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| **Our Ref:** **Contact: Paul Bell** | UNISON Centre130 Euston RoadLondon NW1 2AY*Tel:* 0800 0 857 858*Fax*: 020 7121 5101*Text tel*: 0800 0 967 968*e-mail*: localgovernment@unison.co.uk**unison.org.uk/localgov** |

16 September 2020

Via email

Dear Cllr Crompton,

I am writing as the largest trade union representing members in the leisure sector in local government and the third sector. UNISON recognises the challenging financial position that local authorities find themselves in due to austerity and now the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to work with you to protect these services. As such, we are asking you what are your plans for leisure services in your council moving forward?

Communities up and down the UK rely on leisure services provided either directly or through a contract by local authorities. Our members working in leisure provide a valuable public service.

The benefits to health of physical activity are well documented and accepted. Moderate exercise impacts positively on seasonal and chronic illnesses, and regular exercise improves a person’s ability to regulate their immune system – which could help them avoid the worst symptoms of Covid-19.

Accessible and local leisure facilities are vital in the fight against the coronavirus. The recent announcement by the [UK Government to award £5m of funding to the National Academy for Social Prescribing](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/5-million-for-social-prescribing-to-tackle-the-impact-of-covid-19) may offer opportunities to work with GPs and [bring leisure to social prescribing as some local authorities have already done](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/just-what-doctor-ordered--32e.pdf).

The recent policy paper from the UK Government, “[Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives),” published on 27 July 2020 and the ‘[Better Health Campaign’](https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/) will succeed for the vast majority of the population where they have access to affordable leisure services in or near where they live. This is particularly important if your local authority has the responsibility for public health.

Our members are, therefore, vital in the delivery of leisure services. UNISON stands ready to work with you to save leisure services and thereby jobs. We are therefore seeking to meet with you to discuss your proposals as soon as possible.

In this regard, I would be grateful if you would let us know the following:

**What are your plans for leisure services moving forward, if you provide them directly or through a contract?**

**How are you using leisure to support your public health responsibilities now and in the future?**

**What plans do you have in place if a private contractor providing leisure services fails and the contract is taken in house?**

**What plans do you have in place if a contract fails and you do not intend to bring it in-house?**

I would be grateful if you would send your responses to p.bell@unison.co.uk. We realise not every local authority provides leisure services nor has the responsibility for public health.

Finally, I hope you and your family are well in these unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Short

Senior National Officer