

Presentation to B&NES Wellbeing Panel - July 25th 2014

We are here today as members of the Warm Water Inclusive Swimming & Exercise Network to ensure your support for the inclusion of fully accessible warm water pools within B&NES leisure facilities in the future thus ensuring that they will at last be truly inclusive for all members of the community.

This is a fantastic window of opportunity to provide facilities which will benefit an enormous number of people, help you achieve a number of the objectives in your Health & Wellbeing Strategy and enable better use of finances in the long term.

As you are not doubt aware, five large leisure providers have expressed interest in running B&NES leisure facilities and Council officers are currently in negotiation with a view to awarding up to a 30 year contract. This contract will include the rebuilding of Keynsham Leisure Centre and the improvements to Bath and other B&NES leisure centres.

We are looking for your support for the provision of warm water pools at 32°C with fully accessible changing facilities suitable for everyone whatever their level of disability, and available on a regular basis and at an affordable price and for making an integral and essential part of that contract.

While we realise that leisure facilities is not an area that is your direct responsibility, this is an issue which has enormous relevance to the health & wellbeing of the community as well as implications for the NHS & Social Services budget

You will be hearing from a number of the people who would benefit from access to such pools, but first let's look at how this relates to current Council strategies.

The 3 key themes of the B&NES Health & Wellbeing Strategy are -

- **Helping people to stay healthy** – including especially the issue of childhood obesity
- **Improving the quality of people's lives** – including the aim 'to deliver a co-ordinated response to long term conditions that help people to manage their conditions and stay well' and to provide 'improved services for older people which support and encourage independent living'.
- **Creating Fairer Life Chances** – which identifies groups vulnerable to social isolation including those with mental health issues and the older population and lays down a commitment to 'working with partners to support services and activities which keep local people connected'

There are direct parallels in the **Fit for Life Strategy** published in draft form in May this year. This comprehensive, innovative and ambitious document includes a wide range of information and statistics about the incidence and consequences of obesity and inactivity in all sectors of the community, and the resultant costs to the NHS and Social Services in B&NES. We were able to feed in to this Strategy through one of the Focus groups and also contributed to the consultation.

This Strategy has as its overarching vision "To get **more people, more active, more often**, in a safe, sustainable environment leading to improve health and wellbeing for all" It lays out a wide range of actions, dividing them under themes.

- **Active Lifestyles** – here exercise and swimming are included under Active Recreation, and Sporting Activities and Events
- **Active Environments** – referring to the need for investment in the Council's facilities, notably Keynsham Leisure Centre, to ensure they are 'fit for purpose & meeting local need' and 'designed to be inclusive with potential users consulted on final design' and where one of the outcomes is 'successful delivery of exercise as a form of treatment for ill health'.
- **Active Design** – with its 3 principles of Accessibility, Amenity and Awareness underpinning the approach to the design of sports and leisure activities.

In our discussions with Simon Allen and David Dixon (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods) over the years, they have always been incredibly supportive of the concept of such pools in all Leisure Centres in B&NES as they realise the benefits they can bring to individuals and also the community as a whole as well as the potential savings to the NHS and Social Service budgets. We need to know they have your total support and that you consider there should be no room for compromise on the standards of accessibility so that everyone has the opportunity to engage with these strategies and help themselves in managing their own conditions, to improve their health & fitness and remain as independence as possible throughout their lives

The Public Service Board Vision states "*Bath and North East Somerset will be internationally renowned as a beautifully inventive and entrepreneurial 21st century place where everyone is invited to think big – a 'connected' area ready to create an extraordinary legacy for future generations*"⁽¹⁾ Now is your chance to help create flagship facilities which fit this Vision and set an example of innovation and forward thinking.

(1) - B&NES Fit for Life Strategy draft 2014