

Shropshire Council
Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)
Stage One Screening Record 2025

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change
Management arrangements at Much Wenlock Leisure Centre

Name of the officer carrying out the screening
Peter Davis Leisure Services Manager – Culture, Leisure and Tourism

Decision, review, and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Initial (Stage One) ESHIA Only?	X	
Proceed to Stage Two Full ESHIA or HIA (part two) Report?		X

If completion of a Stage One screening assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes above, and complete both part A and part B of this template. If a Full or Stage Two report is required, please move on to full report stage once you have completed this initial screening assessment as a record of the considerations which you have given to this matter.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations
This is a follow up ESHIA carried out after the eight-week period of public consultation approved by Cabinet. Ahead of consultation, the likely impact had been assessed as low to medium negative across all nine Protected Characteristic groupings as set out in the Equality Act 2010, as all current users of the centre will potentially be affected by the service change. These include: • Women – all ages • Men – all ages • Babies, children and young people • People with disabilities, whether physical disabilities, sensory or mobility disabilities, mental health, or disabilities including neurodiverse conditions and Crohn's disease • People in older age groups • People undergoing gender reassignment • People of different religions and faiths

The particular groupings for whom this was considered to potentially be medium negative, rather than the low negative that would be likely to result from any service reduction, are children of school age, who currently use the pool and other facilities; people in the groupings of gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity; people with disabilities, including children of school age and older people; and people in low income households and/or those who have difficulty accessing private or public transport to travel to facilities that are further afield. This final grouping is within the additional category that we use in Shropshire, where we seek to consider social inclusion factors.

The Council also seeks to take due regard of the needs of people and households that we may consider to be vulnerable by virtue of their circumstances, including young people leaving care, and households on low incomes or in fuel poverty.

Travel and transport access emerged as a key issue for respondents, this corroborates the need to ensure consideration of financial challenges for households and individuals as well as availability of public transport.

Additionally, safeguarding concerns had been considered as likely to be expressed by respondents, as this has been the case with Shrewsbury Sports Village consultation and will need to continue to be factored into efforts to ensure that the facilities present as a safe environment for all.

The overall impacts are now considered to be medium negative across the nine groupings and for the additional categories that we seek to have due regard to in Shropshire, i.e. social inclusion, veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families, and young people leaving care.

The eight-week public consultation period has enabled assessment of a depth of responses from stakeholders and members of the public.

The consultation drew responses across groupings and demographics, and so reflects considerations about the circumstances in which people may find themselves, including challenges of access to services and facilities in a large and rural county. It does need to be articulated that social inclusion is not a statutory grouping for which to have 'due regard'. Neither are socio-economic considerations, albeit these may yet come into force in secondary legislation. Government guidance (November 2023) is clear that decisions may still be taken where a negative equality impact has been identified, provided that due consideration has been given and that mitigation efforts are being made, and that there will be ongoing engagement with groupings affected.

To mitigate the potential negative impact on some groups who will prefer Shropshire Council to continue to operate the facility or might face barriers to accessing alternative facilities if community use were to cease, the following actions are proposed:

- Continue to engage with the existing service users and stakeholders and seek their feedback about the impact of the proposed changes.

- Continue to engage with existing service users and stakeholders and seek their views on alternative suggestions or ideas for meeting the savings target as outlined in the MTFS.
- Provide clear and timely information and communication about the service change and address any concerns or queries that may arise.
- Liaise with William Brookes Academy Trust and 3-18 Education Trust, to consider all alternative operating models to enable community use to continue beyond the notice period.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of health and wellbeing considerations

As a “joint use” centre, the school/academy has exclusive use of the facility during school hours. Outside school hours and during school holidays it is available for community use. During the school term the centre is available for community use for 56.25 hours each week. This availability varies during school holidays according to demand. This has then meant that health and wellbeing benefits have been there not only for school children, for whom exercise is a known factor in promoting health and wellbeing, but also a range of people across the community as well.

Additionally, swimming is a life skill for children to learn, and a form of exercise that may be accessed by people of all ages, as well as being a low impact exercise that is of benefit for those recovering from an illness or injury. It therefore has positive benefits for people in the grouping of Age and Disability, and any reduction in access to somewhere where they may swim or learn to swim will therefore present as a negative.

Views about the likely impact of changes in provision have now been quantified to some extent through this period of public consultation as well as through analysis of existing data in relation to these groupings of consideration. A further grouping of consideration, for whom there is likely to be a negative impact that will require mitigation, are those in need of quiet times such as people with neurodiverse conditions, and dedicated slots, such as for women.

Concerns about loneliness and isolation have emerged from the consultation with, for example, older respondents saying that swimming is the only exercise and interaction that they have. Additionally, they may not be as likely to travel further afield due to a range of circumstances. Other responses refer to the confidence and skills gained for young and older people from being in a club or as an individual using other facilities at the Centre.

Changes in provision will also create a likely impact in relation to the following strategic goals and policies for Shropshire Council regarding Healthy People, as these goals will take longer to achieve:

The Shropshire Plan - Healthy people We'll tackle inequalities, including rural inequalities, and poverty in all its forms, providing early support and interventions that reduce risk and enable children, young people, adults, and families to achieve their full potential and enjoy life. We'll support Shropshire residents to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, choosing healthy lifestyles and preventing ill-health, reducing the need for long-term or hospital care.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality, social inclusion, and health considerations

There will be a 12-month notice period to enable William Brookes Academy Trust and their parent trust, 3-18 Education Trust, to consider alternative service provision. Their stated position is for community use of the facility to continue.

Future service provision could be on a 'lettings only' basis for some elements of the facility – swimming pool, sports hall, multi-use games area, outdoor pitches – should the school/trust decide to operate the centre directly.

The Academy Trust could undertake a procurement process to engage a third-party operator. However, this could require a tapered funding agreement with Shropshire Council, for which no funds have been identified.

The 3-18 Education Trust currently engages a third-party operator to manage a joint-use centre within their portfolio of schools. This would enable a 'step-in' arrangement for the operator to manage community use at Much Wenlock. This would also likely require a funding contribution from Shropshire Council but would enable a different operating model to be implemented prior to the end of the 12-month notice period.

Shropshire Council will support the William Brookes Academy during the process of identifying alternative service provision options. This will include consideration of options to source capital funding to deliver improvements to the facility to increase its long term viability.

This will give opportunity to address some of the consultation feedback in relation to the management, maintenance and condition of the facilities, which are regarded as having an adverse impact on its appeal.

Another consideration to review is whether primary school children are indeed able to access other swimming centres, which may or may not be at capacity.

It should also be noted as a mitigation action that, whilst the Shrewsbury Sports Village transformation of leisure facilities is not due to go live until 2027 (subject to further approvals), were Much Wenlock to close following the withdrawal of revenue funding, this won't take place for 12 months, due to the year's notice that must be given to the school after Cabinet consideration of the consultation outcome.

The council must continue to be mindful of changes in government guidance, around usage of what may be regarded as community assets, or around legislative changes to bring in socio-economic considerations as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Associated ESHIAs

- Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy – Updated 2024
- Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2020-2038
- Vibrant Shropshire Cultural Strategy 2021-2031
- Shrewsbury Sports Village Transformation (Cabinet report 2024)

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor the overall impacts with regard to climate change impacts and with regard to economic and societal impacts

Climate change

The service change is likely to have a negative impact on climate change if Shropshire Council ceasing to operate and withdrawing revenue support results in the facility closing to the community.

Serving notice to the 3-18 Education Trust and withdrawal of management services at Much Wenlock Leisure Centre is likely to result in reduction in community use. Those attending swimming lessons and utilising the swimming pool are therefore likely to travel further afield to access similar facilities, resulting in a probable increase in vehicle emissions by private users.

Up to 300 children will need to be transported to alternative facilities to access swimming lessons. 7 primary schools will also be obliged to use swimming pools elsewhere to fulfil Key Stage 2 requirements. This additional transport requirement will result in increased carbon emissions as well as costs to be accrued.

The closest alternative leisure facilities with swimming pools are at Madeley (7.1 miles), Bridgnorth (8.7 miles), Oakengates (10.2 miles), Wellington (11.1 miles) and Shrewsbury (13.8 miles).

Socio-economic impacts

Economic:

Ahead of the consultation, it was anticipated that the service change is likely to have a low negative impact on the local economy. Shropshire Council currently contract 4.1 FTE staff to operate the centre. However, if the centre closes to community use, or a lettings only operating model is adopted by William Brookes Academy Trust, compulsory redundancies will be required.

A further socio-economic impact brought up in consultation responses was that “Many felt that loss of community facilities would make the area a less attractive place to live, work and bring up families”. There were also comments focused on job losses that would result from service reductions or leisure centre loss.

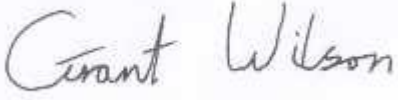
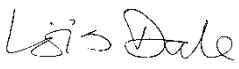
Societal/wider community:

The service change is likely to have a low to medium negative impact on the wider community if the centre is not available for community use. In 2023/24 there were 72,849 individual visits to the centre; 90% of these visits were from within 10 miles. In 2022/23 there were 102,597 individual visits; the swimming pool was closed for 3 months during 2023/24 which explains the reduction in visits last year.

Specific user groups this will affect include:

- Women – all ages
- Men – all ages
- Children and young people
- People with disabilities, whether physical disabilities, sensory or mobility disabilities, mental health, or disabilities including neurodiverse conditions and Crohn’s disease
- People in older age groups
- People of different religions and faiths

Scrutiny at Stage One screening stage.

People involved	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer for the proposed service change</i> Grant Wilson Infrastructure, Contracts and Compliance Manager – Culture, Leisure and Tourism		24 th February 2025
<i>Officer carrying out the screening.</i> Peter Davis Leisure Services Manager – Culture, Leisure and Tourism		
<i>Any other internal service area support*</i>		
<i>Any external support**</i> Mrs Lois Dale Performance and Research Specialist: Rurality and Equalities		24 th February 2025

Phillip Northfield
Public Health Development
Officer

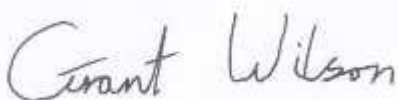


24th February 2025

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers to support external to the service but within the Council, e.g., the Performance and Research Specialist for Rurality and Equalities, Public Health colleagues, the Feedback and Insight Team, performance data specialists, Climate Change specialists, etc.*

Sign off at Stage One screening stage.

Name	Signatures	Date
Lead officer's name Grant Wilson Infrastructure, Contracts and Compliance Manager – Culture, Leisure and Tourism		24 th February 2024
Officer carrying out the screening. Peter Davis Leisure Services Manager – Culture, Leisure and Tourism		

**This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description
Shropshire Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy requires changes to leisure provision to create financial savings. The Council's financial challenges require consideration of priorities for spend, including reviewing all service areas that are non-statutory, and exploring ways in which to deliver services in a more financially sustainable manner. The proposal to cease operating Much Wenlock Leisure Centre and withdraw revenue support will support the Council's Healthy Organisation priority. Approval was sought from Cabinet on 20th November 2024 to conduct public consultation. The Much Wenlock Leisure Centre is a joint-use facility located at William Brookes School. The facility is operated by Shropshire Council for community use, but it is

held on a 125-year lease by William Brookes Academy Trust, which is part of the 3-18 Education Trust.

William Brookes School was rebuilt in 2010. The new campus included a leisure centre with the following facilities:

- Swimming pool (25m x 12.5m)
- Multi-purpose sports hall with four courts
- 20-station fitness suite
- Gymnasium
- Artificial turf pitch
- 200m athletics track, 100m straight and long jump pit
- Multi-Use Games area

Some areas of the centre are in poor condition, do not meet customer expectations and have contributed to reduced usage and income generation. The Academy is responsible for the repairs and maintenance of the centre and procuring utility suppliers. Shropshire Council engages a specialist contractor to maintain the swimming pool plant. Costs for repairs, maintenance and utility supply are split evenly between Shropshire Council and the Academy.

Shropshire Council currently employs 4.1 FTE staff at the centre who would be subject to compulsory redundancy if service provision changes or the centre closes because of the Council serving notice to the academy.

Performance indicators for Much Wenlock Leisure Centre show the following usage of the facility:

- Number of visits 2023/24 – 72,849 (swimming pool closed for 3 months due to filter replacement), 2022/23 – 102,597.
- 300 children attending swimming lessons.
- 7 primary schools use the swimming pool.
- 73 leisure centre members pay by direct debit.
- 90% of visits are made from within 10 miles
- 70% of visits are related to the swimming pool; 11% to the sports hall; 6% to the fitness suite.

The total population within a 10-mile radius is approximately 200,000. The catchment area for Much Wenlock town covers the town itself and stretches westwards towards Church Stretton and eastwards towards Broseley. The closest alternative leisure facilities to Much Wenlock are:-

- Abraham Darby Sports and Leisure Centre – 7.1 miles
- Bridgnorth Endowed Leisure Centre – 8.7 miles
- Oakengates Leisure Centre – 10.2 miles
- Wellington Civic and Leisure Centre – 11.1 miles
- Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre, Shrewsbury 13.8 miles.

Critical to the Council's proposal to serve notice on withdrawing subsidy and management from this site rather than other leisure facilities elsewhere in the county is that it is a facility owned by the school through a 125-year lease from the Council. It is therefore not an asset for which the Council has responsibility for repair, maintenance and ongoing investment during this lease term. Consequently, the Council cannot easily make changes or justify investment to support the revenue or long-term success of a facility over which it has no direct control.

This is a unique arrangement and is not replicated in other Shropshire leisure facilities where the council either operates its own facility or contracts others to do so on its behalf.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

All current users of the centre will potentially be affected by the service change, these include:

- Women – all ages
- Men – all ages
- Babies, children and young people
- People with disabilities, whether physical disabilities, sensory or mobility disabilities, mental health, or disabilities including neurodiverse conditions and Crohn's disease
- People in older age groups
- People undergoing gender reassignment
- People of different religions and faiths

As a joint-use centre, the facility is integral to William Brookes School and as such is utilised by their students during school terms. The Senior Management Team at the school/academy have been involved in discussions. Withdrawing the management service and funding will result in the school/academy taking on full responsibility for the centre and associated operating costs. This could affect the availability of facilities for education use.

Evidence used for screening of the service change

Much Wenlock Leisure Centre is a relatively modern wet and dry joint-use leisure centre. Constructed as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, with £1,008,000 funding from Sport England, it was completed in 2010. As a joint-use centre, the school/academy has exclusive use of the facility during school hours. Outside school hours and during school holidays it is available for community use. During the school term the centre is available for community use for 56.25 hours each week. This availability varies during school holidays according to demand.

The facility mix is:

- Swimming pool (25m x 12.5m)

- Multi-purpose sports hall (33m x 18m) with four courts
- 20-station fitness suite
- Gymnasium (15m x 10.5m)
- Associated Changing Rooms
- Artificial turf pitch - (63m x 102m not floodlit)
- Grass pitches (not floodlit)
- 200m athletics track, 100m straight and long jump pit (not floodlit)
- Multi Use Games Area (floodlit tarmac)

Some areas of the centre are in poor condition, do not meet customer expectations and have contributed to reduced usage and income generation. Issues include:

- Changing rooms are in poor condition e.g. damaged lockers, ceiling tiles damaged, damaged electrical accessories/sockets, etc.
- Redecoration is required throughout, and tiles are missing/damaged.
- Swimming pool changing room floor needs replacing.
- Swimming pool showers are ineffective and need replacing.
- Fitness suite equipment is old and in poor condition.
- First floor pool viewing gallery flooring needs replacing.
- Athletics track needs resurfacing to bring up to standard
- Multi-Use Games Area used for tennis/netball needs upgrading.
- Vinyl surfacing needs replacement or upgrading in dry changing.
- Ageing pool plant room requires investment.

The school/academy is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the centre and procuring utility suppliers. Shropshire Council engages a specialist contractor to maintain the swimming pool plant. Costs for repairs, maintenance and utility supply are split evenly between Shropshire Council and the Academy.

The annual operating budget for 2023/24 is £280,040. Savings identified in the MTFS for Leisure Services included this annual operating subsidy.

The provision of community use at Much Wenlock Leisure Centre is expensive and the facility requires a high degree of capital investment to enable that expense to be reduced. This is not a Shropshire Council owned facility, and it is unlikely that the Education Trust which owns the school will prioritise this investment. It is therefore not possible for the Council to continue to operate or support the service financially.

Providing community use of leisure facilities is a non-statutory service and the Council's priority must now be to maintain statutory (mandatory) services such as social care, highways maintenance and waste services, which are essential services for keeping residents safe.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

After Cabinet approved the proposal to undertake public consultation (Cabinet – 20th November 2024), consultation commenced at the beginning of December and run for an 8-week period, extended to take account of the Christmas and New Year break.

The target audience for the consultation was considered to primarily be current facility users to gauge the potential impact of community use reduction or cessation. This led to inclusion of questions about which other facilities they would be likely to use as alternatives, and questions about any disabilities they may have, to help identify current usage by people in this grouping and any practical challenges being experienced including physical accessibility.

Other consultees included:

- William Brookes Academy Trust – officers & trustees
- 3-18 Education Trust – officers & trustees
- Much Wenlock Town Council
- Shropshire Council local members
- Sports clubs – swimming, cricket, Wenlock Olympians

Initial equality impact assessment by grouping (Initial health impact assessment is included below this table)

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groupings and other groupings locally identified in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Stage Two ESHIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Low positive, negative, or neutral impact (please specify) <i>Stage One ESHIA required.</i>
<u>Age</u> (Please include children, young people, young people leaving care, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g., a child or young person for whom there are safeguarding concerns e.g., an older person with a disability)			 medium negative	
<u>Disability</u> (please include cancer; HIV/AIDS; learning disabilities; mental health conditions and syndromes; multiple sclerosis; neurodiverse conditions such as autism; hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease; physical and/or sensory disabilities or impairments)			 medium negative	
<u>Gender re-assignment</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)			 medium negative	
<u>Marriage and Civil Partnership</u> (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
<u>Pregnancy and Maternity</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)			 medium negative	
<u>Race</u> (please include ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller)				

<u>Religion or Belief</u> (please include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Nonconformists; Rastafarianism; Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Veganism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)			 Medium negative	
<u>Sex</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
<u>Sexual Orientation</u> (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				
<u>Other: Social Inclusion</u> (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; households in poverty or on low incomes; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable; people with health inequalities; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities)			 medium negative	
<u>Other: Veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families</u>				
<u>Other: Young people leaving care</u>				

Initial health and wellbeing impact assessment by category

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have with regard to health and wellbeing, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Health and wellbeing: individuals and communities in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two HIA required</i>	High positive impact	Medium positive or negative impact	Low positive negative or neutral impact (please specify)
Will the proposal have a <i>direct impact</i> on an individual's health, mental health and wellbeing? For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation? .			 medium negative	
Will the proposal <i>indirectly impact</i> an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing? For example, will it affect their ability to be physically active, choose healthy food, reduce drinking and smoking? .			 medium negative	
Will the policy have a <i>direct impact</i> on the community - social, economic and environmental living conditions that would impact health? For example, would it affect housing, transport, child development, education, employment opportunities, availability of green space or climate change mitigation? .				 Low negative

Will there be a likely change in <i>demand</i> for or access to health and social care services? For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health, Local Authority services including Social Services? .			 Medium negative	
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Report ends.