

Dear Julia,

At the Arts Culture Leisure and Youth Affairs SPC meeting on 23rd September 2009 the issue of the pools was first raised in a document, which after requests for clarification as to its status, was described as a 'discussion document'. It noted that a report from 25th August 1999 sets out options in relation to the development the existing network of swimming pools including Coolock, Crumlin, Sean McDermott St, Ballymun, Ballyfermot, Finglas and Rathmines.

The three options were:

1. To close each of the pools
2. To undertake minimum maintenance to keep the pools functioning
3. To provide an appropriate number of multi purpose area sports/leisure centres with the pools as focus - some pools to be supplemented with additional facilities, and if not appropriate for redevelopment, an optimum usage for each location to be determined - if closure the only option in the case of some of the pools, then alternative arrangements put in place.

Ten years later we are presented with a report that suggests one option - closing the first three pools in the list above. We are advised that the expenditure of these pools is €1.3million with income of €197, 000. We are also told that opening Rathmines Leisure Centre has a net estimated expenditure of €1.6 million.

Ten years ago was the time for action to be taken in relation to the three options set out above, before stock and facilities deteriorated further, and before a fait accompli of closing three pools was presented. There has been no community lead in period suggesting one pool should be closed but users would be diverted to another. Sean McDermott street pool is used mostly by children and young people in an area of severe disadvantage. Those who work with these children, who have very little, see the benefits of the children derive from having a local pool. They want it kept open and there is correspondence and petitions to this effect from residents, local teachers, and the children themselves. A question was put to Dublin City Council asking for marketing strategies to encourage more use of the pools. The response was that there is none. Alternative proposals were requested to see if it might be possible to save the pools. None were received. Questions remain outstanding in relation to practical options such as re-negotiation of the €85,000 long term lease at Coolock. No response was received. The ten minute walk that we are told it takes from Sean McDermott St to Marciewicz pool is disputed by local teachers, who would also be faced with trying to bring large numbers of small children some distance across busy roads and the quays.

The 1999 report notes that closing each of the pools would have an immediate benefit for revenue expenditure, but as these facilities are generally located in socially disadvantaged areas, the negative social impact of such closures would outweigh an assessment based on financial criteria only. That was option one of the original report. While books need to be balanced, the local authority is obviously not about financial benefit alone, we cannot support closure of this facility, benefitting disadvantaged children, in the year that Dublin becomes European Capital of Sport.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. Claire O' Regan  
Cllr. Aodhan O' Riordain