

Submissions to Yiewsley swimming pool petition hearing

21st June 2017 LB of Hillingdon 7pm Committee Room 3

My name is Francesca Stephens and I am the lead petitioner for the Yiewsley swimming pool petition.

The essence of what we say today is as follows:

1. We need a proper consultation, not what has happened so far.
2. The Council may be acting contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
3. We need proper financial costings to be done for a swimming pool and whatever else local residents' decide, after consultation, should be on the site. It is residents' money that is being spent in council tax, not councillors' own personal pot of gold.

1. Lack of proper consultation

People are fed up with not being listened to by the London Borough of Hillingdon. The council feels increasingly autocratic.

Cllr Ian Edwards said at Yiewsley and West Drayton Town Centre Action Group that the only consultation with residents that would be done about the swimming pool site would be through the planning process or through the ballot box when the local elections take place in 2018.

That is not genuine consultation.

We have collected paper petition signatures – 761 were collected.

I also started a change.org petition on the www.yiewsley.org website as people were saying 'why can't we have an electronic petition?' As at 2pm today, 567 signatures were on the electronic petition. Did the council officers read that petition? Did councillors read the comments of people who were signing the petition?

The online petition, in the same way as the paper petition, asked for a new pool to be built on the Yiewsley swimming pool site. And it also asked for a consultation with residents, using Hillingdon People magazine, to ask people what else they wanted on the site. It included a request that residents be consulted about whether to pay more in council tax to help pay for a new swimming pool in Yiewsley.

The Council officer's report is wholly inadequate and it is not a good basis for a decision to be made by councillors in Cabinet. There is no evidence in the officers' report of Yiewsley, West Drayton and Uxbridge South residents being consulted about the future of the swimming pool site via Hillingdon People magazine at all. This would be an inexpensive way of consulting with residents.

Hillingdon People magazine is sent to all households and the relevant department could pay for a page of information for residents about Yiewsley swimming pool site to be included and ask them to send in their views, including whether they want a new swimming pool on the site. This hasn't been done.

The future of the Yiewsley swimming pool site formed part of the Conservatives' manifesto pledges for Yiewsley. It was going to be a health centre. But the NHS and the council couldn't agree about what to do.

It is important to realise that this is different from other situations. A specific electoral pledge has been broken by councillors so residents are entitled to have a proper consultation take place. Hillingdon People is the cheapest method of consulting the public about what is a broken pledge to the electorate and what we want instead at the Yiewsley swimming pool site. 'Putting our residents first' is the slogan of both the Council and the Conservative Party. If residents are genuinely important to councillors, then we need to be consulted properly and fairly.

2. The council officer's report does not address the legal issues adequately or at all.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty:

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The council must show that its actions are a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Elderly people and disabled people of Yiewsley and West Drayton have the most difficulty in getting to the other swimming pools. They are more disadvantaged than the 'average' resident. What evidence is there that their needs have been properly assessed by the council?

Children are also likely to be a protected group under the Act. The council may be in breach of its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.

A new pool at the Yiewsley site would have the benefit of being close to residents.

What evidence has the council got to show that leisure facilities other than a swimming pool at the Yiewsley swimming pool site are preferred by local residents?

The budget for public health has been transferred from the NHS to the London Borough of Hillingdon. People need to be persuaded to keep fit. Hillingdon is the fattest borough in London according to Public Health England. People lack motivation when it comes to having to spend at least 90 minutes return journey on the bus trying to get to a swimming pool.

Did any of the council officers who wrote the report saying it takes 30-40 minutes to get to the other pools try the journey in practice? They also understate the distance to the pools. Uxbridge Pool is 3.1 miles away, Botwell Green is 3.3 miles away, William Byrd is 4.4 miles away according to Google directions.

What evidence is there of the Council consulting with local schools about a new pool in Yiewsley?

Would local schools prefer their pupils to walk to swim at a new pool at the Yiewsley swimming pool site? Or do they want to get coaches, cause additional pollution in an already polluted area and drive to the other pools in the borough? There would be cost savings for schools if their pupils could walk to the pool. Has the swimming ability of local children reduced since 2010 when the Yiewsley pool closed?

The council has failed to consult properly and may be in breach of the law.

Why build facilities for people in Uxbridge all the time?

The council is building a new theatre in Uxbridge, despite there being one in Hayes. If residents are supposed to get on the bus to go swimming, why aren't

residents from the north of the borough expected to get on the bus to go to Hayes to go to the theatre?

The council clearly considers there is a need for a new theatre in Uxbridge. Over 760 residents think there is a need for a new swimming pool in Yiewsley.

3. We need proper financial costings to be calculated by council officers for a new swimming pool in Yiewsley on the site of the former swimming pool.

Council officers have failed to include the most basic information in their report for tonight's petition hearing. It is as if council officers and Councillors are just going through the motions. Hear the petition, pat petitioners on the head and then just get on and do what councillors want to do anyway, without really listening.

Councillors after tonight's hearing could ask for proper, better researched reports from council officers, ones that provide more facts to enable people to make better quality decisions.

The capital cost of building a new swimming pool and projected revenue from running it would be included in a proper report.

Whilst we were collecting signatures, some people said they were willing to be on a board similar to the one running the William Byrd pool, if a new pool was built in Yiewsley.

In conclusion

- a) The council officer's report is inadequate for councillors to base their decision on. Proper research needs to be undertaken, using Hillingdon People magazine, to assess what local residents really want from the Yiewsley swimming pool site.**
- b) Costings need to be calculated for a new swimming pool on the Yiewsley swimming pool site and included in a new council officer's report.**
- c) Hillingdon Council is becoming increasingly remote from local residents.**

Francesca Stephens

21 June 2017