriving Tunbridge Wells' market.

Development of an Active Leisure Offer

During 2022, TWBC undertook strategic planning work to assess the provision of existing Leisure facilities across the borough to shape its future reprovision of its Leisure Centres. The outcome of this work is summarised below and provides an indicative draft facility mix.

TWBC's Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Diagnostic Report (March 2022) highlighted that 'the priority existing facility in which to invest is Putlands Sports Centre, which is addressed in The Council's Submission Local Plan (SLP).

The second priority is to replace/renovate the Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre given its age and condition (public leisure facilities typically have a lifespan of 30-35 years).

There is also a need to invest in outdoor pitches, and particularly all-weather 3G floodlit pitches - again addressed in the SLP.

TWBC recently acquired the long-leasehold interest in the Royal Victoria Place (RVP) shopping centre. The Council are now considering how to enhance the 'place' of Royal Tunbridge Wells – with RVP and the wider town centre offering at its heart. TWBC are in the process of appointing a team to explore the feasibility of commercial and leisure redevelopment of part of the centre, considering the impact on the centre's key operational, investment and place shaping elements and on the centre as a whole. We are open to interested suppliers considering if or how opportunities could complement the Council's existing leisure offering. Suppliers interested in speaking with the Council and our management team about RVP will need to request a meeting via the Kent Business Portal messaging tab. Any request will need to include a selection of dates/ times and the names and email addresses of any attendees. The Council will then arrange a Teams meeting including all relevant parties.

Vision and Outcomes

TWBC is clear that it wishes to continue to provide community leisure facilities, but post 2027 (end of current leisure management contract) it needs to consider whether this can be achieved in more diverse ways or through alternative delivery options.

TWBC is also clear that moving forward, leisure facilities and services must embrace the delivery of 'active well-being' in line with both Government and Sport England strategies (Government Physical Activity Strategy – 'Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity' August 2023 and Sport England Strategy 10 - year strategy – 'Uniting the Movement' 2021)

The vision for our active leisure provision is:

'A borough where the opportunity to be more physically active benefits everyone's health and well-being'

Outcomes to be delivered include:

- Improved community health and wellbeing
- Increased levels of physical activity
- Inclusive provision
- Social value; and
- Available resources focussed where they will have most impact.

Nevertheless, a net reliance on a TWBC financial subsidy should be reduced moving forward – to include landlord Repair and Maintenance responsibilities / capital replacement costs and any future legislative amendments driving up costs.

As mentioned, TWBC would like to explore potential future options for the business/assets, and how a future partner is able to respond to strategic leisure and other priorities outlined in:

[New Borough Local Plan \(tunbridgewells.gov.uk\)](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/new-borough-local-plan)

[One You \(tunbridgewells.gov.uk\)](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/one-you)

[Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/royal-tunbridge-wells-town-centre-plan)

[Parks and play areas \(tunbridgewells.gov.uk\)](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/parks-and-play-areas)

<https://twbcclimateaction.co.uk/what-were-doing/corporate-carbon-descent-plan/>

As previously mentioned, the centres, particularly St Johns are popular and well used facilities. Investment is therefore required, to reconfigure and improve the offer.

TWBC is open to discussion that reflect the significant market opportunity in the borough, not least in Royal Tunbridge Wells – and in doing so utilise your strengths and market position, with your view on the risk versus reward, control versus freedom, no council investment versus high council investment and of course low operator investment versus high. We may

consider long leases, management contracts and other forms of agreements – that suit the supplier and the needs of The Council.

How we incentivise the partnership may encompass for example, flexibility and freedom in return for a waterfall payment to TWBC and on the other end of the spectrum, performance payments in return for social value impact.

Purpose of this Market Engagement

TWBC is exploring options to re-provide its Leisure Centres moving towards an active leisure model as set out by Sport England). TWBC would like to explore options for colocation of services, integrating leisure & health and therefore developing a closer alignment of leisure, physical, mental health, and social care.

We would also like to explore options to refurbish or re-provide new facilities focusing on place-based provision and meeting the Council Climate Emergency Commitment of net zero carbon emissions from its operations by 2030.

The success of the project will measure the increase/improvements in Social Value (using the national TOMS - <https://socialvalueportal.com/solutions/national-toms/>), Inclusion and Accessibility.

Site Visits – to be held on 10-13 June and 18-20 June 2024 at our most significant leisure assets, including:

Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre
St Johns Road Royal
Tunbridge Wells

TN4 9TX

Putlands Sports & Leisure Centre
Mascalls Court Road
Paddock Wood
TN12 6NZ

Weald Sports Centre
Angley Road
Cranbrook
TN17 2PN

Interested parties must register their interest in attending the site visits and advise the time and date that they would like to visit each site. These must be sent via the messaging tab of the Kent Business Portal. The available times for the site visits are as follows:

10:00 am to 10:45 am
11:00 am to 11:45 am
12:00 pm to 12:45 pm

13:00 pm to 13: 45 pm
14:00 pm to 14:45 pm
15:00 pm to 15:45 pm

Indicative Timetable

	Expected Date
Publish Notice	W/C 28 th May 2024
Site Visits	10 th June 2024
	TBC
Post Visit Dialogue	W/C 24 th June 2024
	TBC
	October 2024
	December 2024
	Q1 2025

Submission requirements

At this stage we are seeking feedback as above and in summary:

TWBC is keen to engage with the leisure operator and leisure construction market at an early stage to understand:

- Any initial interest in partnership for this project and what that could look like
- Operators’ views on the realistic procurement and development routes for a new active leisure centre offer
- Operators’ appetite for being involved in the design and development phases versus preference for being appointed as the operator at a much later stage of any refurbishment or rebuilding process

Specifically, TWBC would like potential partners to address the following questions:

1. Would you be interested in this potential refurbishment/redevelopment opportunity in Tunbridge Wells? Please indicate a preference - refurbishment or redevelopment (new build)
2. What approach would you take?
3. If redevelopment, would you be more interested in a Design, build, operate and maintenance (DBOM) approach or a traditional design and build contract followed by operator procurement?
4. If the later, please tell us at which stage your involvement is best secured?
5. How would you ensure the offer reflects the Council’s ambitions to move towards an active leisure model?

6. What opportunities are there to reduce the existing carbon footprint of the leisure estate and how would you approach this?

7. Alternatively, are there other options for you as a development partner? If so, please tell us about capital investment, procurement approaches, new funding, and leasing options that you are aware of that may offer potential?

8. As mentioned, please expand on the advantages/disadvantages from an operator's perspective of the various partnership development options available i.e. DBOM, capital investment as part of an operator procurement, and the specific impact on:

- Risk
- Contract length / Lease length
- Indicative payment to TWBC
- Surplus share
- Anything else you think is relevant

9. What length of contract/lease for the operation of the centres would offer the greatest certainty of achieving our/your aims?

10. Please provide up to three examples where you have been/are a development partner for a local authority leisure facility, the procurement route taken, how it worked, and lessons learnt

11. Would you be prepared to attend an informal meeting with TWBC on a no prejudice basis to discuss your ideas/views as part of this market engagement? This is likely to be before the end of 31 07 2024

The Council would also be interested in responses from consultants, architects or contractors that have previous experience in delivering leisure schemes, to identify:

- Preferences for how the ideal project team can be assembled and managed to deliver project outcomes -

Lessons learned on previous leisure projects that can aid TWBC in choosing the right project team and route to market

- Potential alternative capital funding streams.

Interested parties are invited to submit their responses to the bullet points above, in either Microsoft Word or PDF format. Responses should be limited to 500 words per bullet point for the purposes of this exercise.

All submissions must be made via the 'Messaging' section of the Kent Business Portal. Submissions must be received by 12:00pm Friday 28th June 2024.

The information will then be considered by the Council and key stakeholders with a view to developing a specification for a formal tender in early October. Timescales below are provided for indicative purposes but are subject to change at the Council's discretion.