City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Community and Children's Services	**Dated:** 30 June 2026
Subject: Golden Lane Leisure Centre: preferred design option and establishment of a community steering group	**Public report:** For decision
This proposal: • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	Providing excellent services Diverse engaged communities
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director, Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Himmang Chemjong, Project Manager Ellie Ward, Head of Strategy and Performance

Summary

This report seeks Member agreement on the preferred design option for Golden Lane Leisure Centre (GLLC) in order to proceed to the next stage of the transformation project; and approval for the establishment of a community steering group for the project.

A preferred design option for the refurbishment was agreed by Members in January 2026 but following some feedback in relation to the early closure of GLLC, Members agreed in May 2026 to reopen consideration of the options for the preferred design.

A period of targeted engagement undertaken since May reflected a strong desire from the community to maintain the sports hall in the refurbishment. Reflecting this,

there is an emerging design option to keep the sports hall with an enhanced health and fitness offer which has the potential to be financially viable.

The City Corporation to working in partnership with the local community and are proposing the establishment of a Community Steering Group which will ensure that community and user views can shape the refurbishment of the centre and the procurement of a new service provider.

Members are asked to agree their preferred design option and to approve the establishment of the Community Steering Group as set out in the draft Terms of Reference.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note the outcome of the recent engagement process (paras 7 – 11)
2. Note the design options discussed (paras 13 – 16)
3. Note the updated financial modelling (paras 17 – 21)
4. Agree the preferred design option (Option 1, Option 1 enhanced or Option 2C)
5. Approve establishment of a Community Steering Group for the project (paras 22 – 25)

Main Report

Background

The RIBA Process

1. The GLLC transformation project is governed by the RIBA process and throughout this report reference is made to the different stages of the process. The process, defined by the Royal Institute of British Architects, is structured into eight distinct stages that guide architectural projects from inception to completion. The stages can be found at the end of this report for information.

Design options across the process

2. Throughout the process to date, a number of design options have been discussed with an additional one now emerging following engagement. For ease of reference the two main design options previously considered are summarised below:

Option 1	**Option 2c**	**Emerging design Option 1– enhanced**
Refurbishment and extended Gym	Refurbishment and wellness – smaller gym replacing the sports hall	Refurbishment including retention of the sports hall. Provides a modest increase in gym space, and supports a financially sustainable operating model

Originally considered by Members in January 2026	Originally considered by Members in January 2026 and agreed as preferred option. This was the preferred option agreed by Members in January 2026	For consideration as an enhanced/hybrid model offering financially viable proposal whilst retaining the sports hall. To note given timescale allowed, detailed spatial design work still ongoing.

Process to date

3. Initial engagement was carried out during RIBA Stage 1 to understand the experiences and expectations of both users and non-users regarding the transformation of GLLC. This engagement was presented in previous reports (noted in background papers below) and insight from this engagement informed the RIBA Stage 2 design presented at the meeting of the Community and Children's Services Committee in January 2026. At that meeting, Members agreed a preferred design option for the refurbishment which would shape the next stages of the process. This was design option 2C which was refurbishment with a smaller gym replacing the sports hall.

4. GLLC closed on 30 April 2026 after the providers of the leisure services, Fusion, went into administration. The City Corporation has provided alternative provision while GLLC is closed until it reopens after construction works.

5. In May 2026, the Community and Children's Services Committee agreed to reopen the design options for wider public engagement following feedback around the closure and to reconsider the preferred design option.

6. The City Corporation remains fully committed to the investment of over £10 million to improve GLLC and provide a valued resource for the local community for years to come.

Current Position

Engagement

7. Following the May 2026 committee meeting, a short and targeted period of engagement, focused on the 2 initial design options was undertaken. This included

    - A range of online and face to face sessions with the wider community and with specific groups such as families with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and older people.
    - A stakeholder meeting and a design workshop with the Golden Lane Estate Residents Association (GLERA) and with the Barbican and Golden Lane Neighbourhood Forum (BGLNF)
    - An online survey (which could also be provided in hard copy)

8. There was strong engagement in this process with 88 people attending the sessions and 218 responses to the survey. This provides a strong basis on which to build ongoing partnership and dialogue with the community in this project.

9. The events were led by Concilio (Communication Consultant), with Faulkner Brown (Architects) presenting the scheme and design options. Their presentation is included in Appendix 1.

10. A full summary report from the engagement can be found at Appendix 2 but the engagement showed a clear preference to keep the existing sports hall.

11. Of the 206 questionnaire respondents who chose an option, 173 (84%) chose to keep the sports hall and 17 (8%) chose to reconfigure it; the remaining 16 had no preference. The pool and the sports hall were rated most important. On a five-point scale, the swimming pool was rated highest (mean 4.31), followed by the multi-use sports hall (4.15), then the badminton (3.72) and tennis (3.5) courts. The sauna (1.82), power-assisted studio (1.82) and treatment space (1.55) were rated lowest.

12. Based on some of this feedback, a subsequent emerging option has been developed and proposed in direct response to the feedback. The emerging option, an enhancement of Option 1, seeks to balance community provision with financial sustainability by retaining the multi-sports hall alongside an enhanced health and fitness provision. This is discussed in detail below.

Design Options

13. The GLLC Stage 2 Supplementary Report in Appendix 3 sets out the two design options, presented in the context of the overall project objectives, planning risks, heritage considerations, and financial performance of the associated operation. It then details how the design development has responded to the most recent stakeholder and public engagement.

14. A subsequent emerging option has been developed and proposed in direct response to the feedback. The emerging option, a enhancement of Option 1, seeks to balance community provision with financial sustainability by retaining the multi-sports hall alongside an enhanced health and fitness provision.

15. When considering the final design decision, Members are asked to note that the supplementary plans will be worked up in full at RIBA Stage 3 and signed off under Gateway Governance. This will include the issues identified within the engagement such as sauna and/or steam room, changing rooms, the importance of swimming pool seating and reception seating.

16. There are no implications on the project timescale of the design option chosen.

Financial modelling

17. The RIBA Stage 2 Business Planning Report presented in Appendix 4, was commissioned following the Community and Children's Services Committee to revisit the prior approval of Option 2c in January 2026. Prepared by the Sports Consultancy, it considers the subsequent stakeholder engagement findings and also supplementary market testing.

18. The original recommendation of Option 2c was informed by the 10-year financial modelling, benchmarking and operator feedback. This concluded that a larger health and fitness offer had the most potential to generate improved participation, flexibility of programming and a sustainable financial surplus.

19. The Report concludes that following further market engagement this position was reaffirmed, with operators expressing a preference for Option 2c based on its commercial viability, ability to support targeted programming, and alignment with leisure market trends.

20. Updated analysis completed on the emerging design (retained multi-sports hall/enhanced health and fitness), developed in response to engagement findings, demonstrates that a financially viable option that provides a more balanced offer by retaining the indoor sports provision has the potential to be achieved.

21. However, the emerging option continues to deliver a significantly weaker financial position than Option 2c. Despite this, it does show an improvement to the significant losses forecasted previously, resulting in a marginal surplus. As such, the emerging option responds to community concerns raised during engagement while having the potential to deliver satisfactory financial performance, albeit with limited contingency.

Community Steering Group

22. Building on the recent engagement process along with previous engagement, the City Corporation wants to build further develop a strong partnership with the community in relation to the GLLC transformation project. It is committed to ensuring that the refurbishment leads to better quality facilities and services, increased usage, improved community health and wellbeing and is accessible and inclusive.

23. Community experience, views and insights are integral to this and in order to facilitate this, it is proposed that a Community Steering Group is established.
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24. A draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group is attached at Appendix 5. This focuses on creating two-way dialogue with the community and the City Corporation to inform decisions about the refurbishment of GLLC, the new service provider and the services that will be provided going forward.

25. Members are asked to approve the establishment of the Community Steering Group on the basis of the draft Terms of Reference. The final Terms of Reference would be agreed at the Group's first meeting.

Operator Procurement

26. Alongside the refurbishment programme, Officers are progressing with the procurement and competitive tender for the management of GLLC, following completion of the refurbishment. The Invitation to Tender is scheduled to be issued in Q3 2026-27, with a new operator to be appointed in Q1 2027-28. The procurement and development of the service specification will be informed through engagement with the proposed Community Steering Group.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

This refurbishment of GLLC relates to a number of corporate and departmental strategic objectives and outcomes, which are set out in the report presented in January.

Financial implications

The best ongoing financial return is offered by Option 2c. However, the financial modelling does indicate that the emerging plan for a revised Option 1 could produce a marginal surplus.

Resource implications

This project is funded through Community Infrastructure Levy.

Legal implications

None specific to this report.

Risk implications

None specific to this report

Equalities implications

Due regard has been paid to the policy aims set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010. As detailed designs are drawn up in RIBA stage 3, equality impact analysis will continue.

Climate implications

Considered separately in relevant project documentation.

Security implications

None.

Next Steps

27. Once the preferred design option has been agreed, work will then proceed under RIBA 3. This will include:

- Finalising the detailed design
- Securing planning permission
- Ongoing consultation

28. Alongside this will be:

- Establishment of the Community Steering Group
- Procurement of the new service provider for the centre

Conclusion

29. The additional stakeholder and public engagement undertaken following the May 2026 Community and Children's Services Committee decision has provided clear and consistent feedback to inform the next stage of the project. The results demonstrate a strong preference for refurbishment, driven primarily by the importance placed on retaining the multi-use sports hall as a key community asset, alongside the high value attributed to the swimming pool and core facilities.

30. The view of stakeholders and public engagement need to be viewed in conjunction with the revised financial projections.

31. Members are therefore invited to consider the outcomes of the engagement, the emerging design proposals, and the revised business case in determining the preferred option to progress to RIBA Stage 3.

32. Members are also asked to approve the establishment of a Community Steering Group to ensure that community insight, opinion and experience shapes the refurbishment of GLLC and the provision of services going forward.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – June 2026 Engagement Presentation
- Appendix 2 – June 2026 Public Engagement Report
- Appendix 3 – Stage 2 Supplementary Report
- Appendix 4 – Updated Financial Modelling

- Appendix 5 – Draft Terms of Reference for the Community Steering Group

Background Papers

Agenda for Community & Children's Services Committee on Tuesday, 5th May, 2026, 1.45 pm - Modern Council

Agenda for Community & Children's Services Committee on Wednesday, 28th January, 2026, 1.45 pm - Modern Council

RIBA stages

Stage 0: Strategic Definition - Identifying the project's requirements and feasibility.

Stage 1: Preparation and Brief - Developing the project brief and initial plans.

Stage 2: Concept Design - Creating design concepts and exploring options.

Stage 3: Developed Design - Finalising the design and preparing for technical documentation.

Stage 4: Technical Design - Producing detailed drawings and specifications.

Stage 5: Construction - Overseeing the construction process.

Stage 6: Handover - Completing the project and handing it over to the client.

Stage 7: In Use - Monitoring the building's performance and user satisfaction

Himmang Chemjong
Project Manager, New Development & Special Projects

E: himmang.chemjong@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Ellie Ward
Head of Strategy and Performance

E: ellie.ward@cityoflondon.gov.uk