

Newport Pagnell Town Council has kept Middleton Swimming Pool open despite financial challenges caused by the enforced COVID-19 lockdown closure. However, supporting the pool has had a significant impact on council funds and the council now want to see the facility fully utilised under the restrictions imposed by Government Guidance to ensure its future finances.

Middleton pool hosts lessons teaching more children to swim than anywhere else in Milton Keynes, helping future generations stay safe in water. Both the pool and the adjoining fitness centre are now fully open, but even after taking into account the changes for covid-secure measures, usage is significantly below revised capacity.

Across the country many such centres are now closed indefinitely and the re-opening in Newport Pagnell is testament to the determination of the Town Council to protect this much-loved facility.

Mayor of Newport Pagnell, Councillor Paul Day said: ***“The town swimming pool is an outstanding local facility that supports fitness and swimming skills. The consequences of the pandemic lockdown have had a major impact on our operating finances, but we have managed to reopen the facility and are determined to fight for its long-term future. We need the local people to support the pool and fitness centre by using it.*”**

The pool is also used by people from the wider borough and we appreciate any financial support from Milton Keynes Council, but understand they have even greater financial challenges after lockdown too. We believe that ultimately national government has a duty to ensure all councils can continue to fund locally managed public services and facilities.

Based on current information, financial losses at the pool this year could be as much as £350,000 or more if there is a second lockdown of leisure facilities in this area. Losses of such an amount will be met through using the Town Council’s financial reserves and from funding secured from other sources.

The Town Council has already secured a £25,000 grant from Milton Keynes Council to assist with the loss of income at this pool. The grant was from money provided to Milton Keynes by central government to deal with losses because of the pandemic lockdown. Though the grant money is welcomed, this is a small proportion of the overall cost for a facility that services people from across the borough.

The Town Council would like to see a greater contribution from Milton Keynes Council and also remains concerned about the financial impact of a second period of closure if there is another wave of infections.

Councillor Day concluded: ***“As a well-managed council we had financial reserves to ensure the maintenance of all of our facilities. These reserves are going to be exhausted by the pool losses and will need to be replaced. This is expected to increase the annual precept that funds all of the council’s activity, but we will do our very best to minimize the financial impact on our residents.”***