

Save Golden Lane Leisure Centre

Golden Lane Estate, London EC1Y 0SH

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7 April 2026

Chris Hayward

Policy Chairman

City of London Corporation, PO Box 270, Guildhall, London EC2P 2EJ

By email: chris.hayward@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Helen Fentimen OBE JP

Chair, Community and Children's Services Committee

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RE: Proposed Closure of Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre on 30 April 2026 — Formal Demand for Emergency Review, Transition Plan Disclosure, and Prevention of Closure

Dear Councillor Hayward and Councillor Fentimen,

We write to you jointly, and by name, as the two elected members who bear the greatest personal political responsibility for what is about to happen to Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre. Councillor Hayward as Policy Chairman — the most senior elected position in the City of London Corporation. Councillor Fentimen as Chair of the Community and Children's Services Committee, whose own published terms of reference give it explicit responsibility for running the centre.

Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre is scheduled to close permanently on 30 April 2026. The centre is still open. There are 22 days left. We are writing to demand that this closure does not happen — and to ask you to use the authority available to you to find a solution before that date.

1. Your Own Words

In December 2024 — sixteen months ago, when the City of London Corporation formally announced its £10.35 million refurbishment commitment for Golden Lane Leisure Centre — both of you made specific public statements about the facility and the wellbeing of residents. These were not casual remarks. They were formal commitments made at a moment of deliberate celebration of the City's investment in this community.

YOUR OWN WORDS — ON THE PUBLIC RECORD

'We are proud to continue our significant investment in Golden Lane for the wellbeing of all our residents.' — Councillor Hayward, December 2024

'The health and wellbeing of our residents is our number one priority. Our health is the most precious thing, and we must look after it. We want those that live in the City to be able to have access to first-class leisure and sporting facilities.' — Councillor Fentimen, December 2024

'Sport transforms lives and is the glue that binds people and communities together.' — Councillor Hayward, October 2023, on the launch of the Global City of Sport Strategy 2023–2030 — a strategy naming Golden Lane Leisure Centre as a core facility with a seven-year horizon to 2030

Sixteen months after those commitments were made, the only publicly-funded leisure facility in the Square Mile is scheduled to close permanently, with 29 days' notice and no confirmed alternative. We require both of you to explain, in writing and by name, how those commitments are consistent with this outcome — and what you are now doing to prevent it.

2. The Facts the City Cannot Dispute

— Golden Lane is the only site in Fusion Lifestyle's entire national portfolio confirmed to permanently close on 30 April 2026. Every other affected local authority in England found a transition arrangement. The City of London Corporation, which manages over £2 billion in endowment funds, did not.

— Lambeth Council secured continued operation of Brockwell Lido — same operator, same administration date — within hours, as one of London's most financially stretched boroughs.

— The City was conducting Pre-Market Engagement with potential new operators as recently as March 2026. Those operators were active in the market at the moment Fusion collapsed.

— Staff were given thirty minutes' notice of a meeting on 1 April 2026 at which City of London Corporation officials were present, at which they were told they would all lose their jobs on 30 April.

— The City's own website states: "If the refurbishments require a full closure of the Centre, we will look to arrange access to alternative facilities." The centre is due to close in 22 days. No alternative has been confirmed.

— The £10.35 million refurbishment is not scheduled to begin until December 2026 — eight months from now. The gap in provision is a choice, not an inevitability.

3. The Transition Plan the City Should Already Have Had

We draw your attention to a fundamental planning failure that predates the Fusion administration entirely.

The refurbishment of Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre was always scheduled to require closure — from December 2026. A diligent and competent local authority, knowing that its only publicly-funded leisure facility was to close for a substantial period, would be expected to have already developed, consulted upon, and signed off a transition plan for alternative provision during that closure period. That plan should have been in place well before Fusion's administration was announced.

We require you to answer the following questions directly:

1. What transition plan had been developed for alternative provision during the planned December 2026 closure for refurbishment? We ask you to provide that plan in full.
2. If such a plan existed, why has it not been activated now to cover the period between 30 April and December 2026 — the same period for which it would eventually have been required in any case?
3. If no such plan existed: why not? The planned closure for refurbishment was known. The obligation to plan for continuity of provision for vulnerable users was known. The absence of a transition plan represents either a significant failure of contingency planning or a deliberate decision not to prioritise continuity of provision for residents. We require an explanation of which it is.

The Fusion administration did not create this problem. It revealed it.

4. The Contract the City Designed

We understand that the City approached other operators to take over the centre following the administration, and that all declined. We further understand that the principal reasons cited were the prohibitive terms of the existing contract — which made the operator liable for repairs and maintenance despite the City being the landlord — and the economics of the facility, including reduced membership numbers.

We make the following observations:

— The contract was designed by the City. Its terms are the City’s responsibility. If those terms made the facility uneconomic for any operator other than one willing to absorb unsustainable costs, that is a procurement failure for which the City is accountable.

— Membership numbers fell substantially during Fusion’s tenure. Residents know why: post-Covid restrictions were never lifted; facilities deteriorated; management was chronically poor. Residents have long called the operator “Con-Fusion.” The City, as contracting authority, had both the obligation and the power to intervene. It did not.

— We require confirmation of whether alternative operators were offered revised contract terms — ones that properly reflected the City’s responsibilities as landlord — or whether they were shown the same prohibitive terms under which Fusion operated. If the latter, the City has not genuinely tested the market.

5. Statutory Duties — Care Act 2014 and Health and Social Care Act 2012

The proposed closure engages the City Corporation’s statutory duties under two pieces of legislation.

CARE ACT 2014 — STATUTORY DUTIES ENGAGED

Section 1 — Wellbeing Duty: The City must promote physical and mental health and participation in recreation when exercising its functions.

Section 2 — Prevention Duty: The City must provide or arrange services that prevent or delay the development of care needs. The Act requires active consideration of affected individuals; the City ought to have identified vulnerable users and planned for their specific support. The City must demonstrate that equivalent or adequate alternatives exist, that vulnerable users are not disproportionately affected, and that preventative functions are maintained.

Section 6 — Integration Duty: The City must integrate care and support with health-related services including leisure. From 1 May, GPs will have nowhere to refer Exercise on Referral patients.

Core Prevention Outcomes: The Act requires the City to ensure adequate provision of services that support wellbeing and prevention. Having neither a needs assessment nor a mitigation plan indicates either weak contingency planning or a deliberate decision not to prioritise continuity.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ACT 2012 — SIGNIFICANT ISSUE

Closing the only local leisure facility serving a dense urban residential community, with no continuity plan in place, engages the City Corporation’s duties under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The Act requires local authorities to take steps to improve the health of their population and to have regard to the need to reduce health inequalities. Removing the only publicly-funded exercise facility from a community that includes elderly residents, disabled users, GP-referred patients, and children with special educational needs — without assessed alternatives — is a significant issue under this framework.

We require confirmation of whether the City’s obligations under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 were considered before the closure decision was made.

Three programmes are being removed without confirmed alternative:

— Exercise on Referral — a 12-week GP-prescribed programme linked to the City of London Registered Medical Practice and Barts Hospital.

— Young at Heart — subsidised elderly fitness at £1.50 per session, in a neighbourhood where the 65–84 population has grown 20 per cent in recent years.

— SEND sports provision — dedicated swimming, football, and gym for disabled children and young people, including We Swim, a club supporting people with disabilities.

— 129 children and toddlers currently swimming with Anaconda Swimming Club at the pool will lose their provision from 1 May with no confirmed alternative.

We are taking legal advice on whether the closure, and the apparent absence of a needs assessment, an equality impact assessment, and a mitigation plan, constitutes a statutory breach. We have formally asked the City Corporation whether any compliance assessment was conducted before the closure decision was made.

6. Assessments That Should Have Been Conducted

We require the City Corporation to confirm whether each of the following was conducted before the closure decision was made, and if not, to explain why not:

1. A needs assessment identifying vulnerable users of the centre and the specific support they would require during any closure period.

2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) examining the disproportionate effect of the closure on protected characteristic groups — including elderly residents, disabled users, and children with special educational needs.
3. A risk assessment comparing the risks of closure against the risks of continuity — including the public health, care, and legal risks of removing provision without alternative.
4. A Care Act 2014 compliance assessment, specifically addressing the Section 2 prevention duty and the requirement to ensure vulnerable users are not disproportionately affected.
5. A Health and Social Care Act 2012 assessment of the impact on population health and health inequalities.

The absence of any of these assessments would itself constitute a significant procedural failure — one that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman would be entitled to consider as maladministration through procedural fault resulting in community injustice. We note this not as a threat but as a statement of the legal and governance framework within which this decision will be scrutinised.

7. The Governance Dimension

We have been informed by two ward councillors independently that the decision to allow the closure was not taken by the Community and Children’s Services Committee — the body whose own terms of reference give it explicit responsibility for running the centre — but by the Town Clerk acting under an urgency or delegated authority procedure. Elected ward members were apparently not consulted before the decision was taken.

We are writing to Ian Thomas separately on this point. We ask you both directly: were you consulted before the urgency procedure was invoked? Do you endorse the decision? And do you accept that this was the appropriate mechanism for a decision of this significance — one with clear statutory dimensions under both the Care Act 2014 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012?

8. The Strategy Contradiction

The City of London Corporation’s Global City of Sport Strategy 2023–2030 explicitly identifies Golden Lane Leisure Centre as a core facility through which the City delivers sport outcomes. That strategy was published less than three years ago and has four years still to run. Its central commitment is to make the City “a world-leading sport and leisure destination.”

The City cannot simultaneously pursue a Global City of Sport strategy and close the only publicly-funded leisure facility serving its residential community, without a transition plan, without statutory compliance assessments, and without elected member oversight. These positions are irreconcilable.

9. Formal Demands

We require written responses, signed by both of you, within ten working days of the date of this letter — by 22 April 2026 at the latest, eight days before the scheduled closure:

1. An emergency review, conducted before 30 April 2026, of whether the centre can remain open during the period before the December 2026 refurbishment, including through community-led, trust-based, or directly managed arrangements, or through the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy fund.
2. Full disclosure of the transition plan developed for alternative provision during the planned December 2026 refurbishment closure — and an explanation of why it has not been activated now.
3. Confirmation of whether a needs assessment, Equality Impact Assessment, risk assessment, Care Act compliance assessment, and Health and Social Care Act 2012 assessment were conducted before the closure decision was made. If not, an explanation of why not.
4. Disclosure of the contract terms on which alternative operators were approached, and whether revised terms were offered.
5. Confirmed alternative provision for Exercise on Referral participants, Young at Heart members, SEND users, Anaconda Swimming Club members, and We Swim members — at what locations, from what date, and at what cost.
6. A public meeting, chaired by an elected member, open to all residents, within 21 days.
7. A formal deputation to the Community and Children’s Services Committee at the earliest available meeting.
8. Written guarantees on the renovation start date, completion date, and the centre’s reopening.

10. Our Position

Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre is still open. The staff are still there. The pool is still running. There is still time to stop this closure. We are asking you — the two most senior elected figures in this matter — to use the authority and resources available to you to find a solution before 30 April.

We are pursuing this through every available channel: formal correspondence, elected members, our MP, media scrutiny, legal advice, and — if necessary — a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman regarding the procedural failures in how this decision was made and implemented. We hope it does not come to that. We hope instead that you will act.

We look forward to your responses, by name, within ten working days.

Yours sincerely,

Dominique Tipper, Paul Drinkwater & Rajesh Thind

Campaign Coordinators, Save Golden Lane Leisure Centre

On behalf of residents of the Golden Lane Estate, EC1

Enclosures: City of London Corporation Global City of Sport Strategy 2023–2030; BGLNF Consultation Response March 2025; Care Act 2014 Sections 1, 2 and 6; Health and Social Care Act 2012 relevant provisions.