



**BADMINTON**  
ENGLAND

Guy Fishbourne  
Bristol City Council  
City Hall  
PO Box 3399  
Bristol

4 November 2021

Dear Guy,

### **Bristol City Council's draft Leisure Facilities Investment Strategy proposals**

I am aware that the Council is currently consulting on your draft Leisure Facilities Investment Strategy. We have responded through the consultation process, but, given the significant impact that the proposals would have on our sport and the passionate and dedicated Badminton community within your area I thought it pertinent to write to you directly.

Specifically, I am writing with regards the proposal to stop operating Kingsdown Sports Centre as well as the reduction in courts at Easton Leisure Centre. While I recognise the challenging situation that the Council faces, the proposed closure of Kingsdown Sports Centre will not only prevent hundreds of our members from participating in the sport they love but also impact negatively on the strategic outcomes the Council has itself outlined in its Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2020-25. With Cotham containing a LSOA in the top 10% most deprived areas in the country, closure will serve to widen the inequalities that are evident in sport and physical activity and that Government and Sport England are seeking to address. The impacts would be exacerbated by the proposed reduction in courts at Easton Leisure Centre from four to three, a facility in an area that is classed in the highest decile on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

The clubs hosted at Kingsdown Sports Centre are some of our largest and longest established badminton clubs. For example, Beaufort Badminton Club has been established for over 100 years and they all continually attract new members of all ages and backgrounds and offer important opportunities for their members and communities. Unfortunately, it is clear that the options highlighted by the Council as alternative provision to accommodate those displaced by the closure of their facility simply do not stand up to scrutiny - the University of Bristol Sports Centre, identified as the closest and most appropriate alternative facility, is not accessible to the local community during term time and the University's own students have had to seek alternative facilities to play Badminton, including Kingsdown. It is not a viable option for rehousing our clubs and other users of Kingsdown Sports Centre. In short, I fear that the proposal will force the closure of clubs that have been delivering social benefit for over a century, and the associated negative effect of physical and mental health, and social cohesion at a time when this is most needed.

While there are clearly no easy decisions to be made here regarding facility provision and the Council's leisure portfolio moving forward, I strongly urge the Council to reconsider the proposal to cease operation of Kingsdown Sports Centre, as well as the reduction in courts at Easton Leisure Centre. As a former CEO of one of the UK's largest leisure operators I have a very strong insight into leisure provision, its challenges but also potential solutions. I appreciate more than most that sometimes rationalisation is needed, however, there are other options around increasing commercial viability through investment (and better management). I would strongly urge these to be exhausted in the first instance.

These proposals will negatively impact badminton participation – activity that has been delivering financially self-sustaining community benefit for over a century – in the City and the mental and physical health of your residents. This is also at a time of most need, where central Government have called for sport and physical activity to be placed at the centre of the pandemic recovery. In the unfortunate event that the Council still decides to progress this proposal, I strongly request that you work with and support the local community to transfer ownership and ensure this important facility remains available to local residents.

Yours Sincerely

Pete Fitzboydon  
Interim CEO