

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE		
Report Title	Update on Free Swimming in Lewisham	
Key Decision	Yes	Item No. 5
Ward	All	
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services	
Class	Part 1	Date: 18 May 2016

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Healthier Communities Select Committee on the implementation of the proposal to end the offer of free swimming in Lewisham for those aged 16 or under and 60 or over.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The committee is recommended to:
- 2.2 note the background and information on free swimming and provide comment and feedback at the meeting on the ending of free swimming for those aged 16 or under from 1 October 2016.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Lewisham's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2020 '*Shaping our Future*' reflects the many individual strategies and plans endorsed by different agencies and partnerships in Lewisham. All are working with our citizens to build a successful and sustainable future. The key principles of this strategy are reflected throughout the new leisure contract to ensure regular delivery to local residents over the life of the contract.
- 3.2 These key principles are:
- Ambitious and achieving – where people are inspired and supported to fulfil their potential
 - Safer – where people feel safe and live free from crime, antisocial behaviour and abuse
 - Empowered and responsible – where people are actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities
 - Clean, green and liveable – where people live in high quality housing and can care for and enjoy their environment
 - Healthy, active and enjoyable – where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and well-being
 - Dynamic and prosperous – where people are part of vibrant communities and town centres, well connected to London and beyond.

4. Background and free swimming usage

- 4.1 In September 2015 Mayor and Cabinet received proposals to save £232,000 from the Obesity/Physical Activity element of Lewisham's Public Health Grant (Saving A16). £200,000 of this saving related to the ending of free swimming in the borough.
- 4.2 Following a referral from the Health Communities Select Committee Mayor and Cabinet agreed the savings but instructed that officers consider the ending of free swimming alongside wider contractual negotiations with leisure providers that are taking place to deliver £1,000,000 from 1 April 2017 (Saving L7) in order to investigate any possible mitigation.
- 4.3 Free swimming is available to Lewisham residents aged 16 and under and those 60 or over with a Lewisham Library card. The offer is available at both Fusion and 1Life centres.
- 4.4 In the financial year 2014/15 just under 14,000 individuals accessed free swims. The total number of free swims in the same period is 66,500. Data from April 2014 to July 2015 showed that the majority of people accessing free swimming do so infrequently - on average 4.8 times over the 15 month period.

5. Proposal to stop free swimming for those aged 16 and under

- 5.1 Public Health recommended the ending of free swimming from 1 April 2016, as part of identified savings for 2016/17 which was agreed subject to further work to limit the health impacts of the populations benefitting from the offer.
- 5.2 Following the Mayor and Cabinet decision in September 2015, Culture and Community Development Service has continued to pay for free swimming while considering this budget alongside a wider £1,000,000 savings target to be delivered from 1 April 2017 through a range of contractual and service changes.
- 5.3 As such it was necessary to determine which elements of the free swimming offer had significant impacts on health and should be protected if possible.
- 5.4 The Lewisham Public Health team consider that an individual needs to swim on average at least 3 times a month for it to have any physical health benefits. Sport England has a minimum measure of 30 minutes per week.
- 5.5 The number of those aged 16 or under swimming at a level which would sustain physical health benefits is low. During the period April 2015 to August 2015 less than 1% of 0-16 year olds accessing free swims, swam more than 3 times per month under the free swims programme (20 individuals). This compares to 8.3% of over 60s (133 individuals).
- 5.6 The low numbers of under 17s receiving any physical health benefit from free swimming questions the cost effectiveness and purpose of the offer.
- 5.7 Having re-examined the data it is clear that the implementation of the agreed savings for the offer to those aged 16 and under will have minimal health impacts with a more significant impact for the over 60s. As such officers have

confirmed that free swimming will continue for those over 60 under the terms of the Be Active scheme.

- 5.8 To allow enough time for this change to be effectively communicated to users, and to avoid ending free swimming during the school summer holidays it is recommended that free swimming for those aged 16 or under is stopped from 1 October 2016. Officers will work with Fusion, 1Life and the library service to ensure the change is communicated clearly to residents and users.
- 5.9 As part of the contractual negotiations with Fusion and 1 Life 60+ free swimming will continue under the funding available for the Be Active scheme. The ending of free swimming for those aged 16 and under will still deliver the full £200,000 per annum saving agreed in the original proposal.
- 5.10 Officers continue to work with Fusion and 1Life to deliver £1m savings target against the Leisure budget for 2017/18 and the committee will receive a full update on these proposals in September 2016.
- 5.11 Officers will also continue to work with Fusion and 1Life to increase numbers taking swimming lessons, either as part of the school curriculum or directly with the centres, and to ensure that scheduling of pool timetables promotes access for all Lewisham residents.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost to the Leisure budget to continue to provide free swimming for under 17s for 6 months (1 April – 30 September 2016) is £92,000. This figure can be absorbed with the Cultural and Community Development Service budget for 2016/17.
- 6.2 Officers are currently negotiating with both Fusion and 1Life to deliver the £1m savings target against the Leisure budget by 2017/18. These conversations are ongoing, but all possibilities are being looked at to provide a range of options for decision by Mayor and Cabinet during 2016.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 8.3 The proposal to stop swimming for under 17's clearly has a negative impact on young people. However, the statistics provided in section 5 suggest that those affected are a very small part of the population. Whilst it is unclear what the exact impact on under 17's swimming numbers will be; officers consider that significant numbers of young people will continue to access the swimming facilities within the borough's leisure centres through pay and play provision or via educational provision.

9. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 9.1 The provision of leisure activities can assist with reducing crime by providing diversionary activities for young people. However, the low numbers currently accessing free swimming is unlikely to have a direct impact on crime and disorder.

10. Environmental Implications

- 10.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

Background Documents

None

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