

Motion to Full Council - 15 July 2008

Reductions in funding to Tone Leisure

Detailed budget reductions have been considered through Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive which involve cuts in concessions to the elderly, removal of crèche facilities for the young and the closure of the last public squash courts in Taunton. Since news of this has started filtering out to those most affected and “filtering out” is meant, as no public announcement or consultations have been made to those most affected, therefore strong representations against the changes are being made.

We urge a review of funding for the elderly and crèche provision as it is being seen as an attack on the elderly trying to keep fit and young mums when they are most in need following the birth of a child trying to regain fitness. Also it is helpful to some to avoid post natal depression by providing popular, safe, healthy activities. This is being seen as Taunton Deane attacking both ends of the generation spectrum.

The fundamental problem is that all of these negotiations with Tone Leisure and how they overcome the cut in budget have been carried out under confidential cover so those most affected have not been given any advance warning or consulted. This is being seen as anti senior citizens and young mums and they are becoming extremely vocal about the cuts being focused against them and worse, feel it is a fait accompli. This is causing huge resentment with many comments about cloak and dagger decisions, lack of transparency and taking arbitrary decisions affecting people without consultation.

There is also very strong representation from the squash players condemning Taunton Deane for sanctioning the removal of the last public squash courts in the County Town, again, without any consultation with those most affected.

The protestors perceive this as the Council letting them down and only paying lip service to the stated aim of trying to improve fitness in the community by encouraging physical activity.

In order to try and address these concerns the Council **resolves** that:-

1. The reinstatement of funding to Tone Leisure to the extent that removal of concessions to the elderly and crèche facilities for the young are not necessary.
2. To enter into consultation with representatives from the squash playing community to ensure they are fully aware of and accept the proposals for change before implementation which will involve the removal of the last public courts in Taunton.
3. That although accepting the need for tight budgetary control of the Council's finances this should not be at the expense of front line services that are valued by some of the most vulnerable in our community.