

The 1987 Dual Use Agreement established formal sharing by public and the school of Wimborne Swimming Pool and new facilities on the QE site. Government approval of the arrangement secured a significant annual grant.

The Agreement provided that shared leisure centre costs be borne 60% by the public and 40% the school. However, determination of which costs were shared was agreed separately between the Treasurers of the local district council (for public) and Dorset County Council (for school). For some reason, these were defined very narrowly, so by 2013/14 the public bore 90% of total operational charges.

Superb negotiating by Dorset County Council Treasurer! But fast forward to 2021. Initio Learning Trust has become responsible for school access, while Dorset Council has switched roles inheriting the public access responsibilities of the District Council, including the lion's share of operational charges!

The interim had seen huge redundancies halving the leisure centre wage bill, and adoption of an austerity-grade maintenance regime. But these could never compensate for the uneconomic position gifted to the school and drove down revenue.

Did this contribute to rumoured disharmony, given the Trust was stumping up less than the amount of the grant?

Council resentment would be understandable if uninformed. However, any dispute lay with the Trust, not the community of Wimborne for whose leisure facility it had become responsible. Nevertheless, it pursued an unseemly divorce, entirely neglecting its residents.

Our group has requested that both yourselves and the Trust engage with the users. We have written to you, Council leader, urging such dialogue.

No consultation occurred, instead we've had to proceed on a trickle of whispers and rumours.

You organised the Big Conversation in Wimborne Square on August 16. It would have been enormous with voices from some of the 7,000. But you weren't there.

We now come to Dorchester to hear or make representations about local issues and today, I have had to travel to Weymouth, to address you in person, about Wimborne.

Local councillors in the group you lead supported our campaign and with our new MP joined the 7,000 in signing our petition.

Dorset Council and Initio Learning Trust are two institutions charged with the stewardship of facilities that you should administer for public benefit. This is a mess created by the Council and it is past time you sorted it.