

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 21 August 2008

Subject: FREE SWIMMING FOR ALL PROPOSAL

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

Contact officer: Martin Eden 01942 488578

Purpose / summary: To seek Cabinet approval to apply for Central Government funding to part-fund the provision of free swimming for all sections of the population of Wigan for 2009/10 and 2010/11. The additional funding would be made available by the PCT.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: Not to apply for Central Government funding and not to provide free swimming for all within the borough.

The provision of free swimming for all could encourage thousands of 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.

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 2 September 2008

This item is not included in the Forward Plan.

Risks / Implications:

Financial: Within existing Council resources, supported by funding from Central Government and the PCT, for 2 years only at this stage.

Staffing: None.

Policy: SHAPE Policy.

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? No, a full diversity impact assessment will be produced for the introduction of the scheme.

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, it will provide free casual swimming for all sections of the population of Wigan for two years, commencing from 1 April 2009.

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

No – the proposal extends an existing policy of free swimming for the 16 and unders and the over 60s and is in line with the SHAPE Policy.

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 | x | | x |
| | | | |
| Discussion leading to a decision | x | 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

Wigan Town Hall
Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust

Proper Officer Bernard Walker

Date 4 August 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 contributions from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department of Health, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

1.2 The free swimming scheme, and the arrangements it sets out, have been developed across Government with the help of the Amateur Swimming Association, the Local Government Association, Sport England and others.

1.3 The Government is keen to encourage as many local authorities as possible to participate in making swimming free for over 60s and under 16s in their local communities, but also to stimulate ambitious authorities to maximise and sustain uptake through other initiatives such as free lessons for adults who cannot swim, the introduction of swimming co-ordinators and to provide incentives for the most ambitious to move further towards a universal free swimming offer.

1.4 Free swimming for the over 60s (funding pot 1)

1.4.1 Swimming is the most popular participation activity for the over 60's, with 7% taking part in swimming at least once a month. Swimming has the same health benefits as other forms of physical activity. Additionally, regular swimming builds endurance, muscle strength and cardio-vascular fitness and, as a low impact activity, is ideal for the elderly and those recovering from injury. The Government is keen to encourage as many local authorities as possible to participate in making swimming free for over 60s in their area. To achieve this, Central Government is making available £15 million per annum in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011.

1.5 Free swimming for the under 16s (funding pot 2)

1.5.1 Swimming remains a popular activity for children, with 38% of 11-16 year olds participating in swimming in and out of school at least once a month. The Government is keen to extend the principle of making swimming free to the under 16s. To support this, Central Government is making available £25 million per annum in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011.

1.6 Timescales and funding (funding pots 1 and 2)

1.6.1 Local Authorities in England have been asked to confirm, by no later than 15 September 2008, whether they wish to take up this offer to provide free swimming for the over 60's. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport will then write to those local authorities who wish to take up the offer. The letter will set out the resource funding the local authority will be allocated from funding pot 1 in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011. This allocation is calculated according

to a simple formula based on the size of the local over 60's population. Funding will be distributed through a specific grant, details of which will be set out in the letter to local authorities. Wigan's allocation from funding pot 1 is £90,558.

1.6.2 All local authorities who choose to participate in providing free swimming for the over 60's are also invited to submit, no later than 15 September 2008, an expression of interest to make swimming free for under 16s.

1.6.3 For these authorities, details of their prospective allocation from funding pot 2 will be provided no later than 30 September 2008. Authorities will then be invited to confirm, by no later than 15 October 2008, whether they wish to take up this offer. Wigan Council's allocation from the £15m per annum available in funding pot 1 is £90,558. The Council's allocation from the £25m per annum available in funding pot 2 is not yet known but it would be greater than the sum allocated from pot 1. The funding from pot 2 will again be distributed through a specific grant.

1.7 Extended swimming provision

1.7.1 Local Authorities who already offer free swimming that would otherwise have qualified for this funding may deploy their allocation to fund initiatives which will further increase and sustain participation for the under 16s and extend such measures to wider groups of the population.

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

1.8.1 To support local authorities in making swimming free for the over 60's and under 16's, Central Government is also making available £10 million of capital funding in 2008 – 2009 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.

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

1.9.1 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.

1.9.2 Sport England will administer the capital challenge fund on behalf of the Government, and will publish a prospectus for bids for funding by 31 July 2008. Local authorities which have committed to pot 1 and pot 2 will be invited to submit costed plans for funding pot 4 by no later than 15 October 2008.

2.0 CURRENT POSITION

2.1 Wigan Council was the first local authority in England to provide free swimming for children aged 5-16 and adults aged 60 and over. Since these two free swimming initiatives commenced, we have experienced a 42% increase in Junior swimming and a 19% increase in swimming by people aged 60 plus.

2.2 In line with the arrangements set out in the Government's free swimming scheme, Wigan Council would be able to deploy the funding that it would have

received to introduce free swimming for over 60's and the under 16's and use this funding to maximise and sustain participation through other initiatives such as: free lessons for adults who cannot swim; the introduction of swimming co-ordinators; the introduction of universal free swimming for all sections of the population of Wigan.

- 2.3 Officers from Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust have met with officers of the Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Primary Care Trust to discuss the Government's free swimming scheme and the feasibility of introducing free swimming for all sections of the population of Wigan.
- 2.4 The PCT has identified match funding of up to £360k per annum from 1 April 2009 to enable the free swimming initiative to be made available for all sections of the population in Wigan. The PCT would wish for participation in the free swimming scheme to be monitored and evaluated to demonstrate the longer term impact on health.

3.0 FREE SWIMMING FOR ALL – REVENUE FUNDING: POTS 1 & 2

- 3.1 It is proposed that Wigan Council confirms with the Department for Culture Media and Sport, by 15 September 2008, that it intends to deploy the 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) to support fund free swimming for all sections of the population of Wigan.
 - 3.1.1 The Government funding, along with match funding from Ashton Wigan and Leigh PCT, should be used to provide free swimming for all sections of the population of Wigan from 1 April 2009 for a period of two years.
 - 3.1.2 It is not possible to quantify the total amount of funding available until we know the Council's allocation from funding pot 2. We can assume that the Council will receive a minimum of £180k pa from Central Government; in addition, WLCT, in partnership with the Council, is currently investing £180k pa on free swimming for the over 60's and children aged 0-16. The PCT has agreed to match fund this investment by contributing a further £360k pa. Therefore, the total amount of funding available for investment can be assumed to be £540k pa. This may increase depending on the Council's allocation from funding pot 2.
- 3.2 The Free Swimming for All scheme would be administered via the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's existing Lifestyle card scheme. This would enable the Trust to measure and monitor the 'take up' of the Free Swimming for All scheme, and provide information for the PCT to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of the health benefits of the scheme. This would also enable the Trust to undertake targeted marketing of the scheme to those areas of the borough where the increase in 'take up' is least evident.
- 3.3 Subject to sufficient funding being available in pots 1 and 2, it is also proposed that:

3.3.1 A swimming co-ordinator is employed on a two year contract to promote the Free Swimming for All scheme and focus particular effort on the following target groups:

- People aged 17 – 25 years
- At risk groups
- Workplace initiatives – linking to workplace health
- Top 10 % of most deprived Super Output Areas

3.3.2 Targeted free swimming lessons are also made available for Adults and Juniors with most need. A mechanism for this is still under discussion.

3.3.3 A social marketing campaign is implemented to promote the free swimming scheme and the health benefits which can be derived from participation in swimming as a safe and enjoyable activity.

4.0 RISKS

4.1 Financial Support

4.1.1 Although we do not, as yet, know what our allocation will be from funding pot 2, it can safely be presumed that there should be sufficient funding in total to provide free swimming.

4.2 If Funding is Limited

4.2.1 The employment of a swimming co-ordinator and the provision of swimming lessons would provide additional benefits for the Free Swimming for All scheme but they are not crucial to the success of the scheme.

4.2.2 It is vitally important that the Free Swimming for All scheme is effectively marketed and promoted to ensure that the people of Wigan are aware of the scheme and how it benefits them. If there was not sufficient funding available for a social marketing campaign, WLCT would market the Free Swimming for All scheme using tried and tested means, including the Borough Life and Wigan One magazines. We would also work with partners: the Council, the ALMO and the PCT, to raise awareness of the scheme across the Borough.

4.3 Time Limitation

4.3.1 The additional scheme, i.e. beyond that which we currently provide for 16 and unders and over 60's, is only funded for 2 years. Neither the Government nor the PCT can guarantee funding beyond that time, although the Government has expressed a wish that all local authorities operate universal free swimming by 2012. If the scheme had to be withdrawn at the end of the 2 years, that may cause difficult public relations issues.

4.4 Water Capacity

4.4.1 At this stage it is hard to evaluate what the take-up will be for universal free swimming. There is a difficult timing issue because Wigan International Pool closes in September 2008, with the replacement facilities opening early in

2011. There will therefore already be pressure on the amount of water space available for casual swimming.

5.0 FREE SWIMMING FOR ALL – CAPITAL FUNDING: POTS 3 & 4

5.1 It is proposed that a further report is submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 2 October 2008 with proposals for how funding pot 3, Modernising Pool Provision – capital reward fund should be best allocated to maximise swimming participation within the borough.

5.2 This report will also make proposals for how the Council could best take advantage from the bidding process for the £25 million capital funding pot 4 Modernising Pool Provision – capital challenge fund which will be available in 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011 to modernise pool provision and support more ambitious plans for free swimming.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 One of the priorities for action within the Council's Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011 is to improve life expectancy and health.

5.2 We know that low levels of physical activity is one of the key determinants of poor health (along with obesity, smoking and high alcohol intake). The Active People survey confirmed that 21.2% of people in Wigan were active enough for it to positively affect their health. However, the latest Borough Health survey information confirms that 67% of those people living in the 10% most deprived super output areas are engaged in low or no physical activity compared with 60% for the borough.

5.3 The Free Swimming for All scheme would help to encourage thousands of adults to become more physically active, either as individuals or along with family and friends. If physical activity levels across the borough are increased it will positively impact on the health and well-being of people living within the borough.