



New Forest

DISTRICT COUNCIL

July 2023 – June 2024

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 / 2024

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The following report provides detail for the financial year 2023-2024 which was the third full year of Freedom Leisure operating leisure facilities: Applemore Health and Leisure, Lymington Health and Leisure, New Milton Health and Leisure, Ringwood Health and Leisure and Totton Health and Leisure on behalf of the New Forest District Council.

1.2 Strategic alignment



objectives and purpose

Our leisure trust status means it is not all about the finances – our focus is on:

- Increasing participation
- Improving services
- Delivering quality services and experiences for our customers
- Supporting “Active Communities”
- Reducing negative environmental impact
- Delivering for clients and customers
- Developing and rewarding our people

Our strategic objectives cover five key areas, which as a local team we have broken down into four elements to ensure we approach this in the correct fashion for the New Forest community.

	• People	Passionate, bespoke and local
	• Process	Operational excellence / environmentally responsible
	• Customer	Professional trusted partner
	• Product	Innovation & creativity

2. Summary and review of performance for 2023/2024

2.1 Applemore Health and Leisure Centre

Applemore Health and Leisure Centre's attendance increased significantly after the 'Covid period' and several activity areas saw over and above attendance figures compared to pre-Covid. With the introduction of the £200,000+ gym refurbishment after year 2's £100,000+ installation of a brand new soft play unit in the sports hall, childrens attendance significantly increased and the Venue has evolved into a family friendly destination.

The Healthy Communities activities have continued to grow in popularity and we launched a venue specific 'Forever Active' programme that targets physical activity in older adults.

The Centres membership base is now 2,000+ strong and continuing to grow. This demonstrates the success of the gym refurbishment we completed in December 2023 and has grown circa 600 members in 12 months.

2.2 Lymington Health and Leisure Centre

Lymington Health and Leisure Centre's attendance increased significantly after the 'Covid period' and several activity areas saw over and above attendance figures compared to pre-Covid. A continued positive working relationship with Priestlands School has seen ongoing usage of the swimming pool and after long negotiations a shared usage of the sports hall (mainly evening and weekend usage) have been agreed. This has seen community groups and clubs return to the Centre and increased physical participation.

The Venues membership base has grown circa 235 members in the past 12 months and boasts the second largest membership base across the 5 Venues.

2.3 New Milton Health and Leisure Centre

New Milton Health and Leisure Centre's attendance increased significantly after the 'Covid period' and several activity areas saw over and above attendance figures compared to pre-Covid. Arnewood school continue to utilise the sports hall

and swimming pool to deliver their school curriculum and we are actively communicating to maximise opportunities between the two parties.

The Venue boasts the largest Healthy Community programme across all 5 venues (more info can be found on page 15 and 16).

The Venues membership base has grown circa 350 members in the past 12 months following significant investment (circa £200k) into the gym areas in December 2023.

2.4 Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre

Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre's attendance increased significantly after the 'Covid period' and several activity areas saw over and above attendance figures compared to pre-Covid. With the introduction of the £100,000+ installation of an extended soft play area and café area (year 2), childrens attendance significantly increased and the Venue has evolved into a family friendly destination. The Venue achieved a 5* hygiene rating and the café is becoming more popular each month.

A change in our digital marketing strategy has resulted in membership growth from 904 in July 2023 to 1,244 in July 2024.

2.5 Totton Health and Leisure Centre

Totton Health and Leisure Centre's attendance increased significantly after the 'Covid period' and several activity areas saw over, and above attendance figures compared to pre-Covid.

The completion of the FOH refurbishment has modernised the entrance into the venue and improved the customer experience with technical advances in access control (year 2). The FOH improvements included the offering of Costa drinks and catering options so customers can enjoy a variety of food and drinks. The Venue achieved a 5* hygiene rating, and the catering options are becoming more popular each month.

Much like Applemore and New Milton Health and Leisure Centres, significant investment was completed in the gym areas in December 2023 and this has resulted in further membership growth of circa 330 in the past 12 months.

3 People, passionate, bespoke and local:

2023/24 has continued to be an extremely challenging year for the sport and leisure sector as a whole, but Freedom Leisure has worked closely with their local authority partners to provide the best service possible during this difficult time.

3.1 Human resources

Pay and rewards – including pay review and training:

- Reviewed in March 2024, staff pay rewards were delivered to all staff from April 2024 of 3.5%
- ihasco online courses and the freedom internal training programme are being utilised with staff given the ability to complete the training at their place of work or at home (online learning).
- Employees have continued to use discounts from My staff shop, the freedom benefit platform

4 Process, operational excellence/ environmentally responsible

4.1 Summary of significant improvements to facilities or services:

There have been many improvements made to the facilities by Freedom Leisure and New Forest District Council, and these included:

Applemore Health and Leisure Centre

- Upgraded Wet side changing rooms
- Refurbished reception and café area
- Free weights room extension
- Fitness suite full refurbishment
- Sports hall LED lighting replaced
- Pool inflatable
- Various areas decorated throughout the building
- Energy works – ASHP installation (works started in 2022/23 year but will be finalised in 2023/24)

Lymington Health and Leisure Centre

- Full hairdryer replacement
- Health suite upgrades to ensure smooth running of this product
- Fitness suite full refurbishment august 24 (planned for August/ September 2024)
- Group Cycling studio full refurbishment including new bikes (planned for August/ September 2024)



New Milton Health and Leisure Centre

- Wet side AHU (air handling unit) replacement. Significant investment (works started in 2022/ 23 and completed in 2023/ 24)
- Full hairdryer replacement
- Fall arrest upgrade
- Fitness suite full refurbishment November 2023

Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre

- Storage improvements
- New wet side showers
- Energy works – ASHP installation (works started in 2022/23 year but will be finalised in 2023/24)
- Structural steel works upgrades (works started in 2022/23 year but will be finalised in 2023/24)
- Roof surface replacement

Totton Health and Leisure Centre

- Studio upgrade/ extension
- Dry side changing room and toilet upgrade/ extension. Including new shower facilities
- Reception upgrades including turn style updates
- Full hairdryer replacement
- Fitness suite full refurbishment November 2023
- Pool side led lighting replacement (early 2023)

4.3 Incidents:

Below is a summary of 2023/24 accident/incident performance. Headlines are;

	Total visitors	Total accidents	Percentage of accidents
Applemore health & Leisure Centre	362474	59	0.01627%
Lymington Health & Leisure Centre	277112	32	0.012%
New Milton Health & Leisure Centre	271940	36	0.013%
Ringwood Health & Leisure Centre	390782	116	0.029%
Totton Health & Leisure Centre	235053	20	0.00850%

The percentage of total accidents were low across sites this year in line with the total number of visits.

4.6 Environmental Health Office:

The catering facilities across the partnership (Applemore, Totton and Ringwood) all achieved 5-star accreditation.

4.4 Fees and charges:

As part of our annual price review all prices were benchmarked against other leisure operations and inflation.

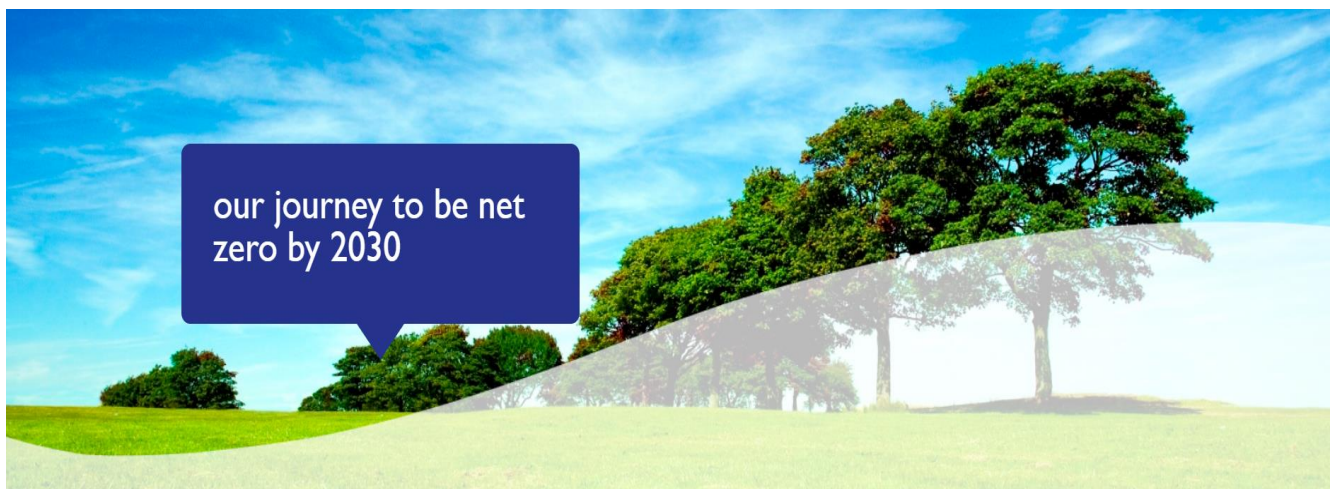
Secondary spend items were also reviewed in line with supplier and contractor inflation rates, any impact to the customer has been minimised.

Going forward Freedom Leisure will continue to review fees and charges to ensure the service remains excellent value for money while remaining competitive within the market it operates and sensitive to the Council's wishes.

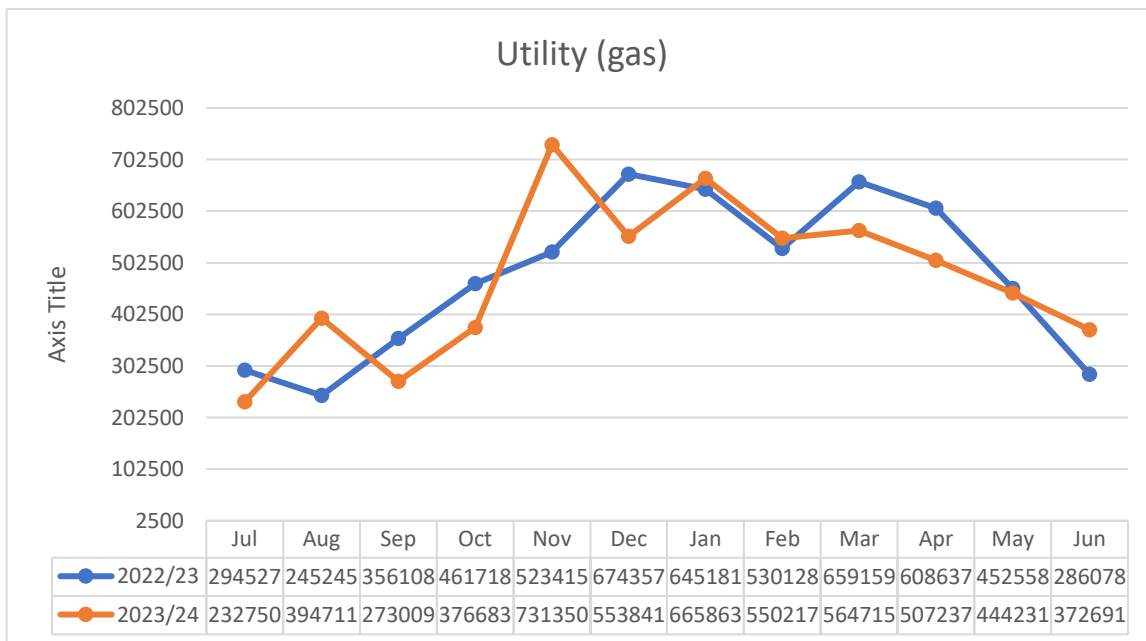
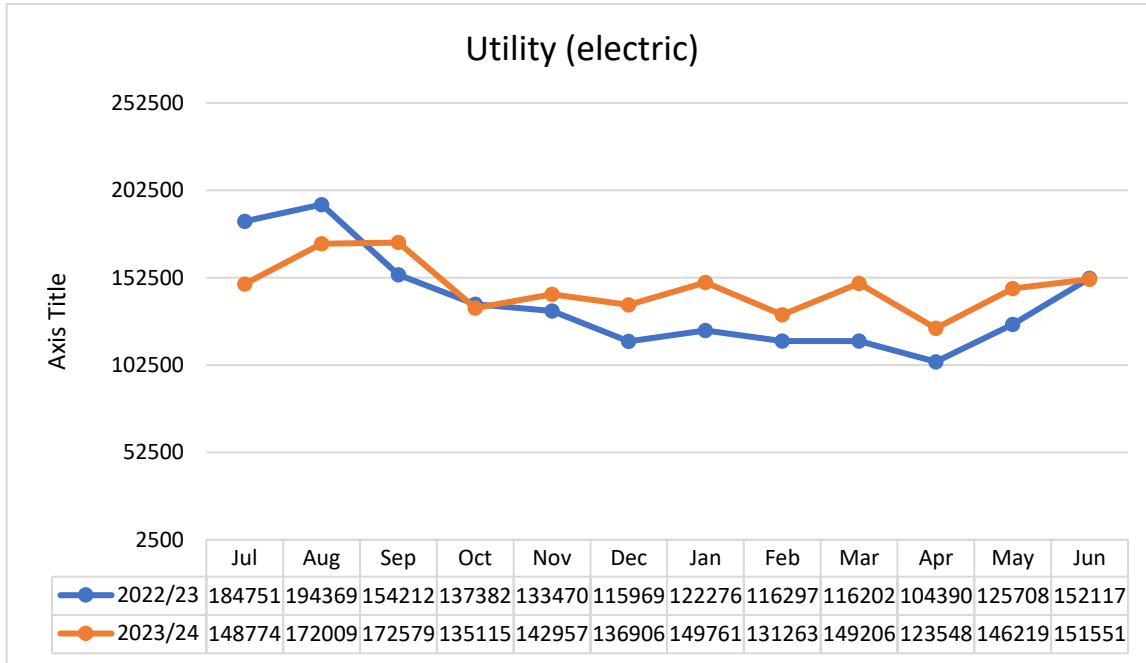
4.5 Environmental:

Freedom Leisure is committed to working with its local authority partners, customers and, crucially, its staff teams to achieve these ambitious targets. A robust sustainability culture is already embedded into the organisation, with the senior leadership team at the not-for-profit trust prioritising environmental management and sustainability as a core business objective in its medium-term plan.

With continuous improvement at the forefront of our minds, we always look for ways to develop, improve and invest in the facilities across the New Forest contract. With our focus being very much on environmental impact, we are also looking at ways to reduce our carbon footprint and continue our journey to net zero emissions.



Utility information:



Key points

- Gas usage down YoY by 69,812 units
- Electricity usage up YoY by 102,745 units
- Continued effort to reduce consumption via staff training and capital projects

Financial impact (July 2023-June 2024)

Total All Sites (gas and electric only)	Applemore	Lymington	New Milton	Ringwood	Totton	Total
Utilities ACTUAL	£185,367	£173,653	£203,274	£191,686	£168,389	£922,369
Utilities BID (3% inflation adjusted)	£94,350	£94,535	£102,623	£81,299	£97,301	£470,108
Difference	£91,017	£99,118	£100,651	£110,387	£71,088	£452,261

5 Customer, profession trusted partner

5.1 Customer satisfaction:

Freedom Leisure is committed to providing excellent customer service. Detail on satisfaction is obtained by the comment cards, email feedback, comments on social media, verbal and surveys. These provide a snapshot in time. Actions are captured using the Efocus system and dealt with as they arise.

5.2 Day to day customer feedback:

Freedom leisure is committed to providing excellent customer service. There are several ways in which it obtains detail on satisfaction. These provide a snapshot in time of current success and areas of improvement. These actions are captured using the Efocus programme and dealt with as they arise. The methods that we will collect feedback are as follows:-

- Online feedback through our website
- Online comments received through social media
- Verbal feedback at site, which is then logged by our colleagues
- Written feedback at site, which is then logged by our colleagues

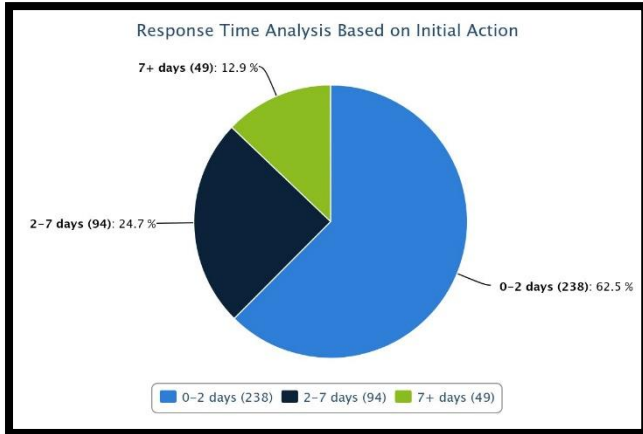


Positive feedback was received this year after significant investment in a number of Venues coupled with improved timetables and customer engagement to shape them.

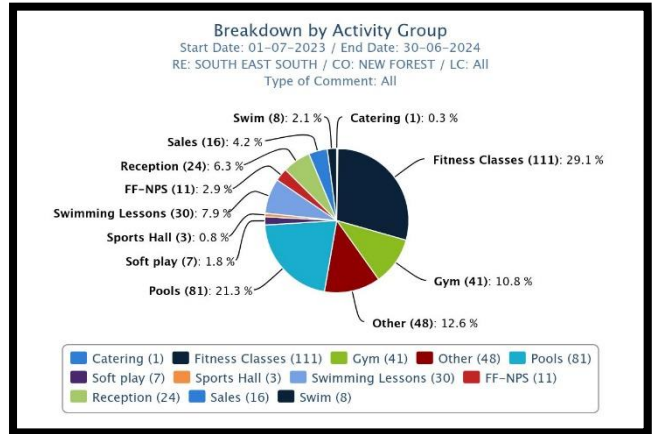
Please find summary of our Efocus feedback received and the timeframe in which we have responded, throughout the year below.

Partnership detail

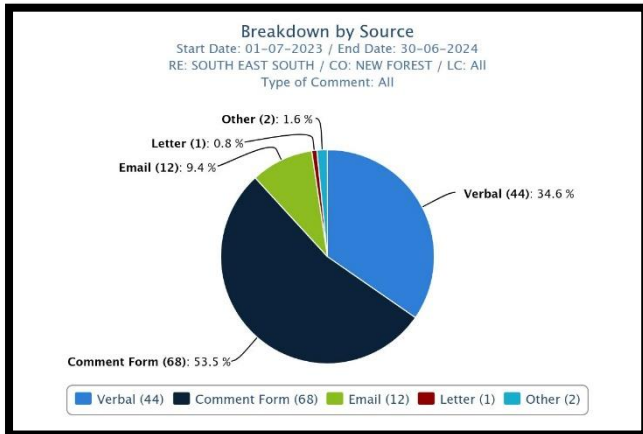
Response time



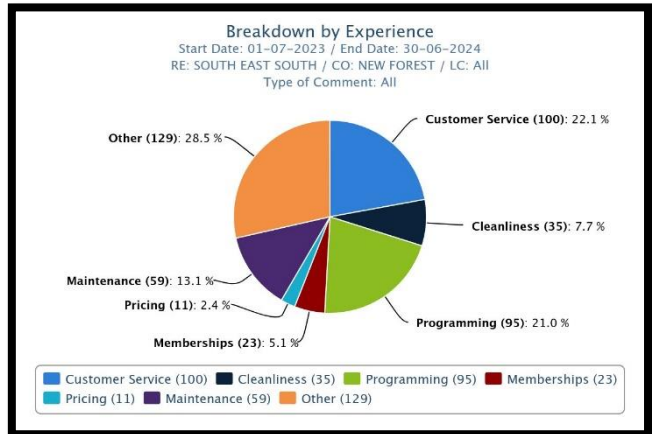
Breakdown by activity



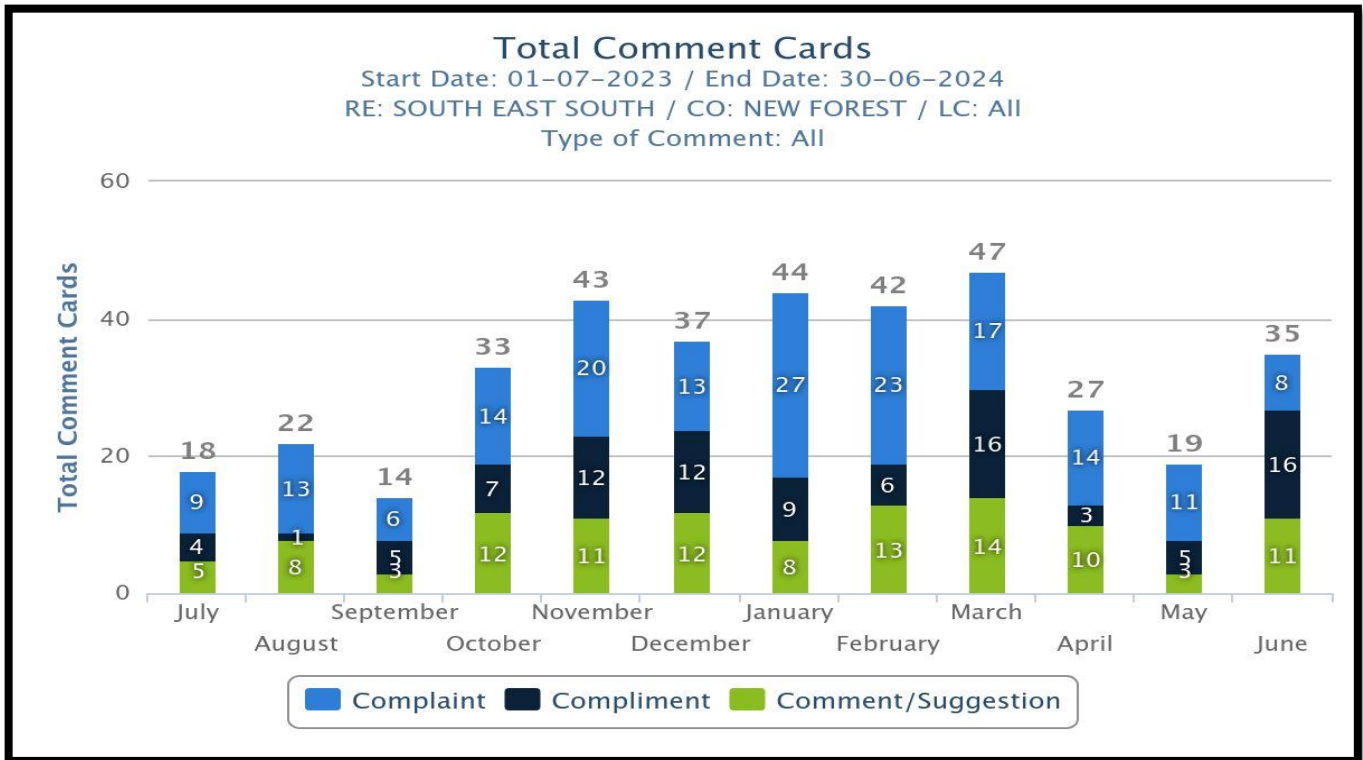
Breakdown of source:



Breakdown of experience:



Comments/ complaints/ compliments



6 Product, innovation and creativity

6.1 Healthy Communities/ sports development:

Our Forever Active programme continues to grow with activities now in place at every venue with the introduction of Chair Pilates. We are now offering 11 Forever Active sessions across the week giving older adults a variety of sessions per week to keep active, in a friendly and casual environment. Tackling loneliness remains a priority for these groups and we often see participants in the cafes enjoying a tea or coffee after their session.



We have faced many challenges this year in gymnastics, mainly due to the national shortage of qualified gymnastics coaches. As a result of this we are no longer running our gymnastics club at Lymington, whilst New Milton has undertaken a re-launch with a fresh team of coaches. We run two sessions per week, both close to capacity. The aim for next year is to increase our offering and continue to build on our base of qualified coaches.

We have introduced an ante-natal membership to our offering which gives pregnant women the opportunity to take out a swim membership for £20 for the year. This is to encourage pregnant women to keep active in a safe way through their pregnancy and encourage them back post birth. Alongside this we now offer parent & baby sessions within our soft plays which are designed to encourage new parents to come along and have

vital interaction with other new parents as well as socialisation and play for the babies, again tackling loneliness within our community.

We also run monthly 'Swim Bike Run' events in partnership with British Triathlon which offers an introduction to triathlons for beginners. This is a casual session with only guidance and suggested distances to cover. The sessions are family friendly and welcome children from 12 years old to attend.

6.2 Holiday Activity & Food:

This year we have continued to offer HAF programmes through external providers which gives low-income families the opportunity to free childcare as well as a balance meal and activity provision during the school holidays.

We have also expanded our internal offering of holiday activities with mini bounce sessions and the introduction of our inflatable aqua runs which have proven to be very popular in the holidays. Especially in the colder months.

As we look forward to next year our aim is to provide internally run holiday camps which will offer children the opportunity to keep active throughout the school holidays, as well as offer essential childcare for families during the school holidays.



6.3 Wellness and GP referral:

Our exercise referral programme has continued to grow this year with 462 members on the scheme with an average of 72 referrals per month. Due to demand, as of August 24 we have recruited two new exercise referral instructors who work across Applemore, Lymington & New Milton which has allowed us to introduce a further 30 hours per week of provision. This has allowed our waiting list for appointments to reduce from 3 weeks to just a few days. We have continued to work closely with NHS partners, including Prehab Services, Stroke Team and pulmonary and cardiac phase III classes. We continue to seek new partnership opportunities with links with southern health perinatal teams as well as NHS balance teams.

We continue to have very strong participation figures with our exercise referral classes. Across the year we have introduced 3 additional Steady & Strong classes as well as the introduction of Cycling Against Joint Pain. These are classes based on our stationary bikes which offers a low intensity class perfect for those suffering with joint pain or living with osteoarthritis. Research has shown that cycling is an ideal low impact form of exercise which benefits those with hip or knee pain. We currently have one class per week at Ringwood and New Milton, which both sessions running at 95% capacity.

Smoking cessation clinics have been introduced at Applemore, Lymington & Ringwood in partnership with Smokefree Hampshire. This service is designed to help those who would like to quit smoking and offers advice and guidance throughout their journey. As Freedom Leisure we can support this service and encourage a healthier and more active lifestyle for the local community we serve.

Health referral class	Participation 2023/2024
Health Circuit	5,061
Pulmonary Rehabilitation	2,223
Cardiac Rehabilitation	1,888
Steady & Strong (Falls prevention)	4,441
Chair Yoga	1,658

6.4 Marketing and Information technology:

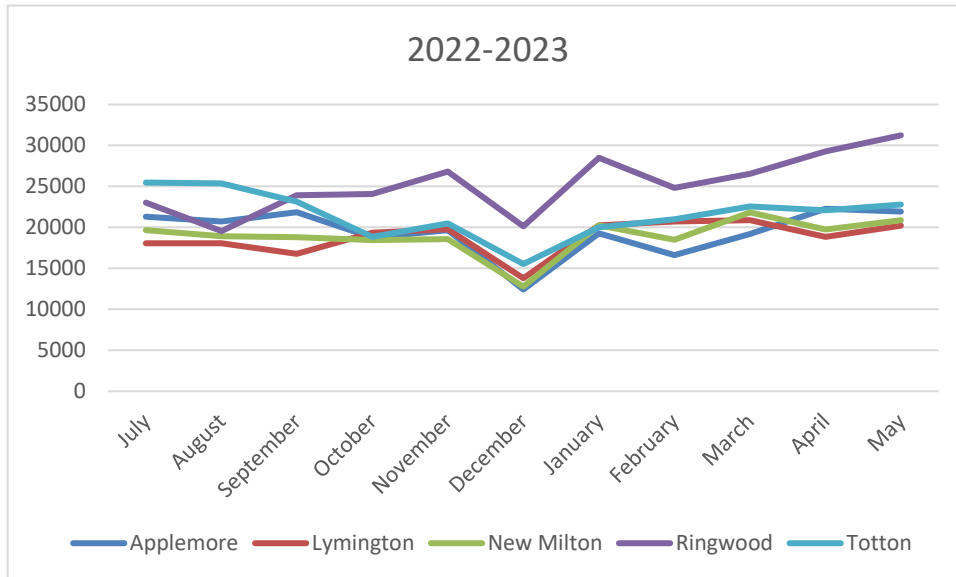
In 2023-24 we utilised the following channels to promote activities: websites, social media: Facebook, Instagram, Google, Brief Your Market email newsletters, text messaging plus internal video screens, banners, posters and leaflets.

Work was also carried out during 2023 to onboard the Freedom Leisure booking app. MyFit App provides access to the centres' online bookings, website and social media plus enhanced features such as news items and push notifications.

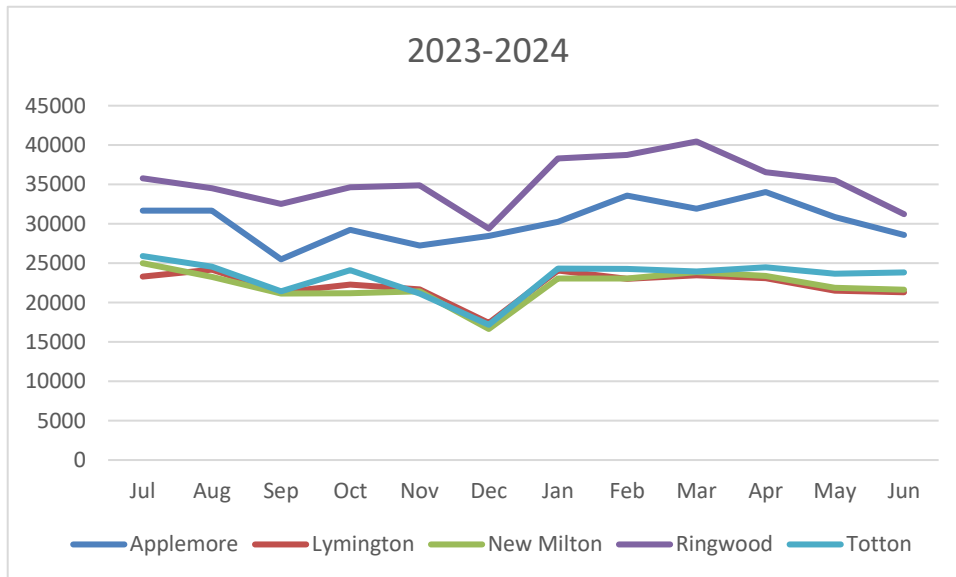
6.5 Participation:

The graph below provides a summary of overall participation rates for activities.

Partnership participation 2022/3 vs 2023/ 24:



2022/3 Total participation = 1,261,268



2023/4 Total participation = 1,596,488

Up 325,220 Year on year.

6.6 Financial

Year 3 of the contract was challenging for Freedom Leisure financially, however the hard work and capital investment completed during year 2 and 3 has seen significantly improved financial performance in the New Forest. The sector is still finding it extremely challenging to cover the huge energy cost increases, whilst still operating in the context of a post pandemic recovery and a cost of living crisis. Year 2 we reported a £1,482,553 loss in the New Forest vs a £320,410 loss in year 3. This is an improvement of £1,162,143 year on year.

Freedom Leisure New Forest Contract Summary							
July 2023 to June 2024	Actual 12m		Bid 12m		Bid 12m		
Income	£8,095,561		£7,917,704		£7,917,704		
Expenditure	£8,415,971		£7,917,704		£7,917,704		
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	-£320,410		£0		£0		
Total All Sites	Applemore	Lymington	New Milton	Ringwood	Totton	Active Communities	Total
Total Income	£2,139,385	£1,368,343	£1,359,287	£1,770,086	£1,458,460	£0	£8,095,561
Total Expenditure	£2,216,763	£1,420,107	£1,419,495	£1,796,560	£1,561,754	£1,291	£8,415,971
Surplus / Deficit	-£77,378	-£51,765	-£60,208	-£26,474	-£103,294	-£1,291	-£320,410

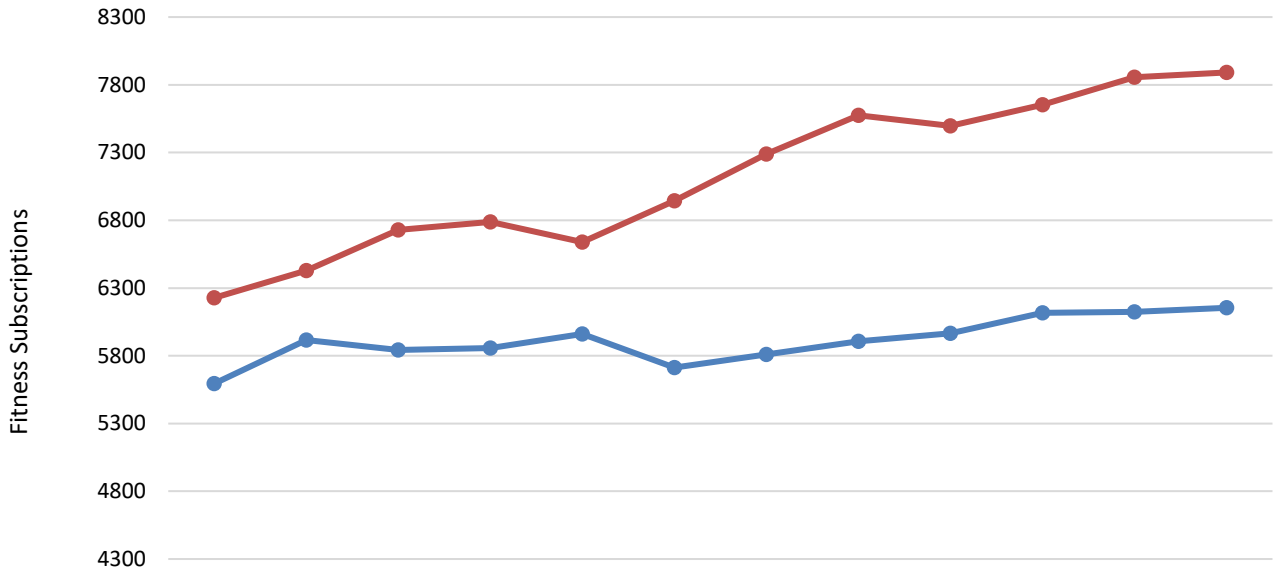
Area Manager Conclusion

2023 – 2024 proved a significantly positive year for all leisure Centres. Following further investment into the Centres we have seen increased participation, sales, income and significant membership growth. As a partnership we have taken huge steps towards delivering the financial bid commitments and based on trends and continued investment, I predict year 4 will see the partnership deliver a small surplus.

I am positive that the partnership is now in a stronger position due to the difficult decisions made in year 2 and this will allow for the partnership to be better placed to offer the very best service and standards moving forward.

An example of this confidence can be demonstrated below:

Health & Fitness Memberships



	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
2022/23	5595	5916	5844	5858	5962	5713	5810	5907	5966	6118	6123	6154
2023/24	6228	6429	6728	6789	6639	6943	7289	7575	7498	7654	7855	7891