

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

URGENT ACTION - NO SPECIFIC POWERS

ACTION FOR WHICH CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAS DELEGATED
POWERS SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION WITH CHAIRMAN

SERIAL NO.....

SUBJECT MATTER: REVISION TO FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME

COMMITTEE TO WHICH MATTER RELATES: STRATEGY

REASON FOR ACTION BEING TAKEN OUT OF MEETING:

In view of the withdrawal with effect from 31 July 2010 of Government funding for the Free Swimming Programme, Officers consulted with the Political Leaders' Group (PLG) on 29 June on how this issue should be addressed. PLG agreed that a report should be submitted to Strategy Committee on 29 July, recommending that the scheme continue to the end of the school summer holidays but should then cease on 1 September. In effect, this meant that Babergh would provide full funding for the scheme throughout August, which could be accommodated within the 2010/11 budgetary provision for this scheme.

Officers have been in discussion on the proposed approach with South Suffolk Leisure (SSL), who run the programme. From these discussions, it is mutually agreed that at least one month's notice of cessation should be given to service users. SSL have also requested compensatory payments as set out in the Financial Implications section below. In order to achieve cessation of the scheme on 1 September and thereby avoid exceeding Babergh's overall budgetary provision for the scheme, it has become apparent that a decision cannot await the Strategy Committee meeting on 29 July and authority is sought to make that decision using powers delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Strategy Committee.

BACKGROUND:

The Free Swimming Programme was an initiative of the previous Government and was part funded by Government and part funded by the participating local authority. Babergh decided to participate in this scheme to support the Council's strategic objectives around healthy lifestyles and social inclusion. (Paper H104 Strategy Committee 18 September 2008 - Minute 68).

In addition to revenue funding from Government, participation in this scheme also attracted capital funding of c£200k, which has been invested in improvements and refurbishment at Hadleigh pool. The revenue support was expected to continue to March 2011, but has been terminated with effect from 31 July 2010 by the incoming Coalition Government.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (IF ANY):

The total annual costs of the free swimming programme for 2010/11 would have been c£120k, of which c£83k would have been met through Government grant. The budgetary provision for SSL to run this fully funded scheme therefore equated to around £10k per month, of which c£7k came from Government and c£3k came from Babergh. Withdrawal of Government funding wef 31 July would have led to a shortfall of c£55k in budgetary provision if the scheme had continued to 31 March 2011.

Although SSL receives its grant for this scheme on a monthly basis, it has demonstrated that the actual uptake of the scheme on a month to month basis is variable, with August being a peak period equating to more than £10k's worth of free usage. SSL would have expected the August "loss" of income to even out over other times of the year, particularly the winter months, when usage would be expected to equate to less than the £10k monthly grant funding. Cessation of the scheme from 1 September would therefore deprive SSL of the opportunity to be compensated later in the year for peak take up in August. SSL has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Officers that an additional £10k for August is a fair reflection of the peak take-up in August. The total payment of £20k therefore sought by SSL for August can be met within the agreed budgetary provision for free swimming in 2010/11.

ACTION AUTHORISED:

That Babergh provides full funding of £20,000 for the Free Swimming Programme for the month of August 2010, and that one month's notice be given by SSL to service users that this Programme will end with effect from 1 September 2010.

DATE ACTION AUTHORISED: 19 July 2010

I have been consulted on this matter details of which are given overleaf and have no observations to make.

.....
Chairman of Strategy Committee

19/7/10
.....
Date

I being the relevant Authorised Officer request authority for the above action to be taken

Signed Deputy Chief Executive
Authorised Officer

20/7/10
.....
Date

I being the duly authorised officer authorise the taking of the action referred to above

Signed
Chief Executive

19/7/10
.....
Date

Details reported to Committee for noting..... 29/7/10

- (NOTE: (i) This form to be completed and given to the Director of Corporate Services (Committee Services) for inclusion in the Register of Delegated Action and for reporting to the appropriate Committee. The signature of the Chief Executive should be obtained prior to the form being sent to Committee Services.
- (ii) If the Chairman is not available within a day to sign the form, please send it to Committee Services who will then arrange the necessary signature.