

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE CABINET BOARD**

Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Sub Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> September 2019

**REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION**  
**ANDREW THOMAS**

**MATTER: FOR INFORMATION**

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**NEW WELSH GOVERNMENT FREE SWIMMING INITIATIVE.**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To advise Members on the changes to the Welsh Government Free Swimming Initiative (FSI).

**2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 Sport Wales commissioned an independent review of Free Swimming in Wales (UK Research and Consultancy Services Ltd), on behalf of Welsh Government. The review has recommended significant changes to the scheme. (Provided as background paper)
- 2.2 Welsh Government Free Swimming Initiative “FSI a new approach”, is appended as Appendix 1

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Free swimming in Wales was introduced in 2003. At the time, it was the first national free swimming programme. It aimed to increase participation among young people (aged 16 and under), and older people (aged 60 plus). Free swimming is funded by the Welsh Government and delivered by local authorities, and since 2005 it has been managed by Sport Wales.
- 3.2 To date the scheme was subject to minimum criteria:-

**Under 16 provision:**

14 hours of free swimming per week per Local Authority area during all school holidays, of which a minimum of 7 hours would be structured aquatic activities.

**60+ provision:**

As a minimum, this includes free swimming for adults aged 60 and over during all public swimming sessions outside school holidays. Local Authorities are encouraged to extend the provision to all public sessions throughout the year where this is possible.

A minimum of 1 hour per day per Local Authority, and a minimum of 1 hour per week per pool, will be dedicated to a free structured instructor lead activity session such as swimming lessons, aqua aerobics etc. These activities should be targeted locally and ensure inclusive provision for older people, such as:

- 3.3 Celtic Leisure has traditionally provided a range of structured activities and free splash sessions above the minimum requirement.
- 3.4 As referred to in 1.1 an independent review of Free Swimming has been completed, the review has recommended significant changes to the scheme.
- 3.5 The review has recommended the continuation of the Free Swimming scheme, although the outcome requires Local Authorities to deliver in a more targeted way. The scheme will continue to provide free swimming opportunities for all young people under 16-years of age, and every person aged over 60.
- 3.6 Sport Wales expect the balance between the provision for U16 and Over 60s to be addressed, with clear prioritisation of provision being given to u16's.
- 3.7 Sport Wales have acknowledged that the pattern of service provision will change, and this is most likely to

result in changes to the access arrangements for the 60 plus age group.

- 3.8 Sport Wales have advised that they envisage that the most likely scenarios for the 60 plus age group will be that free access in the main will be limited to weekend and/or off peak times or a subsidised rate at more popular times.
- 3.9 Sport Wales have said they will expect there to be free provision for over 60's, but this may be alongside a subsidised offer for those who wish to access the scheme on a more frequent or regular basis.
- 3.10 Under the new scheme, a minimum criteria will not be set as a mandate for all Local Authorities, but there is a clear expectation from Sport Wales that for U16 this will be at least one free splash session on weekends in each of the pools, and at least 2 additional sessions per week in addition to the weekend offer during the summer holidays.
- 3.11. Celtic Leisure will be submitting their new Free Swimming Plan based on the new guidelines to Sport Wales for approval, as a condition of the grant. This document is appended as appendix 2

#### **4. Financial Impact**

- 4.1 The payment to Celtic Leisure for the Free Swimming Scheme is supported by grant funding received from the Welsh Government (via Sport Wales). The council is only liable to pay Celtic Leisure the actual sum received from the Welsh Government.
- 4.2 In recent years the annual grant received has been £151,500. The whole grant minus circa £15k, paid to NPT College group, for delivering free swimming at Cymmer pool, has been paid to Celtic Leisure.
- 4.3 Sport Wales have advised that from October 2019 the annual grant will be reduced by 50% to £75,500 as a result of the new delivery criteria.

## **5. Integrated Impact Assessment**

5.1 There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring / information purposes.

5.2 Sport Wales completed a national impact assessment which is provided as background paper.

## **6. Valleys Communities Impacts**

6.1 There is no implications as this report is for monitoring / information purposes.

## **7. Workforce Impacts**

7.1 There are no workforce issues associated with this report.

## **8. Legal Impacts**

8.1 There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

## **9. Risk Management**

9.1 There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

## **11 Consultation**

11.1 There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

## **12 Recommendation**

12.1 The report is for Information only.

## **13. Reasons for Proposed Decision**

13.1 The report is for Information only.

## **14. Implementation of Decision**

14.1 The report is for Information only.

## **15 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Free Swimming Initiative (FSI) – a new approach.

Appendix 2: Celtic Leisure free swimming plan 2019 - 20

## **16. List of Background Papers**

1. UK Research and Consultancy Services Ltd  
“A Review of Free Swimming in Wales”
2. Sport Wales Impact Assessment

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