

THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

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COUNTDOWN TO NEW SWIMMING POOL

The countdown to the new swimming pool and fitness centre has well and truly started. The building contract is bang on target for completion and hand over to the City Council on the 28th November representing an immensely successful outcome for the Harborne Society's long and sustained campaign which started in May 2002.

The worst winter for a great many years with very heavy snow falls and sub-zero temperatures caused major problems ~ quite literally freezing up the two hydraulic cranes ~ yet it failed to knock the project off schedule for too long and just about everything has gone like clockwork. Harborne owes a great debt of thanks to Waites Construction and especially to their Project Manager, David Squires, for the way the contract has been managed with such minimal disruption to the traffic in Lordswood Road and for the great consideration shown to their immediate neighbours. Following demolition of the old building over 98% of the rubble, timber and metal was recycled with all the old brickwork crushed on site and reused as hard core. Solar heating is to be used to contribute towards heating the water for the pools and 'grey' [waste] water from the site is to be reused in the toilets. Water displaced from the pools will be cleaned and recycled. The 'living' roof has already been installed with sedum which retains water and attracts wildlife, bees and butterflies. Tree planting will take place later in the year principally on the adjoining land by the bus stops which will also be tidied up. The successful public open day on 20th May attracted much interest from residents including organised parties of children from local schools. School children were



also invited to take part in a picture competition based on fitness, swimming or the new centre.

The Council intends to call the new building the 'Harborne Leisure Centre' which seems misleading given that it won't have squash courts nor a sports hall for badminton, basketball, five-a-side football, tennis, netball, volleyball etc. Neither will the pool have slides or chutes or a wave machine. We never sought these things given the restricted site and from the outset campaigned only for a new pool and fitness centre which is exactly what we have got. We asked the Ward Committee to reconsider the name and they agreed to retain the existing name 'Harborne Pool and Fitness Centre'.

The Society had one major misgiving, namely responsibility for the future management and operation of the new facility. Despite the Council having 160 years' experience of operating public swimming pools the Council is to appoint a private sector operator who in turn will establish a non-profit making trust to oversee the management and operation of the facility. The operator is to be chosen after a tendering process due to end

in early August. The very detailed tender specification will ensure that the Council's policies and operational requirements are secured fully and the Society is now satisfied on this point. Following evaluation of the tender submissions the operator will be appointed in October and consequently details of the trust will not be known until later. The transfer to the private operator of the former Harborne pool staff and especially on what terms and conditions has also been a concern to the Society. We have been reassured by the knowledge that employees will transfer on terms and conditions which are in no way to their detriment. Additional staff will have to be recruited as the new larger facility will need significantly more than previously.

Allowing for a period for the recruitment, familiarisation and training of staff with the new building following the handover we are looking forward with ever growing pride and anticipation to the official opening of the new facility very early in January next year and to the many years of pleasure it will give to us and future generations of Harbornites Phil Stokes

