

REPORT TO BE CONSIDERED BY: *Councillor Sharon Taylor*

POSITION: *Leader of the Council*

Portfolio Area: Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure /
Resources

Date: 9 July 2010

CONTINUATION OF FREE SWIMMING

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 That the Executive consider whether or not Stevenage Borough Council extends the Free Swimming Initiative from the 1 August to 1 September 2010.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive approves a supplementary estimate of £7,000 in order that the Free Swimming Initiative is continued between 1 August 2010 and 1 September 2010.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In April 2009 a £140 million, two year programme for free swimming for 16s and under and the over 60s commenced. On the 17 June 2010, the Council was informed that The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, on behalf of the five funding Departments, that the resource funding for the Free Swimming Programme would cease earlier than expected, on 31 July 2010.
- 3.2 Since the scheme started at Stevenage Swimming Centre in excess of 32,000 free swims have been registered. The timing of the closure of the Free Swimming initiative is unfortunate as the first full week of the School holidays commences on 26 July 2010.
- 3.3 Given the popularity of swimming in Stevenage and the closure of the scheme at the start of the summer holidays, the Executive Councillor (Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure) has discussed with officers a desire to continue the scheme throughout the month of August.
- 3.4 Officers have also discussed the continuation of the scheme with Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) and agreed cost estimates based on last years actual usage for the same period.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The cost of continuing the scheme for the remainder of the year (until April 2011) is prohibitive; the most popular period for swimming historically is during the summer school holidays. It is therefore felt that given the timing of the cessation of the scheme it would be appropriate to continue with Free Swimming programme from the 1 August 2010 to 1 September 2010 inclusive.
- 4.2 The extension to Free Swimming will provide adequate time for SLL to develop new marketing initiatives to those customers who are adversely affected by the closure of the scheme.
- 4.3 Stevenage Borough Council received a full year grant of £72,299 in 2009/10 and have received a grant (April 2010 to July 2010) of £24,724 to cover the loss of income.
- 4.4 Based on August 2009 usage data there were in excess of 2200 usages costing £6,339. Given the weather during the summer of 2009 and the predicted good weather for the summer of 2010, it may be prudent to expect a greater demand for free swimming and a supplementary estimate of £7,000 would be required.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 There is no budget provision in the 2010/11 General Fund budget for the continuation of the Free Swimming Programme.
- 5.1.2 Should Members wish to continue the programme during August a supplementary estimate will be required.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Under Section 2 of the Local Authorities Act 2000, the Council has power to do anything, which it considers is likely to promote or improve the Social or Environmental Wellbeing of any person resident or present within its area.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of Community Leisure (including SLL) has been carried out. The EIA did not identify any adverse or discriminatory impacts on the grounds of age, disability, gender ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs or by way of financial exclusion.

5.4 Reason for Urgency

- 5.4.1 Given that the next meeting of the Executive is scheduled for the 28 July 2010 and the Free Swimming Programme ceases on 31 July 2010; should Members be minded to continue the programme it would not give sufficient time after call in periods etc. to inform residents of this opportunity before 1 August 2010.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

APPENDICES

- None