

Policy and Resources Committee – 1 December 2016

Public Questions and Comments

Written Comment from Maria Banaghan – Agenda Item 7: Diving Feasibility Study (Barnet Copthall Leisure Centre)

I am writing to express my concern and dismay in regards to the generally 'closed book' approach that Barnet has taken in regards to the provision of diving facilities for the children and families of Barnet.

I was left speechless when I read the totally one sided approach taken to the feasibility study, it appeared it had been written prior to the discussion. How could it happen, that the same company who were commissioned to do the original document, subsequently complete a review of the same scheme? There is surely a conflict of interest? Where is the governance around this process? If possible, could you please send me your SOP for the scheme review processes?

I am also perplexed by the general approach of the author that only one sport can only occur at the cost of another; swimming or diving/ synchronised swimming, not all.

Where is the child in this? This report suggests that this project is simply a financial decision for today's balance sheet. Where is the reference to the development of England's future athletes in a fair and equitable society? How can a family on ordinary means be expected to have equitable access to diving or synchronised swimming if they have to travel to Stratford 3-4 times a week? It's not only the logistics it fundamentally the cost. It is simply not achievable!

This report further marginalises those in our community who can not speak up for themselves and who don't have the resources to give their children the opportunities that will only be afforded to a very few wealthy and well resourced elite. This is truly shameful.

There is also no mention in this report to health outcomes of children and the positive direct and indirect effect of sport in achieving health and well being. With the dramatic increase in childhood obesity and diabetes in our community, the burgeoning costs of the NHS, we are nearing free fall in the costs of supporting all. We remove access to these sports and activities at our peril.

I honestly hope that this is not the final decision and I do hope that Barnet identify a way forward that achieves a compromise that works for all. This is a fantastic opportunity for Barnet to be a shining star for other councils who will be wrestling with similar issues. I do hope further productive discussions ensue.