

10. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

NOTE: Questions and answers to them cannot, by the Constitution, take longer than 3 minutes.

(1) Question to the Board Member, Leisure (Councillor Van Coulter) from Gordon Waite

Population figures and leisure facilities

The Council has recently published figures from the latest census showing that the highest growth in population over the last ten years has been in Cowley Marsh, a figure of 41%. Communities around the Cowley Marsh ward have grown significantly, over 20% in some cases. In contrast, the population of Blackbird Leys has grown by only 4%, that is by only 233. In the wards closest to Blackbird Leys it has grown by only 8%.

One of the main reasons the Council puts forward for a new swimming pool in Blackbird Leys is that some 10,000 people would be within walking distance, compared to about 6,000 in Cowley. These figures are based on the previous census; but the current figures from the Council demonstrate that the catchment area for a leisure facility in Cowley is at least as large as in Blackbird Leys; and Cowley is in the heart of a group of communities that are growing and will continue to do so.

Why is the Council still intent on removing leisure facilities from these growing communities in and around Cowley?

Answer

The new pool and the subsequent closure of Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys Pool have been agreed following a robust business case that detailed the benefits in terms of cost, carbon, access, participation, quality and sustainability.

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/CompetitionStandardPoolFacilitiesAppraisalandOptionsReport.pdf>

IAN BROOKE

(2) Question to the Board Member, Leisure (Councillor Van Coulter) from Nigel Gibson

Fusion Leisure Contract

The Council has consistently claimed that the annual cost of operating Temple Cowley Leisure Centre is over £500,000. The breakdown for last year provided by your Finance Department shows that most of this figure, £248,696, was actually a 'contracted management fee' – not a real cost like fixing the air

conditioning in the gym, or bringing the diving pool back into use, but a figure paid to Fusion that was agreed when the contract with them was signed. In complete contrast, according to your website

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Procurement/Contract%20%20Leisure%20Services.pdf>) you paid Fusion £225,297 last year for operating all the leisure centres, which is £23,399 less than your claimed payment to Fusion for Temple Cowley Leisure Centre.

Can you please explain this discrepancy, and for clarity and in line with the openness you claim on your website, provide a breakdown of these payments by year by leisure centre for the whole of the contract term? If the payments have increased since the contract was signed, can you please explain the reason and the contractual mechanism by which this has happened?"

Answer

The breakdown of the annual £500,000 costs for Temple Cowley Pools has been provided to Mr Gibson on several occasions. The contract costs vary if the council make changes to service such as when we extended free swimming in April 2012. The figures referred to were accurate when they were published.

IAN BROOKE

(3) Question to the Board Member, Leisure (Councillor Van Coulter) from Patricia Wright

Community Facilities - consultation

If the City Council was consulting 8-11 year old schoolchildren prior to deciding whether to replace the existing Rose Hill Community Centre with a new £3m Community Centre on the estate, were children at the schools using the Temple Cowley Pools (both primary and secondary) asked at 'dedicated lessons' for their views on demolishing the present pools and fitness centre and offering a new facility 1.6 miles away, outside the Ring Road, on Blackbird Leys?

Answer

The new pool will have city wide appeal and as such the consultation took place on a city wide basis. The consultation process was very thorough as detailed on the council's website. (<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/declP/ConsultationonLeisureFacilities.htm>)

IAN BROOKE