

ON our letters pages last week, Conservative Paul Lambourne accused Lib Dem Trevor Snaith, *pictured right*, of being mischievous for attacking Wycombe District Council plans to spend up to £750,000 looking into proposals for a new Community Stadium. Cllr Lambourne also criticised the Lib Dem/Labour administration which ran the council between 1995-1999. Here are two responses to his letter.

It's time to listen to what people want

IT'S time for Councillor Lambourne and the Conservative council to listen to the residents and deliver what the local people want!

It would be nice to have a new community stadium, but should our council be spending £750,000 of our money funding consultants about its feasibility?

Wycombe Wanderers and London Wasps are owned by a wealthy individual who could fund this consultation to

show his commitment to the people of High Wycombe and save a considerable amount of taxpayers' money.

Residents ask why our Conservative-run council is constantly whining there is no money for local services, yet they can find £3/4 million to fund a consultation.

Recently Bassetsbury Manor was sold and the council refused to ring fence the proceeds to spend on the local community.

The council closed Holywell Mead Pool, refusing to reopen it despite massive pressure from residents and

they made it untenable for the Environment Centre to continue by withdrawing funding. Across the district there are many examples of cuts in much needed community services and many groups are at risk of closure because of the uncaring approach taken by this administration.

More recently, thanks to pressure from the Liberal Democrats, Wycombe District Council conducted a district-



wide audit which highlighted an urgent need for Community Centres in Ryemead, Abbey and other High Wycombe town wards.

This community deficiency came about as a result of the Conservatives allowing massive numbers of homes to be built without the

necessary community facilities to support them. When pressed recently by the Liberal Democrats, the Conservative administration refused to make any financial provision in the long-term plan to fund and deliver these community centres. The stock response from Councillor Clarke and her Cabinet members is that they don't have the money! This backward thinking and lack of foresight in local planning is of grave concern to us all!

In the 2010 financial year, the Liberal Democrat group presented a budget to deliver a zero increase in council tax which was supported by Labour and Independent councillors.

Councillor Lambourne and his Conservatives again voted to reject this and insisted on an increase hitting us all hard in this tight economic period.

This Conservative council has consistently demonstrated that they are out of touch with the

people of this district. If they truly were forward thinking (as Councillor Lambourne mistakenly believes) they would budget to fund community centres across the town, reopen Holywell Mead Pool and invest in delivering community services which they have systematically dismantled over the last decade!

Also, if the Liberal Democrat plans for the Eden Centre (supported by the Conservatives at the time) had been carried through, we would have had an attractive, smaller development, with the river as a focal point. All of this would have protected the traditional businesses and brought more footfall to the High Street.

The Conservative administration needs to be sympathetic to the needs of residents. Let's start by delivering what is asked for in public consultations and public meetings.

On behalf of the residents I challenge the Conservative councillors to make two small steps. Firstly allocate the funds you are planning to spend on the stadium consultation to help deliver much-needed community centres across the town.

Secondly give the commitment to reopen Holywell Mead Pool this year for the residents of High Wycombe!

Cllr Trevor Snaith, Liberal Democrat, WDC Ryemead Ward, High Wycombe

Tories cut services... we improved them

CLLR Lambourne's letter of last week is full of misinformation about the Liberal Democrat/Labour administration of Wycombe District Council from 1995 to 1999.

Wycombe District Council tax went up more than inflation during that period to compensate for two factors.

First, the Tories' reckless step of cutting the council tax, without any commensurate reduction in services to pay for it, just before the 1995 district council elections. Second, the Council saw a 14% (£1.2m) cut in Central Government grant from 1995/96 to 1999/2000.

If you look at the net cost of the Wycombe District Council's services from 1995/96 to 1999/2000 they increased by only 12 per cent (£13.3m to £14.9) which after taking account of inflation of 13 per cent over the same period was a reduction in costs in real terms. We did much to make the council more efficient, e.g. by cutting the number of

committees and the frequency of their meetings.

In each year in office we tried to balance cost savings with new schemes and enhancements, so as to keep real terms net cost level.

It is interesting to note that since that period the Wycombe District Band D Council Tax has risen from £87 to £127. If the Tories believed the increases we had to make were so bad why didn't they reverse them rather than continuing with further increases?

During the same period (1995/96 to 1999/2000), Tory controlled Bucks County Council increased its council tax by £164, an increase of 37% against Wycombe District Council's increase of £24 or 38%. The Tories at Bucks cut services whilst we improved and did more. A pretty good record.

Frances Alexander, Former Chairman of Wycombe District Council, Chestnut Avenue, High Wycombe