

## Save Golden Lane Leisure Centre

Golden Lane Estate, London EC1Y 0SH

[savegoldenlane@gmail.com](mailto:savegoldenlane@gmail.com)

7 April 2026

### Ian Thomas CBE

Town Clerk and Chief Executive

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

By email: [ian.thomas@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:ian.thomas@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

cc: Helen Fentimen OBE JP, Chair, C&CS Committee- [helen.fentimen@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:helen.fentimen@cityoflondon.gov.uk)  
cc: Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman - [chris.hayward@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:chris.hayward@cityoflondon.gov.uk)  
cc: Ian Thomas CBE, Town Clerk — [ian.thomas@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:ian.thomas@cityoflondon.gov.uk)  
cc: Judith Finlay, Executive Director, Community & Children's Services — [judith.finlay@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:judith.finlay@cityoflondon.gov.uk)  
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cc: Rachel Blake MP — [rachel.blake.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:rachel.blake.mp@parliament.uk)

## **RE: Proposed Closure of Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre — Challenge to the Basis, Process, and Democratic Accountability of the Closure Decision**

Dear Mr Thomas,

We write to you directly, and by name, because we have been informed that the decision to allow Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre to close permanently on 30 April 2026 was not taken by the Community and Children's Services Committee — the body whose own published terms of reference state it is responsible for running the centre — but by you, as Town Clerk and Chief Executive, acting under an urgency or delegated authority procedure.

If that is correct, it means that a decision to allow the permanent closure of the only publicly-funded leisure facility in the Square Mile — affecting hundreds of residents, including GP-referred patients, elderly members, and disabled children — was taken by an unelected officer, bypassing the elected committee with explicit responsibility for that facility. We are writing to demand a full account of that decision, to challenge the basis on which urgency was invoked, and to request that the decision be urgently reviewed before the scheduled closure date of 30 April 2026.

### **1. The Decision and the Procedure**

We understand that the matter of Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre was discussed at the Community and Children's Services Committee in January 2026, that questions were raised by Cripplegate ward elected members, and that subsequently — following Fusion Lifestyle's administration announcement on 1 April 2026 — the decision not to bridge-fund continued operation was taken by you under an urgency or delegated authority procedure rather than brought to the Committee.

We require you to confirm or correct this account, and to provide the following:

1. The precise name of the procedure, Standing Order, or Scheme of Delegation under which the decision was taken.
2. The date on which the decision was formally taken and recorded.
3. The full text of the Officer Decision Notice or equivalent formal record, including the power relied upon and the reasons given.
4. Whether elected Cripplegate ward members were consulted before the decision was taken, or merely notified after.
5. Whether the decision was reported to the Community and Children's Services Committee, the Policy and Resources Committee, or the Court of Common Council; if so, on what date and in what form.
6. Whether the decision is subject to any call-in or scrutiny mechanism; if so, by whom and by what deadline.

### **2. The Urgency Argument Does Not Hold**

The invocation of an urgency or delegated authority procedure requires, at minimum, that the matter was genuinely urgent and could not have been brought to the relevant committee in the normal way. We challenge that premise.

Fusion Lifestyle's financial difficulties were a known and developing situation, not a sudden shock confined to 1 April 2026. The City of London Corporation was in active Pre-Market Engagement with potential new operators as recently as March 2026 — one month before the administration. Every other affected local authority in England — Lambeth, Somerset, Charnwood, Newcastle — was able to identify and implement transition arrangements rapidly. If those authorities, many with fewer resources than the City, could act without bypassing democratic oversight, the urgency basis requires specific justification.

We specifically ask:

7. Why could the closure decision not have been brought to an emergency or extraordinary meeting of the C&CS Committee before being finalised, given the centre does not close until 30 April — allowing nearly four weeks from the administration announcement?
8. What specific alternatives were considered and on what basis were they rejected?
9. Were alternative operators offered a revised contract properly allocating maintenance responsibilities between landlord and operator, or were they shown the same prohibitive terms under which Fusion operated? We understand that the existing contract made the operator liable for repairs despite the City being the landlord, and that this was a material factor in other operators declining.
10. Was a Care Act compliance assessment conducted before the decision was taken?
11. Was an equalities impact assessment conducted?

### **3. The Regulator for Social Housing**

In February 2026, the Regulator for Social Housing rated the City of London Corporation's management of its housing stock at C3, finding approximately 1,000 outstanding fire safety notices and concluding that the Corporation would not meet Decent Homes Standard until 2035. This was the first time an external regulator had passed judgment on the City Corporation's performance in this area.

The Corporation's stated justification for the closure includes the poor condition of the building. Residents are entitled to ask: to what extent is that condition the result of the same pattern of deferred maintenance that led to the C3 rating? And how credible is it for the Corporation to cite building condition as a reason for closure when that condition is itself a consequence of the Corporation's own governance failures?

### **4. The Refurbishment Design**

We understand that a provisional decision has been made regarding the refurbishment design of Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre, based on a sports consultancy's advice, which proposes a model that the Golden Lane Estate Residents'

Association and the Barbican and Golden Lane Neighbourhood Forum have expressed concerns that it may not meet the community's needs. We require you to confirm:

12. Whether a provisional or final decision on the refurbishment design has been made, by whom, and on what date.
13. Whether that decision was taken by elected members or by officers.
14. Whether GLERA — a statutory consultee — was meaningfully consulted before any provisional design decision was made.
15. Whether the proposed design has been assessed for compatibility with the Listed Building Management Guidelines, an adopted SPD requiring continued social use consistent with the building's original purpose.

### **5. Formal Demands**

We require responses within ten working days of the date of this letter — by 20 April 2026:

- Full disclosure of the formal decision record, including the power relied upon, the date of decision, and options assessed.
- Confirmation of whether elected ward members were consulted before the decision was taken.
- Confirmation of whether a Care Act compliance assessment and equalities impact assessment were conducted.
- An emergency review of whether continued operation can be secured before 30 April 2026.
- Full disclosure of the refurbishment design decision: who made it, when, under what authority, and what consultation was conducted with GLERA.
- A public meeting, chaired by an elected member, open to all residents, within 21 days.

We are copying this letter to the Policy Chairman, the Chair of the C&CS Committee, all nine Cripplegate ward elected members, and Rachel Blake MP. We look forward to your response 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: Regulator for Social Housing judgment February 2026; Care Act 2014 Sections 1, 2 and 6; Listed Building Management Guidelines (adopted SPD).*