

BODY: CABINET

DATE: 22nd October 2008

SUBJECT: Free Swimming Programme

REPORT OF: Director of Housing, Health & Community Services

Ward(s): Devonshire, Sovereign and Old Town

Purpose: To inform Cabinet of the Government's proposed free swimming programme. It includes the purpose and payment of grants provided by the department for culture, media and sports (DCMS). It sets out the financial implications for both revenue and capital funding.

Contact: Rick Newman, Sport & Leisure Manager, Telephone 01323 415421 or internally on extension 5421.
E-mail address: rick.newman@eastbourne.gov.uk

Recommendation:

1. That Cabinet support the decision to accept the grant offered by the DCMS to support the introduction of a free swimming programme for local people aged 60 and over.
2. That Cabinet support the decision to express an interest in offering a free swimming programme for local people aged 16 and under subject to the level of grant offered by the DCMS and the agreement of Eastbourne Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure.
3. That Cabinet recognise that the grant funding is initially for a period of two years and further funding for this scheme will be subject to the outcome of the next Spending Review.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 6 June 2008, a new £140 million fund to boost sport and fitness through free swimming was announced as the centre piece of the Government's plan to ensure a lasting sporting legacy from the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.
- 1.2 £80 million of this fund is for revenue grants covering 2 years. The grant is ring fenced and is for the provision of free swimming during normal public swimming times for people aged 60 and over and for people aged 16 and under outside normal school hours.
- 1.3 On 29 July 2008, a circular was received setting out details of the Government's proposed free swimming programme, in particular the purpose and payment arrangements. Grants will be made pursuant to the powers in section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. As stated above,

the grants payable will be for an initial period of two years, further funding to supplement this initiative to deliver free swimming for all will be subject to the outcome of the next Spending Review.

1.4 The proposed revenue grant has been calculated on the following basis. Nationally:

a) £15 million per year will be provided according to a formula based on the size of the local 60 and over population to those of the 354 local authorities who choose to provide free swimming for those aged 60 and over. Local authorities had until 15th September to accept this grant.

b) £25 million per year will be available to provide free swimming to those aged 16 and under. This part of the grant is only available to those authorities that have confirmed their commitment to provide free swimming to those people aged 60 and over by 15th September 2008. For these authorities an expression of interest was required by 15th September 2008.

The ring fenced grant in principal to Eastbourne Borough Council for the aged 60 and over element has been set at £38,115 per annum for two years.

The ring fenced grant to Eastbourne Borough Council for the aged 16 and under element has not yet been agreed.

1.5 In addition to the revenue grant, the Government is providing £60 million capital reward fund for capital projects designed to modernise pool provision for those authorities who are fully participating in the scheme. £10 million of the £60 million will be available in the financial year 2008/09 to reward those authorities which sign up to both schemes outlined above.

2.0 Partnership

2.1 Since the announcement of this Government initiative, officers from Eastbourne Borough Council have been working with Serco Leisure and Eastbourne Leisure Trust to establish potential financial implications.

Serco Leisure have agreed to provide a free swimming programme (for two years 2009/10 & 2010/11) for those residents aged 60 and over in exchange for an annual payment equal to that of the grant figure (£38,115 per annum) from Eastbourne Borough Council.

Officers are continuing to look at the financial implications of introducing a free swimming programme for local people aged 16 and under.

3.0 Health & Social Benefits

3.1 It is anticipated that the introduction of a free swimming programme for local people aged 60 and over and 16 and under will contribute towards our target (Sustainable Community Strategy) of increasing participation in sport, physical and cultural activities. Providing a free swimming programme will encourage a healthier lifestyle, help to tackle childhood obesity and will encourage local people to access our facilities.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 Eastbourne Leisure Trust through Serco Leisure have agreed to provide free swimming for residents aged 60 and over during normal public swimming times in return for the grant from the DCMS, for the two year period. There will be no further financial implications for Eastbourne Borough Council.

4.2 The implications of accepting the grant for 16 or under free swimming have yet to be identified and will be reported to Cabinet as soon as they are known.

5.0 Human Resource Implications

5.1 Depending on the take up of free swimming by local residents there may be a need to provide additional staff within both the Sovereign Centre and Motcombe Pool. These additional staff would be employed by Serco Leisure and the costs would also be met by them.

6.0 Environmental Implications

6.1 Additional swimming usage as a result of this scheme may result in an increased use of energy and consequential CO²emissions. Serco Leisure will monitor utility usage and will report any increases after the commencement of the free swimming programme.

7.0 Summary

7.1 Cabinet is recommended to support Eastbourne's participation in the free swimming programme for local people aged 60 or over and 16 or under subject to further discussions with Serco Leisure and to recognise that the programme is funded for an initial period of two years to March 2011.

Rick Newman
Sport & Leisure Manager

Background Papers:

Department for Culture, Media and Sport – Free Swimming Programme Circular
(CMS 99869/MK)