

To: Cllr. Ann Newton, Leader, Wealden District Council (WDC)
Cllr. Keith Glazier, Leader, East Sussex County Council (ESCC)
cc: Cllr. Philip Lunn (WDC, Economic Development & Leisure)
Cllr. Bob Standley (ESCC, Education and Inclusion)
MP Nusrat Ghani, Wealden District



Uckfield Leisure Centre

9 January 2023

Dear Cllr. Newton and Cllr. Glazier,



Uckfield Town Council is dismayed by media reports that Uckfield Leisure Centre's future is uncertain. We are especially concerned about the swimming pool, a much-loved and well-used community asset.

We implore you not to go through with this damaging closure.

In the last decade, fast-growing Uckfield has lost both its Youth Centre and dedicated Post Office, with the Library and Children's Centre running reduced hours. We appreciate the difficult financial background to these decisions, having suffered from cuts ourselves. However, we firmly believe that an impactful, community-damaging line is being crossed.

Whilst there is rightly a focus on the cost of energy, leisure is an essential part of family life, good mental health, and physical wellbeing. Uckfield Leisure Centre is an affordable and accessible lifeline for families in a rural hub, with limited transport alternatives. Our more senior residents also benefit from aqua fit exercises. We cannot afford to lose these benefits.

As the only indoor public leisure facility remaining in a growing Uckfield, the swimming pool plays an important role in the educational and social life of our children and young people. Swimming is a vital life skill and is the only sport taught as part of the national curriculum. Without a Youth Centre, the pool is an important social space. A tennis court provides far fewer opportunities for a large number of residents than a swimming pool.

We acknowledge that the school's proposals may seem exciting and could bring benefits to the town. As Town Councillors and representatives of our community, we would welcome this discussion if we believed that leisure facilities in Uckfield were being upgraded.

However, with Wealden DC centralising leisure facilities in Crowborough and Hailsham, we know that this will not be the case. For this reason, we further doubt that adequate funds would be found to relocate the pool.

While the ownership and management of the pool may be between your two councils, it really *belongs* to Uckfield residents. Many locals recall that they substantially helped to pay for it by contributing to the Uckfield Indoor Swimming Pool Trust in the 1980s.

The closure of the pool without an upgraded, fully accessible replacement would not just be a retrograde step, it would be an insult to every one of them. For these reasons, Uckfield Leisure Centre and pool must be protected. We underscore the strength of feeling on this issue in Uckfield.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. Daniel Manvell, agreed by Uckfield Town Council on 19 December 2022