

---

## SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF EAST OXFORD

**Amanda Perry (RMN)**

**10/3/2012**

I'm making this address today because I am disappointed at the Labour Council's proposal to close Temple Cowley Pool and Leisure Centre and Blackbird Leys Pool, and equally outraged at how the Council appears to be deliberately running down a much used facility, that is at the heart of so many communities.

I was brought up in Cowley using Temple Cowley Pool and leisure centre, and now that I am living in Blackbird Leys, I use both Blackbird Leys and Temple Cowley leisure centres.

I would note that I know absolutely no-one from either area that has been approached by the Council in relation to consultation on the Council's proposition to close Temple Cowley Leisure Centre. Also, those people I have spoken to, that use either or both centres', have not been consulted regarding the Council's propositions. I now question in relation to this, how truly democratic the Labour Council in Oxford City are?

In addition to being a local woman that uses both facilities, I am also a registered psychiatric nurse working at the Warneford Hospital.

In relation to my clients and the local communities, I am horrified at the proposed closure due to a number of reasons, but mainly what it will mean for many people who are already disadvantaged in terms of access to local facilities:

Temple Cowley is at a Hub – it is on many very good transport routes allowing those from Oxford City, Cowley Road, Cowley, Temple Cowley, Rose Hill, Iffley, Wood farm and Littlemore to access its facilities. Despite the Council's claims, in practice Blackbird Leys is not as accessible as Temple Cowley, and certainly not from all of these communities. Equally, despite an obvious lack of maintenance and what appears to be an active run down by the Council, Temple Cowley Leisure Centre remains an excellent facility.

Everyone is being stretched financially at the moment, but more so those who are already disadvantaged and on low incomes. How will those people affected by the closure of Temple Cowley Pools be able to afford to get to Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre?

Equally, many of the people I work with suffer with mood, anxiety or psychotic disorders. These people already struggle to access services close to them, but if these facilities are closed it could have a huge impact on their ability to socialise and to get exercise – which we know can positively impact on their mental health, which will equally impact on their ability to survive in the community, increasing a need for involvement from mental health services which are already greatly stretched.

The Labour Councillor on a recent radio show noted that Oxford had over and above the number of pools required for a City however, I am aware that he was including private leisure facilities in these numbers, which clearly cannot be accessed by the disadvantaged on low incomes.

Alongside this, building a new facility (which I gather will offer less not more, than what is currently/possibly available for example no diving pool, no larger pool and so on) will decrease one

**Concerns regarding the proposal to close Temple Cowley Pool and Leisure Centre  
and Blackbird Leys Pool**

## SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF EAST OXFORD

of the only large green areas in Blackbird Leys, a community recognised as having moderate to severe deprivation. As we are equally aware having green areas to walk and spend time in is beneficial to mental health, and to decrease this availability will have a knock on effect on the health of some individuals.

I was led to believe by all political parties that they wanted individuals to take personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing and therefore to rely less on the state, I do not believe that the current plans bear this in mind.

As an aside, I gather that the Council has not approached any refurbishment specialists to look at the refurbishing costs for Temple Cowley and the current Blackbird Leys pool, choosing instead to use consultants without this expertise. This certainly makes no sense to me and I feel indicates poor practice, with a possible and very real consequence of a waste of tax payers' money. When I look at the impact of the cuts on my clients and others who are already disadvantaged, I am saddened that the Council would choose to follow through with these plans. If any money could be saved from refurbishing the already well utilised and loved facilities then surely this money could be used to help more disadvantaged groups in the local area?

Lastly, I am very concerned, given the recent approval given to Oxford Brookes to build flats at the St Clements car park, that if Oxford Brookes is sold the Temple Cowley site, this will also have direct effect on Temple Cowley Library... I must say I am concerned at who is truly benefitting from these propositions. If the closure of Temple Cowley Leisure Centre goes ahead, then I can inform you that many constituents like me, will feel unable to trust a Labour Council again. This is still a very real and live issue for the communities in East Oxford, and across Oxford as a whole.

So in conclusion, as the building costs of the proposed new pool escalate, I ask the Labour Council to reconsider what it is doing, and keep Temple Cowley open to serve the many communities who both want and need it.