

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

27 July 2010

AGENDA ITEM NO.5

**QUESTION FROM MARK BARRETT, BURSAR OF CALNE LEISURE CENTRE LTD
TO COUNCILLOR STUART WHEELER, CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE, SPORT
AND CULTURE**

IN RESPECT OF: ITEM NO. 6 - REVIEW OF LEISURE

My name is Mark Barrett and I am the Bursar of the Calne Leisure Centre Ltd.

After the abrupt closure of our Leisure Centre by the previous administration, Calne Leisure Centre (CLC), was formed by the community as an Independent Provident Society (IPS) with a range of volunteers to provide a successful business plan to re-open Calne's Leisure facility.

Shares for the company were issued, and with the support of over 700 shareholders and funds from businesses and other individuals in the surrounding area, our centre was rescued after closure. Without having had a properly phased handover, and in the absence of adequate maintenance of our leisure centre in the years prior to closure, it took four months of intensive effort by unpaid professionals and other volunteers to complete basic refurbishment so that the leisure centre could reopen in January 2008.

That was nearly three years ago and renovation is still ongoing, as it will be in any public use building of this nature. Funding comes from annual and monthly membership and casual use, as well as accommodating the Comprehensive School (JBS) and six of the nine Primary schools for swimming and fitness programmes through their education budgets. Capital and Revenue grants from WC, although substantially smaller than grants to other Centers under their control, are also imperative to the continuation of Calne's Leisure facility.

The latest figures show that we have regular attendance figures of over 20,000 a month with an annual turnover in excess of £500,000 including the necessary grant funding from this council and our town council

The Board of unpaid Directors have discussed the recent announcements by this Council to review the Leisure facilities in Wiltshire and was already forming a strategy for the next ten years which will identify necessary improvements and refurbishment of the building, as well as replacing old and worn equipment. Our plans also include

renewable energy sourcing and energy and water saving schemes. We are working hard towards reducing our carbon footprint but we will still need mains power and our oil fed boiler system needs to be updated and changed to mains gas to maintain viable use of the swimming pool. These will all be expensive but necessary projects to undertake.

Our Boards Question is:

The Council might use Calne Leisure as an example of how a community can successfully sustain its leisure service in the face of closure, and Calne Leisure may be able to assist other communities in developing their plans to preserve their facilities. We ask that the Council does not lose sight of Calne Leisure's need for the active support of this Council even whilst its attention is drawn to making cost savings elsewhere. Can the Council give us an assurance that it will still actively, and indeed, proactively support Calne Leisure in its aspirations to renovate its facilities and develop the services that it provides to its community of 20,000 people?

Response:

The review does look at the possibility of devolving some centres to community groups or trusts with support from the Council over a period of time. The Council recognises that this has worked extremely well in Calne and the Council is keen to develop discussions with other local communities who may be interested in this approach.

We want to help communities to retain their local facilities and to be able to manage and run them successfully in the future and we will be prepared to invest in these facilities before devolving them. This applies as much to Calne Leisure Centre as it does to any of the other facilities. Following discussions that you have had with officers in the last day or so we are keen to continue discussions with to determine how the Council can support it with its aspirations in the future.