

WWISE Network presentation to Communities, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel – July 25th 2106

Why are you allowing the remodelling of both Bath & Keynsham Leisure Centres to go ahead when there is no provision for those older children, young people & adults including the elderly living with short & long term conditions who need warmer water so they can swim for leisure & recreation ?

This campaign started in 1996 when the warm water pool in the Leisure Centre was closed in favour of the Activity Pool with very little warning. This brought an enormous outcry with demonstrations, a 300 signature petition and media coverage for several years against its closure. In 2004 BANES Active Lifestyle Team set up the Remedial Swimming Consultative Group which eventually funded the WWISE Network to gather information about the need. It soon became evident there was a pressing need & this could not be catered for within the current facilities.

When new operators were being sought by the Council the WWISE Network attended all the relevant Committees – 4 Select Committees, Cabinet & Full Council as well as the CCG & Health & Wellbeing Board. The concept of a replacement warm water pool was supported by all &, following this, the Network was invited to talk with the consultants & BANES officers.

It was with dismay that this spring, we found it was not in the contract. We were asked the day before the plans were displayed to the public to meet with the architect & designers for the project – a date has never been given for this meeting.

I am presuming an agreement was formed & proposed to GLL before the contract was signed, and somewhere between our talks with the consultants & this agreement being but to GLL, the idea of a warm water facility was dropped. GLL are an efficient company operating 200 leisure centres and were perhaps not made aware of the local need, so as we have thought, communication has broken down.

I'm sure GLL would want the Council to be seen to be carrying out their Health & Wellbeing & Fit for Life Strategies, Children & Young People's Plan, as well as complying with their Decision Making Protocol, Equalities Policy & Pledge to Young People.

We know there are constraint to the Council's budget but part of the conditions under which GLL were awarded a long term contract was that they would raise a large amount of capital to invest in improving the leisure facilities in return for the income from the leisure facilities over the term of the contract so the capital cost of any remodelling would not come out of the Council's current budget. Some of the money for the remodelling is coming from GLL itself, some from Sport England with the remainder being a loan from the Council, to be repaid over the term of the contract. The changes needed to the proposed design might possibly incur additional expense but they would serve to make it more accessible to a wider range of users so the additional income generated, especially during the daytime, would help offset any additional cost.

Quite apart from the fact that the plans are not in line with a number of your own Strategies & Policies, they are failing to capitalise on this once in a lifetime opportunity to ensure a warm water pool suitable for everyone is included in the remodelled Leisure Centres and we ask that the design as it is proposed is given further consideration by both the Council & GLL.