

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

23 May 2011

Report of the Chief Leisure Officer

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 EXTENSION OF SWIM SCHOOL PROGRAMME

Summary

This report develops previously approved proposals to extend the existing Swim School programme at Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool, including an assessment of the potential increase in income to the Council.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the last meeting of this Board it was recommended to Cabinet that proposals to extend the Swim Schools at Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool be pursued, with an implementation date of 1 September 2011, subject to a further report to the next meeting of this Board.

1.1.2 The previous report outlined a number of core operational principles that had been explored following a detailed external audit and extensive industry and customer consultation. Greater detail is contained in the section below including an estimate of the increased income likely to accrue for the revised arrangements.

1.2 Detailed Proposals

1.2.1 Continuous Assessment – The revised Swim School will operate for 45 weeks of the year allowing a two and five week break at Christmas and in the summer holidays respectively. This will promote continuous assessment, which provides pupils with the ability to move through the stages of the Swim School programme based upon ability rather than the constraints of fixed term courses. The only exceptions to this approach will be the Adult & Child lessons which will remain on a term time basis. These classes operate in the mornings and may prove difficult for parents to attend in the holidays if their child has older siblings. The day time programming of these classes would also prove more difficult to accommodate with the high volume of casual day time swimmers.

1.2.2 Cost and Payment Arrangements – the current payment arrangements are based upon a unit cost per lesson. Parents are required to pay in advance on a termly

basis. Under the revised arrangements the direct debit price will be reflective of the unit cost multiplied by the number of teaching weeks (45), then divided into twelve monthly payments. This payment option will be incentivised by the child receiving free annual membership and 4 free casual swims per calendar month. This will be controlled via the leisure management software at reception. Customers wishing to pay by direct debit will sign a 12 month contractual agreement after which time they may cancel with one month's notice.

Those who wish to continue to pay termly will be offered 15 week block payment options. However, this option will not attract any incentive and it is proposed that the unit cost will rise by 50 pence. It is hoped to attract 75% payment via direct debit after the first year of operation.

- 1.2.3 Swim School Co-ordinator – this post has been filled on an interim basis through the secondment of a Duty Manager at Tonbridge Swimming Pool who specialises in Swim School teaching. The role incorporates responsibility for programming, customer liaison, supervision of teaching staff, a link to administrative processes and the important function of direct customer liaison. It is anticipated that the role may become permanent in future should the overall approach prove successful.
- 1.2.4 Teaching Staff – the existing Swim School staff are all employed on a casual basis. The proposals require the offer of a form of permanent employment to the staff, which will provide greater continuity of teaching. The Leisure Contracts Manager is currently considering the way forward in liaison with Personnel Services and a number of meetings have been held with affected staff. In general, the response has been positive albeit that some teachers have expressed a desire to remain on a casual contract. It is expected that those teachers wishing to transfer will do so on 1 September 2011 for an initial one year temporary period, again pending the overall success of the new arrangements.
- 1.2.5 Teaching Plan – consideration has been given to a Teaching Plan that remains based upon the National Plan for the Teaching of Swimming but incorporates a more flexible approach to lesson planning. Premium lessons offering a ratio of 1:4 teachers to swimmers are incorporated in the first four levels of the Swim School in response to customer demand.
- 1.2.6 Income – The 2011/12 revenue estimate for the Swim School is £380,000 and it is anticipated that in a full year the impact of the measures above will accrue an additional £70,000. This increase will be off set by the increased cost of teaching staff resulting in an expected net increase of around £40,000.

This assessment of increased income would, therefore result in an additional £20,000 net income in 2011/12 which in turn will give some confidence in predicting future growth of income through the overall development of the Swim School. The Leisure Contracts Manager estimates the first full financial year of operation could see a net increase of income in excess of £60,000.

1.3 Timescale

- 1.3.1 It remains the objective to introduce the revised approach to the Swim School from 1 September 2011. In order to achieve the timescale, arrangements need to be finalised prior to the normal re-enrolment dates at the end of the summer term in July 2011.
- 1.3.2 It is the intention to inform existing and new customers through a series of newsletters, the site specific websites, e-mail communication and direct poolside engagement. This process has already commenced.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 As outlined in the report the proposals are expected to produce a significant net income benefit to the Council. This analysis has been undertaken in liaison with the Director of Finance.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The Indoor Leisure Operational Risk Register highlights the need to achieve annual financial targets for the facilities and that the result of failure to manage the associated risks could be financial, contractual and professional. The proposals above will assist in reducing the outlined risks by increasing income to the Leisure Services Business Unit.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Business Continuity/Resilience, Healthy Lifestyles and Young People.

1.9 Recommendation

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that the proposals to amend the Swim Schools at Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool outlined in the report be pursued, with an implementation date of 1 September 2011.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers: Nil

contact: Martin Guyton

Nil

Robert Styles
Chief Leisure Officer

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The Swim School programme at Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool and access to the facilities is inclusive.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The proposals will assist customers in terms of affordability and potential access to children who may benefit from being taught in smaller groups.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.