

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Project and Programme
Executive and Head of
Community Development

REPORT NUMBER: **H104**

TO: STRATEGY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 18 September 2008

FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of details of funding made available by the Government to provide free public swimming for certain age groups. The report sets out details of urgent action authorised out of meeting by the Chief Executive to enable Government deadlines to be met in respect of the over 60s, and seeks the Committee's views on other aspects of the free swimming programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the action taken out of meeting by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of Strategy Committee as referred to in Appendix 1, be noted.
- 2.2 That the Council participates in aged 16 and under free swimming subject to the Head of Community Development, in consultation with the Chairman of Strategy Committee and the Director of Finance, being satisfied that any shortfall in Government funding will not, in their opinion, have a significant financial impact on the Council in 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 2.3 That the appropriate officers be authorised to submit a bid for capital funding.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The actual net cost to Babergh of providing free swimming for over 60's for each of the two years will not be known until the end of each financial year in question. However, based on the best available information it could be as much as £13,500 in 2009/10 and slightly higher in 2009/10 (after allowing for the Government grant of £31,438).
- 3.2 The position on aged 16 and under swimming is less clear but the same principles as above apply. Income levels are nearly 3 times higher than the over 60's, so the net cost could, in theory, be higher. The actual cost will depend on increased take-up and the level of Government Grant, which is not yet known.
- 3.3 Approaches are being made to Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk PCT to ascertain whether any funding may be available to meet these shortfalls. If not the cost will have to be incorporated into budgets for the next two years. The issue has already been flagged up with the Service and Financial Planning Group.
- 3.4 Any capital funding secured may reduce the Council's costs for maintaining one or both swimming facilities.

4. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 This issue is not linked with any of the Council's Significant Business Risks. However, there are risks with the recommended course of action and these are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Seriousness or Impact	Mitigation Measures
Government funding does not continue after 2 years	Significant	Marginal	Free swimming discontinued, full cost met through Council Tax, or other savings made to meet cost.
Significant increases in take up of free swimming	Significant	Marginal	Other savings have to be made to meet increased deficit.

5. **KEY INFORMATION**

5.1 Funding has been made available by the Government to provide free public swimming (not organised sessions) for those aged 60 and over. The full details of the scheme were received by Babergh on 31 July. The funding allocated to Babergh in 2009/10 and 2010/11 is £31,438 each year based on our 60+ population. There will also be funding for those aged 16 or under for free public swimming. The funding will be paid in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

5.2 Future funding i.e. 2011/12 and beyond, will be subject to the outcome of the next spending review. Authorities can choose whether to participate or not. There is also a capital pot split into two to modernise pool provision. The four pots of funding are:

1. Over 60s free swimming
2. Aged 16 or under free swimming
3. £10M capital reward for modernising pool provision
4. £50M over 2 years for modernising pool provision

5.3 **Timetable**

The Government has set very tight timescales for responses as follows:

Monday 15 September – final date to confirm participation for over 60s (pot 1).

Monday 15 September – final date to confirm interest for aged 16 and under (pot 2).
N.B. only eligible to express an interest if the authority agrees to participate in pot 1.

Tuesday 30 September – Date by which Government aims to provide details of council's prospective allocation for those aged 16 and under.

Wednesday 15 October – final date to confirm participation for aged 16 and under.

Wednesday 15 October – final date to submit costed plans for modernising pool provision (pot 4).

The scheme will be implemented on 1 April 2009 for two years. The revenue has to be used in the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Capital Pot

- 5.4 £60M has been allocated by the Government for capital projects designed to modernise pool provision. A capital reward fund (pot 3) of £10M is being made available this financial year to reward those authorities which sign up to both free swim programmes.
- 5.5 Those local authorities involved in pot 3 will receive a pro-rata population – based share of the £10M. These funds can be used for “project development costs” for bids for the financial year 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 5.6 £25M p.a. will be available in 2009/10 and 2010/11 to “modernise pool provision” and support more ambitious plans for swimming (pot 4). There are no more details explaining this at present.
- 5.7 Sport England will assess bids in the first instance and publish a prospectus for bids for funding from 2009/10 onwards. Local authorities, which have committed to pots 1 and 2 (over 60s free swims and 16 and under free swims) will be invited to submit costed plans for pot 4 i.e. for modernising pool provision, by 15 October 2008.

6. ACTION TAKEN AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Over 60s

- 6.1 The total income from over 60s for casual swims at Hadleigh Swimming Pool and Kingfisher Leisure Centre in 2007/08 was £30,666. There are no specialised sessions at either site that could claim a reduction through age. The potential financial impact for Babergh is therefore as follows:

Assumption 1 (no increase in take up)

	Amount £ p.a.
Loss of income in 2009/10 of £33,170 (includes 2 years inflation at 4% on casual swim prices)	33,170
Less: Government grant	-31,438
Estimated minimum cost to Babergh	1,732

Assumption 2 (30% increase in take up – based upon similar increase in take up in Waveney on trial scheme for over 45s)

	Amount £ p.a.
Loss of income	44,850
Less: Government grant	-31,438
Estimated minimum cost to Babergh	13,412

The losses in year 2 would be similar plus inflation.

- 6.2 Based on the information contained in paragraph 6.1 and following consultation with the Chairman of Strategy Committee, the Chief Executive exercised the general power to act out of meeting, by reason of limitation of time, and agreed that Babergh should participate in over 60s free swimming irrespective of a user's residency (ie. not limited to Babergh residents) and to confirm interest in the aged 16 and under free swim (see 6.3 below). The standard reporting form in respect of this is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

Aged 16 and under

- 6.3 The income in 2007/08 for this category at Kingfisher Leisure Centre and Hadleigh Swimming Pool was £78,973. We will not know whether this figure will be covered by Government grant until the end of September or even early October. However, based on the figure for over 60s, it is reasonable to assume there will be a shortfall, which would be exacerbated by a similar increase in take up.
- 6.4 Members are asked to consider pursuing with free swimming for aged 16 and under on the basis that it will contribute to the following Council objectives, and provided that the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Chairman of Strategy Committee and the Director of Finance, is satisfied that any shortfall will not, in their opinion, have a significant financial impact on the Council in 2009/10 and 2010/11:-
- A more active population with healthier lifestyles
 - Increased take up of developmental opportunities and activities by children and young people particularly from isolated or income deprived areas.
- 6.5 There are also other marginal benefits to free swimming; These include use of other services at the facilities and within nearby trading areas eg. shops, cafes, restaurants.

Capital Funding

- 6.6 There is very little information available on this. However, the language of Government is around modernising pool provision especially old facilities.
- 6.7 If Members are supportive of pursuing a capital application then it is suggested that if it is appropriate to make a bid officers are authorised to submit an application which best meets the Council's needs.

7. **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Action Out of Meeting Form.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

Letter from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport dated 29 July 2008.

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BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

URGENT ACTION - NO SPECIFIC POWERS

ACTION FOR WHICH CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAS DELEGATED
POWERS SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION WITH CHAIRMAN

SERIAL NO.....

SUBJECT MATTER: Free swimming programme

COMMITTEE TO WHICH MATTER RELATES: Strategy

REASON FOR ACTION BEING TAKEN OUT OF MEETING:

Government deadlines to respond as to whether the council wished to participate in free swimming programmes for over 60s and aged 16 and under were before the next meeting of Strategy Committee.

BACKGROUND:

In July the Government announced funding for two years (2009/10 and 2010/11) to enable local authorities to offer free swimming for the over 60s and 16 years of age and under. The deadline for confirming participation for over 60s was 15 September and expressions for interest for 16 years of age and under was on the same date. There is also a capital pot to modernise pool provision provided local authorities participate in the two free swim programmes. Further details are contained in the report on this matter to Strategy Committee on 18 September 2008

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (IF ANY):

It is unlikely that Government funding will meet the full cost over the two years. However, it will also depend on take up but it is estimated that the cost to Babergh will be between £1,700 and £13,500 per annum for over 60s. The position on aged 16 years and under is still unclear as further information is still awaited from the Government. After two years if Government funding does not continue then, if the policy was continued, the cost would fall on the Council tax or other savings would need to be made. Further details are contained in the committee report

ACTION AUTHORISED:

That Babergh should participate in over 60s free swimming irrespective of a user's residency (i.e. not limited to Babergh residents) and to confirm interest in the aged 16 and under free swim.

DATE ACTION AUTHORISED:

27 August 2008

I have been consulted on this matter details of which are given overleaf and have no observations to make.

.....
Chairman of Strategy Committee

27 August 2008
Date

I being the relevant Authorised Officer request authority for the above action to be taken

Signed
Authorised Officer

27 August 2008
Date

I being the duly authorised officer authorise the taking of the action referred to above

Signed
Chief Executive

27 August 2008
Date

Details reported to Committee for noting 18 September 2008

- (NOTE: (i) This form to be completed and given to the Director of Corporate Services (Committee Services) for inclusion in the Register of Delegated Action and for reporting to the appropriate Committee. The signature of the Chief Executive should be obtained prior to the form being sent to Committee Services.
- (ii) If the Chairman is not available within a day to sign the form, please send it to Committee Services who will then arrange the necessary signature.

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