

Jane Alexander

I am not here to talk about Temple Cowley Pools or Blackbird Leys Pool for a change but about all of you. I am here to talk about Oxford City Council. I have been asked in the past not to mention council officers by name as they are not able to reply during this meeting so I will restrict myself to talking about the process I have learnt about over the past couple of years since trying to express public views to the council.

I would ask that you have the respect to listen to me while I make this address. Having made several addresses before and witnessed others making addresses I am aware that many councillors see public addresses as a time to check their mobiles, write text messages, read through papers or even chat to other councillors. I consider this to be rude and disrespectful of the public who you are supposed to represent and who's interests you are supposed to be working for.

I shouldn't really be surprised now by the rudeness of some councillors though, as I have seen first hand and on many occasions, how much some councillors and some council officers seem to hate the public to express their own opinions. We the public have a right to be heard and listened to by you our 'representatives'.

The constitution used to state that the first duty of a Councillor was to their constituents. Not long after I pointed this out to my councillor Bob Timbs early in 2010, the Constitution was changed to remove that line. Some of you may not be aware, the council has now changed the Oxford's Constitution at least three times since our Save TCP campaign started in earnest. Did you know that? The Constitution which should be there to serve the public, now serves to protect the council from the public.

I have witnessed members of the Labour councillors making rude remarks about members of the public during Full Council meetings. I have witnessed the same Labour councillors making rude remarks about other councillors from other parties. This is so childish and pathetic. All councillors have the right to speak at these meetings and so there should never be any need to call out abuse and try to intimidate and put down others. The public, on the other hand, are given no right of reply to our questions and addresses when not dealt with adequately or when councillors give misleading responses or outright 'untruths' to what we say, knowing full well what they are doing.

Refusing to read documents and know the truth, is no excuse for telling lies. Then, there are the physical assaults which some members of the public have been subjected to, just for asking a councillor to tell the truth for example when Bob Timbs said 'The new pool (that was proposed for Blackbird Leys) would be bigger than the present Temple Cowley Pools'.

Anyone who had read the council documents would know that was not true and all of the councillors should have known that by November 2010 especially Cowley councillors, Bob Timbs and Bryan Keen.

Mary Clarkson apologised for her error after she read the documents following the same error, when she too stated that the new pool would be bigger at Full Council in 2011. John Tanner did not admit his error made at the same Full Council, he didn't even bother to reply.

A member of the public should not be in the position of having to correct a councillor's incorrect statements. If any councillor is not able to read and understand documents for themselves then others should make them aware of the facts in full in a way that they can understand. Any councillor with responsibility for a particular area should be capable of doing the job.

At the Cowley area meeting in November 2010, I asked Bob Timbs to correct what he was saying, that the proposed pool would not be bigger. Bryan Keen, who also did not seem to know the truth, decided to ignore the words of one of the council officers who suggested a suspension of the meeting to deal with my demanding truth from Bob Timbs.