

WWISE Network presentation to Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel– July 27th 2106

In 1996 the warm water pool at Bath Leisure Centre was closed with very little warning which prompted an enormous outcry with demonstrations and a petition of over 3000 signatures plus media coverage over several years against the closure.

In 2004 BANES Active Lifestyles Team set up the Remedial Swimming Consultative Group when the temperature in the main pool was capped & it was following this that they funded the WWISE Network to gather information about the extent of the need. It soon became evident there was a pressing need in a number of demographic groups especially older children & adults which could not be catered for within the current facilities.

Two years ago, when a new operator was being sought by the Council to run the BANES leisure facilities, we attended the 4 relevant Select Committees, Cabinet & Full Council as well as the Health & Wellbeing Board & CCG. All supported the concept of a warm water pool being included in the Leisure Centres, and it was following this that we were invited to talk to the consultants & officers negotiating the contract. They were also in favour of it the pool being included in any refurbishment.

It was with dismay therefore that in March we found it had not been included in the contract so was not in the new design when it was displayed to the public. We had met with GLL the week before and they had asked us to meet with the architect & designers – no date has yet been given for this meeting despite daily phone calls over the course of a month.

We presume an agreement was drawn up and put to GLL before the contract was signed but - somewhere along the line the concept of a warm water was dropped despite all the support within the Council. GLL is an efficient company running over 200 leisure facilities but it seems they were not made aware of the local need – a serious breakdown in communications.

A second warm water pool is included in the plans for the Bath Leisure Centre but at 60 – 90cm/2 – 3ft deep is too shallow for young people & adults. An additional 30 – 40cm /1 – 1.5ft in depth is all that is needed and this could be quite achievable in the space available.

We know there are constraints on the Council's budget but we are assured that the conditions under which GLL were awarded the contract was that they would raise the capital needed to invest in the leisure facilities in return for the income. While some of this capital is coming from GLL & Sport England, the remainder is a loan from the Council to be repaid over the term of the contract, so outside the Council's current budget.

We are sure the Council would want to be seen to be following their own Health & Wellbeing Strategy, their excellent Fit for Life Strategy, their Childrens' & Young Peoples' Plan as well as complying with their Protocol for Decisions Making, Equalities Policy & Pledge to Young People

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to ensure a warm water suitable for everyone is included in the refurbished Leisure Centre ensuring equal access for all and we ask that the design as it is proposed is revisited by the Council & GLL.