

APPENDIX H

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE
2ND SEPTEMBER 2008

Title:

**THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR A FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME
AND WAVERLEY'S POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT**

[Portfolio Holders: Roger Steel, Mike Band]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

This report sets out the basis of the Government's proposal for a Free Swimming Programme and seeks a decision on whether to commit to the Free Swimming Programme for those aged 60 or over, and submit an expression of interest in the initiative for free swimming for those aged 16 or under.

Environmental implications:

There are no specific implications arising from this report.

Social / community implications:

This scheme will have a positive benefit in terms of increased physical activity. This Borough-wide scheme will increase participation in physical activity for the over 60s, under 16s and will have positive benefits in terms of equality and diversity issues.

E-Government implications:

There are no specific implications arising from this report.

Resource and legal implications:

Waverley's commitment to these proposals will require a contract variation to the Leisure Management contract. This will require an additional payment from Waverley Borough Council to DC Leisure to compensate them for loss of income for 'Free Swimming'. Currently the actual cost has not been fully evaluated and it is possible that the Government funding will be insufficient to cover cost. To date Government grant has been announced on just the over-60s free swimming programme. It is guaranteed for the two years to 2009/10 and 2010/11; support beyond that is dependant on the next comprehensive spending review. Officers will be working with DC Leisure to manage the costs and ensure effective programming of swimming sessions at the pool, and will report back on the consequences.

The Government's Initiative

The Government's Free Swimming Initiative has four distinct funding streams. These are:

1. £15m per annum (2009/10 and 2010/11) has been allocated nationally to local authorities to administer the Free Swimming Programme for those aged 60 and over. Waverley has been allocated £38,950 p.a. for these two years.
2. £25m per annum (2009/10 and 2010/11) has been allocated nationally to local authorities to administer the Free Swimming Programme for those aged 16 and under. Waverley will not know its allocation until 30th September 2008 but is required to express its interest in this scheme by 15th September 2008.
3. £10m of capital funding is available in 2008/09 to modernise swimming pool provision. All authorities that sign up to participate in (1) and (2) will be entitled to a one off grant pro rata to population. The amount of this will not be known until it is clear how many authorities have committed to the schemes.
4. £25m capital p.a. will be made available in 2009/10 and 2010/11 to modernise swimming pool provision and to support more ambitious plans for free swimming to those authorities who commit to both schemes. This will be administered by Sport England. Fully costed plans for this funding must be submitted no later than the 15th October 2008.

Officer Comment

There are clear service and health benefits to free swimming but the implementation needs to be managed to avoid disruption to existing pool users and target groups.

There is considerable financial risk in that any central grant funding made available may be insufficient to cover the potential loss of income of offering free swimming. There is a further potential risk if we decide not to participate as the neighbouring boroughs in Surrey will be committing to the scheme. The scheme will be made available on a county basis as the smallest unit and our non-participation could potentially affect others. Also, a decision not to participate on financial grounds would need to be managed because this scheme will be publicised heavily on a national level. There is a risk that funding will not be available after 2012 and Waverley will have to absorb these costs within its base budget if the scheme continues.

Previous similar schemes in Woking and Wales have shown small increases in participation. The under 16 scheme at Woking proved more popular than the over 60s scheme and operational problems had to be dealt with.

The necessary financial information to fully evaluate the under 16 scheme will not be available until later this month. However, an expression of interest in this part of the programme has to be submitted by the 15th September 2008. We will then have a further month until 15th October 2008 to confirm whether we wish to proceed with our commitment. The financial implications will be reported to the October Executive.

Conclusion

Whereas the full details of the financial information for this initiative have not been able to be made available with this report, it is felt appropriate that the Chief Executive should respond expressing an interest in the Under 16 Scheme.

Officers will be working with DC Leisure to manage the costs and ensure effective programming of swimming sessions at the pool, and will report back on the consequences in October.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that the Executive:

1. Support the 'Free Swimming' programme for the over 60s and authorise the Chief Executive to confirm participation in the over 60s initiative.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive to express an interest in the Free Swimming Programme for the under 16s by the 15th September 2008.
3. Authorise the Chief Executive to negotiate and agree a contract variation with DC Leisure for Free Swimming for the over 60s on a cost neutral revenue basis.
4. Instruct officers to negotiate with DC Leisure to enable free swimming for the under 16s and report back to the October meeting of the Executive.
5. Authorises officers to submit proposals to the capital modernisation programme from the Council's approved capital improvement programme.

Background Papers (DCS)

Correspondence addressed to the Chief Executive regarding level of grant funding and application process.

Sport England – Frequently Asked Questions

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Kelvin Mills

Telephone: 01483 523432

E-mail: Kelvin.mills@waverley.gov.uk

KEY DATES

September 15th 2008

Chief Executive to confirm participation in the Over 60s and Under 16s initiatives by this date, in response to the letter from DCMS dated 29th July 2008.

September 30th 2008

Waverley will be informed of the amount of funding allocated to the borough.

October 15th 2008

Authorities must confirm in writing by this date whether they wish to participate in the Under 16s Scheme.

Plans must have been submitted to Sport England to access the Modernising Pool Provision – Capital Challenge Fund.

April 2009

Grant funds will be received for those initiatives to which Waverley has committed. The Programmes will start upon receipt of this money.