

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

- (1) That the grant of a 15-year lease of Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempton Youth Centre to Canoe Trail Ltd be approved on the terms outlined in the attached report prepared to accompany the decision.
- (2) That the Head of Regeneration, Property and Local Economy be authorised to finalise the terms of the lease to Canoe Trail Ltd.

2. Date of decision

31 October 2025

3. Reasons for decision

To implement the recommendations within the Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facility Strategic Review, approved by Executive on 20 November 2024.

To meet the budget assumptions within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the agreed 2025/2026 revenue budget for leisure services contract management.

To ensure the long-term future of Kempston Outdoor Centre for the delivery of outdoor and adventurous activity provision for the benefit of local people, and children and young people in particular, while removing the current costs to the Council associated with the operation of the site, which equate to c.£15,000 per annum.

By incorporating Kempston Youth Centre into the lease, achieve an additional benefit of a saving on Early Help & Family Support budgets relating to building management costs, which equate to c.£49,000 per annum, while protecting current Youth Centre usage.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The Council could continue to operate Kempston Outdoor Centre but there is no budget to do so within the leisure services contract budget from October 2025.

The option of excluding Kempston Youth Centre from the lease has been rejected on the basis that the nature of the site and shared services adds complexity, and because it would not achieve the level of financial benefits associated with the recommended option.

The possibility of exploring other outdoor activity operators who could take on the running of the Outdoor Centre could potentially be explored; however, CTL are the established operator on the site and have been running the outdoor and adventurous activity programme for a number of years.

5. How decision is to be funded

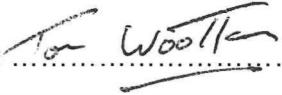
N/A – the decision will achieve rental income and additional benefits in the form of savings on Leisure and Early Help & Family Support budgets.

6. Conflicts of interest

| Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest. | Nature of interest | Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation) | Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation). |
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The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed: 

Date: **31 October 2025**

Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Tom Wootton**

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:3November2025.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:11November2025.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – The Mayor

Date of Report: 31 October 2025

Report by: Head of Regeneration, Property and Local Economy and Service Director for Public Realm, Highways and Waste Management

Subject: LEASE OF KEMPSTON OUTDOOR CENTRE AND KEMPSTON YOUTH CENTRE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the background relating to the operation and use of Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre, considers the implications arising from the approved Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and the associated Sports Facilities Strategic Review, and reviews the options considered to recommend the lease of Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre to an external operator. The report also considers the implications of the decision, including the estimated associated financial benefits.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mayor is invited to consider and, if satisfied, to:

- (1) **Approve the grant of a 15-year lease of Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre to Canoe Trail Ltd;
and**
- (2) **Authorise the Head of Regeneration, Property and Local Economy finalise the terms of the lease to Canoe Trail Ltd.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To implement the recommendations within the Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facility Strategic Review, approved by Executive on 20 November 2024. In particular, that the Council should seek the long-term lease of the site to an outdoor activity operator or others, who should cover all operating costs under the terms of the lease.

- 3.2 To meet the budget assumptions within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the agreed 2025/2026 revenue budget for leisure services contract management. In particular, resulting from the recommendations of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review, the removal of the site from the leisure services contract budget from October 2025.
- 3.3 Entering into a lease with Canoe Trail Ltd (CTL) will ensure the long-term future of Kempston Outdoor Centre for the delivery of outdoor and adventurous activity provision for the benefit of local people, and children and young people in particular, while removing the current costs to the Council associated with the operation of the site, which equate to c.£15,000 per annum.
- 3.4 Given the nature of the site and the shared functions and services of the combined building, it is viewed as necessary to include Kempston Youth Centre within the lease for the whole site. The terms of the lease will ensure the continuation of the Kempston Youth Centre name, the protection of existing uses by youth clubs and for Early Help & Family Support services, and that the permitted use remains as a youth centre. This has an additional benefit in the form of a saving on Early Help & Family Support budgets relating to the building management costs for Kempston Youth Centre, which equate to c.£49,000 per annum.
- 3.5 In addition, the site will be let on a full repairing and insuring basis, leading to additional savings to the Council in the form of repair and maintenance costs associated with site condition surveys.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Kempston Outdoor Centre is currently part of the Council's leisure services contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), which includes the lease of the site to GLL. CTL operate the site and deliver an outdoor activity programme under a sub-agreement with GLL. This programme consists of a range of outdoor and adventurous activities for schools, youth groups and private groups, including water sports, climbing, high ropes and bushcraft activities. The activity programme is targeted at all sections of the local community but with particular regard to young people. CTL also deliver Duke of Edinburgh's Award activities, qualifications and training courses, adventure school holiday clubs, and water sports for the tourism market from the site.
- 4.2 Kempston Youth Centre is operated by the Council through the Early Help & Family Support service. The Youth Centre consists of a multi-use activity hall, classroom space, a music room and recording studio, meeting and one-to-one intervention spaces, and kitchen facilities. There are also office spaces used as a community base by the Early Help & Family Support team. Current usage includes youth clubs and groups run by a number of partner organisations, holiday activity clubs, parenting and family programme delivery, and Engagement and Development team group activities (including Youth Voice projects for children on Child in Need and Child Protection plans, Looked After Children, and young carers). The centre is also used for other Early Help & Family Support activity on an as-needed basis, including one-to-one interventions with young people, family sessions with practitioners, and team around the family meetings. Kempston Youth Centre is part of the Family Hubs network.

- 4.3 The net cost to the Council of Kempston Outdoor Centre under the leisure services contract was £15,000 in 2024/2025. This represents the leisure contract costs including apportioned operator's overhead and margin fees, but excludes utilities (gas and electricity), the costs for which sit within the Kempston Youth Centre budget, and property repair-related costs. The cost to the Council for Kempston Youth Centre was £49,000 in 2024/2025 (cost of utilities, cleaning services, NNDR, telephone and broadband costs, and waste charges). These costs also exclude repair and maintenance requirements identified in the site condition surveys.
- 4.4 The Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facilities Strategic Review, approved by Executive on 20 November 2024, recommended that the Council should seek to maintain activity at Kempston Outdoor Centre through a review of lease arrangements, with the aim of achieving the long lease of the site to an outdoor activity operator or others, who should cover all operating costs under the terms of the lease. The review, therefore, identified the reduction of net running costs of the site to the Council to zero; this informed the leisure services contracts budget for 2025/2026, which assumes the removal of the budget for the site from October 2025.
- 4.5 The Outdoor Centre and Youth Centre are located in two halves of the same building and share utilities and services. It is viewed, therefore, as necessary and beneficial to let the site as a whole, with lease terms ensuring the protection of the Kempston Youth Centre name, existing uses, and permitted use for youth centre activities. This has an additional benefit in the form of a saving on Early Help & Family Support budgets relating to the building management costs for Kempston Youth Centre identified at 4.3 above.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 The recommendation is for the Council to lease the Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre site to CTL, as the established operator of the Outdoor Centre.
- 5.2 The financial terms of the proposed lease are set out in the "Key Implications" sections of the report below. Draft Heads of Terms have been created and agreed in principle with CTL and the key terms are summarised below:
- 15-year full repairing and insuring lease of Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre.
 - Landlord and tenant break clause on the fifth anniversary of commencement and at every fifth year thereafter, with six months' notice.
 - Permitted use of the site as an Outdoor Centre and Youth Centre; the site must retain the names Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre.

- The lease will not be contracted out of the security of tenure provisions of Sections 24-38 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.
- The tenant will not be permitted to assign the lease; subletting of part will be subject to landlord's consent.
- Storage space will be maintained for equipment and materials required a part of the protected youth centre bookings. An asset log of music equipment will be compiled and surplus equipment will be sold with an open book model, with proceeds invested into new equipment. The music equipment will be available for use by users of the Youth Centre.
- The tenant and Council will work together to identify, facilitate and enable access to third-party funding streams, grants or other opportunities that may contribute to the improvement, enhancement or betterment of the site.
- The tenant will be required to maintain the whole property in good repair and condition; they will be required to hand back the building in a condition equivalent to its current state and as documented with a photographic schedule of condition.
- The tenant will be responsible for the maintenance, repair and (where necessary) renewal of all service media.
- Any works that the tenant wishes to carry out will require the prior written consent of the Council; structural alterations will be prohibited unless agreed by the Council.
- If the roof is determined by a qualified independent surveyor during the term of the lease to be uneconomic or requires full replacement, the tenant may serve notice to surrender the lease. If the high ropes course is determined during the term of the lease to be uneconomic to repair or requires full replacement, it can be removed from the premises.

5.3 The terms of the lease will require the tenant to ensure the continued provision of prescribed youth centre services and activities at the site, which will be subject to a schedule of protected bookings. This includes:

- Exclusive use by the Council's Early Help & Family Support team of two offices, including access to welfare facilities.
- Youth Clubs delivered by Council partners.
- Engagement & Development Team group activities.
- Parenting and family programme delivery
- Supervised contact sessions.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6.1 The option of continuing to operate Kempston Youth Centre under the leisure services contract has been rejected on the basis that there is no budget associated with the site within the leisure services budget for 2025/2026 from October 2025.

- 6.2 The option of progressing with the lease for Kempston Outdoor Centre only and excluding Kempston Youth Centre has been considered. This has been rejected on the basis that the nature of the site and the fact that services and utilities are shared adds complexity, and because it does not achieve the level of financial benefits associated with the recommended option.
- 6.3 The possibility of exploring other outdoor activity operators who could take on the running of the Outdoor Centre could potentially be explored; however, CTL are the established operator on the site and have been running the outdoor and adventurous activity programme for a number of years.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues – Relevant Legal Power

In dealing with this matter, the Council will have regard to its general powers of competence under the Localism Act 2011 and s123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Draft Head of Terms have been prepared in relation to the lease of the site. Once confirmed, the Council's Legal Services team will be instructed to prepare the lease and provide Legal advice/support in connection with this matter.

The Council has the right to remove any facility from the leisure services contract with GLL; this will be undertaken by way of a Partial Termination Authority Change Notice under the contract Change Protocol and will result in a contract variation and contract modification notice. The termination clause in the current lease to GLL for Kempston Outdoor Centre will need to be enacted co-terminus with the leisure services contract change. All parties are supportive of the recommendation.

7.2 Policy Issues

The recommendation accords with the Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facility Strategic Review approved by Executive on 20 November 2024, namely the recommendation to review lease arrangements for Kempston Outdoor Centre, with the aim of achieving the long lease of the site to an outdoor activity operator or others, who should cover all operating costs under the terms of the lease.

The continuation of outdoor activity provision at Kempston Outdoor Centre supports the Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034, approved by the Executive on 9 July 2025, as well as the Council's Corporate Plan for 2024/2025 to 2027/2028 through the following priorities and objectives:

- Supporting Individuals and Families – the venue offers a facility that provides opportunities for a wide range of individuals and groups within the Bedford Borough community. People of all ages and abilities are offered the opportunity to participate in outdoor and adventurous activity and to access the benefits of physical activity.
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing – this priority includes the objective to maximise our sports and leisure facilities, to help residents lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Kempston Outdoor Centre is a key local hub for participation and offers opportunities to enjoy the benefits of participation in physical activity.

Securing the continuity of existing uses of Kempston Youth Centre within the lease terms supports the Council's Corporate Plan for 2024/25 to 2027/28 through the following priority and objectives:

- Supporting Individuals and Families – this priority reflects a family-friendly approach and a focus on early intervention, and includes the objective to create opportunities for all children and young people, including Looked After Children.

7.3 Resource Issues

The recommendation is to enter into a full repairing and insuring lease for the Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre site. The tenant will be responsible for repairs and maintenance, and for meeting the costs of all utilities, communications, refuse collection, rates, cleaning and any other outgoings associated with the operation of the site.

The rental value of the site has been calculated at £30,000 per annum by a Chartered Surveyor within the Council's Estates team. The cost of securing alternative accommodation for the protected bookings associated with the Youth Centre has been calculated at £18,000 per annum. It is, therefore, proposed that a rent of £12,000 per annum is charged for the premises. It is proposed that a two-year bedding in period applies, followed by a stepped rent over years three and four, increasing to £12,000 by year five. After year five, rent will be subject to annual CPI increases. This is in order to ensure that CTL have an appropriate period of time to develop additional business to reflect the additional direct operating costs associated with the Youth Centre, as well repair and maintenance costs arising for the site as identified in the condition surveys.

The recommendation has the following direct financial benefits:

- Saving of c.£15,000 per annum on leisure services contract costs associated with Kempston Outdoor Centre (based on 2024/2025 costs).
- Saving of c.£49,000 per annum on Early Help & Family Support budgets from the removal of property costs for Kempston Outdoor Centre (based on 2024/2025 costs).
- Additional rental income of £12,000 per annum (from Year 5).

Additional savings will be generated from:

- The removal of costs incurred through the Council's Property Services team on Planned Preventative Maintenance compliance testing, servicing and maintenance.
- The removal of repair and maintenance costs associated with the site condition surveys over the period of the lease.

7.4 Risks

Potential risks around finalising the terms of the lease of the site have sought to have been addressed by agreeing the draft Heads of Terms with CTL in principle prior to seeking approval for the recommendation. Estates and Legal will continue to support with finalising the lease against the agreed terms.

Potential risks around the loss of youth centre provision and services associated with incorporating Kempston Youth Centre into the lease have been addressed by ensuring lease terms which:

- Require the names Kempston Outdoor Centre and Kempston Youth Centre to be maintained
- Restrict permitted uses of the site to outdoor activity and as a youth centre
- Protect existing uses of the Youth Centre under a schedule of protected bookings.

Potential risks around viability of the current operator of Kempston Outdoor Centre to be able to absorb the additional costs associated with operation of the Youth Centre and repair and maintenance requirements as identified in the site condition surveys have been addressed through a number of measures, including:

- Rent calculation taking into account both the rental valuation for the site and the 'hire' costs of protected bookings for current Youth Centre usage.
- Incorporating a bedding-in period, stepped rent increase and landlord and tenant break clause into the lease.

There is a financial risk if the recommendation is not approved in that the required saving in relation to the leisure services contract costs will not be achieved. This would create a financial pressure as the budget associated with the site has been removed and it would be necessary to seek to dispose of the site, which would have significant implications for the Youth Centre.

7.5 Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications resulting from the recommendations of this report. Running the whole Outdoor Centre and Youth Centre site under one operator may provide an opportunity for improved energy efficiency in terms of utilities usage.

7.6 Equalities Impact

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

The activity has no relevance to Bedford Borough Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, promote good relations, promote positive attitudes and eliminate unlawful discrimination. The recommendations represent an administrative change in terms of the property and operational responsibilities for the site under the terms of the lease, through which continuity of existing services for residents is ensured. An equality impact assessment is not needed.

7.7 Impact on Families

There is no significant impact or change on families resulting from the recommendations of this report. The recommendations represent an administrative change in terms of the property and operational responsibilities for the site under the terms of the lease, through which continuity of the existing uses of the Youth Centre to support families, children and young people will be ensured under protected use arrangements. This includes continuity of the current parent and family programme delivery.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

There are no direct community safety and resilience implications resulting from the recommendations of this report.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

There is no significant impact or change on Health and Wellbeing resulting from the recommendations of this report. The recommendations represent an administrative change in terms of the property and operational responsibilities for the site under the terms of the lease, through which continuity of existing services is ensured.

Kempston Outdoor Centre will continue to deliver a range of outdoor and adventurous activities that support improved health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly for young people. The recommendation therefore supports the priority in the Council's Corporate Plan to help residents lead healthy and fulfilling lives. High-quality, affordable and accessible leisure facilities and activity opportunities can positively impact health and wellbeing. Regular physical activity and participation in sports can reduce the risk of major illnesses, improve mental wellbeing, and help residents to manage their existing health conditions. The wider benefits can include reduced loneliness and isolation, increased social cohesion, and a reduced burden on social care and NHS services.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience (including Leisure, Recreation and Culture)
Portfolio Holder for Valuing Families: Children' Services
Corporate Leadership Team
Strategic Asset Group
Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Environment
Executive Director for Children, Education & Families
Service Director for Education, SEND & Schools
Manager for Early Help & Family Support
Team Leader Early Help & Family Support
Manager for Assets & Development
Strategic Lead Leisure
Manager for Spots Development & Leisure
Finance
Legal
Greenwich Leisure Limited
Canoe Trail Limited

8.2 No direct adverse comments have been received in relation to the recommendations of this report. Considerations around the protection of the name and permitted usage of Kempston Youth Centre, and the protection of current usage for youth clubs and by the Early Help & Family Support service, have been incorporated into the proposed Head of Terms for the lease of the site, to ensure continuation of these services.

9. **WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS**

- 9.1 The views of Ward Councillors for Kempston North and Kempston West were sought in relation to the recommendations of this report. Considerations around the protection of the name and permitted usage of Kempston Youth Centre, and the protection of current usage for youth clubs and by the Early Help & Family Support service, have been incorporated into the proposed Head of Terms for the lease of the site, to ensure continuation of these services.

10. **CONTACTS AND REFERENCES**

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| Report Contact Officer: | Tom Perrett, Head of Leisure and Culture Margaret Birtles, Manager for Assets and Development |
| Declarations of Interest by the Report Author: | None |
| File Reference: | None |
| Previous Relevant Minutes: | Executive: 20 November 2024 – Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-34 and Sports Facility Strategic Review Executive: 9 July 2025 – Approval of Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 |
| Background Papers: | None |
| Appendices: | None |