

Mark Parkinson
Deputy Chief Executive
Exeter City Council,
Civic Centre,
Paris Street,
Exeter, EX1 1JN

12 April 2015

Dear Mr Parkinson

Re: Approval of the Swimming Pool Development

Following the City Council's Executive Committee's decision to proceed with this proposal, and to approve funding of £19.4m, I exchanged emails with you trying to ascertain details of the proposal which were heard in Part 2 of the meeting - excluding members of the public and press. Since then there has been a lot of disquiet aired in the Express & Echo from members of the public and politicians about the proposed swimming pool.

The executive committee of the Society discussed the proposed pool recently, and whilst we have differing views about the location of the pool, we are all concerned about the value for money of the project, and wish to understand more about the business plan that supports it. You have previously advised me that the committee report set out the need and financial ramifications of building a new leisure complex, and if this is the case it is disappointing that this is not being shared with ratepayers who may have the burden of meeting the cost of the pool in future years. And in advising that information could not be released you ended your email reply by saying *'I understand that the above is less than helpful in providing real clarity to the issues you've raised. However, I am restricted by the paper being a Part 2 paper and therefore am unable to provide any real additional clarity.'* Can you tell me if the decision to discuss this paper in part 2 of the meeting was made by officers or councillors?

I would also be grateful for a clear statement from the council about what in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended in 2006) justified the exclusion of the swimming pool papers from publication. Can you provide me with extracts from the Act, or reference to the appropriate paragraphs?

This is the largest capital commitment the Council is making in many decades and yet it has been taken behind closed doors, which is very disappointing. Government wishes public decision making to be open and transparent but this does not appear to be the case here. Because of the growing public interest in the pool I believe city council officers and councillors should reverse the decision to keep the committee paper and the business case confidential. Is there any procedural reason why this cannot be done? If the council has a good case for building the pool why not share it, even if it means publishing an edited version with commercially sensitive matters redacted or removed?

I note from the minutes of Council's Executive meeting that it established a Leisure Complex Programme Board to oversee the Leisure Centre development. However, I note that here are no details of meetings on the Council's website. Have they met since December 2014?

Yours sincerely



Keith Lewis
Chairman
Exeter Civic Society

Cc Cllr. Peter Edwards, Cllr Rosie Denham