

Nottingham

Save our leisure centre!

AROUND 200 people joined a lively march in Nottingham to try to dissuade the council from closing their beloved 150 year old Victoria Leisure Centre, which includes a swimming pool, sauna, Turkish baths, gym and Jewish baths.

Yvonne Powles

Nottingham Socialist Party

It is the only indoor facility of its kind in a deprived area, much troubled by drug crime. People are terrified that children will become involved in drug and alcohol abuse to relieve their energies and boredom, which could otherwise be engaged in sport activities.

Council corporate director Michael Williams braved the crowd saying: "It will cost £10 million to refurbish this centre." No evidence of this 'fact' exists. It seems the council plucked a figure from the air.

He felt recent money spent on nearby facilities was adequate provision and that local people should go there. However, one woman told Mr Williams that teens had been warned off from entering other areas to use facilities, by local youths there.

Mr Williams' claim that arrangements for schoolchildren to attend other pools for lessons were all in hand was completely contradicted by a local head teacher in the audience.

Local tenants and residents activist Mat Anderson spoke of the council's willingness to spend £16,000 on a customer contact centre, £250,000 on investigating their own employees and £300,000 on making sure the council delivers on what they say!

He said people in St. Anns, Sneinton and surrounding areas are likely to die 13 years earlier than their counterparts in more affluent areas of the city, of heart attack, cancer and obesity. In the current climate of "Fit not Fat" why is the council not investing in local amenities? Don't we need more leisure centres, not fewer?

The centre is an important part of this community and convenient, particularly for those needing wheelchair access. Schools use the swimming pool, and an inexpensive summer-long activity programme keeps young people off the streets.

It is felt the council has deliberately not done repairs on the building over many years, instead preferring to get rid of the old place and sell it off for



Defend Victoria Leisure Centre

redevelopment, which will not benefit the families living there.

"You are already counting the money you have saved before the closure has even been agreed," said Mat. Jean Thorpe of the Socialist Par-

ty agreed: "In an unacceptably short consultation period, you hoped to railroad this closure through before local people could oppose it. However a magnificent campaign of opposition has been built."

Greenwich workers fight attacks

MEMBERS OF the Unison union in Greenwich have been lobbying councillors in protest at proposals to privatise and cut council services. The council plans include privatising cleaning and catering services, job cuts and transferring staff to "trusts".

Onay Kasab

Greenwich Unison, personal capacity

The campaign has already scored an early victory. Before the council meeting on 27 February, managers visited libraries at Coldharbour and Abbey Wood and the mobile service staff and told them these services would close and that there would be compulsory redundancies.

Within hours, Greenwich Unison launched a campaign. The council took fright very quickly. This was based on our past campaign victories. The branch had already prevented cuts to the mobile service the previous year as well as previously preventing the closure of education services such