

Statement: PS11.19

Cabinet – 8 February 2022

Re: Agenda item 11 - Leisure Facilities Investment and Procurement

Statement submitted by: Geoff Callard

I wish to make the following statement to the cabinet meeting taking place on 8th February at 4pm. It is regarding the council's Leisure Investment & Procurement Strategy (Agenda Item 11), and Kingsdown Sports centre in particular.

I object to the council's intention to stop operating Kingsdown Sports Centre (page 90). The intention seems to be to deprive Kingsdown and Cotham and the surrounding areas including Montpelier, St Pauls, Redland and Clifton of a highly valued public community sports facility. The council seems to assume that this area does not merit public support because of the relatively high income of some of the residents of this area. This smacks of discrimination. Whilst it is true that there are more relatively high income residents in this area than some other parts of Bristol, it is also true that there are a large number of local residents who are not well off, including some pensioners, single parent families and many school and university students, who are both unable to afford the prices of private gyms and unable to travel further distances to access facilities further away from their community.

The aim of the mayor and the cabinet seems to be to centralise sports and leisure facilities in larger sports centres such as Easton. In this age of climate change, it flies in the face of the council's (and government) stated policy to reduce carbon emissions. Bristol City Council was the very first in the whole country (and probably the whole world) to declare a climate emergency. Policies such as this leisure policy of centralising resources and cutting local community services in very local communities of Bristol such as Kingsdown and Cotham means more people making longer journeys by car or bus, adding to the emissions which contribute to climate change and also to the poor air quality of Bristol. That is assuming of course, that people are able to do this anyway. There are many local pensioners in Kingsdown and Cotham who are unable to move far from their homes, but need to get out of their homes, and at least get a bit of exercise for their general health and wellbeing. Kingsdown Sports Centre affords them that possibility, and the Centre is valued highly by many of them. To deny them this is quite frankly, wrong and against all reasonable policy.

Please keep Kingsdown Sports Centre open.