

Agenda Item No 13 (ii)

Written Question received from Councillor Rita Egan

Central Bedfordshire Council Meeting January 24th

Question to Portfolio Holder for the Leisure Strategy –Councillors Spurr and Dalgarno

Can I ask the portfolio holders responsible for the Leisure Strategy why, on page 346, Agenda Item 16 of the Executive Papers, 8th January, 2012, the words, “new 6 lane 25 meter pool” appear in paragraph 24.

On numerous occasions I have questioned why Houghton Regis should be given a 6 lane pool when Flitwick is to have a proposed 8 lane pool. I was given an assurance at the last meeting I attended that an 8 lane pool would be considered for Houghton Regis. I feel as if my comments have been completely ignored, even when I have given cogent arguments for changing the number of lanes in the projected pool. I will reiterate again my reasons for seeking a larger pool:

- The growth area north of Houghton Regis is much larger than any planned growth at Flitwick. It makes no sense whatsoever to build a small facility in Houghton Regis and a large one in Flitwick.
- Houghton Regis is an area of significant deprivation. Many residents do not lead healthy lifestyles. Providing great local facilities encourages poor families to participate in healthy activities. Houghton Regis should be provided with the best facility that can be provided on social and health grounds alone.
- It is unhelpful to suggest that swimmers should go to the Luton Inspire Pool to swim. Stopsley is hardly accessible to residents of Houghton Regis. The same could be said for the other pools that are available in Luton. It also might surprise some members to know that the bus fare to Dunstable from the top of Parkside coupled with the cost of swimming is beyond the capacity of some residents to pay. Around one quarter of Parkside residents do not own a car.
- An 8 lane pool would provide much needed training time for a swimming club. At the moment, there is no club in Houghton Regis, partly due to the closure of the Houghton Regis pool and also because this pool was never suitable for competition. I think it is important that we plan for a new Swimming Club to be formed in the new facility and provide the appropriate space for members to train. Some of South Beds Masters Swimming Club's top swimmers are ex members of the Houghton Regis Swimming Club and these swimmers are some of the best in the UK.
- My own club, the South Beds Masters, has already requested that an 8 lane pool be built to accommodate competitive swimming such is the shortage of pool time in the region. Training times in local pools are already allocated and oversubscribed.
- 8 lane pools afford much greater opportunity for concurrent swimming activities. It is possible to hold two or three different activities in one session. Clubs and individual swimmers can train at the same time as alternative

activities such as aquasize or fun swims. More income would be generated because more activities could take place in a session.

- If an 8 lane pool were provided, there would be income generating opportunities as the pool could be rented out for competition. Competitions are income generators for swimming clubs and for the facility that hosts them.
- We have already heard how the Olympic legacy is struggling to deliver on its promise. This is especially so with disabled athletes. If we built an 8 lane pool we could become model for encouraging both able bodied and disabled swimmers to take up lifelong swimming both for leisure and for competition.

These are only some of the reasons I have given for in the past for proposing an 8 lane pool. I hope, this time, that my comments might be taken on board and that the figure "6" be changed to the figure "8" in the leisure strategy document.

Cllr Dr. Rita Egan. Parkside.