

Public Questions

Relating to Agenda Item 5: Keep Publicly Funded Leisure in Oxford – Petition.

Questions from Dorothy Bertola

- 1) Do you think the people in East Oxford will travel to Blackbird Leys for a regular swim if they are able to walk or cycle to Temple at the moment?

A: It is estimated that the new centre will receive around 400,000 visits a year. Many of these will be from people living in East Oxford.

- 2) Do you think regular swimming is good for the health and well being of the population?

A: Yes.

- 3) Do you think that if they did travel by bus or car to Blackbird Leys instead of walking or cycling it would increase carbon emissions?

A: Yes in respect of the mode of travel used.

- 4) Is it cheaper to repair the Temple pool rather than rebuild a new one?

A: No. The professional estimates for a proper refurbishment of Temple Cowley far exceed the cost of the new build pool.

We feel it is unlikely that the £3m estimate for a refurbishment includes works which will be required under current legislation in terms of energy conservation and disabled access or includes professional fees and contingency.

- 5) Do the people of Blackbird Leys want a new pool?

A: It is clear that people in Blackbird Leys welcome the idea of the new pool being built there as does the Parish Council. However, it must be stressed that this is a facility for the whole of the city and the surrounding area.

- 6) Who actually wants a new pool?

A: The market research carried out by our leisure centre operator suggests a wide cross section of people across the city and beyond. The new pool is also supported by the focus group.

Questions from Frances Farrer

7) Why is it considered proper to remove from East Oxford its own, small, local, accessible swimming pool?

A: Councillors have considered and balanced the views of local people, the costs of maintaining and keeping open the pool, its shortcomings in terms of access, levels of use and the needs across the city and have come to the conclusion that a new pool is the best way forward.

8) Why has no account been taken of the needs and wishes of the Temple Cowley and East Oxford community on the matter of the swimming pool, especially those for whom transport is difficult, ie older people and parents with young children? These are arguably the sections of the community who benefit most from swimming.

A: Councillors are aware of these views and have balanced them carefully with all of the factors that they have to consider in coming to a conclusion as to what is in the best interests of tax payers across the city.

9) Why is the proposed larger, colder, remoter pool considered relevant to the local community of Temple Cowley and East Oxford?

A: The new pool will not be cooler than Temple Cowley. In fact it will be able to maintain the desired temperature throughout the year where as due to factors inherent in the out of date design Temple Cowley often fails to maintain the temperature during the winter. Sometimes this leads to the pool being closed, or sessions being cancelled.

The new pool is proposed to be a facility accessed and used by a much wider audience than Temple Cowley and east Oxford. It is not feasible to provide each community in the city with their own community pool.

10) Why is the relatively small cost of fixing up the Temple Cowley Pool not considered economically sensible for retaining such a useful and popular amenity?

A: The professional estimates for a proper refurbishment of Temple Cowley far exceed the cost of the new build pool.

We feel it is unlikely that the £3m estimate for a refurbishment includes works which will be required under current legislation in terms of energy conservation and disabled access or includes professional fees and contingency.

11) Does the drive to build an Olympic pool at Blackbird Leys have the object of attracting the Olympic Games? If so, how realistic an ambition is that?

A: The aim is not to build an Olympic pool which would be a full competition pool of 50m length. What is proposed is a regional level competition pool of 25m length. It is an aim to complete the new pool during 2012 to link it to the Olympic Legacy for the city which we see being used to drive participation in sport and exercise for the good of the health and well being of the people of Oxford.

Questions from Mark Batin

12) Why, as a resident of the area, was I unaware of the consultation process?

A: The various consultation processes that were undertaken included the following promotion methods.

- Several press releases;
- Coverage in the Oxford Mail;
- Coverage on radio and television;
- Posters to community outlets and at the Leisure centres;
- Front page web coverage on Council's website for the duration of consultation periods;
- Direct e-mails; and
- Through key groups such as the Community Sports Network.

13) Given the passive nature of the publicity surrounding the consultation process, how was the 'city wide survey' carried out?

A: This was undertaken using the council's website and also using paper copies at the Leisure Centres.

14) The open sessions demonstrated considerable support for keeping Temple Cowley Pools open, why was this ignored?

A: Councillors are aware of these views and have balanced them carefully with all of the factors that they have to consider in coming to a conclusion as to what is in the best interests of tax payers across the city.

15) The consultation indicated that a majority of those consulted were not in favour of 'doing nothing'; how does this translate into 'they were in favour of the closure of Temple Cowley'?

A: The provision of a new pool and closure of the two aging and expensive pools to the south of the city is the only viable alternative to closure with no replacement.

16) Was the direct question of the closure of Temple Cowley Pools put to those consulted?

A: The fact that part of the plan would mean closing the aging and costly pools was never hidden or avoided. However, certain parts of the consultation have focused on what a new pool should be like and included these aspects rather than the topic of the closures.

17) If the question at 16 was put, what was the result?

A: We are not able to answer this question quantifiably. However, we are clear that there is considerable local support for keeping the existing pools open. Across the city as a whole the balance of support appear to favour a new pool.

18) The consultation indicated that a majority of those consulted were of the opinion that the scheme involving the closure of Temple Cowley Pools represented 'good value for money'; were they asked what they thought was 'best value for money'?

A: No this was framed for them by information on relative costs and outcomes of the options.

19) Did a majority also hold the opinion that keeping Temple Cowley Pools represented 'good value for money'?

A: The consultation was not framed in that way.

20) How were the focus groups chosen?

A: The focus group is made up of users and stakeholders. The users from Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys were chosen in collaboration with our Leisure Management operator Fusion Lifestyle, who selected users from existing user groups at the facilities.

21) What proportion of the focus groups was composed of local residents and Temple Cowley Pools users?

A: The focus group has included the following representatives,

- Temple Cowley Pools User (Swimming);
- Temple Cowley Pools User (Swim, Gym and Classes);
- Blackbird Leys Pool / Leisure Centre Users;

- City of Oxford Swimming Club;
- Oxford Swans Disability Swimming Club;
- Thame and Oxford School Sports Partnership;
- Fusion Lifestyle;
- Old Temple Cowley Residents association; and
- Oxfordshire Sports Partnership.

Question from Maggie Hartford

22)The report claims that publicly funded leisure will still be available in Oxford, but how will you do this without any swimming facilities within easy travelling distance of the majority of the population? In winter, it would be impracticable, physically and financially, for non car owners like me, living in South and East Oxford to get to a pool on the far side of Blackbird Leys.

A: The new centre is well served by bus services and is on the cycle lane network. It is not possible to have a pool local to everyone in the city so it is inevitable that some people will have to travel.

Question from Susan Heeks

23)How does the council expect the public to have confidence in council decision making processes when it ignores the wishes of 10,000 petitioners, to save Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys Pools, and when it's own perfunctory consultation exercises net a mere '168 comments' and '641 responses'?

A: Councillors are aware of these views and have balanced them carefully with all of the factors that they have to consider in coming to a conclusion as to what is in the best interests of tax payers across the city.

24)How can 9M, for a new pool, possibly be value for money, when TCP and BLP can be improved to a perfectly adequate standard for 3M?

A: The professional estimates for a proper refurbishment of Temple Cowley far exceed the cost of the new build pool.

We feel it is unlikely that the £3m estimate for a refurbishment includes works which will be required under current legislation in terms of energy conservation and disabled access or includes professional fess and contingency.

Question from Paul Hillier

25) My son learned to swim at Temple Cowley pool – we have always made good use of the pools. It is a valuable local resource that should be retained. An asset of this size in Oxford should not be sold off for housing. It should be further developed for leisure. The Cowley community cannot be expected to travel to Black Bird Leys to exercise – we need public leisure facilities in Cowley.

A: The Council continues to work with partners and the private sector providers to ensure that there is an accessible mix of leisure facilities in the area for example through local schools.

26) Have the council considered leasing the gym and pools to private business, who would then cover the running and maintenance costs?

A: Temple Cowley pool and gym currently requires a net subsidy of almost £500k to run and has a repairs and maintenance capital requirement of £2.3m just to keep functioning. We think it extremely unlikely that any private sector operator would want to take on those liabilities.

Questions from Sarah Wild

27) Why is Oxford City Council ignoring the requests of thousands of residents who want to keep Temple Cowley Pool by rushing through the planning application to demolish it?

A: No planning application has been made to either demolish or develop the Temple Cowley site. Planning permission has been applied for and granted in respect of the new pool.

28) Why does Oxford City Council not recognise that this local facility makes a valuable contribution to the health of the community?

A: The Council does recognise this but has to balance these benefits against the costs and shortcomings of the centre for example in terms of cost, energy consumption and accessibility.

29) Why does Oxford City Council believe that with sporting provision 'bigger is better' when the residents want to 'keep things local'?

A: The Council adopted its Leisure Facilities Strategy in 2009. This took the view that it was not sustainable to maintain a relatively large number of underutilised facilities in the city and that it would provide better value for money to provide a smaller number of facilities with wider appeal and higher usage.

30) Why does Oxford City Council not recognise that the strong community around the Temple Cowley Pool is a community that benefits from all the wonderful facilities in the area and that removing the pool is an assault on the strength of that community?

A: The Council does recognise this but has to balance these benefits against the costs and shortcomings of the centre for example in terms of cost, energy consumption and accessibility.

31) Can Oxford City Council give data about how the community in Temple Cowley/East Oxford will benefit from loss of facilities?

A: Possibly, if you clarify what data is requested.

32) Can Oxford City Council tell me that what they plan to do with the site?

A: The city council as landowner has no plans at present for the future of the site. It has not been marketed and no discussions have taken place with potential purchasers. The land has been valued with the use being assumed as being for residential purposes. The land appears in the planning consultation on potential development sites as suggested for residential or student housing purposes.

Questions from Penelope Newsome

33) Why is it that the recommendation is to ignore the petition asking to keep open Temple Cowley Pool and instead to waste our Council Tax on building a completely new pool at Blackbird Leys?

A: The new configuration of leisure facilities will actually save money due to the savings on running costs of the 2 centres that will close, the modern efficient nature of the new pool which has a low carbon footprint and the predicted increase in income from enhanced usage.

34) What is the point of carrying out a public consultation and then ignoring the results? - viz .the expressed wish of the public to keep open Temple Cowley Pool ?

A: The Council does recognise this but has to balance these benefits against the costs and shortcomings of the centre for example in terms of cost, energy consumption and accessibility.

35) Are we to assume that democracy in Oxford is now a thing of the past and that public policy is to be dictated to us by Council Officers and their friends in the construction industry?

A: The Council is part of the representational democracy of this country. It is the elected councillors who will decide whether or not the new pool will go ahead. If you believe that there are corrupt or improper motives at work you should report your evidence to the Council's Monitoring Officer or the Police.

36) What has happened to elected Council Representatives of the people that they are prepared to cast their votes on this matter, and on other matters also, in spite of representations from their electorate who ask them to vote otherwise?

A: Elected members have a duty to balance all of the relevant factors and make a judgement which is in the interests of the tax payers of the city.

37) Are the citizens of Oxford just wasting their precious time in bothering to turn out to elections, participate in consultations or indeed take any interest in their own city and its development?

A: No. The elections decide who the Councillors will be who have to make those judgements.

38) Does the opinion of one person, Mr. Ian Brooke, really count for more in policy decisions than the voices of thousands of the citizens of Oxford?

A: No. Mr Brooke provides professional advice on leisure matters. This advice is balanced by members with the other issues.

39) What is the real reason for wishing to spend our Council Tax on a new swimming pool in an outlying part of the city rather than on refurbishing a much-used pool in a place accessible to many more citizens?

A: The new configuration of leisure facilities will actually save money due to the savings on running costs of the 2 centres that will close, the modern efficient nature of the new pool which has a low carbon footprint and the predicted increase in income from enhanced usage. It will also remove the risk of unpredictable expenditure inherent in ageing facilities.

40) Does Mr Ian Brooke's recommendation really make sense economically at a time of stringent cuts in other social services in Oxford?

A: As shown in the above question 39.

Questions from Louise Webberley

- 41) What are the statistical results and where can I access them for the previous door to door canvassing by local councillors in the Blackbird Leys area regarding the proposed new competition standard pool at Blackbird Leys?

You should approach the Councillors who carried out this exercise and reported their findings to the City Executive Board

- 42) Was door to door canvassing regarding the proposed closure of Temple Cowley pool carried out by local councillors? If not, in the interests of fairness and democracy can you confirm that you will carry out a similar process with councillors serving residents in the Cowley area, what their views are on the proposed closure of Temple Cowley pool?

No it was not other than by way of the normal ward work of the local councillors. The views of the residents of Temple Cowley are well known. This was a specific exercise at the initiative of local members to find out views regarding the new pool from the perspective of those who would overlook the new development.

- 43) In your Corporate Plan 2011, you say that building a new pool at Blackbird Leys will reduce the city's carbon footprint. In your plans for the proposed new pool you have mentioned providing additional parking space including the possibility of converting a football pitch to a car park. You are therefore anticipating many more car drivers. With this in mind and the fact that residents from the Cowley area will have to drive to the new facility (if they can afford to own a car), how can you honestly say that this will result in a reduction of the carbon footprint?

Yes. We believe that the savings in energy consumption will outweigh any additional car journeys for a similar number of users particularly if you net off those current journeys to facilities which will be reduced or removed. There are no plans to convert any football pitches to car parking.

- 44) Can you give concrete assurances that if Temple Cowley pool is closed down, that the land will not be used for developers to build accommodation for Brookes University?

No. Whilst there are no plans to reach this outcome the council is under a fiduciary duty to ensure that it receives the best consideration for land disposals. Unless other policy considerations outweigh the Council will be duty bound to accept the best offer for the land to be developed in accordance with local planning requirements.

- 45) How does removing a pool from the Temple Cowley area contribute to engaged, greener communities as detailed in your corporate plan 2011, when you are ripping something from the

heart of the community which binds and brings families and individuals together?

The Council often is faced with balancing sometimes conflicting priorities. In this case the Council believes that the optimum balance is achieved through building a new pool.

- 46) In these times of austerity, isn't highly irresponsible of the labour council to propose spending 9 million pounds of tax payers money on a new pool when it would only cost 3 million to refurbish Blackbird Leys and Temple Cowley combined?

The professional estimates for a proper refurbishment of Temple Cowley far exceed the cost of the new build pool.

We feel it is unlikely that the £3m estimate for a refurbishment includes works which will be required under current legislation in terms of energy conservation and disabled access or includes professional fess and contingency.

The new configuration of leisure facilities will actually save money due to the savings on running costs of the 2 centres that will close, the modern efficient nature of the new pool which has a low carbon footprint and the predicted increase in income from enhanced usage. It will also remove the risk of unpredictable expenditure inherent in ageing facilities.

- 47) Is Councillor Price now furnished with the facts that a return bus journey from the original swan to the proposed new swimming pool at Blackbird Leys for an adult and child £4:30 return and not "about a pound" as he previously suggested. In these times of austerity, Can Councillor Price comprehend, that the bus fares plus payment for a swim will make a trip to the swimming pool for many families, that a minority of families as he previously suggested, a luxury rather than a reasonably cheap form of healthy activity?

The new centre is well served by bus services and is on the cycle lane network. It is not possible to have a pool local to everyone in the city so it is inevitable that some people will have to travel. Cost is a barrier to usage but so is not having the correct type of accessible facilities. The Council has a generous scheme of concessions for those on low incomes and offers free swimming for those under 17 to minimise cost barriers to access.

Questions from Charlotte Barrow

- 48) What are the personal and professional interests of all Council officers and councillors involved in decisions about the future of Temple Cowley pools?

There is a register of members' interests maintained by the Council. This is published on the Council's website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/RegisterofCouncillorsInterests2.pdf> where all the entries can be viewed.

Senior officers have to each year set out a declaration of their personal interests that may conflict with those of the Council. There are none recorded that may in any way prejudice the decisions referred to.

49) What are the personal and professional interests of all Council officers and councillors involved in decisions about the future of the site of the present Blackbird Leys pool?

There is a register of members' interests maintained by the Council. This is published on the Council's website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/RegisterofCouncillorsInterests2.pdf> where all the entries can be viewed.

Senior officers have to each year set out a declaration of their personal interests that may conflict with those of the Council. There are none recorded that may in any way prejudice the decisions referred to.

50) Council decision - how do you justify merely taking note of a petition signed by the equivalent of 7 per cent of this City's population, and ignoring the impact of the ring road on travel and thus the definition of East Oxford in this context?

The petition was noted and the information it conveyed was weighed carefully in coming to a decision as to what was the most appropriate way forward.

51) Para 5 (c) bullet point 3 (i) - 'competition standard pool' - why can Temple Cowley not be maintained at a level acceptable for competition, as in the past?

It is the ability to maintain and keep the whole of the pool complex that is in doubt rather than the ability to continue to hold competition events at Temple Cowley. Having said that the new pool will better meet the requirements of the amateur swimming association in respect of competitions.

52) Para 5 (c) bullet point 3 (i) - 'competition standard pool' - why is the University Pool not used for competition, as per the original planning permission?

The University pool is used by the City of Oxford Swimming Club for training purposes on a very limited basis when the pool is not required by the university. This pool can not host competitions as there is no spectator seating. To provide such there would effectively mean rebuilding the pool hall

as it is not large enough to take the required level of seating. We are satisfied that the university complies with the planning requirements. Both we and the swimming club have good relations with the university sports department.

53) Para 5 (c) bullet point 3 (iii) - what is meant by 'continued' when it says "That work is continued to ensure Temple Cowley residents retain good access to leisure facilities?"

We are working to enhance access to good quality leisure and sports opportunities in the area. We are investigating a range of possibilities in the public and private sector for example enhancing access to school based gyms.

54) Para 5 (c) bullet point 3 (iii) - how do you propose to ensure that Temple Cowley residents do retain good access in future?

We are working to enhance access to good quality leisure and sports opportunities in the area. We are investigating a range of possibilities in the public and private sector for example enhancing access to school based gyms.

55) Para 5 (c) bullet point 3 (iii) - do you propose to ensure that people working in Temple Cowley retain good access to leisure facilities in future? If so, how?

We are working to enhance access to good quality leisure and sports opportunities in the area. We are investigating a range of possibilities in the public and private sector for example enhancing access to school based gyms.

56) App 1, para 3 - are you aware that while Blackbird Leys had 'users' at the focus groups, Temple Cowley users were never formally or widely consulted by either of the two individuals you claim represented them? For example, one of them holds the email addresses of a number of users (the TC Users' Group) but this is not available to others and was never used to solicit opinions or views. That being so, how can you claim to have had fair representation (whatever the views) of current users of Temple Cowley Pools and Gym?

We believe that we have selected the user representatives in an appropriate manner. We have also put up in the pools and on the website information about the leisure facilities strategy and given opportunities for individuals to have their say. We are clearly aware of the views of the 'save temple cowley pools' group.

57) App 1, para 6 - repeat of point 11.

This is not a question

58) App 1, para 7 - what are the figures for canvassing? How many households were canvassed? How many answered the door and discussed the issues? What is the breakdown of opinion? (Please note here my second paragraph above; I was never canvassed, but I was told it was all done and dusted over a year ago.)

You shall have to enquire of the members who carried out this canvassing.

59) If the chair does not agree to give a response to one or more of the above questions at the meeting, why not?

Because I do not hold that information

Questions from Mohammad Nayheem-al-din

60) Has the council established by building a new swimming pool this will benefit the communities in Oxford, can they quantify this?

This matter has been the subject of a number of detailed reports to the Council's City Executive Board and Scrutiny Committee. All of the reports and supporting information is published on the Council's web site. Please see <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decLP/ConsultationonLeisureFacilities.htm>

61) Has the council carried out a detailed investigation (study) into the refurbishment of Temple Cowley Pool and Blackbird Leys Pool. The statements the council have made of the improved energy efficiency, carbon savings and improved facility by building a new swimming complex, have to be justified and available for the public to scrutinise and question?

This matter has been the subject of a number of detailed reports to the Council's City Executive Board and Scrutiny Committee. All of the reports and supporting information is published on the Council's web site. Please see <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decLP/ConsultationonLeisureFacilities.htm>

62) Have the council got any plans in place to carry out a study into the feasibility of refurbishing the pools rather than rebuilding from new?

This matter has been the subject of a number of detailed reports to the Council's City Executive Board and Scrutiny Committee. All of the reports and supporting information is published on the Council's web site. Please see <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decLP/ConsultationonLeisureFacilities.htm>

63) Has the council considered the amount of carbon, energy and resources that will be spent during the construction phase and after during the operational phase of the new swimming complex, Is this comparable to the amount spent by refurbishing the existing centres. The results of such a study must be made available to the public?

This matter has been the subject of a number of detailed reports to the Council's City Executive Board and Scrutiny Committee. All of the reports and supporting information is published on the Council's web site. Please see <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decLP/ConsultationonLeisureFacilities.htm>

64) Has the council considered the impact on the environment from the users who will be forced to travel by car to & from the new swimming pool from Cowley including surrounding areas around Cowley to Blackbird Leys?

Yes

65) I understand the Council has consulted the major stakeholders in the new swimming pool at Blackbird Leys. Have they contact and consulted the users of the swimming pools highlighted for closure to obtain their input on what they prefer to happen?

Yes –

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decLP/ConsultationonLeisureFacilities.htm>

Questions from David Jackson

66) The supporting paper (22 June 2011, from Ian Brooke) notes that at the 13 Jan 2010 CEB, the outline business case for the proposed new development of approximately £4.8M in capital costs. Since then, design plans have been updated (e.g. the "moveable floor" is now included, visit numbers have been clarified etc) with capital costs apparently rising to £8.5M. As this exceeds the outline cap of £6M that was agreed on the 13 Jan 2010, where is the full business case for the updated project?

The figures above confuse the construction costs, ie what we might pay the building contractor with the project costs which also includes the design costs, surveys, professional fees a client and a building contingency. It is the latter which the Council budgeted for. The build cost has risen reflecting primarily the outcomes of the consultation planning requirements. This is why a client and build contingency was set. The project overall is within budget.

67) The supporting paper refers to the Council meeting on the 21 Feb 2011 where the Capital Programme was agreed and £8.5M was allocated to line Z3108 to fund the proposed new pool. Who took the decision after the 13 Jan 2010, and when, to increase the Capital costs of this project?

All capital schemes have to be approved by Council.

68) Given the planned £6M cap in capital costs within the outline business case (agreed by CEB on 13 Jan 2010), how will the additional £2.5M capital costs be funded?

These are not additional costs they were always included in the total project budget. The total cost will be funded by the capital receipt from the Temple Cowley site and borrowing. The borrowing will be paid for by the savings on the running costs of the two closed centres.

69) Given the change in projected project costs since the outline business case was agreed on the 13 Jan 2010, has the full business for the project been updated and is that updated full business case available for review?

The total costs have not changed from the initial feasibility study carried out by Mace.

70) Given the change in projected project costs since the outline business case was agreed on the 13 Jan 2010, how much more money will be borrowed to finance this proposed project?

The total costs have not changed from the initial feasibility study carried out by Mace.

Questions from Martin Winch

71) Why isn't the proposed new pool at BL a full size Olympic 50 metre pool? Is there no room? In trying to understand the reasoning behind the decision to build a new pool next to the existing facility at BL and eventually demolish Temple Cowley Pool Complex I assumed that the new pool would offer something(s) outstanding that clearly TP could not offer. Since this is not the case I am even more baffled as to why the Council is so determined to provide a facility that has not been campaigned for.

There is a need and demand for a 25m competition standard pool in Oxford. Whilst there may be a desire for a 50m pool in some quarters that could not be justified on cost grounds. The new pool offers more than Temple Cowley in terms of the floating floor which gives greater flexibility in usage, has a

proper sized teaching pool and has a fun pool element for families with small children. The new pool will provide much improved access for those with limited mobility and those with disabilities. It will also have much lower running costs than the two existing pools.

Both Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys existing pool require significant investment to deal with repairs and maintenance and to bring them up to modern standards. The advice that the Council has had from its specialist advisors is that it would be more cost effective and lower risk to provide a new pool rather than refurbishing the existing ones. This is set out in detail in the reports which are published at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decLP/ConsultationonLeisureFacilities.htm>

72) I assume that the council has not received petitions signed by thousands of people for a new pool?

That is correct. However, there is support in the City for the new pool including those from the existing Focus Group.

73) Is it true that the proposed new facility will cost approx. £9m while approx. £3m would keep both TCP and the BL Swimming Pool operational for another 20+ years?

No. It will cost the tax payer more to keep refurbish and keep open the two existing pools.

74) Have members of the council who wish to drive this decision through to build the new facility and replace TP actually had a swim at TP and experienced the great swimming experience that TP still offers complete with excellent pool water quality? Unfortunately it seems the fashion nowadays is to too readily demolish even quite respectable buildings when all that is needed is careful maintenance.

Most if not all members have visited the centres recently. Some have also been to see the possibilities provided by state of the art modern facilities.

75) While the Council may well have received some complaints that Temple Cowley Pool is shabby and in need of refurbishment has the council considered what a small proportion of people this represents compared to the total number of people using the facility?

Whilst the level of complaint is relevant the Council must also take into account compliance with modern standards and usage when forming a view as to the suitability of a facility.

Questions from Madelyn Brewer

76)As a pensioner from East Oxford who is unable to drive and who swims to keep fit so that I can continue to work, I would like to know who is representing my interest and my need to keep a facility open in East Oxford that is easily accessible by public transport?

The new centre is easily accessible by public transport.

77)Why are you ignoring the needs of families with children who need a facility in Temple Cowley that is easily accessible by walking or by local buses?

Councillors are aware of these views and have balanced them carefully with all of the factors that they have to consider in coming to a conclusion as to what is in the best interests of tax payers across the city.

Questions from Hilary Walker

78)Why has the Council not listened to the clear voice of their electorate who do not want to see the loss of the Temple Cowley Pool?

Councillors are aware of these views and have balanced them carefully with all of the factors that they have to consider in coming to a conclusion as to what is in the best interests of tax payers across the city.

79)Why is the Council choosing an expensive option in a context of restrictions on public spending?

The new configuration of leisure facilities will actually save money due to the savings on running costs of the 2 centres that will close, the modern efficient nature of the new pool which has a low carbon footprint and the predicted increase in income from enhanced usage. It will also remove the risk of unpredictable expenditure inherent in ageing facilities.

80)Why is the location more accessible for public transport (ie Temple Cowley) not being recognised and used?

The new centre is well served by bus services and is on the cycle lane network. It is not possible to have a pool local to everyone in the city so it is inevitable that some people will have to travel.

Questions from Nigel Gibson

81)How can the Council be building a 'world class city for everyone' when its only leisure aspiration is to replace two well-used

facilities with one swimming pool that is only 25m, and at the same time not replace the diving pool?

The design of the new pool has been the subject of public consultation, scrutiny by a focus group and key stakeholders. The design has been amended as a result and we are confident will be well supported addition to the leisure facilities in Oxford.

82) Why is the Council persisting in wanting to build a new pool where only those living on a single estate can get to it by walking?

The new centre is well served by bus services and is on the cycle lane network. It is not possible to have a pool local to everyone in the city so it is inevitable that some people will have to travel.

83) Why does the Council want to force members of the public who want to use public transport to get to a leisure centre but don't live in Blackbird Leys or along the Cowley Road to double their travel costs?

The new centre is well served by bus services and is on the cycle lane network. It is not possible to have a pool local to everyone in the city so it is inevitable that some people will have to travel.

84) Why is the Council proposing to build a pool designed to only last 25 years when the facilities it will replace have stood for that long already, and could be refurbished for a third of the cost to last at least as long again?

The new proposed pool will be designed for a 60 year lifespan. The professional estimates for a proper refurbishment of Temple Cowley far exceed the cost of the new build pool.

We feel it is unlikely that the £3m estimate for a refurbishment includes works which will be required under current legislation in terms of energy conservation and disabled access or includes professional fees and contingency.

The new configuration of leisure facilities will actually save money due to the savings on running costs of the 2 centres that will close, the modern efficient nature of the new pool which has a low carbon footprint and the predicted increase in income from enhanced usage. It will also remove the risk of unpredictable expenditure inherent in ageing facilities.

85) Previous questions on this topic have revealed that the Council has no firm contractually binding agreement for the cost of running the proposed new pool, either for the duration of the Fusion contract or thereafter – how can you justify this?

You would be foolish to commit to a firm contractually binding cost until you knew what was going to be provided at the facility, what the utility costs were likely to be etc. If you could get a contractor to provide a firm price on that basis it would be loaded to cover the risks associated with the unknowns.

86) At the Planning Review Committee that approved your Planning Application to yourselves for the proposed new pool there was considerable concern about increased traffic that might ensue along what are effectively single carriageway roads in a 20mph residential area. What will you do if the new facility results in unacceptable traffic congestion?

This matter has been thoroughly dealt with during the planning process. We do not accept that there is a risk of unacceptable traffic congestion.

87) How will you fund the proposed new pool if you are unable to dispose of Temple Cowley Leisure Centre for the £1.5m required and assumed in your business case?

The Council's Corporate Director of Finance and Efficiency would provide advice to the Council on the most effective means in the light of that unlikely eventuality.

88) At a previous CEB the Leader commented on the main petition, saying that as it did not have the signatures of the whole of Oxford then it could be ignored. With this particular petition standing at well over 12,000 signatures, and only not increasing because the Campaign Team have stopped collecting signatures for it, does the Leader still believe that he should ignore everything unless it has the backing of the 150,000 Oxford residents?

The Council is aware of and has carefully weighed the significance of the petitions and other representations received with the other factors making up this decision process.

89) The report includes a review of facility improvements that have apparently been received from members of the general public – these included more seating and more parking. As these are only applicable to the use of the facilities by the Swimming Club, why is the council pandering to the requirements of a 250-strong elite group, none of whom live at Blackbird Leys, rather than listen to the majority of the general public in Oxford?

The Council is not pandering to the swimming club. However, the City of Oxford Swimming Club is an important stakeholder in the development of swimming and sport generally in the city. Their contribution to the health and well being of the people of the city and particularly its young people should not be denigrated. The swimming club is a city wide club, with members coming from across the City including from Blackbird Leys.

The majority of improvements to the proposed new pool through the consultation process were around benefits to the general public rather than just directly to the swimming club.

90) Question rejected

91) The text in Agenda Item 5 says that the April Full Council debated "petitions". For the avoidance of doubt, can you please clarify whether you think only one petition, or more than one petition, was debated at the Full Council meeting?

One petition was debated at Council on 18 April. The report on the matter referred to an earlier petition that had been before to October Council.

92) Exactly how many signatures were on the petition that is the subject of Agenda Item 5?

The paper enclosing the petition said it contained 2,600+ signatures.

93) How many signatures would need to be on a petition for the Council to change its policy?

Petitions do not by simple weight change policy. The elected representatives on the Council weigh them when coming to decisions.

94) Why has the Council not responded to the much larger petition, with over 12,000 signatures, that was submitted at Full Council last year?

The Council dealt with the petition at its October meeting. Minute 49 refers.

95) For the avoidance of doubt, can you please clarify that the opinions expressed in the petition are not just those of the Campaign Group (as stated in the text of Agenda Item 5), but also those of the signatories, ie your council tax payers and voters, and by implication the majority of the people of Oxford?

To avoid confusion, it is the signatories on the petition who have expressed their opinions based on the information available to them at the time.

96) In voting on this Agenda Item, will the Council be making a decision to close Temple Cowley Pools and/or "Blackbird Leys

Pool” (I assume you mean the existing Blackbird Leys Swimming Pool).

The extract within the recommendation that you refer to is ‘to confirm the previous policy to build a new high quality swimming pool facility adjoined to Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre and once completed to close both Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool’. A final decision will be taken on the future of both Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool at the City Executive Board meeting in July.

97) I have been told that a group of Blackbird Leys residents have applied for Town Green status for the area of green space on which the Council proposes to build – what effect, if any, would granting Town Green status have on the Council’s policy, and will the Council wait until the outcome of the application before moving ahead with its plans?

No such application has been served on the City Council as occupier of the land. In the event that an application is received the Council will consider the merits of such an application and consider the most appropriate and responsible course of action.

In the event that Town Green status was granted it would have the following effects :

- no new development may take place on the park - this would impact on plans for the skate park and play area and any other similar proposals as they could not be carried out
- the Council’s Bye Laws for Parks would not be enforceable in this Park, which may lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour
- it would be difficult to operate organised sports on the space

98) What has happened to Councillor Timbs promise to the public at CEB last year that a full detailed business case would be published along with the Mace study?

We consider that has been covered by the reports to the City Executive Board.

99) Will the Council place in the public domain the full business case that must surely exist supporting this Agenda Item?

All of the reports and supporting documentation has already been published on the Council’s web site.

100) Paragraph 5(f) in the report supporting Agenda Item 5 reports that “a great deal of public consultation” has taken place. Why do you fail to mention the huge amount of opposition to closing the existing facilities ie Temple Cowley Leisure Centre and the existing Blackbird Leys Swimming Pool, that has surfaced through all the petitions and during the council’s

consultation? Why is the council ignoring the will of the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Oxford in favour of the 250 elite members of the Oxford Swimming Club none of whom live in Blackbird Leys?

The whole report is about the petitions. The Council has carefully balanced these with the other factors which make up this decision.

101) Why does the report not address the key point of the last petition, that by closing Temple Cowley Leisure Centre the council is actively withdrawing publicly funded leisure facilities from within the ring road in East Oxford?

The Council provides leisure facilities for the whole city as set out in the report.

102) Paragraph 6 of the report talks about how the Council and Fusion have sought to increase income. The reasons given are related to layout, condition of facility, mix and car parking. All of these factors are within the Council's control, and attendances at the Leisure Centre, when the Council wasn't trying to run it down and justify closure, have been much higher. What is the income at present, and how much would you want it to increase to? How does this aspiration relate to the fixed price that the Council is paying to Fusion to operate all its facilities?

The net cost of the centre is almost £500K. The income level is commercially sensitive to Fusion Lifestyle and cannot be published.

The income would need to grow to a position that it made the refurbishment option more cost effective than the new build. There is no realistic prospect of this.

It does not.

103) The perception of people living in Oxford is that there is a clear barrier presented by the ring road. In paragraph 7 of the report why does the Council seek to dismiss what everyone knows is true by calling this perception an "entirely artificial construct"?

Because it is just that.

104) In terms of paragraph 8 of the report, what actual demand has the council found in Blackbird Leys for a new swimming facility?

The business case relies on the marketing information provided in confidence by Fusion Lifestyles.

- 105) Why has the Council allowed the myth to persist that the proposed new pool will be bigger than existing facilities, 50m and Olympic size, when it will only be 25m, and only a pool when Temple Cowley Pools is a complete wet/dry leisure centre?

It is not the Council that has perpetuated this myth. The Council has never stated that it is our intention to provide a 50m pool. Having said that the total water space being provided is bigger than that which is operational at Temple Cowley due to the inclusion of a larger teaching pool and the fun water area.

- 106) Why has the Council allowed the myth to persist that most of the cost of the £2.6m backlog maintenance work previously identified as necessary at Temple Cowley Pools is for the column surrounded by scaffolding, when a Freedom of Information Request last year revealed that it would only cost £31,000 to repair?

Because it is true.

- 107) Does the Council recognize that its dogged determination to close Temple Cowley Leisure Centre is in the teeth of a continuing huge amount of opposition from people across Oxford and beyond, as reflected in the petitions?

We do recognise any of the characterisations set out in this question.

- 108) Does the Council recognize that its policy to close publicly funded leisure facilities inside the ring road in East Oxford is not justified as far as its voting public are concerned?

The views of the public are weighed carefully when taking such decisions.

Questions from Sue Tibbles

- 109) Why do the petitions seem to have been ignored?

They are not ignored they are carefully weighed against other factors.

- 110) How can the Labour administration justify spending £9 million on a new pool when £3 million would keep both Temple Cowley Pools and the Blackbird Leys Swimming Pool operational for another 20 or more year?

The Council's budget which included the funding for the new pool was approved with 24 councillors voting for and 13 against.

The professional estimates for a proper refurbishment of Temple Cowley far exceed the cost of the new build pool.

We feel it is unlikely that the £3m estimate for a refurbishment includes works which will be required under current legislation in terms of energy conservation and disabled access or includes professional fees and contingency.

The new configuration of leisure facilities will actually save money due to the savings on running costs of the 2 centres that will close, the modern efficient nature of the new pool which has a low carbon footprint and the predicted increase in income from enhanced usage. It will also remove the risk of unpredictable expenditure inherent in ageing facilities.

111) Please may I also ask about job losses if Temple Cowley Pools close?

We do not anticipate any as staff will be offered the opportunity to transfer to the new centre.

112) Please may I ask what will be the knock-on effect to the Temple Cowley Library and whether that too would then be under threat of closure and therefore more job losses, if Temple Cowley Pools close?

There is no linkage between the decision regarding the pool and that for the library.

Questions from Jane Alexander

113) The report from Head of Law and Governance recommends to confirm the previous policy to build a new high quality swimming pool facility adjacent to the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre and, once completed, to close both Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool and yet one of the main points made in the 'substantial body of evidence' states clearly that Temple Cowley Pools facility is only 'mid life' and this and the present Blackbird Leys pool could be refurbished to a high quality standard for £3 million which is what the majority of the public want as shown by the more than 11,000 strong petition, both the SaveTCP survey, the consultation run by the council and the public meeting held in August 2010 when 99% voted to keep what we have rather than build new at Blackbird Leys, so, why are the council ignoring the public, and their own evidence for which they have paid huge amounts of money, only to ignore all of this expensively collected information?

The views expressed by the public are carefully weighed with the other factors under consideration.

- 114) The report from Head of Law and Governance recommends to confirm the previous policy to build a new high quality swimming pool facility adjacent to the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre and, once completed, to close both Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool and yet most of the people of Blackbird Leys do not want a new pool built on their park and have applied for Town Green Status for the land. The received opinion (from OSS) is that no building plans are approved or started until this is decided as returning the land to its former condition can be a very expensive procedure, so, why is the council behaving so recklessly with our money?

The Head of Law and Governance has not written a report recommending confirmation of previous policy decisions. The Council has no evidence, and none is provided with this question, to confirm that the majority of people in Blackbird Leys do not want a new pool built at the existing leisure centre. No application for a Town Green has been served on the City Council as occupier of the land. In the event that an application is received the Council will consider the merits of such an application and consider the most appropriate and responsible course of action.

- 115) The report recommends the Board to note the contents of the report, the views expressed in the petition by the campaign group, the public consultation and engagement exercises carried out by the Council even though some of the 'exercises' involve inaccuracies for example quoting that the Oxford PCT actually approves the building of a new pool at BL when in fact it has NEVER approved it, so how can you trust the accuracy of the report?

We believe that the PCT does support the proposal.

- 116) What do you mean by 'note the.....views expressed in the petition by the campaign group'?

Just that.

- 117) Question rejected

- 118) Question rejected

Questions from David Cook

- 119) Please explain to me why the alternative plans prepared by consultants and other professionals and put forward by the protest group appear to have been ridiculed and considered a waste of time.

The Council has not received alternative proposals from qualified consultants and professionals.

120) The site is central there are increases in the population (and schools) in the area the estimated cost is half of the projected new pool (that would have less facilities), public opinion is neither in favour of change nor of the change of use that has been openly discussed for the Cowley pool site, .there will be more congestion/carbon footprint/annoyance to tenants in Blackbird Leys that would not happen with any expansion of Cowley Pools Please. Why fly in the face of ALL the consultations and public protest. It DOES NOT MAKE SENSE which is all I get from my local Labour councillors.

Not a question

Question from Shane Clark

121) Has Bob Price, leader of the council, misled the council and the public over the statement, "City council leader Bob Price said previous studies had identified building a new pool at Blackbird Leys as the preferred option." (FOI 1831)? As the only report written that makes this recommendation was that provided to the council in 2009, written by the council, based on work and 'evidence' which has now been destroyed (FOI 1875) and compiled by the head of leisure who although might have considerable experience in the leisure industry is not qualified to make these recommendations (FOI 1841 "your professional qualifications to be able to make the recommendations you do to council in the review – particularly you independence to do so too" – no evidence of expertise in this area was provided so can only assume experienced but not qualified to write the report of 2009). The previous studies referred to by Bob Price are only derivatives of this 2009 report and hence, apart from the 2009 study there are no other studies that recommend BBL for the site of a new leisure centre/pool – hence has he misled the public?.

No

122) Should the 2009 leisure review and the work presented by Ian Brooke be withdrawn as it is not an open, independent and expert report? The report was written by the head of leisure however although it has been stated that considerable and wide ranging views were sort there is no remaining evidence of an open and transparent process (FOI 1875) as all correspondence, letters, e-mails minutes of meetings etc have not been retained – destroyed! The council has not been able to provide evidence of the expertise or professional qualification of the head of leisure and therefore his 'expertise' in producing and presenting this report is in question (FOI 1841). Also as an

employee of the City Council his 'independence' is also in question.

No. This is nonsense.

123) Are there any plans or discussions at all to close TCP soon after this decision is made finalised on grounds of H&S?

The plan is to keep both TCP and BBL pools open until the new facility is open.

124) Are there actual agreed community links with Oxford university? The link provided in the report does not exist. (Page 13)

Yes. Please try the link attached here <http://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/oxford-university-sports-facilities/sports-facilities/memberships/community-membership>

125) Has the city council and councillors been presented with an honest, open and unbiased service to ensure an open, fair and transparent process to ensure the right decisions are made on the issues of leisure in oxford and most notably on the issues of closing TCP and moving the pool 1.8 miles to BBL?

Yes as is required by law, the Council's constitution and the appropriate codes of conduct.

126) Is it in the interests of "The Council and Fusion Lifestyle ... to identify a cost effective and sustainable means of significantly increasing income at the [TCP] site Considering that "the site options for a new pool were tested with the companies bidding to operate the council's leisure centres and there was a clear and common preference for Blackbird Leys"; And due to the contract with Fusion will cost the council and people of Oxford if the BBL pool is not built and TCP not closed?

This statement is incorrect. The Council is contracted to Fusion with the status quo. There is the option to move to a new facility but this is entirely at the discretion of the Council. There is no financial penalty to the Council if it decides not to exercise this option.