

Dorset Council to stop running QE Leisure Centre

QE Leisure Centre (QELC) in Wimborne will no longer operate as a public leisure centre from the end of March after Dorset Council cut funding and withdrew from running the facility.

Although the dual-use agreement between the council and Queen Elizabeth's School (part of Initio Learning Trust) had another 60 years to run, the local authority said it could no longer afford to fund the loss-making centre.

The school will take over the management of the building, and students will be able to use the facilities including the gym, sports hall, dance studio, hard court, athletics area and newly re-laid and refurbished astro-turf pitch. The swimming pool will be available after the completion of planned works.

Whilst it won't be run as a public leisure centre, new arrangements are being developed by the school to provide opportunities for clubs and community groups to hire the facilities.

Liz West, chief executive officer of Initio Learning Trust, said: "We are disappointed that Dorset Council has cut funding and will no longer run QELC.

"We have explored every possible way of maintaining the leisure centre, including through partnerships with private operators, but without significant capital investment it simply is not viable.

"Dorset Council were asked to provide funding to support this development, but unfortunately they were unable to do so.

"Whilst QELC won't be run as a public leisure centre, QE students will still use the facilities for lessons as they always have, and they will continue to receive a first-class education in sport and fitness.

"We also recognise the important role that QELC plays in the local community, and we are developing opportunities for clubs and community groups to hire the facilities.

"The building itself needs improvement and we are still in negotiations with Dorset Council to secure their contribution for the works.

"They have committed to handing back the QELC building in good condition and have set aside a £730k budget. We very much hope and expect that this funding will be provided in full."

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