

Petitioners Say Pool Before Sports Hall

YOUNGSTERS turned up in force at the Mayor's parlour on Saturday morning to support a request for a training swimming pool in the school campus at Hardenhuish.

They were led by Mrs Beth Winterton, wife of a Chippenham doctor, who handed in a petition signed by 3,100, urging the council to give their support for an all-the-year pool. This will be sent to Wiltshire County Council.

Mrs Winterton has three children, two of whom she taught to swim. A son, Simon, aged 14, has already sent letters appealing for a pool to Chippenham's MP and Dr Roger Bannister.

CONSULTATION

Mrs Winterton, who was accompanied by a strong body of parents and youngsters from Chippenham Swimming Club, told the Mayor, Mr Malcolm Hodges, that the need for a petition arose out of a feeling that the ratepayers of Chippenham were not being fully consulted over a proposed sports hall scheme which would involve large financial dealings on their behalf.

It was debatable whether Chippenham needed badminton, indoor tennis, squash, or any other adults' sports before a teaching pool where non-swimmers of any age could learn water safety.

Mrs Winterton said it was a fact the projected sports hall would be built on school land and would be intended, as a joint scheme, for school use part

of the time. Did they really believe that the handful of children playing tennis, badminton, or squash would equal 50 to 60 youngsters who could fill a 25-metre pool usefully all day?

WATER SAFETY

Local educational records of teaching water safety left much to be desired in an era when learning to swim must be equated, for safety's sake, with learning to read and write.

They might well ask why existing gymnasia and halls in the schools were not being suggested for public use after school hours.

The area sports advisory council executive committee thought a pool was of paramount importance.

The Mayor said he and his council would no doubt lend all their weight in passing the request to the county council. He made it clear it was a county council matter and nothing to do with the borough council.

They had heard that the county council had no financial means at present for a training pool in the Hardenhuish campus. Chippenham was already subsidising the pool in Monkton Park and this year the sum was in the region of £11,000, which meant one and half pence from the rates.

A sports hall, he considered, was long overdue in a town the size of Chippenham.