

Sports and Leisure Facilities in Garforth and Kippax.

Following recent media coverage regarding the proposed plans for the closure of sports facilities in both Garforth and Kippax.

Members of Garforth Residents Association, representing the interests of the community of Garforth are disappointed and concerned about the lack of consultation that Leeds City Council appear to have engaged in prior to the above announcement in the local press.

The facilities presently provided at Garforth Sports Centre are very well used, though thought by most to be less than adequate for the local population of 16000 and those from the wider communities in the villages of Kippax, Micklefield, Aberford, taking the population to around 35,000.

A recent report by the **Director of City Development** in September 2008 reflects this popularity of Garforth Sports Centre when it uses the measure of cost to the Council per visitor, at 76 pence as opposed to say £3.98pence per visitor at East Leeds Leisure Centre.

Of course there are no swimming facilities at Garforth, which would increase the cost.

The nearest public swimming facility for Garforth is located in Kippax. The facility, which opened in the early seventies, is a dated, failing building, with high maintenance cost. Not an inviting or attractive construction, this possibly deters people from using it. It has possibly run the course of its useful designed lifespan of about 35 years. The cost per visitor there being quoted at £2.32p.

The future health and well being of all our people is a major issue, which is discussed nationally every day in news and current events, from diet to exercise and the future Olympic Games in 2012.

The report by the **Director of Development** identifies that over the past 21 years 19 privately funded swimming pools have opened in the city, identifying a need plus market for such facilities by those people who can afford to pay the fees and memberships rates charged.

Perhaps we should be looking for more partnerships with the Private Sector and our Council in this area.

An example of such private funding and public co-operation exists in the Town of Tadcaster where there is provided for the whole community a privately funded swimming pool and gym. The Tadcaster Swimming Pool Trust, a facility that has been open for 14 years, it is clean smart, well organised an attractive building and a pleasure to visit.

The population of Tadcaster is 6,500 with a wider population of 35,000 when extended to Sherburn, Boston Spa and York Suburbs.

The facility is staffed by 12 full and part time employees supplemented by 70 volunteers sourced from within the local community.

The volunteers, of ages from 16 to 80 years, who are willing to spend a few hours unpaid keep the facility running to the high standard it obviously enjoys whilst keeping cost down. The tasks they undertake include those of trained pool attendants and reception desk staff.

In considering the future of our sports facilities, we are asking that those who are tasked with making the final decisions take into account the human aspect. Not just measuring the cubic meters of swimming pool water provided in the city.

Look at the facilities like those in Tadcaster, yes it was built with brewery money in 1994, but it is run at a profit with the enthusiasm of the people it was designed for.

Take into account when adding the running costs, the available unused resources available, eager to help and be trained in new skills.

We are suggesting that the facilities for the people of Garforth, be put into Garforth.

That our well used sports centre be improved and extended. That the provision of a new swimming pool within our community boundary, not taken away to create a large expensive development miles away in Leeds City.

We are asking that the Council Leisure Services start again, broaden and extend their consultation process to include users of the facilities they are planning to close.

Think outside those usual constraints, take account of volunteer workers. Visit examples of facilities like the one at Tadcaster; study their means of making their facility a success. Steal some of their good ideas, they don't mind.

Ask those local groups, schools, clubs, organisations, community groups and individuals what they want. After all it is these people who use the facilities now, not just as a sports facility but also as a place for events meetings, gatherings.

Lets not just make sports facilities bigger but further away.

We expect facilities to improved not removed.

**Philip Dunwell
Chairperson
Garforth Residents Association**