

Cabinet

23 October 2008



Free Swimming

Report of John Richardson, Corporate Director, Environment Cabinet Portfolio Member for Environment – Councillor Bob Young and Cabinet Portfolio Member for Healthier Communities – Councillor Eunice Huntington

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To seek Cabinet approval to take up the grant for the provision of free swimming for over 60s and under 18s.

Introduction

- 2 On 29 July, Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced its intention to provide direct funding to Local Authorities which would enable those people aged 60 years and over and 16 years and younger to access their local swimming pool free of charge.
- 3 Cabinet at its meeting on 28 August 2008 agreed that an expression of interest should be lodged with DCMS confirming that subject to the announcement of the level of financial support, free swimming would be available within the public swimming pools across the County.
- 4 On 7 October confirmation of the grant levels were received and are shown in the table below set against each existing Local Authority area with a comparison of the income generated at 07/08 out-turn.

Table 1

Local Authority	Grant 60 +	07/08 Actual Income	Income Variance	Grant 16 & Under	07/08 Actual Income	Income Variance	Capital Improvements
Chester-le-Street	£17,249	# £11,400	£5,849	£24,999	# £30,850	(-£5,851)	£12,101
Derwentside	£28,378	£19,162	£9,216	£40,473	£67,578	(-27,105)	£19,673
Durham	£25,874	£25,928	-£54	£35,388	£69,201	(-£33,813)	£20,985
Easington	£30,186	£12,638	£17,548	£47,171	£52,910	(-£5,739)	£21,388
Sedgefield	£28,100	£6,955	£21,145	£42,916	£65,319	(-£22,403)	£19,951
Teesdale	£9,320	£3,727	£5,593	£10,890	£17,797	(-£6,907)	£5,649
WearVally	£20,727	*£41,364	(-£20,637)	£30,132	£25,355	£4,777	£14,187
Total	£159,834	£121,174	£38,660	£231,969	£329,010	(-£97,314)	£113,934

* Estimated

08/09 anticipated

Detail

- 5 Durham County Council has the ability to opt into either or both age group categories, and receive the approved level of grant for two financial years commencing April 2009.
- 6 The table above shows that to provide free swimming for those aged 60 years and over (Pot 1) the grant level would exceed direct income by circa £38,000. To provide free swimming for those aged 16 years and under (Pot 2), the grant level would fall short of direct income by circa £97,000.
- 7 As the grant is fixed for the two year period 2009 – 2011, and if a 3% price increase is applied for each year from 07/08, the following assessment can be made:

	Total Grant £	Total income £	Variance +/- £
Year 1 (09/10)	391,803	477,195	-85,392
Year 2 (10/11)	391,803	491,510	-99,707

- 8 The table above shows that taking only direct income into account the free swimming programme will require £85,000 additional funding in year 1 and around £100,000 in year 2. There will inevitably also be additional operational costs which the pools will have to consider i.e. additional cleaning, supervision and possibly dispersal from paid activity elsewhere to free activity in the pools which are not covered by the grant and will have to be managed within the service.

Pot 3 – Capital Improvement Grant

- 9 DCMS are offering those Local Authorities who confirm their intention to allow free swimming to both age categories, a share of a £10m capital improvement grant to invest in public swimming facilities. County Durham has been allocated a total grant of £113,934 (as shown in table 1). This grant is not available unless the new authority agrees to go ahead with both Pot 1 and Pot 2.

Pot 4 - Free swimming Capital Modernisation Programme.

- 10 For those Authorities signed up to Pot 1 and 2, they also become eligible to apply for funding being administered by Sport England to help to make more extensive improvements to their swimming pool stock. The funding available in this pot is £25m for both 2009/10 and 2010/11. Authorities only signing up to one age category again would not be eligible to apply to this funding source.

Risk

- 11 The funding announced by DCMS is only for a two year period, 2009 – 2011. The effect of providing free swimming on the level of physical activity taken within this period and the associated health benefits will be a factor when considering whether to extend the time period. Clearly, there are no guarantees that this program will be government funded after April 2011 which will leave the new authority in a position of having to consider directly funding the scheme which may cost in the region of £500,000 pa, or targeting specific target groups/geographical areas or re instating swimming charges. Regular monitoring and evaluation reports will be produced for consideration by Members and DCMS during the course of the program.

Conclusion

- 12 The opportunity proved by DCMS to financially support a free swimming programme within the County is one which should be taken, subject to minimising any financial risk. It is anticipated that the grant will leave a shortfall against direct income of £85,000 in year 1 and approaching £100,000 in year 2.
- 13 Recent discussions with the County Durham and Darlington PCT confirm that they will provide gap funding of £100,000 in year 1 (2009/10) and provide their best endeavours to match this figure in year 2 (2010/11).
- 14 DCMS are expecting local authorities to confirm their intentions as to whether they wish to take up the grant offer by 24 October; however a week's extension has been negotiated given County Durham's unique position.
- 15 As all 7 existing local authorities currently define junior concessions as those age 18 years and under, and which the income projections are based on, it is recommended to continue with this age banding for the free swimming category thereby increasing the value of the DCMS initiative by 2 years.

Recommendation

- 16 That in the circumstances and owing to the deadlines set by DCMS, consideration is given to this report by the Cabinet and that agreement is given to:
- i) Provide free swimming for both over 60's and under 18's for the years 2009/10 and 2010/11 subject to confirmation of the grant.
 - ii) Accept the offer from the PCT to provide gap funding of £100,000 in 2009/10 and if possible the same in 2010/11.

Background Papers

Cabinet report dated 28 August 2008

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Appendix 1: Implications

Local Government Reorganisation

(Does the decision impact upon a future Unitary Council?)

Report considered by Joint Implementation Team and agreed for submission.

Finance

Details of finance are outlined in the report.

Staffing

Resource implications will be determined once take-up is realised.

Equality and Diversity

Equality Impact Assessments will be required upon the Free Swimming Programme.

Contributes to the social cohesion agenda.

Accommodation

N/A

Crime and Disorder

N/A

Sustainability

N/A

Human Rights

N/A

Localities and Rurality

Links the Concessionary Travel Scheme to the Health Improvement agenda and takes account of affordability and access.

Young People

Contributes to the Access to Sport agenda of 'Things to do, places to go'.

Consultation

N/A

Health

Contributes to the Regional Health Improvement Strategy and the Health Improvement Plan.

Improving the take up of social and leisure activities by older people - improving health and social inclusion.