
SWIMMING - GRANT FROM GOVERNMENT

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Andy Scott, Health and Leisure Portfolio
Responsible Director - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To outline the issues surrounding the Government free swimming initiative.

Summary

2. The Government is keen to encourage as many local authorities as possible to participate in making recreational swimming free for those aged 60 or over and those aged 16 or under in their local communities. This initiative is part of a legacy action plan for the 2012 Olympic Games. Grants will be provided for free swimming schemes, the evaluation of which will be used to determine future funding and delivery arrangements.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that the grant offer for the under 16s is declined and the grant offer for over 60s is accepted.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) The grant allocation for over 60s free swimming in 2009/10 and 2010/11 meets the projected income from this user group.
 - (b) The grant allocation for under 16s free swimming in 2009/10 and 2010/11 is significantly lower than the projected income yield from this user group and would leave an additional revenue pressure of approximately £170,000 p.a., potentially increasing to £220,000 in 2011/12.

**Cliff Brown
Director of Community Services**

Background Papers

DCMS free swimming guidance (October 2008)

Mike Crawshaw : Extension
LF

S17 Crime and Disorder	This programme could potentially contribute to this agenda through provision of diversionary activities.
Health and Well Being	This scheme is orientated around the health improvement agenda.
Sustainability	There is no confirmed continuation funding beyond 2011, which leaves a potential £250k + funding gap.
Diversity	The programme is targeted at groups that may be termed hard to reach.
Wards Affected	The proposed scheme is Darlington wide.
Groups Affected	Over 60s and under 16s
Budget and Policy Framework	Revenue funding of £170k would be required from DBC to top up the DCMS grant in 2009/10 and 2010/11.
Key Decision	This is a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The scheme relates to the Healthy Darlington theme, however, sport and physical activity is able to contribute to the delivery of all of the themes.

MAIN REPORT

Grant Conditions and Arrangements

5. **Free swimming for the Over 60s**

The Government is making available £15 million per annum in 2009/10 and 2010/11 for free swimming for the over 60s. The grant offer will be provided according to a formula based on the size of the local population of 60years plus and can be accepted by DBC without having to subscribe to the under 16 programme.

6. **Free Swimming for Under 16s**

The Government is making available £25 million per annum in 2009/10 and 2010/11 for free swimming for under 16s (this is only available to authorities that also subscribe to the over 60s offer as well). The grant offer for this fund will be dependent on the number of authorities who express interest in the programme and can only be accessed by also accepting the offer for over 60s.

7. **Modernising Pool Provision – Capital Reward Fund**

All authorities that sign up for free swimming for over 60s and under 16s will be entitled to a one off capital grant in 2008/09 to help refurbish existing pool provision.

8. **Modernising Pool Provision – Capital Challenge Fund**

A capital fund of £25 million per annum in 2009/10 and 2010/11 is also available to modernise pool provision and support more ambitious plans for free swimming. Sport England will administer this fund and local authorities that sign up for free swimming will be invited to submit costed plans.

The Darlington Offer

9. The grant allocation to DBC from DCMS for free swimming for over 60s in 2009/10 and 2010/11 is £31,021. This offer meets the projected income from casual swimming at the Dolphin Centre for over 60s in 2009/10. The grant has initially been accepted in September 2008, which was a condition of receiving a further offer for the under 16s scheme.
10. DCMS have since offered £50,238 to the Council for free swimming for under 16s in the next two financial years. The projected income yield from under 16s casual swimming at the Dolphin Centre in 2009/10 is £220,000.
11. If DBC sign up to accept the DCMS grant offer for over 60s and under 16s we will be eligible for £22,605 of capital reward fund to assist with pool modernisation.
12. DCMS had asked local authorities to confirm whether they will accept these grant offers by 24 October 2008 but indicated they would accept later returns.

Considerations - Continuation Funding

13. Further funding to local authorities to deliver the free swimming programme in financial year 2011/12 and subsequent years will be subject to the outcome of the next Spending Review. The evidence from financial year 2009/10 and financial year 2010/11 will be used to inform future funding and delivery arrangements.

14. The uncertainty around funding arrangements beyond 2011 should be considered as Darlington could potentially be left with a choice of re introducing charging for swimming for over 60s and under 16s or face an additional annual revenue pressure in excess of £250,000 to underpin the subsidy for continued free swimming for residents. This possible funding gap could be mitigated within the over 60s target group as the existing revenue yield of approximately £30,000 from this group could potentially be underpinned by further developing partnership arrangements with Darlington PCT or diverting Darlington Borough Council's resources from other areas. Clearly the medium term financial risk associated with mainstreaming under 16s free swimming is much greater.

Effectiveness

15. Narrowing the gap in health and well being in Darlington is a key priority within 'One Darlington, Perfectly Placed' and effective programmes and interventions are required to address the underlying causes. An effective, integrated support framework will be fundamental to the success of any physical activity intervention. This has been clearly evidenced at local level through the success of the 'Zone Active' pilot in the Eastbourne, Park East and Lascelles wards between 2005-08. The project engaged over 3,000 members within the three years of activities with a throughput of over 18,000. It was successful in targeting a broad range of ages and abilities within the three identified wards with the support of partnership organisations such as Schools, Darlington Borough Council Sports Development team and a cross section of voluntary and Community sector organisations.
16. There is also strong evidence available from physical activity programmes within the Health Sector that reinforces the importance of targeted initiatives with built in support mechanisms to effect long term behavioural change. Sport and physical activity programmes that focus on priority groups in community settings can provide the most effective mechanism for changing the physical activity habits within communities. Consideration should therefore be given to whether casual free swimming is an effective health intervention. Meeting the potential funding gap beyond 2011 may not constitute the most effective use of resources that could alternatively be channelled into targeted health improvement programmes.
17. In this context a focused programme of swimming development for target groups is already being delivered through £10,000 funding agreed with Darlington PCT. This programme was developed through the local swimming action group and involves a broad range of sessions in community settings including parent/child sessions, over 45s swimming lessons, BME community classes and sessions for adults with disabilities. Further work is in progress alongside the PCT developing this scheme to provide more support for residents and planning is underway for a pilot scheme in 2009 bringing together targeted swimming and subsidised swimming as a focused initiative.

Summary

18. It is recommended that the grant offer from DCMS for over 60s is accepted and that the grant offer for under 16s is declined. Officers have already conveyed this provisional recommendation to DCMS pending Cabinet confirmation, given the tight deadline for returns that was set by Government. Further work in partnership with Darlington PCT should be developed to facilitate more targeted physical activity interventions that can be

mainstreamed without dependence on short-term grant funding arrangements.

Outcome of Consultation

19. No consultation has carried out on this initiative due to the short period of time the Council was given to respond to the grant offer.