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Epsom’s Rainbow Centre former operators drive up Leatherhead Leisure Centre visitor numbers

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BBC reports: Visitor numbers are booming at Leatherhead Leisure Centre on the back of major investment to rebuild the site’s reputation, staffing, and facilities. GLL Leisure (former Rainbow Centre contractors) took over management of the centre last year – which at the time had just three full-time staff. Knowing this would be a major issue, the company began recruitment months before the contract took over – leading to it having full management staffing from day one. That, and investing “well over” what they bid on refurbishing the site, together with timetabling tweaks, has seen memberships soar with almost double the amount of visits on last year.

The encouraging figures were presented by GLL Leisure staff to Mole Valley District Council’s March 24 external scrutiny committee. The first phase had been to turn the ship and rebuild reputations. They said: “Leatherhead Leisure Centre had a poor reputation under the previous leisure contractor in respect that the building had deteriorated – and the preservation of the building was the first priority. We also wanted to make sure that we had enough staff to run the building as previously there was a lack of staff. There were literally two lifeguards that we took on and one manager.”

So far the numbers have shown the effort has been worthwhile with memberships at Leatherhead at 4,600 – up 1,800 in just a single year. Visitor numbers soared as well from 260,000 per year in 2024 to 508,000 last year. They believe a similar approach at Dorking Leisure Centre – which GLL Leisure also run, should see similar results.

They added: “We knew Leatherhead was a destination many many years ago and we wanted to get that back. We invested well over what we put in the bid but we had real confidence that it was going to work, and it really has. A lot of people have come from private health clubs to come and use the leisure centre, as part of the new gym development so that’s a real good indicator that people are coming back to public centres rather than spending over the top on private health club provisions.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image: Leatherhead Leisure Centre (Image Google)

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GLL used to operate the Rainbow Centre but were replaced in October 2025 when Epsom and Ewell Borough Council awarded the contract to Places Leisure. In the coming weeks Epsom and Ewell Times hopes to complete an investigative report on circumstances surrounding the management contracts between Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and the Rainbow Centre operators.

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