

# FOCUS on Swalwell

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## Labour Council threatens Dunston Leisure Centre with closure

**Gateshead Council's all-Labour Cabinet have agreed to consult residents about the impact of the closure of Dunston Pool and Gateshead Leisure Centre.**

In 2015 the Council agreed to aim to make the leisure services across the whole of Gateshead self-financing rather than reliant partly on a subsidy funded by council tax payers. The aim was to reach this by 2020 but this was never achieved. If the Council were to retain the leisure services at their current level and under current trends, Gateshead Council will be left with a bill of £44 million over the next ten years.

Within that amount, £13.3 million is needed for essential maintenance and major repairs to buildings, especially the two being considered for closure.

Furthermore, the buildings and their boilers are old and inefficient. The recent rises in energy costs have made a bad situation worse.

The Council proposes to close Dunston Pool and Gateshead Leisure Centre to get more immediate savings though if these cannot be fully achieved, Birtley Sports Hall could close as well. The Council is planning to find a private sector operator to take over the management of the remaining leisure facilities.

Lib Dem Councillors in Gateshead have been warning for over a decade that the Council needed to take some tough decisions to phase out the subsidy for leisure services. Labour have failed to do this, and to make the service sustainable with its own source of income to invest in the service. The result now, after years of Labour mismanagement, is that important local facilities are now threatened with closure.

**Cllr Chris Ord** said, "Many Swalwell residents learnt to swim at Dunston Pool and it has been a familiar facility for six decades. Labour have had years to sort out the problems with under-investment and income but they failed to do so, blaming everyone but themselves for the mess."



### Meanwhile, Newcastle plans to open a new leisure centre



The old West Denton Leisure Centre which will be demolished and replaced by a new building.

While incompetent Labour are planning to close leisure facilities in Gateshead, Labour run Newcastle are planning to open a new, state-of-the-art leisure centre in West Denton, paid for by a £20 million "levelling up" grant from the government.

Lib Dem Leader of the Opposition in Gateshead, **Cllr Jonathan Wallace**, challenged Labour councillors at Cabinet over this. He was informed that each council can make only one application to the "Levelling Up Fund" and Gateshead had opted instead for funding for the new cultural and performance facilities on Gateshead Quays.

"We were quite stunned when we were told this," said Jonathan. "These new facilities on the Gateshead Quays will contain hotels, concert halls, conference centres and a new multi-storey car park. Labour have opted to put money into this huge cultural facility rather than into local leisure services.

The new Gateshead Quays car park will be near to the infamous Quarryfield car park which cost £700,000 of council tax payers' cash to build (initially without planning permission!) The Council have agreed to rip up this car park in the near future.

## Sign our petition

[www.gatesheadlibdems.org.uk/savedunstonleisure](http://www.gatesheadlibdems.org.uk/savedunstonleisure)

### Petition: Save Dunston Leisure Centre & Pool

I / We call on Gateshead Council to keep Dunston Leisure Centre and Pool open.

Name:

Address:

Email:

Tel:

Can we update you about the progress of this petition? Yes  No

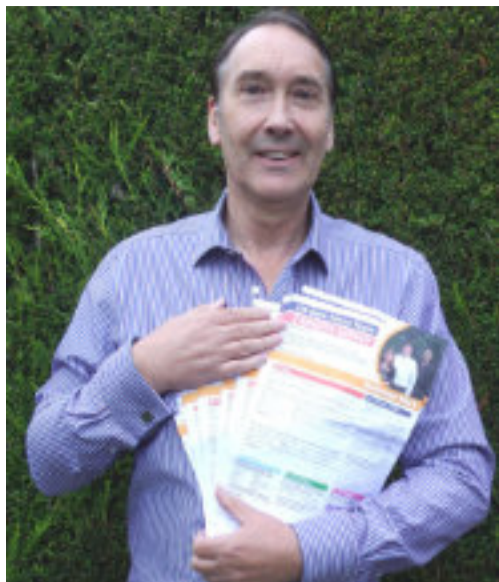
Return FREE to: FREEPOST, Gateshead Lib Dems, Gateshead, NE9 5XT

We will include your name, email address, phone number, address and signature when submitting and sharing the petition with Gateshead Council. The Liberal Democrats will use your contact details to send you information on the topics you have requested. Any data we gather will be used in accordance with our privacy policy at [libdems.org.uk/privacy](http://libdems.org.uk/privacy). To exercise your legal data rights, email: [data.protection@libdems.org.uk](mailto:data.protection@libdems.org.uk).

**Liberal Democrats Focus Team - working for you, all year round**

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## Survey Results



Last year we carried out a survey - collecting the views of residents, so that we can continue to focus on the things that matter to you!

We had a huge response to our survey and it has taken us time to go through the forms.

We are continuing to work on the responses and have further updates for you below.

### Trees

During our survey, we asked residents to suggest places where trees could be planted.

**Peter Craig** said "We have had dozens of suggestions and these have now all been passed to the Climate Change team who will incorporate these into the Council's Climate Emergency Plan."



### Charging points for electric cars

As we move towards having more electric vehicles, this is becoming more of an issue for residents as charging points are often not working.

The service has been arranged via the North East Combined Authority and there have been some issues, but we are pushing the Council for a swift resolution.



## Remembrance Day



There was an excellent turn out at the Remembrance Day service at the cenotaph in Swalwell on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November.

The Remembrance service took place in Holy Trinity Church, Swalwell, followed by wreath-laying at the War Memorial.

35 wreaths were laid by local residents, community organisations and businesses, including one laid by **Cllr. Sonya Hawkins** on behalf of the residents of Swalwell.

A video was taken of the wreath-laying : <https://youtu.be/HWKakRhaZ7o>

KINGSWAY CABS have very kindly donated £250.00 to Swalwell Community Group towards the cost of this year's Christmas Tree, which has now been installed.

**Chris Ord** said "This is greatly appreciated by the group's volunteers and is a very big help towards reaching the funds required for the Christmas."



## Banktop inquiry complete - at last



We now have the results of the public inquiry for the house on Swalwell Bank which was to resolve a long running planning dispute.

Local residents together with ward councillor, **Peter Craig**

all gave evidence at the enquiry, which lasted three days.

The decision of the Inspectorate will require alterations to the scheme that was originally approved:

- Remove the pitched roof and replace it with a new flat roof,
- Alter 2 windows with obscure glazing and remove another,
- Implement a Tree Planting and Hedge Planting scheme.

The work must be completed within 104 weeks of the Order being granted.

## Hospital bus service saved



Following a meeting with Councillors in Gateshead, Nexus have agreed to keep the 69 bus service for the next three years.

Plans by Go North East to reduce bus services had sparked concern that many communities would be without a working bus service.

"This is welcome news," said **Chris Ord** "We had raised concerns that we would lose a direct link to the QE Hospital, and also that some people would lose access to Whickham shops, so we are pleased that the service has been saved for now."

## Warm spaces

We are very conscious that there is a cost of living crisis at the moment and people have been very worried about how they can continue to heat their homes this winter.



A number of local organisations, including Swalwell Community Centre have declared themselves as "warm places" where people can go to stay warm and enjoy a little company and some hot refreshments. **Sonya Hawkins** advised "The Council is creating a network of warm spaces and you can find other places where this is happening by referring to the directory on the link below."

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/21258/Warm-Spaces-directory>



### Focus Team

Write to the team or call them:



- Peter, Sonya & Chris are always available to help you if you need them.

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