

**COUNCILLOR RON WHITTAKER**

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Dear Mr. Holmes,

**PLANNING APPLICATION - KING'S PARK : 7-2010-3625-AC**

I am writing a detailed letter with some past history regarding the present outline planning application which is to be presented to a future Planning Board.

As Vice Chairman of the Board, I have already made my decision that when such an application comes before Members, I will take no part in discussions and will withdraw from the Committee Room for that item alone; this accords with the law and the Councillors' Code of Conduct. In making this decision I have taken into account that over the past 20 years, since the closure of the Westover Road Ice Rink, I have spent considerable time in campaigning for a return of ice skating facilities in the town/Borough and have made reference to King's Park. I therefore feel it would be improper for me to remain in the meeting. However, this does now allow me to speak on this matter and include the Press.

In my representation I have noticed a few comments in the local media about King's Park and am aware that a Member made a point regarding the present financial position facing Bournemouth Council and considered it not the time to proceed with this Ice Rink and that the project should be put on hold. The question has to be asked - 'on hold' for how long? It has taken the Council nearly 20 years to bring forward an outline application to which the private sector, developer and operator (not the Council by way of a subsidy) will develop the new facility with other leisure facilities to help pay for itself. I really do not think anyone can accuse the Council of rushing forward for the long term dream held by so many for a permanent ice facility within the Borough!

In January 2006, I put forward the following motion, seconded by former Councillor, Chris Mayne:

"Urgent consideration be given to secure the establishment of permanent ice skating facilities within this Borough." The vote was carried 46 in favour, 3 against. This then led me on over the next two years with questions regarding progress.

In September 2006, discussions were held with the Charity Commission concerning the potential use of land at King's Park.

In 2007 there was a change in administration. In September 2007 I questioned the postponement of King's Park and was informed there was a window of opportunity to work with the private sector and also options in the context of the Town Centre Strategic Vision to be looked at. I was advised 'nothing had been ruled in and nothing ruled out'. I gathered that Officers were meeting with a developer on 27 September 2007 to look at the Winter Gardens site.

Again, a question on 23 October 2007 regarding a meeting to look at alternative town centre sites. I was advised the meeting went well and the developer agreed to consider options within the timescale of the Town Centre Master Vision. King's Park remained an option that could be revisited and, as Members know, in December 2008 the Cabinet considered a very detailed report on the Ice Stadium. Public opinion survey results also went to the Special Bournemouth and Poole Economic Overview Panel on 11 December 2008. The decision was that the selection of King's Park as its preferred site for a permanent Ice Stadium be approved and that a Capital Gateway Board application for funding to progress the work necessary to support an outline planning application for the stadium, including an impact assessment, environmental impact, etc., be approved.

It is interesting to note that at the Cabinet meeting held on 17 December 2008, even after all the public consultations had taken place, there was no objection or deputation put forward, except one local resident who was in support of the project. The minutes show:

"Request that the proposals for an Ice Stadium in King's Park be progressed as soon as possible"; the same situation occurred at the 11<sup>th</sup> Overview Panel - no public questions, deputations or petitions.

Mr. M. Holmes,  
Director,  
Planning and Transport Services.

**BY HAND**

Continued/...

Then on to Council 20 January 2009 - again, no objections to the then recommendation from Cabinet.

In September 2009 I put forward a further question requesting an update on progress since the last Council meeting and yes, as agreed by Council in January 2009, an outline application, development brief and expressions of interest were to be invited from potential developers and operators. It was then hoped that all this could be achieved by December 2009.

So here we are, nearly 20 years since the ice rink in Westover Road was closed, and this is now **our last and only chance to have what to many will be a long held dream come true**. To have this facility with all its supporting mix of sport and leisure facilities **it is necessary to make the whole project viable** to a private developer and operator.

On the history side of the ice rink, many supporting minutes/papers/reports of the past 20 years show how from January 1991 myself, the late Cyril Dyer and former Councillor Philip Whitelegg, we brought forward a motion as follows:

“That this Council places on record its concerns at the manner in which the closure of the Westover Ice Rink has taken place without prior consultation with the Council or any of its Officers and urges that such consideration must take place before any irrevocable decisions or actions are taken in regard to ice skating facilities in this building”. Such motion was carried 33 to nil and former Councillor Trenchard made the additional words:

“The Council instructs the Chief Executive to investigate the use of the previously identified **King’s Park** site for a new stadium and seek interest from **potential developers and operators**.” **HENCE, HERE IT WAS 1991 AND NOW IT IS 2010**. The amended wording was also carried 34 to nil against.

All this was fully covered by the Daily Echo (cuttings enclosed). Over the years much correspondence was passed to Prudential who were owners of the property in Westover Road in 1995/96. The company had interest shown by Garrison Holdings to develop/turn this building into a theme of the ‘Gladiators’ television programme. In the meantime, Officers had been spending considerable time trying to seek contact with a consortium to achieve the Council’s objective of an ice rink return but without any success (report of December 1995 with letters from myself to Prudential in January 1996 requesting they give serious consideration to a company called Axon Limited who had shown interest in restoring ice facilities back to Westover Road refer). Again, in May 1996 a further letter was sent to Prudential asking why they had refused to open negotiations or allow Axon Limited to acquire the premises, leading to failure. Other sites were looked at, including Honeycombe Chine in 1998, then being dealt with by Peter Challen, Director of Development Services. My letter dated 1998 expressed concern that developers looking at possible leisure development at Honeycombe were moving away from ice skating facilities within the suggested development which was supported by the National Ice Skating Association (letter dated 26 November 1998 refers); here again, this was due to what we were told regarding the viability of the scheme. Another site looked at was Westover Gardens - but this was never going to happen as it affected the Pavilion and adjacent land. Hence why we know the **existing Winter Gardens site** could not support an Olympic size rink, more so with the clear need for the supporting mix of leisure facilities to stack up financially. The former Bus Station site could, I believe, achieve this facility but it is in private ownership.

So, in 1999, it was back to King’s Park (report of July 1999 refers) which involved ‘Plant Ice’ as a preferred developer but, like so many interested parties over the past 20 years, nothing ever happened.

I apologise to have gone on at such length but as I have already said, it is **not the case here of “... not the time to proceed”!!** If we can attract a developer and operator, **it is time to proceed** as the past 20 years have shown; perhaps more so with the type of weather we have experienced during August in previous years.

Yours sincerely,

**COUNCILLOR RON WHITTAKER**

**Copies to:** Pam Donnellan, Chief Executive  
Joy Postings, Director, Law & Governance  
Leader of the Council  
Deputy Leader & Resources  
Chairman, Planning Board & Agenda Group  
Group Leaders

Encs.