

Update on the borough's leisure facilities

Lead Councillor for the Environment, Cllr James Steel provides an update on the borough's leisure facilities:

“We are sorry to confirm that although the government now allows outdoor pools to open we are unable to open our paddling pool at Stoke Park this summer. We know how much you love our borough's popular free attraction and we have not taken this decision lightly. We completely understand how disappointing this news is to many of you looking forward to visiting the paddling pool in the holidays but after reviewing the guidance and how safety measures would work in such a regularly crowded area, we found the risk to your health and the extra costs are too high.

“Due to the open area surrounding the pool we cannot ensure the necessary Coronavirus (Covid 19) secure environment to keep you and our staff safe without incurring substantial extra costs of around £23,000 on top of running costs for what is now the last 5-6 weeks of the season. At this point in the pandemic, where we have already set aside an emergency budget of £15million to ensure we can maintain your essential services, we are unable to justify this additional spend which is needed to adhere to government requirements to control visitor numbers, as we would need additional staff, ticketing and site security measures.

“We have plenty of other free attractions to visit safely across Guildford - hectares of award-winning parks, playgrounds and countryside are there for you to enjoy with friends and family in your bubbles. Did you know we have the most Green Flags in the South East? Visit Guildford's website to find information on where to go and walking maps. We are also working hard collaborating with our partners and supporting our businesses to help them open up and start to restore vibrancy across our borough while following the guidance and necessary safety measures. The government 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme launches next month and lots of our restaurants will be taking part to give you discounted meals which is great news for families and our refurbished town centre museum will open later in this month.

“Once again we understand it is disappointing news to hear our paddling pool won't open this summer and we hope that you can understand why we have taken this decision. Please rest assured your safety, protecting our vulnerable communities and maintaining your essential services remain our priority – the Coronavirus (Covid 19) hasn't gone away and we must keep to the guidance and keep Guildford safe to avoid any health protection lock downs that other areas of the UK have experienced.”