

Save Golden Lane Leisure Centre

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10 April 2026

Helen Fentimen OBE JP, Deputy

Chair, Community and Children's Services Committee

City of London Corporation

Judith Finlay

Executive Director, Community and Children's Services

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By email: helen.fentimen@cityoflondon.gov.uk | judith.finlay@cityoflondon.gov.uk

cc: Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman

cc: Simon Cribbens, Assistant Director Commissioning & Partnerships

cc: Rachel Blake MP, Cities of London and Westminster

cc: Liz King, Alderman, Cripplegate Ward

cc: Kate Doidge, Clerk, Community and Children's Services Committee

cc: Sue Pearson, Chair, GLERA and BGLNF

cc: Tim Goldmark, Treasurer, GLERA

cc: Grazia Piras, CPCF Steering Committee Member

RE: Response to City of London Corporation Press Release of 7 April 2026 – Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre

Dear Councillor Fentimen and Ms Finlay,

We write in response to the City of London Corporation's press release of 10 April 2026 announcing alternative leisure arrangements for Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre members.

We acknowledge that the City has now secured access to Finsbury Leisure Centre and Ironmonger Row Baths for existing members, with memberships honoured for 12 months at no additional cost. We also note that the City will cover any additional costs arising from this arrangement. These are welcome steps, and we recognise the work of officers in securing them.

However, we must be direct: today's announcement, welcome as it is, was produced under public and media pressure in the days since the closure was announced. It does not address the central concerns of this campaign, and it raises further questions that we require answered in writing.

1. The "Temporary" and "Enforced" Framing

The City's press release describes the closure as an "enforced early closure" and refers to the centre being "temporarily closed." We take issue with both characterisations.

The word "enforced" implies the City had no agency in what occurred. This is not borne out by the facts. The City of London Corporation was conducting Pre-Market Engagement with potential operators of the leisure centre as recently as 4 March 2026 - less than four weeks before Fusion Lifestyle entered administration. Officers therefore had an active list of organisations with an expressed interest in operating this facility at the precise moment the crisis arose. We are not aware that any of those organisations were approached about an emergency interim arrangement. We require a written explanation of why not.

The word "temporary" implies a confirmed reopening. No such confirmation has been provided. The City has committed to a refurbishment scheduled to begin in December 2026, but has provided no guaranteed completion date, no written commitment to reopen, and no detail on what standard of facility will be delivered. Until these guarantees are provided in writing, "temporary" is an aspiration, not a commitment.

2. The Adequacy of Alternative Provision

The City's announcement states that GLL will work to accommodate existing programmes and user groups "wherever possible, subject to space and availability." We regard this language as inadequate for the following specific groups, each of whom requires a specific written answer:

SEND provision: The City Parent Carer Forum, in partnership with Fusion Lifestyle, operated three dedicated SEND sports programmes at Golden Lane: SEND Swimming (ages 3–25, including 1:1 sessions), SEND Football (ages 7–12), and SEND Gym (ages 13–25). Over 30 children attend regularly. There is a waiting list for SEND swimming. Golden Lane is the only SEND-dedicated sports provision within the City of London. We require written confirmation of the following:

- Whether Finsbury Leisure Centre and Ironmonger Row Baths have staff trained and experienced in supporting children and young people with SEND needs
- Whether the pool at Finsbury Leisure Centre is of equivalent dimensions to Golden Lane's 20-metre pool
- Whether the specific SEND swimming, football, and gym programmes will continue at named facilities, on named days, with named staff
- What provision will be made for the waiting list

WeSwim: WeSwim is a community that supports adults with disabilities to swim at Golden Lane, often with a 1:1 volunteer. Its waiting list is already 3–6 months. A further 8-month closure means many more disabled adults will be denied access to supported swimming. We require written confirmation of what provision will be made for WeSwim participants and their volunteers.

Exercise on Referral / GP referral programmes: Golden Lane operates an Exercise on Referral programme in partnership with the local GP surgery and Barts Hospital. Patients — including those recovering from cardiac conditions — have been referred to specific programmes at this facility as part of their clinical care. We require written confirmation of what arrangements have been made with the referring GP practice and Barts Hospital to continue these programmes at alternative locations, and on what timeline.

Young at Heart: The City's own subsidised elderly fitness programme is based at Golden Lane. We require written confirmation that this programme will continue at a named alternative location, on the same terms and at the same cost to participants.

3. The Governance Questions That Remain Unanswered

Today's press release does not address the questions we raised in our letter of 6 April 2026, which we repeat here and to which we require written responses within 10 working days:

1. Who made the final decision to close Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre on 30 April 2026? Please provide the name and job title of the officer or officers responsible, and the date on which the decision was made.
2. Was the decision put to the Community and Children's Services Committee for a vote or formal resolution? If not, under what delegated authority was it taken, and why was it not referred to members?
3. Were elected members of the Committee — including the Chair — consulted before the decision was announced publicly on 1 April 2026? If so, which members, and when?
4. Was an Equality Impact Assessment conducted before the decision to close the centre was made? If not, why not, given that the closure eliminates the only SEND-dedicated sports provision within the City of London?
5. What specific alternatives were considered and rejected before the decision to close was made? Please provide the financial modelling or viability assessment that underpinned the conclusion that no bridge arrangement was possible.
6. Why were the organisations engaged through the March 2026 Pre-Market Engagement exercise not approached about an emergency interim arrangement when Fusion entered administration on 1 April?

4. The Renovation: Guarantees We Require in Writing

We welcome the City's commitment to invest £10.4 million in refurbishing Golden Lane Sports and Fitness Centre. However, residents have received no formal written commitments on the following matters, which we now formally request:

- The confirmed start date for refurbishment works
- The anticipated completion date for refurbishment works
- A written commitment that the centre will reopen following the refurbishment
- The standard of facility to be provided upon reopening, including whether all existing facilities - pool, sports hall, gym, squash courts — will be restored
- The process by which residents and community groups will be genuinely involved, and not just consulted with, on the refurbishment design and specification of this precious community asset

We further ask how, if no application for planning permission has been made, can it be possible to start work in December? The bike project was in planning for a year and all of the plans for the refurbishment of the Leisure Centre will all have to be reviewed by heritage, transport and accessibility officers.

5. Our Outstanding Requests

We renew the following formal requests, first made in our letter of 7 April 2026:

- A public Town Hall meeting, open to all Golden Lane and Barbican Estate residents, to be held within 21 days, chaired by an elected member, at which officers answer questions in public
- A formal deputation to the Community and Children's Services Committee at the earliest available meeting
- A meeting between senior officers and campaign representatives within the next 7 days, as referenced in the communication sent to the City Parent Carer Forum today

We note that the City's communication to the City Parent Carer Forum today referenced a planned meeting with Save Golden Lane campaign representatives next week. We welcome this and ask that you confirm the date, time, and attendees in writing by return.

6. Parliamentary and Ministerial Engagement

We inform you that Rachel Blake MP, Member of Parliament for Cities of London and Westminster, met with campaign representatives this morning and has committed to the following actions:

- Writing formally to the City of London Corporation requesting consideration of all possible options to find interim provision and to bring forward the refurbishment timeline
- Tabling written parliamentary questions to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Raising the C3 housing regulator judgment - which found serious failings in the City Corporation's management of its housing estates in February 2026 - with both the City Corporation and the Secretary of State
- Speaking publicly in support of the campaign

We regard the combination of this closure - without consultation, without an equality impact assessment, and as the only such closure in England - with the housing regulator's findings of six weeks ago as evidence of a systemic failure in the City Corporation's relationship with its resident population. We welcome Rachel Blake's intention to raise this at the highest levels of government.

At the most basic level, Golden Lane Leisure Centre cannot lay derelict at the heart of the estate for years, especially not given patterns of antisocial behaviour and physical deterioration. We remain firm in our view that the centre must be kept open until a credible plan for the refurb, one that has genuinely involved residents, is approved and that work commences. We would like to bring your attention to the fact that both CIL and CILNF are massively underspent. We think this would be an obvious use for some of this money providing staff cover and other running costs for the interim period. We also think we can do a great deal to bring our Leisure Centre back to vibrant health following the extended period of chaos with the failing Fusion Lifestyle contract.

We look forward to your written responses to the questions above within 10 working days.

Yours sincerely,

Dominique Tipper, Paul Drinkwater and Rajesh Thind

Save Golden Lane Leisure Centre Campaign

This letter is sent by email and is a matter of public record. It will be shared with our ward councillors, our MP, and published on our campaign channels.