

## Farnborough Leisure Centre



**A package of proposals that would future-proof its leisure facilities and protect council funds has been unanimously approved by Rushmoor Borough Council's Cabinet.**

The Cabinet, meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, agreed that as part of this package, Farnborough Leisure Centre should remain closed permanently. This would allow redevelopment of the site to take place and a new '21st century leisure facility' to be built as part of the Civic Quarter regeneration scheme.

So that residents continue to have alternative local facilities available, the Cabinet also approved a new three-year contract to Places Leisure to carry on running the Aldershot Pools and Fitness Centre, with the aim of the complex re-opening as soon as possible when lockdown restrictions are lifted from April.

In addition, the Cabinet agreed that the council should start to plan for the re-opening of the Aldershot Lido this summer, following publication on Monday of the government's roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions.

The Cabinet heard that the council's current leisure contract for the Aldershot and Farnborough facilities expires on 31 March, but because of the 'profound impact' of the pandemic on the leisure industry and the on-going uncertainty it had created, it had not been possible for the council

to seek a new long-term contract that would offer a good outcome for the council or its residents.

The council had considered a number of options, including extending the current Places Leisure contract for both Farnborough and Aldershot, but because of the on-going uncertainties in the leisure market, Places Leisure had indicated that this would require an additional council subsidy of between £550,000 and £2 million a year.

Councillor Maurice Sheehan, the council's Cabinet member for Operational Services, said that in the current financial climate, these proposals were 'simply not affordable'.

He said: "I very much regret that we are in a position of having to close Farnborough. I know the decision to close the leisure centre will disappoint a great many of our residents. However, we must remember that the council is required by law to set a balanced budget."

He added: "The Farnborough Leisure Centre is of an age where we are going to have to spend a great deal of money to maintain it as an operational building, not least in replacing the roof of the building. The Civic Quarter masterplan offers us an exciting opportunity to build a modern 21st century leisure facility in the heart of Farnborough."

The Cabinet was told that the council had appointed a contractor, who would support the clubs that use Farnborough Leisure Centre to find alternative facilities. The council would also work with Places Leisure to keep any job losses to 'an absolute minimum'. In addition, the council and Places Leisure would make sure customers were aware of the alternative local leisure facilities available until the new leisure centre is built. Information will be available on the [Places Leisure](#) website.

Councillor David Clifford, Leader of Rushmoor Borough Council, acknowledged the petition to keep Farnborough Leisure Centre open and praised the way in which the petition had been led.

Following the Cabinet decision, he said: "This means we are in a position to really turbocharge the regeneration of Farnborough. This is great news for Farnborough. We can really get on with the regeneration and the vision we've got for a town centre in Farnborough that's not going to be compromised. We are going to be investing in a 21st century town that is going to be absolutely beautiful."

