

Full Council

18 July 2024

Public Participation – Statements from Members of the Public

Statement submitted by Ross Bowell, Director of Resources, Initio Learning Trust

Initio Learning Trust statement regarding Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre (QELC)

Queen Elizabeth's School, Wimborne is continuing to provide excellent sports provision for students, community clubs and group hire on the refurbished artificial grass pitch and hard courts. However, we are acutely aware that the 31 March closure of the QELC facilities to the public, including the swimming pool, has been detrimental to our local communities. We disagree with the council's briefing note assertion that "the future subsidy at QELC could be in excess of £850K" per year. For example, we received correspondence in June 2024 from a credible local leisure provider advising that "Whilst we recognise that time may have passed and circumstances change; we still believe that given the right setup, investment and staffing levels, a successful leisure operation is possible on the premises." Accordingly it will be informative to provide further detail on the briefing note comment that "QE school had two years to find a new operator or arrange to manage the facilities directly themselves. They were unable to find another operator so have opted to manage the site under a different operating model." Supported by a specialist leisure consultant, in 2023 Initio ran an open tender for the continued running of QELC as a dual-use leisure centre and received two bids from regional leisure providers which indicated that with one-off capital investment to bring QELC up to modern standards the centre was potentially viable. In May 2023 we had asked Dorset Council to provide additional capital investment and £150,000 revenue support over 2 years to support the continued operation of the leisure centre. An extract of the response in June 2023 is below: "Thank you for setting out your formal request for additional funds to alter and improve the facilities at QE Leisure Centre. Your specific request of an additional £1.557m capital investment from Dorset Council and £150,000 revenue support for 24/25 and 25/26 was reviewed by the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Culture, the Director of Place Services and the Head of Environment and Wellbeing...Dorset Council is not able to provide any capital or revenue funding above what it has already committed to do." Initio Learning Trust invites the new Dorset Council leadership to reconsider its approach to QELC. Our market engagement suggests that with a one-off capital investment and little or no revenue subsidy the council could successfully and viably recommission QELC as a public leisure centre operated by a specialist third party leisure provider while protecting QE school's access to the facilities to support high quality educational provision to Dorset children.

Statement submitted by Peter Webb

Purbeck Local Plan

Council should seriously consider rejecting the proposal to adopt the Purbeck Local Plan 2018 – 2034

Other than some further consultations on a few relatively specific issues raised by the Inspector, the bulk of the work and evidence that has gone into the Plan was carried out and collected prior to 2018, with some dating back prior to 2015. That is nine years or more ago. The Plan was prepared using housing number projections that were universally seen as illogical given where Purbeck is and its attraction to those migrating from elsewhere in UK driving up prices and to the exclusion of local people

It would be wiser to stick with the currently adopted Purbeck Local Plan until the new Dorset Local Plan has been prepared.

While the extant Purbeck Local Plan has less weight than it did, the reality is that development in Purbeck is constrained by both Green Belt, Natural Landscapes and Environmental regulations. There will not be a free for all by developers on the parcels of land not constrained. They will await what the new Labour Government actually delivers. So should Dorset Council before preparing its Local Plan for the whole of Dorset, utilising new evidence collected and realistic housing projections.

Incorporating old evidence and consultation results for Purbeck while using new evidence for the rest of the County is both illogical and potentially unfair and distorting.