

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL INFORMATION
REPORT TO ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No

meeting date: 16 SEPTEMBER 2009
title: FREE SWIMMING SCHEME
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: AMY GASKELL

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform committee of the operation of the free swimming scheme at Ribblesdale Pool that was implemented by the Council in April 2009.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The government announced in June 2008 that it intended to provide local authorities with funding to enable free swimming to be offered to the over 60's and under 16's. They stated it was the first step in achieving the government's aim of providing free swimming to everyone by 2012.
- 2.2 The Government has made available £15m per annum for 2009/10 and 2010/11 for the over 60's scheme and £25m per annum for 2009/10 and 2010/11 for the under 16's scheme.
- 2.3 The amounts allocated to each authority will be calculated based on a simple formula based upon the size of the local population aged 60 and over and aged 16 and under.
- 2.4 An additional capital grant will also be made available to those authorities who sign up to the free swimming scheme to enable those authorities to modernise pool facilities. The government is making £25m per annum available (2009/10 and 2010/11) to fund the capital grants.
- 2.5 Not all local authority districts have signed up to the free swimming scheme - 82% are to offer free swimming to the over 60's and 60% to offer free swimming for both the under 16's and the over 60's. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has confirmed that local authorities may not restrict the offer of free swimming to residents only and must make the offer available to all users of the pool.
- 2.6 Each local authority who has signed up to the scheme is required to monitor attendance of the under 16's and over 60's and report these figures to Sports England on a monthly basis.
- 2.7 It was expected that following the introduction of the scheme staffing costs would increase due to additional lifeguards being required to supervise the higher levels of attendance.
- 2.8 An increase in chemical treatment costs was also anticipated, again due to increased attendance.

3. GRANT INCOME

- 3.1 A revenue grant of £54,100 has been received from DCMS for 2009/10 to subsidise the admission income lost by offering both schemes.
- 3.2 An additional capital grant of £17,516 has also been awarded. It is intended that this grant will be used to fund improvements to the filtration of the small pool and

installation of UVA disinfection of the main pool. These improvements are expected to be carried out in December 2009 during the annual pool closure and have been incorporated into the Council's Capital Programme.

4. OPERATION

4.1 As mentioned previously local authorities offering free swimming are required to monitor and report attendance to Sports England. To allow this to happen the following has been implemented:

- Users over the age of 8 years old who are resident in the Ribble Valley have been issued with a Freedom Leisure Card. Each user is charged £1 for the issue of the card. (The actual purchase cost of the card to the Council is £0.57).
- Users under the age of 8 years old who are resident in the Ribble Valley are not issued with a card. This is to prevent them attending the pool without adult supervision. Attendance is monitored through the till – broken down by sex.
- Attendance of users who are not resident in the Ribble Valley is recorded on the till. Again, broken down by sex and also age ie junior (under 16) and adult concession (over 60's).

In all cases proof of age is required.

5. ATTENDANCE

5.1 For the period April – July 2009 the number of leisure cards issued (ie to users who are aged 8 years and over and resident in the Ribble Valley) was as follows:

Month	Number Issued
April	802
May	427
June	212
July	266
TOTAL	1,707

Attendance under the scheme for the months April – July 2009 has also been monitored and was as follows:

Month	Members		Non-Members	
	Under 16's	Over 60's	Under 16's	Over 60's
April	527	287	2,116	170
May	921	791	2,565	137
June	644	742	1,788	111
July	684	910	2,582	138
TOTAL	2,776	2,730	9,051	556

NB: Members consist of those users who have been issued with a leisure card ie residents of the Borough. Non-members consist of users who have not been issued with a leisure card ie under 8's (residents and non-residents) and all other non-residents.

The above table can be summarised as below:

Month (2009/10)	Under 16's	Over 60's
April	2,643	457
May	3,486	928
June	2,432	853
July	3,266	1,048
TOTAL	11,827	3,286

These figures can be compared to attendance for the same period in the previous year:

Month (2008/09)	Under 16's	Over 60's
April	3,027	274
May	2,775	322
June	1,781	220
July	2,171	299
TOTAL	9,754	1,115

It is therefore apparent that the number of under 16's and over 60's visiting the pool has increased following the implementation of the free swimming scheme.

6. POOL INCOME

- 6.1 Income for the period April – July 2009 was compared to the same period in the previous year to identify if there have been any real variations. Details can be seen as follows:

Income Type	2008/09 (£)	2009/10 (£)	Variation (£)
Freedom Card Membership	254	1,784	+ 1,530
School Swimming Lessons	8,577	8,265	- 312
Hire of Baths – Clubs	21,602	20,828	- 774
Hire of Baths – Other	620	2,120	+ 1,500
Hire of Baths – Galas	0	286	+ 286
Courses (Swimming Lessons)	8,712	22,061	+ 13,349
Contracts	4,961	3,791	- 1,170
Aquatone & Contracts	2,523	2,566	+ 43
Adult Admissions	26,811	26,136	- 675
Junior Admissions	15,042	829	- 14,213
TOTAL	89,102	88,666	- 436

As can be seen above the overall impact on income from admissions/courses has been minimal following the introduction of the free swimming scheme.

7. POOL COSTS

- 7.1 As mentioned previously, there were concerns that staffing costs may increase as a result of offering the scheme. After consulting with the Leisure Facilities Manager and also the Financials System there has been an increase. Details can be seen following.

	2008/09	2009/10	Variance
Salaries	24,646	26,164	+ 1,518
Salaries Overtime	2,421	2,564	+ 143
Pool Attendants Wages	15,391	19,449	+ 4,058
Pool Attendants Overtime	2,668	2,182	- 486
Instructors Wages	12,287	13,861	+ 1,574
Instructors Overtime	1,544	929	- 615
TOTAL	58,957	65,149	+ 6,192

It must be noted that of the £6,192 increase. £4,614 is due to employee annual salary increments. Therefore the actual increase due to extra hours worked is £1578. This increase in costs can be adequately covered by the aforementioned revenue grant received from DCMS.

7.2 There was also a concern that filtration costs would increase due to increased usage. Actual costs incurred for the period April – July 2009 have decreased in comparison to same period during 2008/09 (decrease of £1,005). This is due to the implementation of a new dosing system for chlorination tablets. The new system is more accurate and allows the number of tablets used for chlorination to be monitored and regulated. The previous system did not allow this to happen, and a crude method of dosing was used, resulting in higher costs.

8. SWIMMING SESSIONS

8.1 Following the implementation of the scheme the existing programme of swimming sessions offered has been amended as follows:

- More adult only sessions during the evenings
- Senior citizen sessions three mornings a week have been restricted to those aged 60 and above. Previously elderly swimmers under this age could be admitted.
- 'Fun Swim' sessions have been restricted to one session on a Saturday, rather than two.

9. LIFEGUARD COVER

9.1 The increase in attendance at the pool could lead to the potential risk of there being inadequate lifeguard cover of the pools. The Leisure Facilities Manager has confirmed that during public swimming sessions the minimum number of lifeguards required are always present. The lifeguard to swimmers ratio for public sessions can be seen as follows:

Pool/Session	Number of Swimmers	Lifeguards Needed	Maximum Capacity
Large Pool Public Swimming	Up to 40	1	120
	41 – 80	2	
	80 – 120	3	
Small Pool Public Swimming	Up to 40	1	40
Large Pool Fun Swim	Up to 10	1	90
	11 - 50	2	
	51 – 75	3	
	75 – 90	4	

9.2 During non-public sessions eg ladies only sessions, lifeguard cover is based upon prior knowledge of attendance.

9.3 Duty Officers also provide additional lifeguard cover as required.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The free swimming scheme appears to be running well, with uptake being popular.
- 10.2 As confirmed by the Leisure Facilities Manger there does not appear to be a significant increase in costs following the introduction of the scheme.
- 10.3 Overall income though admissions has not been significantly affected by the introduction of the scheme.

AMY GASKELL
SENIOR AUDITOR

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