

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

28th June 2010

Free Swimming - Removal of Department of Culture, Media and Sport Funding

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|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Relevant Portfolio Holder | Cllr Peter Anderson |
| Relevant Head of Service | John Godwin |
| Key Decision | |

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The following report outlines the removal of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) grant funding for the provision of free swimming for 16 yr olds & under, and over sixties as from 31st July 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Council is RECOMMENDED to

- 1) note the removal of the grant funding from the Department for Culture Media and Sport, which equates to £46,747 for the period 1st August 2010 to 31st March 2010;
- 2) remove the free swimming programme for over sixties with effect from 1st August 2010; a media and promotional campaign to be prepared to inform residents of this decision and the circumstances in which it was made;
- 3) extend the free swimming provision for 16 year olds and under at the Council's expense until 27th August 2010 (in line with the summer holiday programme), due to high volume of under 16's swimmers and families' expectations during this period;
- 4) limit the provision of free swimming admissions during public swimming sessions on a pay and play basis to Redditch residents only;
- 5) approve the release of revenue balances to a maximum of £6,000 to fund the loss of income at the centres; this to meet the costs associated with the Council continuing the scheme to 27th August following the removal of grant funding;
- 6) confirm that, as part of the re-introduction of the charging scheme for these groups, a non-Reddicard, Reddicard or Concessionary Reddicard rate will apply dependant upon customers' personal circumstances (the proposed charging rates to be as detailed in Section 5 of this report); and

- 7) **note the staffing implications outlined in Sections 5 and 14 of the report and agree to fund the associated redundancy costs of £3,000 from revenue balances, should a redeployment opportunity not be secured.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On the 15th September 2008 the Council agreed to support free swimming for over 60's as part of the DCMS national pilot scheme. On the 19th January 2009 the Council also agreed to support an extension to the original scheme and to accept the funding offer for 16 year olds and under.
- 3.2 The funding stream was scheduled to run from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2011 over two consecutive financial years.
- 3.3 On the 17th June 2010 lead leisure officers received notification from Paul Bolt at the DCMS that the funding stream would cease on the 31st July 2010, as part of the Government's exercise to find savings in 2010/11. This was confirmed to all Local Authority (LA) Chief Executives on the 18th June 2010.
- 3.4 The DCMS have confirmed that they will honour the grant funding agreed to 31st July 2010 and will write to all LA's to give further detail on the draw down process shortly.
- 3.5 Young people and their families and over 60's have used the pools during the free swimming period which has increased access to sessions and contributed to increases in physical activity leading to healthier lifestyles.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The key issue contained within this report will relate to:
- a) The ongoing provision of the service for 16 year olds and under, to the 27th August, with the financial impact of this extension.
 - b) The re-introduction of the Council's charging policy for both over 60's and under 16's including the reintroduction of Reddicard charges (Section 5).
 - c) The need to produce a full communications plan to ensure that residents fully understand the reasons behind the decisions and to inform residents as to the rationale for maintaining the 16 and under scheme during the school holiday period.

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- d) The redundancy / redeployment implications relating to the Swimming Co-ordinator post, and financial cost to RBC.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Grant funding of £46,747 for this financial year had been built into the service base budget as a confirmed revenue stream. This budget covers loss of income from admissions, an extension to the hours of the Swimming Development Officer, and funds to meet additional expenditure arising from the increased demand placed upon the service by increased usage. The net financial impact of the loss of grant funding cannot be absolutely stated at this stage. However, Officers believe that the re introduction of charging will mitigate a large proportion of this loss. In addition a monitoring system will be implemented immediately to provide a position statement to Members.
- 5.2 The cost associated with funding the 16 years and under swimming package over the summer holiday period is £6,000. It is proposed that this is funded from revenue balances.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the Swimming Development Officer post be made redundant. The redundancy costs will be £3,000 should suitable redeployment not be achieved.
- 5.4 Recommended Reddicard prices are based on the charge applied in 2008/9 prior to the scheme starting with an increase applied for financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11.

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Non-Reddicard | Reddicard | Concessionary Reddicard |
| £2.25 | £1.50 | £1.20 |

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications contained within this report.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report proposes that Members reverse the policy which was adopted whilst the grant funding was in place and return to the Council's original admissions and concessions policy relating to over sixties and under 16's for swimming at the dates detailed above.

8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The current scheme supports the Council's Vision & Values in the provision of opportunities for all community groups to access swimming provision. The Council have adopted NI8 (Adult Participation in Sport) as a key indicator and the cancellation of the scheme may have a detrimental effect on outcomes. This however would depend upon the anticipated review of national indicator sets, where this indicator amongst others may be suspended.
- 8.2 The removal of the full concession will impact on some customers. However this will be off set by the opportunity for over 60's to obtain a Concessionary Reddicard and obtain a discounted price for swimming admission. In addition, under 16's may apply for a Resident Reddicard and dependant on circumstances receive a discounted or concessionary price for swimming.
- 8.3 The under 16's may be entitled to Positive Opportunities Worcestershire (POW) funding which entitles children on free school meals to access leisure activities across Redditch free of charge funded through Extended Services.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The Council could be criticised by users for the removal of concessions, even though grant funding has been stopped. This will be mitigated by the high profile communications plan that is being developed.
- 9.2 Officers consider that there are no other risks if the potential lose of income is funded (from balances) to allow the extension to the sixteen and under free swimming scheme until the 27th August 2010

10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

The withdrawal of the funding may mean some of the customers accessing free swimming will stop swimming with an impact on physical activity levels. Customers may be initially disappointed with this decision and could result in reduced satisfaction with services.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

There are none within this report that can be quantified. However it is suggested that customers on lower incomes would be most affected by removal of the provision in its current format. Some of the measures contained within this report will assist in supporting young people and their families to access free swimming during the summer holidays and beyond. This will include access to POW funding for under 16's. Additional GP Referral for some of the over sixties with health related issues may enable this group to continue with free swimming at the pools.

12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

None contained within this report.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

None contained within this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

With part of the grant funding the Council chose to appoint a Swimming Co-ordinator who will now be made redundant (see Section 5). The individual and trade unions will be advised of the position and all redeployment opportunities offered.

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There may be decline in participation figures at Hewell Road and Kingsley Sports Centre. Evidence may suggest a shift back to the lower attendances indicated in the table below for 2008/9 although it is hoped swimmers will continue to swim having had the opportunity of swimming on a regular basis over the last 16 months the scheme has been running.

| Target Group | Visits 09/10 | Visits 08/09 | Difference |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Over 60's | 8996 | 2433 | 6563 (+370%) |
| Under 16's | 23203 | 15217 | 7986 (+ 53%) |
| Total: | 32199 | 17650 | 14549 (+82.4%) |

16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

None contained within this report.

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

Due to the cancellation of free swimming there may be a decline in participation from targeted groups living in areas highlighted as those experiencing health inequalities. As previously mentioned in Section 11 young people and their families from these areas can access POW funding to use for free swimming sessions.

18. LESSONS LEARNT

Not Applicable.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

There will be the need to create a communications plan which clearly informs customers on the government's decision to cancel this programme. A variety of communication methods will need to be utilised to ensure all of the community is covered and a consistent message portrayed. Staff at Sports Centres will play an important part in ensuring the effectiveness of this and will be fully informed on all decisions and issues relating to this report.

20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Portfolio Holder | Yes |
| Chief Executive | Yes |
| Executive Director (S151 Officer) | Yes |
| Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services | Yes |
| Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services | No |
| Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships | No |
| Head of Service | Yes |
| Head of Resources | Yes |

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| Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services | No |
| Corporate Procurement Team | No |

21. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

22. APPENDICES

None.

23. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previously published Council reports and minutes only.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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