

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting9th July 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Free Swimming

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that updated members on how the FREE Swimming initiative had been received since its inception on 1st April 09.

The FREE Swimming initiative funded primarily by Central Government via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) started on the 1st April 2009, with free swimming being available at the Splash, Billingham Forum and Thornaby Pool facilities.

The initiative had proved very popular and had seen 24,747 free swims throughout April/ May 2009 (20,681 – U16 / 4,066 – Over 60). This was an overall increase of 2,888 for the same period in 2008, which may be attributable to the FREE Swimming initiative. This equated to a 13% increase in swimming participation in the target age ranges.

Tees Active Ltd (TAL) had issued over 11,000 swipe cards in the first two and half months of the FREE Swimming initiative, which indicated that the scheme had been very well received. At this stage it was not know how many of the participants were residents of the borough although TAL would be providing this information following comprehensive analysis of quarter 1 of the programme.

As a consequence of signing up to the FREE Swimming initiative for Under 16's and Over 60's, the Council became eligible to bid for a share of £25m nationally for capital improvements to swimming facilities. This was through Round 1 of the FREE Swimming Capital Modernisation Programme (CMP). The Council had been fortunate enough to receive an allocation of £300,000 from the CMP towards the development of a movable floor at Billingham Forum and to develop additional family changing at Splash. The Council had also been advised that nationally there was a £2m under-spend from the Round 1 CMP so officers were assembling an additional submission to support the Billingham Forum scheme.

The scheme would from a revenue point of view cost the Council in the region of £22,000 over the two years. However this had not only provided social and health benefits to residents, it had also yielded to date £300,000 in capital investment into swimming facilities, with the opportunity for more through the CMP.

Splash had by far been the most frequented of the 3 TAL operated swimming facilities in the borough. As Splash was the only facility within Teesside offering slides and a wave machine as part of its offer user numbers had consistently been very high, resulting in the facility being at times unable to maintain the levels of cleanliness that TAL pride themselves on.

There was an opportunity to bid for additional capital resource through Round 2 of the FREE Swimming CMP. Officers were looking at options as to how a bid for a share of this funding could benefit the facilities within the borough. As there was only £25m nationally it was not realistic to look at funding new facilities due to the levels of funding that would be available from this programme (max. £300,000 - £500,000).

With regards to the success of FREE Swimming in other local authorities, this information was being sought and would be available following the release of data for the first quarter.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the increase in swimming participation by Under 16's and Over 60's be noted.
2. Officers pursue additional capital funding from the FREE Swimming Capital Modernisation Programme, to secure further improvements to existing facilities.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that members are aware of the increases in participation generated since the inception of FREE Swimming.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillors Lupton and Mrs Womphrey each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of this item as a result of their membership of Tees Active Ltd.

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By Midnight, Friday, 17th July 2009

Proper Officer
14 July 2009