

KINGSTON LEISURE CENTRE

Public information events
Feedback summary

February 2024



Contents

1.0 Introduction and aims.....	3
2.0 Public information events summary.....	5
3.0 Feedback.....	11
4.0 Reach and demographics.....	20
5.0 Conclusion.....	24
Appendix 1: Exhibition boards.....	27

Kingston Council is committed to building a new swimming and leisure centre in Kingston town centre, and has been working at pace to bring forward revised proposals for the centre.

Accessible, inclusive and sustainable facilities remain at the heart of the project that will deliver the range of activities that residents and stakeholders said they wanted to see, in a more efficient two-storey building created within an affordable budget.

A Design Team has been brought on board to create the revised proposals.

Across January 2024 the public were invited to meet the team, ask any questions, and let the Council know what they thought about the information provided through a range of methods as described in section 2.0.

The events aimed to:

- Update stakeholders on the new approach to Kingston Leisure Centre
- Introduce the new Design Team
- Set out an updated timeline for the project

Authorship:

This document has been collated and written by an independent third party, make:good.

make:good were asked by Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames to process, analyse and provide a summary of the feedback received at the January 2024 public information events for Kingston Leisure Centre.

The public exhibitions and online opportunity for feedback on the proposals were delivered from January 13th - January 28th 2024 and consisted of:

- Four in-person public information events
- Online survey available on Council's dedicated engagement website www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk/regeneration/leisure-centre, and a link posted to the project website www.transformkingston.co.uk/leisure-centre
- Project email address where people could submit comments
- Opportunity for phone calls to be taken through the Council's Contact Centre

Opportunities to participate were promoted via:

Physical promotion



Leaflets

- Leaflet to surrounding area within a 0.5 mile radius and to approximately 2,000 properties
- Leaflet posted to close neighbours of the site



Posters and screens

- JCDecaux posters uploaded to town centre digital screens
- Internal and external screens within Guildhall updated
- Poster placed at site entrance
- Posters placed in community notice boards
- A1 sign advertising all events placed outside exhibition venues

Digital promotion



Websites

- Transform Kingston website updated with information boards and dates
- Events placed on the Council's 'Events' page



Social media

- Posts across Council's social media platforms; Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor and X throughout January



Emails

- Emails to political, community and leisure stakeholders
- Email to Transform Kingston mailing database
- Member bulletin email sent to members



Digital press

- Let's Talk page created, with project on homepage of website
- Piece placed in Your Kingston resident newsletter
- Piece placed in Let's Talk regular

Timetable of events

Event date and time	Event location	Attendance	Pieces of feedback
Saturday 13th January 1pm - 4pm	Kingston Quaker Centre, Fairfield East	160	69
Wednesday 17th January 4pm - 7pm	Everyday Church, 46 Union Street	43	20
Wednesday 24th January 4pm - 7pm	Richard Mayo Centre, Kingston URC Church	29	15
Saturday 27th January 11am-2pm	Richard Mayo Centre, Kingston URC Church	46	21

Other feedback channels:



- For those not able to attend in person all of the information on display was made available on the project website: www.transformkingston.co.uk/leisure-centre
- **152 online surveys** were completed.
- People were also invited to email their feedback through to the Major Projects Team and a phone number was also provided.
- **8** project related emails were received and we did not receive any phone calls.

Content:



Material presented at these events included:

- An introduction to the project team
- Background and timeline of decisions to date
- Summary of feedback received in the past and how the team have responded
- Revised proposals for the leisure centre for Kingston Town Centre
- Approaches for improving public space
- Timeline for delivering a new centre



Kingston Leisure Centre New Specialist Team



Chris Jones
(Project Director)



Siddiqa Islam
(Assistant Director Major Projects)

Tom Fairey
(Development Partner)

Richard Thompson
(Project Manager)

Bastin Bloomfield
(Architect)

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES PROJECT TEAM


Providing inclusive and accessible leisure and well-being services for our borough's residents is a key part of the council's commitment to reduce inequalities and create a fairer borough. The council is committed to building a new swimming pool and leisure centre on the site in Kingston town centre, which will deliver the range of activities that residents and stakeholders said they wanted to see within an affordable budget.

We are a team of specialist consultants that have a wide range of experience across the sport, leisure and well-being sector. We create inspiring, accessible and inclusive spaces for activities that meet the needs of our communities. We are excited to be helping to deliver a new leisure centre for Kingston town centre.


Following the necessary closure of the unsafe Kingfisher building in 2019, and the responsible decision to revise proposals following the unprecedented national financial picture in March 2023, the council has worked at pace to bring forward new proposals.

Facilities within the new leisure centre have been informed by a strategic review of leisure needs within the borough, as well as the extensive feedback provided during the three rounds of engagement in 2021 and 2022.

The centre will be managed and operated by a leisure operator (to be appointed) on behalf of the Council.



THE SITE TODAY



THE SITE TODAY - FAIRFIELD ROAD

www.transformkingston.co.uk

Kingston Leisure Centre Committed To Delivery

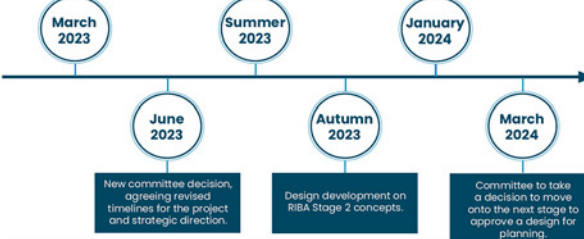
Following the June 2023 committee decision to bring forward a revised and affordable design for the new leisure centre, the project has progressed at pace with initial designs.

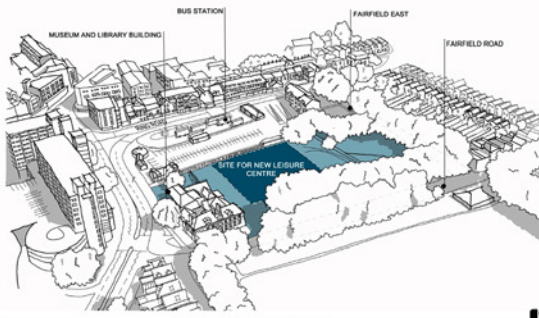
The reimagined leisure centre will sit in the same location and improves upon the offer found in the Kingfisher Leisure Centre when it was open, taking on board the community feedback already received, and the strategic review of leisure needs.

Increased costs against a backdrop of national financial pressures leads to a decision not to complete the procurement process for a contractor.

New professional design team is appointed.

Public exhibitions and opportunity for all to view progress.





www.transformkingston.co.uk

Sample of exhibition boards - see Appendix 1 for full boards

Feedback gathered

The questions asked of attendees were:

1 Please select the top three facilities most important to you by writing a 1,2, or 3 in the relevant box:

- 25m competition pool
- Learner pool with interactive splash pad
- Fitness gym
- Group cycling studio
- Studio spaces
- Sports hall
- Squash courts
- Health suite
- Soft play
- Cafe
- Upgraded play area

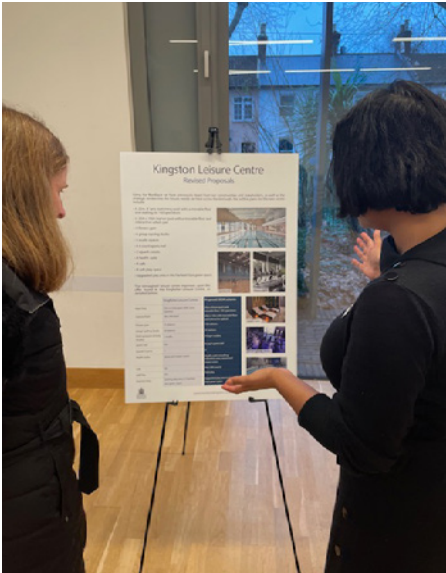
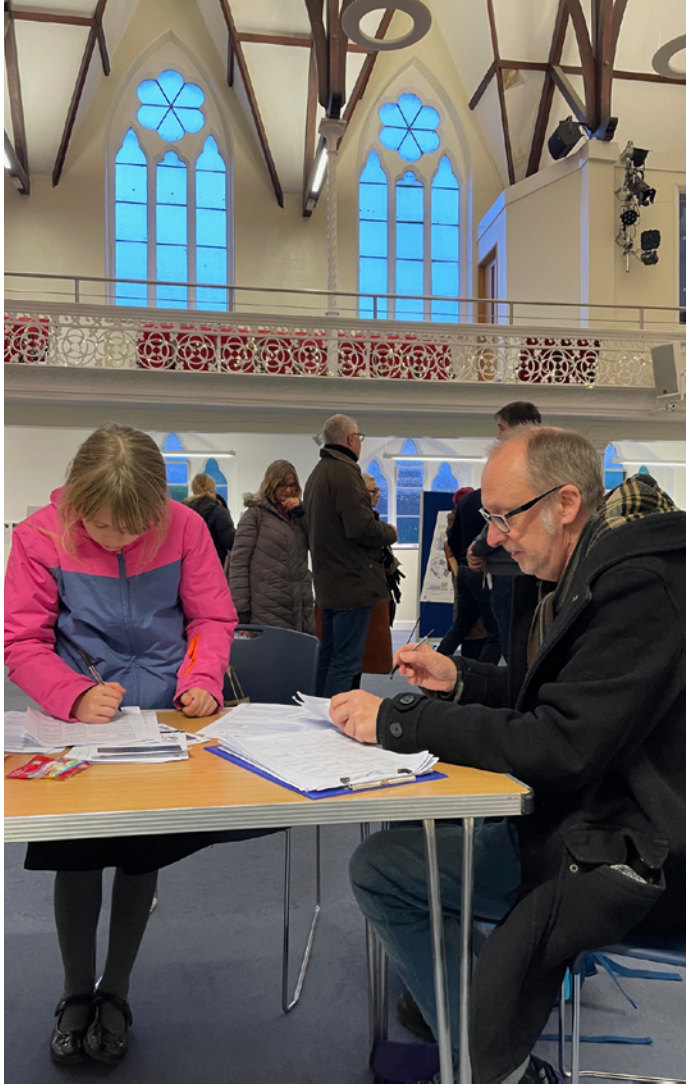
2 Do you have any comments you would like to make about the new public realm and upgraded play area around the leisure centre?

3 Do you have any other comments about the project?

4 Have you given feedback on proposals for the new leisure centre before?

We also collected anonymous Equalities Impact Assessment data.

Photos of events



Feedback figures:



attended our in-person events



pieces of feedback across four events



pieces of online feedback were received



emails commenting on the proposals



had provided feedback as part of the previous proposals

Question 1:

'Please select the top three facilities most important to you by writing a 1,2, or 3 in the relevant box:'

- 1 25m competition pool was ranked most important by **166 people and was ranked 1, 2 or 3 by 240 people.**
- 2 The learning pool was ranked most important by **30 people and was ranked 1, 2 or 3 by 134 people.**
- 3 The fitness gym was ranked most important by **13 people and was ranked 1, 2 or 3 by 93 people**

When aggregating together responses that were ranked 1, 2 or, 3 these features remain the top 3 facilities. Aggregated feedback shows the next three most important facilities as:

- 4 The sports hall was ranked 1, 2, or 3 by **83 people.**
- 5 A cafe was ranked 1, 2, or 3 by **55 people.**
- 6 Studio spaces were ranked 1, 2 or 3 by **43 people.**

Question 2: 'Do you have any comments you would like to make about the new public realm and upgraded play area around the leisure centre?'

Feedback weighting:

- **74% of respondents did not express a particular sentiment about the public realm proposals.**
- **21% expressed a positive sentiment**
- **5% expressed a negative sentiment**

All feedback was sorted into positive and negative responses, and the remainder of responses were neutral. The vast majority of these neutral comments were suggestions, general statements or questions about the project.

More people were positive than negative about the proposals - the majority of people had balanced views and whilst they were frustrated about the delays in the project to date, they could see the benefits of the new leisure centre.

On the whole, **the negative responses included more detail** as to why they were concerned with a certain aspect of the plans, whereas the positive responses didn't go into as much detail besides general approval.

Neutral feedback (74%)

The neutral and balanced feedback focused on specific suggestions on the type of play provision to include, the quality of the proposed planting and landscaping and how the public realm could best accommodate people getting to and from the centre.

More detail on this thematic feedback is set out on the following page.

Key themes for question 2:

Outdoor facilities and play (50 comments)



The plans were well received. Comments reflect a need for the play equipment to be suitable for all ages. Several comments requested more seating, and the inclusion of picnic tables, with others suggesting the cafe looking out towards the play area and having partially sheltered outdoor seating spilling out. Some commenters expressed disappointment that there are no plans for outdoor basketball/netball/football courts, or provision of outdoor exercise classes and expressed a lack of things to do in the area for older children / teenagers, and access to outdoor courts would benefit this age group.

"The playground desperately needs upgrading and it will be nice to have spaces that all ages can use."

"The upgraded play area should not be any smaller, and it would be good if it could retain the current balance of having a natural/wood balancing and obstacle circuit alongside slides, swings and roundabouts. Additional swings would also be popular."

Planting and landscaping (28 comments)



Overall the planting was well received. Respondents would like as many trees as possible, and requested that no trees were removed during building work. Some questioned the need for an orchard and again upkeep was a worry, with falling fruit potentially attracting vermin. The 'wilder' areas like the nature trail were well liked, with respondents noting the biodiversity benefits of meadow-like planting. Commenters' main concern is ensuring regular maintenance of planted areas.

"The public realm area looks well-designed and good value. It could be even wilder."

"The community garden and nature trails in my mind are a great addition."

Getting to / from the centre and parking (28 comments):



Provision of car parking and plenty of bike racks was frequently mentioned, as respondents noted traffic to and from the area is likely to increase on completion of the centre. Several responses referred to good, sheltered parking for bikes at the previous leisure centre and requested secure bike storage going forward, along with consideration of larger storage space for e-bikes / cargo bikes. The provision of two disabled parking spaces was seen as insufficient. Regarding safety, some commenters wondered how the site was being secured from the main road and noted the coach parking should not adjoin the play area.

"I'm worried about the volume of traffic that will be coming into Kingston attracted by new pool complex and knowing they can park there."

10 comments wondered if there was a way to **integrate / open up links to the library and museum**, having seen ideas for this in the previous proposal, in order to create a central hub for sport, leisure and learning in Kingston.

"It would make much more sense to join the new development to the existing library facilities with a shared park."

Question 2 :

'Do you have any comments you would like to make about the new public realm and upgraded play area around the leisure centre?'

Binary sentiment for question 2:

Positive (21%)

Most of the positive comments welcome the upgrades to the play area and acknowledged that this is a much needed facility for the local community that would benefit from better public realm setting. The community garden and the nature trail were also well received, and respondents were positive about the wildflowers and biodiversity benefits that they will provide.

"Delighted to hear and see the plans for the future. It's much needed for local residents and community."

Negative (5%)

There is concern about the loss of the current play area during construction works, as it is used frequently by local families. Some of the negative sentiment came from people who were concerned that the sustainable drainage (which was interpreted to mean a pond) was too close to the play area and therefore could be dangerous for children playing. There are quite a few concerns about who will manage the upkeep of the orchard and other landscaping.

"I'm unsure if the pond is a good idea near a playground. Unless I've misunderstood what the 'natural drainage' area is."

Question 3: 'Do you have any other comments about the project?'

Feedback weighting:

- **75% of respondents did not express a particular sentiment about the project.**
- **13% expressed a positive sentiment**
- **12% expressed a negative sentiment**

All feedback was sorted into positive and negative responses, and the rest was neutral. The vast majority of these neutral comments were suggestions, general statements or questions about the project.

Neutral feedback (75%)

The neutral and balanced feedback focused on a desire to see the project happen as soon as possible, the swimming pool provision, creating an inclusive environment, ensuring there is funding available to realise the project and the sports hall.

Many of the comments were questions on specific features within the building rather than comments about the building itself, these questions can be addressed in future stages of the project.

More detail on this thematic feedback is set out on the following pages.

Question 3 :

'Do you have any other comments about the project?'

Key themes for question 3:

Get it built (86 comments)



The overwhelming sentiment / theme apparent in the comments is that this project is long overdue and needs to go ahead as quickly as possible. The completion date of 2027 feels a long time away for several commenters. Many feel the pool is the most important aspect of the proposals and therefore should be prioritised in the build.

"Can you stop all the procrastination and get on with it."

"It looks great but please expedite this project for the good of the community."

Pool (66 comments)



The plans for the pool have been received well, and many feel that it is the most important aspect of the plans. However, many have lamented the lack of 'fun' elements that the Kingfisher centre had: slides, wave machine, octopi etc. The 25m competition pool is also popular, with some asking for it to be extended to 50m and the provision of seating for spectators during competitions. The lack of a hydrotherapy pool was questioned by some.

"Disappointed the 'fun' elements of the Kingfisher have all been stripped away."

"I am very pleased to see a good-sized swimming pool."

Accessibility / inclusivity for all ages (22 comments)



The sloped entry in the previous pool was popular with respondents, and that it was helpful for those with disabilities. Sentiment on the moving floor was mixed with some concern about access to the pool during operation of the floor. Accessible changing rooms are just as important as accessibility in the pool. Some comments mentioned the need to cater to all ages, not just families, and that there should be an effort to make the elderly feel as welcome as children.

"Please ensure this space works for those with additional needs and accessibility needs."

"We have used a pool with moving floor and it was great."

Key themes for question 3:

Funding/viability (19 comments)



There is concern about the funding of the build and respondents would like transparency from the Council on how the development will be paid for, and the plans to stay within budget. There are further concerns as to how the centre will be financially viable once open. One suggestion included hiring out multi-use rooms/studios to local community groups as there is a lack in the area of function rooms for hire.

"I hope that there is an opportunity to generate revenue for the centre through opening up to outside hiring of space that is competitive."

"I would be interested to understand more about the budgeting for the project. What is the projected cost and what contingency is built in?"

Sports hall and other facilities (18 comments)



Respondents were glad of the inclusion of a sports hall, saying that there is a lack of these in the borough, with some requesting a bigger size of hall. Several comments requested that the sports hall have a ceiling high enough for badminton and nets for indoor cricket. Some were disappointed about the removal of the climbing wall.

"Very pleased to hear about the sports hall and its measurements."

"Is there any way a climbing wall facility could be accommodated within the sports hall?"

Question 3 :

'Do you have any other comments about the project?'

Binary sentiment for question 3:

Positive (13%)

Respondents are keen for the project to commence as quickly as possible, and are hopeful that the new facilities will be of great benefit to community health and wellbeing. Reintroducing a pool into Kingston was seen as a key benefit for the project and the range of proposed facilities would meet the needs of the community.

"Looks like it will meet the needs of a diverse community."

"Great addition to Kingston and surrounding."

Negative (12%)

The majority of negative sentiment is focused on how long Kingston has been without these facilities, and lack of confidence in the Council to deliver them - as opposed to commenting directly on the plans themselves. However, some of the negativity was directed towards the lack of 'fun' elements in the pool, as these were very popular in the previous centre. Other concerns are on the viability of the centre and how it can recoup costs once open.

"It's appalling the borough has been without swim facilities for such a long time."

Postcode data

Of the 277 people who gave us written feedback, **182** provided us with postcode data. From this we can see:

- 84% of respondents live within a 1 mile radius of the site
- 95% of participants live in the borough of Kingston

(note that most map points represent multiple respondents)

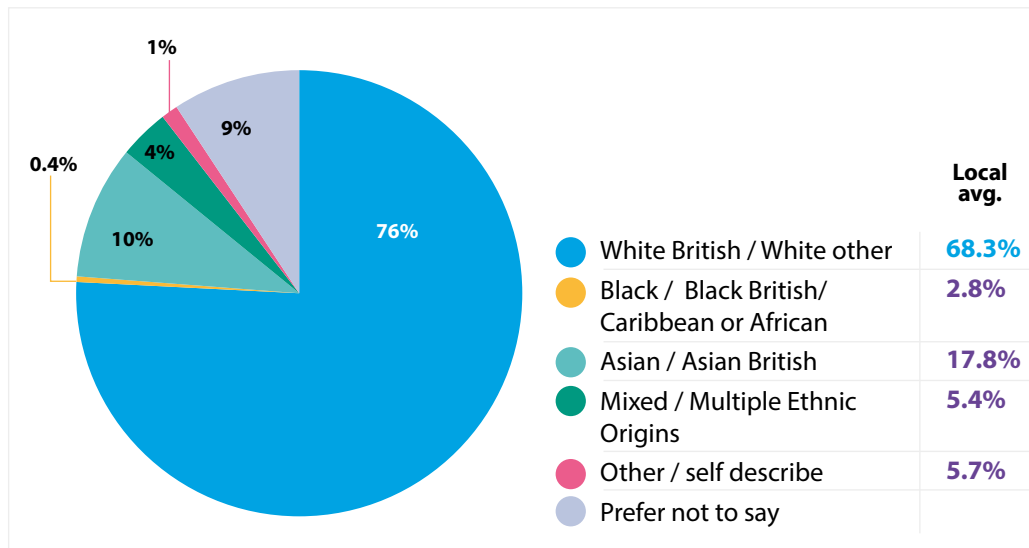
Demographic data

We have tracked and compared the data given with local averages (based on 2021 Census data for the borough of Kingston). Of the 277 people who gave feedback, **250** gave some demographic data (shown on following page).



● Development site [---] 1 mile radius [---] Kingston borough boundary

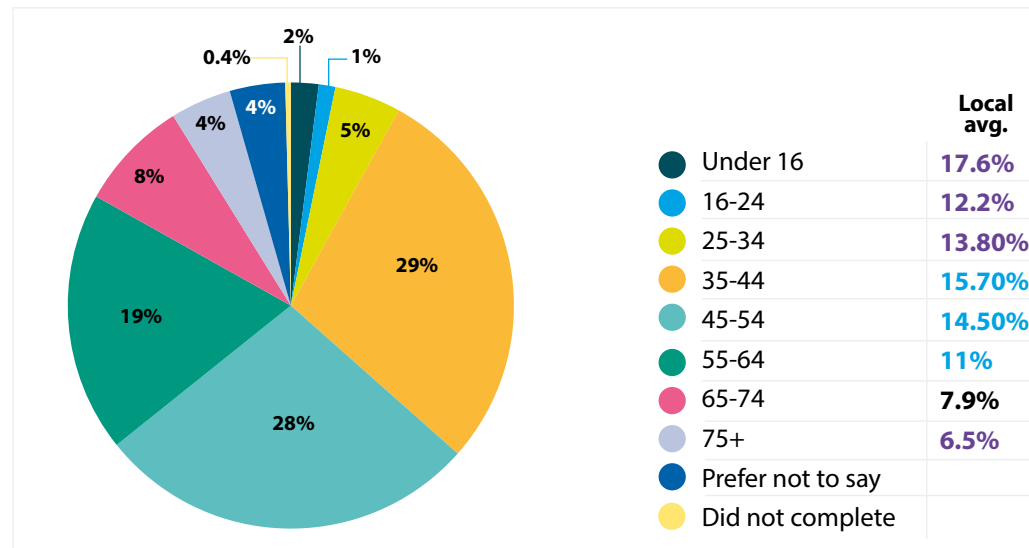
Numbers in **purple** indicate an under-represented demographic.
 Numbers in **blue** indicate an over-represented demographic.



ETHNICITY: 248 responses

The majority of participants were White British or White other and when compared to borough data all other ethnicities were under represented. Participants of Mixed/ Multiple ethnic origins were under represented by 1.4% whereas there was a greater under-representation in Black/ Black British/ Caribbean or African and Asian/ Asian British.

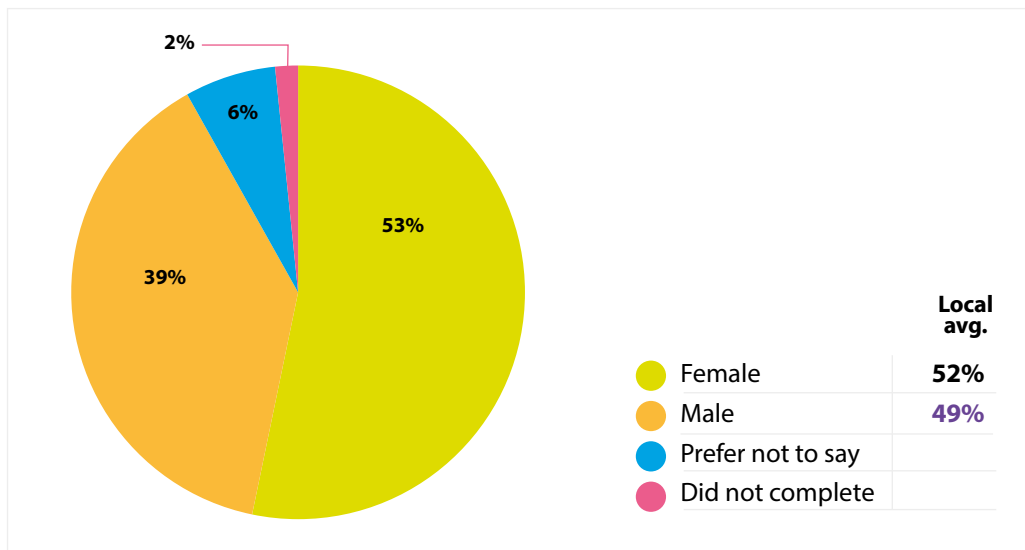
NOTE: There is no 'Did not complete' number because all respondents answered this question



AGE: 249 responses

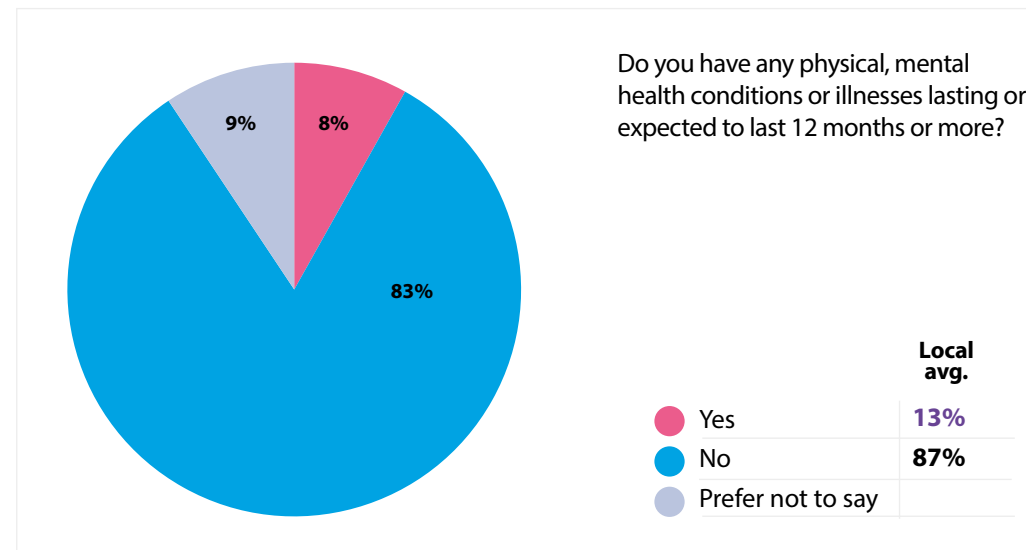
Those aged 16 - 34 were under represented as were people under the age of 16. Under 16s represent 17.6% of the borough's population and were not reached through the feedback gathering process. People aged 35 - 64 were over represented in the feedback showing that the current communication methods are reaching that demographic.

Numbers in **purple** indicate an under-represented demographic.
 Numbers in **blue** indicate an over-represented demographic.



SEX: 246 responses

People identifying as male were under represented in this feedback gathering process and this disparity will need to be addressed in the next stages of the project.



DISABILITY: 246 responses

People with an illness and/ or disability were under represented and this will need to be addressed in the next stages of the project.

NOTE: the project team is working closely with disability groups to ensure their voices will be heard as part of the next phase of the project, particularly on design and material usage.

NOTE: There is no 'Did not complete' number because all respondents answered this question.

The events were well attended and the volume of online feedback shows that this project is important to the residents of Kingston.

The channels of promoting the opportunity to participate resulted in a good level of participation. It is recommended that the full range of promotional activities used for this round of events should be continued in the next phases of the project.

Whilst there are some areas of reach that need to be addressed, particularly with ethnicity, the turnout at events and volume of feedback gathered was high, demonstrating the Council's commitment to involving their communities.

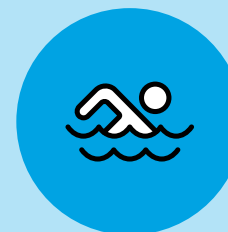
Key feedback:



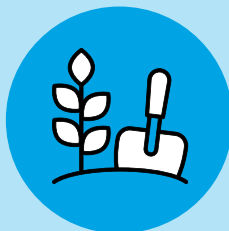
Continuing provision of timeline clarity and updates on how the project is to be realised are important to people



The community are excited for this project to be realised despite frustrations on delay



The swimming pool is the facility people are most interested in



Reassurance needed on maintenance for outdoor areas



More detailed designs and clarity will be welcomed as the project progresses

Areas for further responses:

These areas can be addressed or responded to in the pre-planning phase to complete the feedback loop from this phase of the project.

Outdoor



Public realm:

- What will happen to play provision during construction?
- How will you make sure the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) near the playground will be safe?
- How will you ensure the upkeep and maintenance of the public realm?
- How will trees and planting be managed and maintained?

Play:



- How will the play provision cater to a range of ages?
- Will the play area include seating and shelters?
- Is it possible to include basketball/netball/ football courts?

Parking:



- How will you accommodate the level of car and cycle parking required?
- Can the coach parking be moved from the play area?

Indoor



Swimming pool:

- What fun elements will be included in the swimming pool?
- What spectator seating can be provided?
- Why is there no therapy pool provision?
- How will the pool be made accessible?



Sports hall:

- Will the hall be able to accommodate badminton?
- Will the hall be able to accommodate indoor cricket?



Viability:

- How will you ensure that the project remains viable?

Appendix 1: Exhibition boards

Contact:

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