

## REPORT TO EXECUTIVE



<b>DATE</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August 2008</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>Leisure and Culture</b>
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**Government's Free Swimming Programme****PURPOSE**

1. To consider the Council's response to the Government's Free Swimming Programme.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. The Executive is recommended to:
  - a) Approve participation in the Free Swimming offer for those aged 60 years or over to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS),
  - b) Approve the submission of an expression of interest to DCMS to participate in the Free Swimming offer for those aged 16 years or under and,
  - c) Delegates the final decision regarding the participation in the Free Swimming offer for those aged 16 years or under to the Head of Leisure and Recreation, in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and Culture and the Executive Member for Resources.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

3. The introduction of free swimming for residents aged 60 or over and those aged 16 years or under, should increase participation in swimming within the Borough and assist in the campaign to reduce obesity, reduce CHD (coronary heart disease) and increase the length and quality of life for local residents.
4. The Government have introduced financial incentives to encourage Councils to take up the scheme and these are outlined later in this Report. It is estimated that there will be no adverse overall impact on the revenue budget for the Council.

## SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

### Background

5. Members will be aware that earlier this year, the Government made an announcement regarding the introduction of free swimming for those aged 60 or over and those aged 16 or under. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008, the Council received a Circular from the DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport), which provides details of how the Free Swimming Programme should operate and the associated grants that will be made to encourage Local Authorities to participate.
6. The grants are provided for free swimming schemes and the evaluation of these schemes will be used to determine future funding and delivery arrangements. As such there will be a need to quantify the success of the scheme through local monitoring and therefore, the grant will be ring-fenced in order to allow evaluation of the funding.
7. The grant is not subject to separate auditor certification procedures. This ring-fencing will be temporary and will not continue beyond the financial 2010/11.
8. The Government's Free Swimming Programme is also designed to help Local Authorities achieve successful delivery of a number of National Indicator targets and will help contribute to at least three indicators within the Local Area Agreement including:
  - NI 55 - Obesity among primary school age children in Reception Year
  - NI 110 - Young people's participation in positive activities
  - NI 137 - Healthy life expectancy at age 65
9. **Payment of Grant Conditions**

Local Authorities who wish to participate in the Free Swimming offer for those aged 60 or over, must provide confirmation by 15<sup>th</sup> September 2008. By confirming participation to DCMS, the Authority agrees to spend the grant for free swimming for those aged 60 or over. Free swimming for those aged 60 or over, means that people in that age group who wish to swim at any time throughout the year, when they would normally be admitted to the pool for public swimming and in accordance with local programming, should not be charged for doing so.
10. Local Authorities who also wish to participate in the Free Swimming offer for those aged 16 or under must also submit an Expression of Interest for this part of the programme by 15<sup>th</sup> September 2008. For these Authorities, the Government will then aim to provide details of their prospective allocation by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008. Authorities will then be invited to confirm by 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008, that they wish to participate in this element of the offer. By confirming participation in this part of the offer, an Authority agrees to spend the grant for free swimming for those aged 16 or under. Free swimming for those aged 16 or under, means that people in that age group who wish to swim out of normal school hours, throughout the year, when they would normally be admitted to the pool for public swimming and in accordance with local programming, should not be charged for doing so.
11. **Funding for Capital Projects**

In addition, the Government is providing a total of £60 million capital for capital projects, designed to modernise pool provision, which are integrated with providing free swimming.

£10 million for this pot will be made available in 2008/09 to reward those Authorities which sign up to both schemes, as outlined above. Those Authorities will receive a pro-rata population-based shared of the £10 million capital in 2008/09 and may submit bids for the remaining funding from financial year 2009/10 onwards. These funds can be used as project development costs for bids for financial year 2009/10 and 2010/11. Sport England will assess bids in the first instance on behalf of the Government and will publish a prospectus for bids for funding from financial 2009/10 onwards.

**12. Grant Allocation**

£15 million will be provided to those Authorities who chose to provide free swimming for those aged 60 or over. This results in an allocation to Burnley of £25,178. £25 million will be available to provide free swimming for those aged 16 or under. Allocation of grant for this element will be determined subject to the numbers of Councils who express an interest.

**13. Response to the Government’s Free Swimming Programme**

There is much evidence now to demonstrate that increased physical activity has a positive impact on an individual’s health, and swimming as well as being a life skill, is also an excellent form of exercise for more elderly residents. The Council has signed up to the PCT’s campaign to “Save a Million Years of Life” and this initiative can only help in that campaign. However, there is a need to ensure that the costs of introducing the scheme are met by the Government’s grant, as Members will be aware that there have been problems with other similar initiatives, for example, concessionary fares. As with concessionary fares, it is always difficult to fully estimate the costs of introducing such a scheme, as it is impossible to accurately calculate the increase in demand that may result from the scheme, although in this case unless there was a phenomenal increase in demand, the additional costs should only be marginal, as the groups of residents will only be able to use the pool for free on general swimming sessions, which already will have lifeguards on duty. Indeed, the introduction of free swimming for children may result in increased participation by their parents, who would then pay for admission and may ultimately, increase income.

14. There is a need to do a detailed analysis, especially for the impact of introducing free swimming for people who are 16 or under, however, the timescale for the decision regarding over 60s is more pressing. The key question therefore, is to establish what the current income estimate is for those people aged 60 or over, who currently swim in our pools, as this will be the income that we will lose. It is essential that this level of income is covered by the Government grant.

15. The annual income for Swimmers aged 60 or over is as follows:

**Casual Swims**

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Charge For 2007/08</b>	<b>Actual Total for 2007/08</b>	<b>Estimate for 2008/09</b>
St Peters	2277	£1.70	3870.90	£4326.30
Padiham	2169	£1.70	3687.30	£4121.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>4446</b>		<b>7558.20</b>	<b>£8447.40</b>

**Member Swims**

St Peters	£799	£893
Padiham	£553	£619
Total	£1352	£1512

16. The annual income for Swimmers aged 16 or under is as follows:

#### Casual Swims

Centre	Numbers	Charge For 2007/08	Actual Total for 2007/08	Estimate for 2008/09
St Peters	17,268	£1.70	£29355.60	£32,809.20
Padiham	4,563	£1.70	£7,757.10	£8669.70
Total	21,831		£37,112.70	£41,478.90

#### Member Swims

Centre	Estimated Breakdown of Total for 2007/08	Estimate for 2008/09
St Peters	£6059	£6773
Padiham	£1165	£1301
Total	£7224	£8074

As stated earlier the calculation for those aged 16 or under is slightly more complicated, however, at this stage there is only a need to Express an Interest in this part of the Free Swimming Programme and then as a result of that, the Government will then let the Council know what the grant would be for those who are 16 or under.

#### 17. Relationship with the Council's "Clear" Membership

As Members will be aware, the Council has been extremely successful at increasing the number of residents who pay monthly to have unlimited access to the Council's gyms, swimming pools and exercise classes. The Council currently operates an off-peak membership of £21.00 per month for those people aged 55 and over. The current number of off-peak 55 members who are 60 or over is 102. There will be a need to consider how these members do not lose out through the introduction of the Free Swimming Programme and some members who predominantly swim as opposed to use the gym may cancel their membership although this is not expected to be a significant number.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

18. As stated earlier, the Government's grant to the Council for the 60 and over scheme is £25,178. It is estimated that the current income for 2008/09 for general swims and members from that age group is £9,959 (£8,476 net of VAT). In addition, there is a need to consider the impact on Clear Membership, but it is unlikely that there would be such a massive reduction in the 102 members that the grant would not cover the costs, however, if there was a 50% reduction the loss of income would be £12,852 (£10,937 net of VAT). It is also estimated that there will not be such an increase in swimming that there is a need

to introduce additional lifeguards or staff to cater for the increased takeup. As a result, and even after taking into account any price increase that would have been added for 2009/10 it is felt that this part of the Government's Free Swimming Programme should be adequately met from the Government grant.

19. In respect of the 16 or under age group, the initial calculation shows income of £49,553 for 2008/09 (£42,173 net of VAT) against an estimated grant of £41,963 (based on £25 million apportioned on same basis as for 60 and over age group), although this could increase if not every local authority subscribes to the scheme. As a result there is a need to do a more detailed calculation once the level of grant from the Government is known.
20. In addition to the above, there will be some small element of capital funding to help modernise pools for those Councils who subscribe to both elements of the scheme. Initial estimates for 2008/09 come to a figure of approximately of £20,000 and this could be used to help fund the refurbishment to Padiham Leisure Centre. Although welcomed the provision of a further £50 million funding for 2009/10 and 20010/11 is a small amount when one considers the number of pools within the country and the high costs of refurbishment. There will be a bidding process for this funding and it is envisaged that this will be highly competitive.

#### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

21. The introduction of free swimming for those aged 60 or over and those aged 16 or under, should help to increase the number of residents within the Borough who take part in regular physical activity. This in turn will help the Council to make a real contribution to the East Lancashire campaign to "Save a Million Years of Life" and at the same time, help to improve the quality of life of local residents.

#### **DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

22. Chair of Leadership and Community Scrutiny Committee.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

23. Department for Culture, Media and Sport Circular – Free Swimming Programme.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

**PLEASE CONTACT:**

**MICK CARTLEDGE**

**ALSO:**