

FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Portfolio Holder, Councillor Hugh Branney
LEAD OFFICER: Cath Coombs, Acting Head of Leisure and Environmental Services
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Summary and Recommendation:

1. Members endorse the confirmation submitted to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport indicating that Copeland wishes to accept pre-allocated funds to enable people aged 60+ years to access free swimming.
2. Members endorse the expression of interest submitted to enable Copeland to be allocated funds to provide free swimming for those aged under 16 years.
3. Officers work with swimming providers and other partners to develop the programme and seek funding to enable the free swimming initiative to be sustainable.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Government announced on 6 June 2008 that it intends to fund councils to provide free swimming for some groups, as a first step towards an aspiration to provide free swimming for everyone by 2012. Swimming is recognised as an accessible activity that has measurable positive effects on an individual's health and well being.
- 1.2 On 29 July 2008 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) wrote to all District Councils, Unitary Authorities and London Boroughs setting out the offer, with an indication of the level of support and the approach to be adopted.
- 1.3 The programme is made up of four grant pots:

- Grant pot 1: Free swimming for those aged 60 or over. Total funding available funding £15 million.
 - Grant pot 2: Free swimming for those aged 16 or under. Total funding available funding £25 million.
 - Grant pot 3: Modernizing pool provision – capital reward fund. Total funding available funding £60 million for both pots 3 & 4.
 - Grant pot 4: Modernising pool provision – capital challenge fund.
- 1.4 If a Local Authority takes up the offer of funding through grant pot 1 and grant pot 2, it will become eligible to apply for the capital funding earmarked for modernising pool provision.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 The Borough of Copeland have been pre-allocated the sum of £22,953 per annum for two years to fund free swimming for those aged 60 years and over. This is the allocation according to a formula based on the size of the 60+ years population.
- 2.2 Discussions have taken place with Leisure Copeland (Copeland Swimming Pool) and Egremont Pool Trust (Wyndham Swimming Pool) to determine if the allocation is sufficient to meet existing and expected demand.
- 2.3 At Copeland Pool a sum of £16,361 per annum will be required to enable free access to over 60's. This figure is based on current usage levels.
- 2.4 At Wyndham Pool an indicative figure of £5,000 has been suggested that would enable free access for the over 60's. Cultural Services Officers have requested a more detailed breakdown of the figure.
- 2.5 A copy of the grant offer letter is available in the Member's room with section two outlining payment conditions and arrangements. Annex B of the grant offer letter explains in more detail conditions for payment.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 From an analysis of the figures identified above it appears that the offer to Copeland will cover the provision of free swimming for the over 60's. However, a number of risks exist in taking up the offer including:
- Demand for swimming by the 60+ age group exceeds the pre-allocated sum. Leisure Copeland has agreed to accept the risk of this occurring at Copeland Swimming Pool and absorb any additional free swimming entries over and above the sum of £16,361. This risk also exists at

Wyndham Swimming Pool and no decision has been taken at present on the acceptance of this risk.

- These grant funding pots are only available for two financial years and will not continue beyond the 2010/2011 financial year. The Government is keen to encourage participation in the free swimming initiative and has indicated that there will be further incentives to move towards a universal free swim offer. A significant risk exists of introducing an initiative only to withdraw it in the future as further incentives are unknown at this time. This initiative could be difficult to remove once it has been implemented.
- If Copeland is awarded grant funding to support free swimming for the 60+ age group (and possibly the under 16's age group), and no additional Government grant funding becomes available after the initial two year period, the cost of maintaining free provision may become a cost pressure upon the Authorities' budget and should be included in budget planning for the Medium Term Revenue Strategy – an item for 2011/12.
- The risks will also apply should Copeland be able to accept a grant offer aimed at enabling free access to those aged 16 years and under.

3.2 Authorities who wish to participate in the free swimming offer for those aged 60 or over were to provide confirmation to the DCMS by 15 September 2008.

3.3 In addition, it was also necessary to express an interest in participating in the free swimming offer for those aged 16 or under by the 15 September 2008. The Government will then provide details of allocation of grant pot 2 by 30 September 2008. The amount of the allocation is unknown at this time, and there is no obligation to implement the initiative if this part of the grant allocation does not cover the cost. To give some idea of the level of support required Copeland Pool in 2006/07 recorded 26,791 junior swim admissions. The value of this is circa £47,000. The indicative figure given by Wyndham Pool to admit under 16's is £15,000.

3.4 Due to the timing of this Executive meeting, Officers have indicated to the DCMS Copeland's wish to access the pre-allocated amount under grant pot 1 and expressed an interest in being allocated funds to enable under 16 years swimming from grant pot 2.

3.5 Dialogue is ongoing with Egremont Pool Trust to ascertain the feasibility of including Wyndham Pool in the free swimming offer for those aged over 60's.

- 3.6 Details of methods to access the grant pot 3 and 4, capital towards modernising pool provision, are emerging but will not be known fully for some time.

4. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

The provision of free swimming directly supports Corporate Plan ref 3.6.5, remove barriers to participation in sports and arts events at all levels for communities in Copeland.

List of Background Documents:

In Member's room - Copy of grant offer letter from DCMS to Local Authorities.

List of Consultees:

Cllr Hugh Branney.
Corporate Team.

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Yes
Impact on Sustainability	Yes
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Yes
Children and Young Persons Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act Implications	None
Section 151 Officer Comments	
Monitoring Officer Comments	

Please say if this report will require the making of a key decision: No