

Press Release Saltash Leisure Centre

Saltash Town Council are very concerned about the negative impact the potential closure of the leisure centre in Saltash will have and strongly oppose the closure. Sheryll Murray MP is also keen to see Saltash leisure centre remain open for the benefit of all constituents.

At the Saltash Town Council meeting held on 7th October members of the public raised the following questions which echo the concerns of the Town Councillors:

1. Can Cornwall Council provide income and expenditure of the Leisure Centre prior to the pandemic and current?
2. With one of the Government's targets to have all children able to swim 25 meters, unaided, by the time they leave primary school, and the recently announced incentive for any child unable to achieve the 25-metre unaided swim by the time they leave year 6, they and their family will be offered free swimming lessons. What would the benefits of closing the leisure centre?
3. Have Cornwall Council considered the increased burden of cost for schools and the increased time away from the classroom to achieve swimming as part of the curriculum?
4. Childhood obesity is another area of concern, especially in areas of deprivation, of which Cornwall is one. What message are we sending our children if we close a centre designed to promote health and fitness?
5. Increased traffic is at odds with Cornwall Council's own commitment to reducing climate change through, for example, achieving carbon neutrality. This extends further than just the schools using the pool: there are 16,000 residents in Saltash (compared to just 9,000 in Liskeard) Let's say, for the sake of it, 50% of these (8,000) have to drive a 26-mile round trip for a swim. Would this not be an unnecessary increase in pollution?
6. Why is the Government not supporting the health and wellbeing of the Cornish people, especially due to the pandemic and the financial impact it has had on the leisure centre?
7. Can clarification be given as to why Cornwall Council have stated that there is no additional funding available when other leisure centres in other parts of the country, such as the Northwest, are evidently being awarded funding from the Government?
8. Cornwall Council claim to promote public health and wellbeing through physical activity with a dedicated website called Healthy Cornwall which makes reference to swimming being recommended for wellbeing, both mentally and physically. How then can Cornwall Council justify the proposal to close the leisure centre?

9. In 2019 Cornwall Council declared a Climate Emergency but now seem to be suggesting that resident travel up to 30 miles or 30 minutes to reach leisure activities. How can this be justified and to what effect on the carbon footprint?
10. Many people are saying that the leisure centre consultation is skewed in the wording of questions, to allow for interpretation that residents and users can and would wish to travel further to alternative facilities.
11. Many have expressed a concern that closing the leisure centre is the first step towards selling off the land for private development, helping towards plugging the £18 million black hole in Cornwall Council finances.
12. Insufficient information given to establish the actual financial loss suffered during the pandemic and no financial information forthcoming to enable proposals to be put together for the potential bid to continue.
13. No suitable explanation from Cornwall Council as to why they are prepared to allow GLL to walk away from a contract that is valid until 2042.
14. As it was Cornwall Council that awarded the failing contract, do they not feel moral, if not legal responsibility to take action that will enable the leisure centre to continue and to improve.
15. Why are the financial calculations of Cornwall Council and GLL based on usage and membership during the pandemic, whilst giving no consideration to how membership and viability may improve in the future?

Further concerns from Town Councillors are:

1. Cornwall Council has received government funding of £750k but this is not mentioned in the consultation?
2. Saltash has a new school in the town for children with learning difficulties all of whom will need somewhere to learn to swim (The Fountain Head House School)
3. In addition, Saltash has the new development, Treledan which will house approx. 3000 people many of whom might access the leisure centre.
4. The Leisure Centre is a key part of the "Saltash Community Campus" as described in the Saltash Neighbourhood Development Plan and its associated Policies. As the Town Council for Saltash we were not made aware of this proposal. The effect of the closure of this facility has not been considered in the Neighbourhood Development Plan and closure is therefore non-compliant with the Plan.

Saltash Town Council would welcome being involved in the further creative discussion/option meetings and to review the group specific information around finance, performance and building survey reports.

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