



**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 2 October 2008

**Subject:** FREE SWIMMING FOR ALL PROPOSALS – CAPITAL FUNDING

**Report of:** Director of Adult Services, Chief Executive - Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust

**Contact officer:** Martin Eden 01942 488578

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**Purpose / summary:** To seek Cabinet approval to apply for Capital funding from Central Government to refurbish the swimming pools, plant and equipment and changing room facilities at three sites across the Borough. The bid will need to be submitted by 15 October 2008.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** Not to apply for Central Government funding and not to refurbish swimming pools, plant and equipment and changing room facilities at three sites across the Borough.

The refurbishment of the swimming pools, plant and equipment and changing room facilities at three sites would assist in encouraging new customers to use the swimming pool facilities as part of the Government's free swimming scheme.

This refurbishment would encourage sedentary and inactive adults to become more physically active, which would positively impact on their health and well-being.

**Recommendation / decision:** That Cabinet approves the decision and prioritises the capital funding bids to Sport England. A suggested priority list is included in the report.

**Key Decision:** This report involves a key decision within ground(s) 1.

The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 14 October 2008

This item is included in the Forward Plan.

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial:

Within existing Council resources, supported by capital funding from Central Government in 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.

There is no identified revenue funding for Tyldesley Pool beyond 2010/2011. The current subsidy is c. £135,000. There is also no ongoing commitment from Central Government or the PCT for their contribution to free swimming beyond 2010/2011.

Staffing:

None. This would need to be reviewed for 2011/2012 and beyond.

Policy:

SHAPE Policy.

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?

No. A full diversity impact assessment will be produced prior to the submission of bids for capital funding at Stage 2.

Wards affected:

All.

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

No

**If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?**

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

Yes – if the proposals are approved, capital funding bids will be submitted to Government to refurbish swimming pool facilities in Ashton, Hindley and Tyldesley over the next two years.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

No

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

**For Cabinet reports only:**

|                                     |          |             |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| Categorisation of the report        | <b>x</b> |             | <b>x</b> |
|                                     |          |             |          |
| Discussion leading to a decision    | <b>x</b> | Discussion  |          |
| Monitoring                          |          | Decision    |          |
| Sharing for corporate understanding |          | Information |          |

**Tracking/Process:**

|       |                     |              |          |
|-------|---------------------|--------------|----------|
|       | Consultation        | Ward Members | Partners |
|       |                     |              | PCT      |
| Panel | Overview & Scrutiny | Cabinet      | Council  |

**Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.**

Cabinet report - 30 September 2004, Getting Wigan Active : A New Vision for Leisure & Cultural Services

Written Ministerial Statement on Free Swimming by Rt Hon A. Burnham, MP and Minister for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport – 17 July 2008

Letter from DCMS to Chief Executives of local authorities in England regarding the arrangements for the Government's free swimming programme – 29 July 2008

Cabinet report on free swimming for all proposals - 21 August 2008  
Wigan Town Hall,  
Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust

Proper Officer Bernard Walker

Date 21 September 2008

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

1.1 On 6 June 2008, the Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport and the Secretary of State for Health announced details of the Government's free swimming scheme in partnership with local government. This cross-Government announcement set out a £140 million package comprising of £80 million of revenue funding to provide free swimming for people aged 60 and over and for children aged up to 16 and £60m million capital funding to modernise swimming pool provision.

### **1.2 Revenue Funding**

#### **1.2.1 Free swimming for the over 60s (funding pot 1)**

Central Government is making available £15 million per annum in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011 to enable local authorities to provide free swimming for people aged over 60. Wigan Council's allocation from funding pot 1 is £90,558.

#### **1.2.2 Free swimming for the under 16s (funding pot 2)**

Central Government is making available £25 million per annum in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011 to enable local authorities to provide free swimming for people aged 0-16. Wigan Council's allocation from funding pot 2 will be confirmed by Government by 30 September 2008.

#### **1.2.3 Current position – revenue funding**

At the Cabinet meeting on 21 August 2008, Members' approved proposals to deploy the revenue funding that the Council would have received for free swimming for the over 60's and the under 16's (which will be a minimum of £180k per annum) along with match-funding from Ashton, Wigan and Leigh PCT to provide free swimming for all sections of the population of Wigan from 1 April 2009 for a period of two years.

It is not yet possible to quantify the total amount of revenue funding available until we know the Council's allocation from funding pot 2. This will be confirmed by 30 September 2008.

Subject to sufficient funding being available from pots 1 and 2, Members' also approved that a swimming co-ordinator would be employed on a two year contract to promote the Free Swimming for All scheme and focus particular effort on target groups. Targeted free swimming lessons would also be made available for Adults and Juniors with most need.

### 1.3 Capital Funding

#### 1.3.1 Modernising pool provision – capital reward fund (funding pot 3)

Central Government is making available £10 million of capital funding in funding pot 3 to modernise pool provision. All authorities that sign up to participate in free swimming for the over 60's and the under 16's will be entitled to a one-off capital grant in 2008 – 2009 This funding will be allocated amongst authorities, based on the size of the population of the Borough.

#### 1.3.2 Modernising pool provision – capital challenge fund (funding pot 4)

Central Government is also making available £25 million capital per annum in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011 to modernise pool provision and support more ambitious plans for free swimming. Local authorities which have committed to providing free swimming for the under 16's and the over 60's will be invited to submit costed plans for funding pot 4 by no later than 15 October 2008.

### 1.4 Current Position – Capital Funding

1.4.1 Because Wigan Council already provides free swimming for people over 60 and children under 16, the Council will be entitled to an allocation of capital funding from funding pot 3 to modernise pool provision. The size of the allocation will be confirmed by Government by 30 October 2008.

1.4.2 Wigan Council will also be able to submit capital funding bids to funding pot 4 in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011 to modernise pool provision.

1.4.3 Council owned swimming pool facilities are located at the following buildings:

- Ashton Leisure Centre
- Hindley Pool
- Howe Bridge Sports Centre
- Leigh Indoor Sports Centre
- Tyldesley Pool
- Wigan International Pool

1.4.4 **Ashton Leisure Centre** - is a joint use centre, located in a residential area of the town. The centre is used by pupils of Cansfield High School and local primary schools for school swimming lessons in the daytime and is well used by the community during the evenings and at weekends.

Over the past five years, the site has received some investment in plant and equipment. The site has also benefited from the refurbishment of the fitness suite. Visitor numbers have increased due to the free swimming initiatives and the increasing popularity of the fitness suite.

The site has capital requirements to improve and sustain the swimming pool facility and to encourage increased swimming usage.

- 1.4.5 **Hindley Pool** – the site lies at the heart of Hindley's largest Council housing estate, and although the site is in a poor state of repair due to lack of investment over recent years, it is still recognised as an essential community swimming facility. The Trust invested £130k in 2006 to provide disability changing facilities and hoist facilities, to provide a swimming centre of excellence for people with disabilities.

The site has capital requirements to improve and sustain the swimming pool facility and to encourage increased swimming usage.

- 1.4.6 **Howe Bridge Sports Centre** - is a successful, well used district facility serving the east of the borough with wet and dry facilities. Over the past five years, both the Council and the Trust have made significant investment totalling in excess of £800k to modernise and improve the pool plant and equipment and refurbish the pool changing facilities.

As a result, there is limited opportunity to invest further capital funding at the site over the next two years to improve the pool facilities to sustain the high level of usage.

- 1.4.7 **Leigh Indoor Sports Centre** – The site opened to the public in January 2008 and will not require any capital investment within the next two years.
- 1.4.8 **Tyldesley Pool** – is a converted cinema, which has limited swimming and ancillary facilities. The building is in a poor state of repair and the pool has a relatively short life-span in comparison with other pool facilities.

On 30 September 2004, Cabinet agreed to review the future of Tyldesley Pool when the new swimming pool facilities open to the public at Leigh Sports Village. The new swimming pool at Leigh Sports Village opened in January 2008. However, it was not possible to review the future of Tyldesley Pool at that time because Wigan International Pool was due for demolition as part of the PFI scheme and, had Tyldesley Pool closed in January 2008, there would have been insufficient water space across the Borough to accommodate schools, clubs and the Swim Scheme of Excellence. Accordingly, the Council agreed to review the future of Tyldesley Pool upon the opening of the new pool facilities in the town centre of Wigan in 2010/11.

It should be noted that usage of Tyldesley Pool is lower in comparison to the other pools across the Borough. Once the new pool facilities in the town centre of Wigan re-open in 2011, it would be possible to close Tyldesley Pool and relocate the schools, clubs and existing customer base to Howe Bridge Sports Centre and Leigh Sports Village. It would also be possible to consider alternative management arrangements for Tyldesley Pool involving the swimming club, the Swim Scheme of Excellence and the local schools.

However, the Free Swimming for All scheme is due to commence in Wigan from 1 April 2009 for a period of two years, and Government has stated that they shall use the evidence from these first two years to inform future funding and delivery arrangements.

If the Free Swimming for All scheme is as popular as anticipated, and if the scheme continues beyond the initial two year period, it would prove more difficult to close Tyldesley Pool and relocate the schools, clubs and existing customer base to Howe Bridge Sports Centre and Leigh Sports Village, as both of these pools will be in great demand as a result of the Free Swimming for All scheme.

If alternative management arrangements were considered for Tyldesley Pool, any new arrangements would have to safeguard the existing pool programme, as any capital funding grant received would be allocated on the basis of the site maximising participation in swimming. Sport England has stated in their prospectus that they would claw back the grant if the project ceases to operate for any reason within the terms of the grant.

Tyldesley Pool has considerable capital requirements to improve and sustain the swimming pool facility in order to encourage increased swimming usage. This funding opportunity is the only likely opportunity for such investment.

- 1.4.8 **Wigan International Pool** - The site closed to the public on 21 September 2008 and will be demolished in the coming months as part of the Council's PFI scheme to develop a Joint Service Centre and new replacement swimming pool and leisure facilities in the town centre of Wigan.

## **2.0 PROPOSALS - CAPITAL FUNDING POTS 3 & 4**

### **2.1 Capital Reward Fund (funding pot 3)**

- 2.1.1 It is proposed that Wigan Council deploys the capital funding from funding pot 3 to support the purchase of a range of portable equipment to help maximise swimming participation over the two years of the Government's free swimming scheme. The Capital Challenge Fund (pot 4) does not allow for the purchase of portable equipment for the pools.

## **2.2 Capital Challenge Fund (funding pot 4)**

- 2.2.1 It is proposed that the Council submits capital funding bids to Sport England for the first round of the Capital Challenge Fund in 2009/2010 for three pool facilities: Tyldesley Pool, Ashton Leisure Centre pool and Hindley Pool.
- 2.2.2 Sport England has requested that the Council prioritise the Capital funding bids to enable them to allocate the capital funding to the priorities of the Council.

## **3.0 Prioritisation for Capital Bids**

- 3.1 It is proposed that Capital funding bids are submitted for the three pool sites in the following priority order:

1. Tyldesley Pool
2. Ashton Leisure Centre pool
3. Hindley Pool

## **3.2 Tyldesley Pool**

- 3.2.1 Tyldesley Pool is the least used of the three pools and attracted 52,123 casual swim visits in 2007/08. However, the pool is also extensively used by Tyldesley Swimming Club, Tyldesley Water Polo Club and the local schools. The pool is in a poor state of repair due to lack of capital investment and the dilapidated condition of the heritage store located adjacent to the pool hall.
- 3.2.2 If the pool is to remain open beyond the opening of the new swimming facilities at the PFI scheme 2011, and if the pool is to remain a Council asset, it is likely that the Council will have to invest considerable sums of money over the coming 7-10 years to sustain the facility and continue operating it for public use.
- 3.2.3 Accordingly, the refurbishment scheme for Tyldesley Pool is a much larger scheme than the refurbishment proposals for Ashton and Hindley, due to the poor condition of the building. It is estimated that this scheme will cost c. £900k to complete.
- 3.2.4 Capital funding is required to modernise Tyldesley Pool to enable the site to increase participation in swimming. The Capital funding would be spent on improving the external fabric of the building, including the walls and the roof associated with the large dilapidated heritage store adjacent to the swimming pool. Pool plant and equipment would be replaced where necessary, and the quality of the changing rooms would be improved to provide better changing facilities for people with disabilities. The pool hall

would also be refurbished to provide a more attractive swimming environment for casual swimmers.

### **3.3 Ashton Leisure Centre**

3.3.1 The pool facilities at Ashton Leisure Centre are the most used of the three pools and attracted 99,741 casual swim visits in 2007/08. The pool is also extensively used by Ashton Swimming Club and the local schools.

3.3.2 It is anticipated that a considerable number of the casual swimmers who used Wigan Pool will relocate to Ashton Leisure Centre for casual swimming. It is anticipated that this site is likely to achieve the highest increase in casual swimming as a result of the universal free swimming initiative.

3.3.3 Capital funding is required to modernise Ashton Leisure Centre to enable the site to increase participation in swimming. The capital funding would be spent on refurbishing the poor quality changing rooms, including better changing facilities for people with disabilities; refurbishing the pool hall to provide a more attractive swimming environment for casual swimmers; undertaking priority plant repairs and remodelling the entrance to the facility to provide better and more suitable reception facilities for customers. It is estimated that this scheme will cost c. £400k to complete.

### **3.4 Hindley Pool**

3.4.1 Hindley Pool is the second most used pool of the three pools and attracted 88,812 casual swim visits in 2007/08. The pool is also extensively used by Hindley Swimming Club and the local schools. Capital funding is required to modernise Hindley Pool to enable the site to increase participation in swimming.

3.4.2 The capital funding would be spent on refurbishing the poor quality public and school changing rooms, refurbishing the pool hall, undertaking priority plant repairs and refurbishing the external elevations to the building. It is estimated that this scheme will cost c. £400k to complete.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

4.1 Wigan Council is well placed to apply to the Government's capital programme, as free swimming for people over 60 and under 16 has been Council policy for some time. This has proved very successful, with a 42% increase in swimming for 16 and unders and a 19% increase for the over 60's. In addition, unlike many other Boroughs, Wigan has experienced an increase in swimming against a national picture of declining visit to pools.

The Council will receive a capital grant from pot 3: the size of the grant is not yet known but it will enable some refurbishment work to be undertaken at one of the pools requiring capital investment.

- 4.2 The Government's Capital funding scheme could provide much needed capital investment to enable refurbishment and maintenance work to be undertaken in three pool facilities across the Borough should our bid be successful.
- 4.3 More accurate estimates will be tabled at the meeting once we have received the detailed information from NPS.