

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**CABINET**
THURSDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2008**Free Swimming Initiative, Wyre Forest District Council**

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	Improving Health and Wellbeing and Meeting the needs of Children and Young People
CORPORATE PLAN AIM	A Better Quality of Life
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Marcus Hart
HEAD OF SERVICE	Head of CAPS
CONTACT OFFICER	Kay Higman ext 2902
APPENDICES	Appendix 1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Council on the current situation regarding the Government Free Swimming initiative in 2009/10 and 2010/11 and Wyre Forest District Council's proposed response to the grant offer for the under 16's initiative.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- 2.1 The Head of Community and Partnership Services in consultation with the Head of Financial Services, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Cabinet Member for Leisure Services be requested to progress the Government Free Swimming initiative for the over 60's only (Pot 1). This external funding of £34,916 per annum will be shown in the Revenue Budget for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.
- 2.2 The Head of Community and Partnership Services in consultation with the Head of Financial Services, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Cabinet Member for Leisure Services be given delegated authority to agree with the Council's partners DC Leisure the details of the scheme.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 29th July the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) wrote to the Chief Executives of all local authorities in England to provide an overview of the proposed scheme which basically offered various grant settlements for free swimming for the over 60's and under 16's.
- 3.2 The grant settlement for **Pot 1 (over 60's)** in Wyre Forest is £34,916 per annum for 2 years and is pre fixed, based on the population of those aged 60 and over in Wyre Forest. The calculation does not reflect actual usage at the sites and is set based on a predetermined amount set nationally (£15 million).

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- 3.3 The grant settlement for **Pot 2 (under 16's)** was unknown at the time of the previous Cabinet report in September but was recently confirmed as £44,674. The total available funding across England is £25 million. The final grant settlement depended on how many authorities wished to participate in the under 16's scheme and how many authorities do not accept their allocation for over 60's funding as well as a similar calculation as to the Pot 1 funding based on population in Wyre Forest under 16 years of age.
- 3.4 In order to access Pot 1 (over 60's) funding the Council was required to confirm by the 15th September 2008 that it wished to accept the grant. To access Pot 2 (under 16), the Council was required to express an interest by the 15th September 2008 and accept the offer of a specific amount to be confirmed, by 15th October 2008. The confirmation of acceptance for Pot 1 and expression of interest in Pot 2 so far, were made in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure Services and CMT in order to meet the 15th September deadlines.
- 3.5 The Government is also providing 2 capital funding pots (**pots 3 and 4**). These pots have £60 million (capital reward fund) and £25 million (capital challenge fund) respectively, available to support pool modernisations which in turn support the free swimming schemes. Those authorities who sign up to both schemes will receive a pro rata population based share of £10 million capital in 2008/09. For Pot 4 local authorities who are participating in both schemes were invited to submit costed plans by 15th October 2008.
- 3.6 There is no commitment from DCMS to continue funding for Pot 1 and 2 beyond March 2011 as it will be subject to the outcome of the next spending review. The outcome of the 2 completed years will be used to inform further funding however no details exist at this stage on any performance measures that will be implemented.
- 3.7 Where the full grant amount is not used by the authority 25% can be rolled over into the following year if the DCMS agree or the authority may be required to return the grant funding in line with the funding agreement.
- 3.8 DC Leisure in partnership with WFDC has operated a free swimming initiative for 2 hours every day over the school holidays, which has been extremely successful.

4. **KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 Discussions took place with DC Leisure who manage the Council's 3 sports and leisure centres. The 2 centres involved in the scheme would be Wyre Forest Glades Leisure Centre and Stourport Sports Centre.
- 4.2 DC Leisure had agreed to run both schemes at the 2 centres and further agreed to meet any shortfall in the grant that arose in order for these schemes to operate, for example if the number of over 60's exceeds the amount of money allocated DC Leisure agreed to stand this loss of income. Therefore, there would have been no financial obligations on the Council as a result of these schemes.
- 4.3 Guidance from the DCMS indicates that the schemes cannot be closed to Wyre Forest residents only.
- 4.4 On 25th September 2008 a report went to Cabinet detailing that DC Leisure was prepared to underwrite any proposed shortfall in funding in order to operate the

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scheme for Pot 1 (over 60's) and Pot 2 (under 16 free swimming). This was a decision taken by DC Leisure nationally across all their sites.

- 4.5 Indications were that most local authorities were not going to take up the grant for the under 16's. Some Local Authorities having received notification of their grant allocation have decided that in their circumstances they will in fact now be taking up the grant offer. However, it appears that nationally the take up for the under 16 grant is significantly lower than for the over 60's.
- 4.6 As the grant offer finally received for Wyre Forest for the under 16's was only for £44,674, DC Leisure is no longer prepared to underwrite the under 16's free swimming but is still prepared to underwrite Pot 1 (over 60's).

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 DC Leisure had agreed to underwrite the schemes in respect of Pots 1 and 2 (over 60's and under 16's). Unfortunately due to the low amount of the grant offered from DCMS, DC Leisure having initially agreed to underwrite the scheme, will not now be able to underwrite this for the under 16's. For DC Leisure locally it would have meant a potential deficit of over £100,000 per year for the 2 years of the scheme.
- 5.2 On this basis only Pot 1, the scheme for the over 60's will be able to go ahead as neither DC Leisure or the Council are able to underwrite the under 16 free swimming initiative to this degree. It is however intended to continue with the current free swimming periods during school holidays as previously.
- 5.3 Since the funding for Pots 1 (over 60's) is for 2 years only, £34,916 per annum, after this, the scheme will cease unless the DCMS provides further funding.
- 5.4 The Council is not able to apply for any capital investment (Pots 3 and 4) as Pots 1 and 2 both have to be entered into to be eligible for this funding.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council will be required to agree Funding Terms with DCMS to enable grant monies to be claimed. These will be approved by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
- 6.2 The Council will enter into a formal legal agreement with DC Leisure with regard to the scheme to ensure that there are no financial risks for the Council. (Appendix 1)

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The funding scheme for Pot 1 is for 2 years only and will finish in March 2011. It is important therefore to ensure all users know the scheme is only for 2 years and that all publicity associated with the initiative reflects this.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The free swimming initiative is intended to improve the health and well being of the local communities and support delivery of local priorities and supports the Council's Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. The scheme will be a welcome addition for over 60's.

9. CONSULTEES

- 9.1 Head of Legal and Democratic Services
- Head of Financial Services
- Head of Community and Partnership Services
- Cabinet Member for Leisure Services

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Cabinet 22/11/2007 Minute Number CAB.113 – The Receipt Award and Allocation of External Funding