

**Statement: PS11.13**

**Cabinet – 8 February 2022**

**Re: Agenda item 11 - Leisure Facilities Investment and Procurement**

**Statement submitted by: Briony Waite**

I am resident of High Kingsdown and I consider the Kingsdown Sports Centre to be a vital community facility that it should be retained by the council and continue to form part of the leisure centre package managed on behalf of the council.

High Kingsdown and the wider area is a diverse and vibrant community, which in the absence of the Sports Centre would lack any other publicly run and accessible community facilities. Despite the assertions being made to justify the removal of the Sports Centre from the list of Council Leisure Centres, parts of the Cotham ward within which the Sports Centre sits, and areas immediately beyond this boundary, fall within the most deprived 10% of areas nationally. It is accepted that other parts of Cotham ward are more affluent, but it is this diversity and the ability for the Sports Centre to act as community focal point for bringing these residents together which is so important and should not be lost.

The High Kingsdown Community Association, of which I am the chair, has secured the registration of the Sports Centre as an asset of community value. We have done this not to frustrate any plans for investment in the site, but to underline its importance and value to the community. There are no community centres or facilities in the whole of this area.

Whilst the mayor has argued that council resources are limited and should be directed to communities in greater need, a recent Freedom of Information request has shown that the council could not identify any initiatives which itself had carried out to promote the Sports Centre to these more needy communities. It would surely make more sense and be more cost effective to put some resources at the disposal of the Sports Centre in order to target these communities and make sure the activities being offered were attractive to and met the needs of these residents. At the very least I consider this option should be tested before the site is released from the council's portfolio.

It is clear this site has had little if any strategic investment or direction being given to it from the Council in recent years – rather, it has been allowed to decline. Yet it is a site with huge potential - it could be quite easily be made more accessible and offer a wider range of benefits to the community. I would like to see this being realised as a council asset rather than subject the staff and our community to the uncertainty which will follow if the mayor confirms his decision today.