

FULL COUNCIL – 19 OCTOBER 2016

Written question from Councillor John Medland to Councillor Shirley Smart, Executive Member for Public Transport, Tourism, Recreation and Heritage

- (i) Is the member aware that the recent press release announcing the investment of £880,000 in the Medina Leisure Centre has caused widespread anger among people in the West Wight who face the prospect of the closure of the West Wight Sports Centre as it struggles to cope with the withdrawal of all IW Council financial support.
- (ii) Does the member appreciate the extraordinary ways that the West Wight Sports and Community Centre has expanded its range of activities to provide innovative youth, public health, social and IW Council information services that enormously assist our wider efforts in combating ill health, social isolation and mental illness?
- (iii) Does she understand the opinion in the West Wight that historically we have had to pay twice over for our sports facilities, through Council tax far facilities in other parts of the Island and through voluntary effort, grant seeking and local precept for our own sports and community centre?
- (iv) Does the member understand the view that the preferential treatment the IW Council gives to its two sports centres in order to make them income generating assets is prejudicial to the success and survival of all other sports facilities who cannot compete with public subsidy on this scale?
- (v) Does the member agree with me that both for the sake of equity to all members of the Island's population and economic justice to all providers of sporting services in a free market that it would be better if both the Heights and Medina leisure centres were devolved from direct Council ownership to independent status so that all sports facilities on the Island can operate on the same level playing field? If not would she agree that for the sake of equity that West Wight Sports and Community Centre should equally benefit from this Council's future capital investment programme?

Response

- (i) The investment for Medina was an invest to save bid, supported by a detailed business case that demonstrated the value of the investment through the creation of new income streams. Similarly, in 2013, West Wight received a grant of £100,000 with no requirement to return the sums to the council. The Council has already confirmed that it would be happy to look at an invest to save bid for the West Wight Sports Centre.
- (ii) Yes it is supportive of all of the activities of Island Leisure Centres.
- (iii) All Island Leisure Facilities make a considerable commitment paying rates including the Council operated facilities. All are supported by volunteers and by 2018 no IWC owned and operated site will receive an operational subsidy from the Council.

- (iv) The investment is an invest to save bid and as a result is not a public subsidy. As all IWC owned and managed Leisure Facilities will no longer receive a subsidy by 2018 then this is not the case.
- (v) The Council operated Leisure centres have been operated as private concerns in the past and a trust model was also investigated and rejected. The Medina facility is also an integral part of the school estate and essential to providing the pupils curricular activities and such a model may not be appropriate for this facility. The school sports facilities at Ryde and Sandown no longer receive a subsidy from IWC as is the case for West Wight. The Council can, and I am sure will, look at new ways of operating the sites, however as already stated none of the IWC currently owned and managed will receive subsidy by 2018.