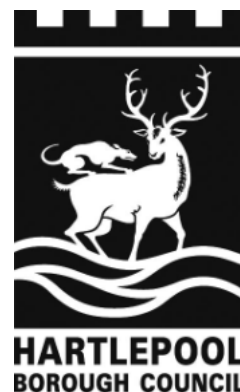


CULTURE, LEISURE AND TOURISM PORTFOLIO

DECISION SCHEDULE



Tuesday, 20 July 2010

at 10.00 am

**in Committee Room C
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

Councillor H Thompson, Cabinet Member responsible for Culture, Leisure and Tourism will consider the following items.

1. KEY DECISIONS

No items

2. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 2.1 National Free Swimming Initiative – Cessation Of Government Funding –
Director of Child and Adult Services

3. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

No items

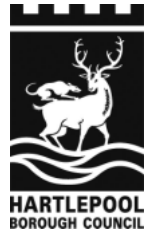
4. REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW OF SCRUTINY FORUMS

No items

CULTURE, LEISURE & TOURISM PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

20 July 2010



Report of: Director of Child and Adult Services

Subject: NATIONAL FREE SWIMMING INITIATIVE –
CESSATION OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

Further to the Portfolio reports of August 19 2008 and 11 November 2008 concerning the Government's launch of the national free swimming initiative between the period April 2009 to March 2011, the report seeks to inform the Portfolio Holder on the cessation of Government funding in support of this programme effective 31 July 2010.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Details of the withdrawal of the available funding for the Free Swimming Initiative for Over 60's and Under 16's are given, effective 31 July 2010 and the consequent impact on revenue budgets.

Given the current financial climate and the lack of time given to find alternative sources of funding to allow the scheme to be continued, recommendations are given for the cessation of the scheme effective 31 July 2010.

Subject to Portfolio Holder approval regarding the cessation of the scheme, recommendations are also given for the necessary swimming charges that will need to be implemented effective 1 August 2010.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

Sport and Recreation is part of the Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-key

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio, 20 July, 2010.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

The Portfolio Holder is requested to:-

1. Note the announcement in relation to the removal of the Government's grant to support the Free Swimming Initiative for Over 60's and Under 16's effective 31 July 2010.
2. Note the grant awarded for the period 1 April - 31 July 2010 amounting to £9,118 for the Over 60's and £19,964 for the Under 16's provision leaving a financial shortfall of £55,897 for 2010/11.
3. Approve the cessation of the Free Swimming Programme for Over 60's and Under 16's effective 31 July 2010.
4. Subject to the Portfolio Holder approving the cessation of the Free Swimming Programme, approve the consequent swim charges as detailed in Section 5 applicable from 1 August 2010.
5. Approve the 'freezing' of the Active Card charge for the remainder of the financial year to allow for an adequate assessment of take-up to be monitored by Officers.

Report of: Director of Child and Adult Services

Subject: NATIONAL FREE SWIMMING INITIATIVE –
CESSATION OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. Further to the Portfolio reports of August 19 2008 and 11 November 2008 concerning the Government's launch of the national free swimming initiative between the period April 2009 to March 2011, the report seeks to inform the Portfolio Holder on the cessation of Government funding in support of this programme effective 31 July 2010.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Portfolio Holder will be aware that the Council was invited to take part in the national free swimming initiative for Over 60's and Under 16 year olds for a two year period from April 2009. The grant allocation offered by the Government for each of the respective age groups was calculated according to a formula based on the size of the local populations of those age groups in the participating local authorities, using census data to determine local populations.
- 2.2 As a consequence having accepted the Government's offer, the Council received revenue funding in support of the Over 60's programme of £26,848 per year to cover the period 2009 - 2010 and 2010 -2011. Similarly, £58,131 per annum was also made available to support free provision for the Under 16's. Hartlepool PCT also provided £20,000 partnership funding in support of the overall initiative.
- 2.3 Having agreed to take part in the initiative, Officers were also given the opportunity to bid for capital funding to make improvements to our swimming pool provision in order to make facilities more attractive and more in keeping with user needs and expectations. As a consequence of a successful application and as the Portfolio Holder is aware, a considerable refurbishment programme has been undertaken at Mill House Leisure Centre.

3 CESSATION OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING

- 3.1 The Portfolio Holder will be aware of several recent Government announcements concerning Department spending cuts and the cessation of funding for some programmes and initiatives. As part of this, the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, on behalf of the five funding Departments, announced on 17 June that

the resource funding for the Government's Free Swimming Programme would cease on 31 July 2010.

- 3.2 Officers were advised of this by email on June 17th and then subsequently by letter, that the intention was to cease this programme and pay those local authorities participating in the free swimming programme a grant to cover the provision of free swimming for the period 1 April 2010 – 31 July 2010 only.
- 3.3 Further to this correspondence, Officers received notification by email on July 7 the details of the grant being made available to the Council to cover the period to 31 July 2010. This amounts to £9,118 for the Over 60's and £19,964 for the Under 16's provision.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Without the continued financial support of the Government, it will be difficult to continue to offer the free swimming programme from August 1 onwards for the remainder of the year without having a severe detrimental impact on revenue budgets.
- 4.2 If we did continue to operate the programme, the Council would be faced with a funding shortfall of £55,897. Given the current financial difficulties that the Council is facing and the impossible task of finding alternative funding sources within the timeframe allowed, Officers have concluded that there is no option other than to cease the programme, effective 31 July 2010.
- 4.3 Should the Portfolio Holder approve this course of action, it will necessitate the introduction of some new swimming charges effective 1 August. Under normal circumstances, these would have been brought to Portfolio for approval before the start of the new financial year; however, under the circumstances, we could not have possibly foreseen the need for this.

5. SWIMMING CHARGES

- 5.1 The Active Card is the Council's version of a Leisure Card that enables preferential member rates and booking facilities to be offered to anyone who purchase the cards as well as concessionary rates to Borough residents only, subject to certain eligibility criteria. Active Cards, in this case were issued free of charge to residents.
- 5.2 Owing to the need to monitor those accessing the Free Swimming Initiative, the scheme was linked to the Active Card whereby in order to swim free of charge, participants had to be in possession of a card. However, with the launch of the initiative, we were unable to make any charges for the Active Card and these were therefore removed.

Latterly however, owing to the volume of cards being issued, we were able under the grant criteria, to set an administrative charge of £2.00 which is the current charge in place for the card.

- 5.3 With the direct link to the Active Card therefore, any Over 60's or Under 16's without a card paid normal casual swimming charges. These charges had been set as a consequence during the 2010/11 pricing review as follows:-

- Casual Adult £2.70
- Casual Junior £1.80

- 5.4 The Portfolio Holder will note however that there is not a specific Casual Over 60's charge in place and as a consequence, Over 60's without an Active Card have paid the Casual Adult rate to date. This does not match the current charging rates in place amongst neighbouring Local Authorities, thus, in order to rectify this, keep participation levels up and encourage Over 60's to swim, Officers believe that it would now be an appropriate to introduce some specific Over 60's charges.

- 5.5 Having taking account of neighbouring Local Authority charges as well as those identified within the CIPFA Culture, Sport and Recreation Statistical data, overall therefore, the following swimming charges for 2010/11 are recommended as follows:-

CATEGORY	PRICE (£)	COMMENTS
Casual Adult	2.70	Charge already in place
Member Adult	2.10	Charge already in place
Concession Adult	1.40	Charge already in place
Casual Over 60's	2.20	New charge 01.08.10
Member Over 60's	1.70	New charge 01.08.10
Concession Over 60's	1.25	New charge 01.08.10
Casual Junior	1.80	Charge already in place
Member Junior	1.50	New charge 01.08.10
Concession Junior	1.10	New charge 01.08.10

- 5.5 It is hoped that the introduction of the Over 60's charges as well as the availability of concessionary rates will help to compensate in some way for the loss of the free swimming scheme. At the moment also, Officers are keen to leave the current £2.00 charge in place for the Active Card to allow for an assessment of the take-up of it in comparison with previous years where higher charges had been in place. It is intended that further recommendations will be made concerning this during the pricing review for 2011/12.

- 5.6 Overall, Officers believe that the introduction of these charges will make up the financial shortfall created by the loss of the Government grant.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Portfolio Holder is requested to:-

1. Note the announcement in relation to the removal of the Government's grant to support the Free Swimming Initiative for Over 60's and Under 16's effective 31 July 2010.
2. Note the grant awarded for the period 1 April - 31 July 2010 amounting to £9,118 for the Over 60's and £19,964 for the Under 16's provision leaving a financial shortfall of £55,897 for 2010/11.
3. Approve the cessation of the Free Swimming Programme for Over 60's and Under 16's effective 31 July 2010.
4. Subject to the Portfolio Holder approving the cessation of the Free Swimming Programme, approve the consequent swim charges as detailed in Section 5 applicable from 1 August 2010.
5. Approve the 'freezing' of the Active Card charge for the remainder of the financial year to allow for an adequate assessment of take-up to be monitored by Officers.

CONTACT OFFICER: Pat Usher, Sport and Recreation Manager

Background Papers

Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Report August 19 2008 – Government Announcement on Free Swimming Scheme.

Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Report November 11 2008 - National Free Swimming Initiative – Further Update