
Report To:	Education and Communities Committee	Date:	19 January 2021
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/14/21/RB
Contact Officer:	Ruth Binks	Contact No:	01475 712748
Subject:	Free Swimming for Under 16s		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline options for free swimming for under 16s in Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 As part of the 2021/22 budget process the Council agreed a saving of £100,000 from the £180,000 budget for free swimming for the under 16s in Inverclyde. The Committee is asked to consider proposals to support swimming in Inverclyde with a reduced budget of £80,000.

2.2 Free swimming for Under 16s has been available in Inverclyde since 2005. Despite this initiative, the numbers of free swims accessed has declined over the years.

2.3 Various options are considered in section 5 of this paper. Each of the options has advantages and disadvantages. If any agreed option requires more budget than the allocated £80,000 then it is proposed that this would be taken from the Grant to Voluntary Organisations budget.

2.4 It is proposed to change the way that Inverclyde Leisure are paid for free swimming. Currently they receive a block grant of £180,000 to support free swimming for under 16s resident within Inverclyde. It is proposed to change this to a fee per swim. This means that Inverclyde Leisure will only be paid for the swimming sessions actually used.

2.5 The CMT recommend Option 3 in this paper. This means the following:

- Free swimming would be provided every weekend to under 16s resident within Inverclyde from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
- Every under 16 swim would be further subsidised by £2 per swim to bring the cost down to an average of £2.60
- During the holidays a further subsidy of £1 per swim will be paid to Inverclyde Leisure by the Council. This will bring the average cost of a swim down to £1.60 for under 16s.

2.6 The option proposed costs £107,000. The proposal is to use the Grants To Voluntary Organisations budget to provide further subsidy for swimming.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Committee is asked to agree that Inverclyde Leisure is paid for each swim rather than a set annual sum.

3.2 The Committee is asked to agree that Option 3 to subsidise swimming is taken forward and that the additional funding is taken from GTVO.

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4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Currently all young people in Inverclyde under the age of 16 access free swimming. This has been in place since 2005. The Council pays £180,000 per year to Inverclyde Leisure to cover the cost for this.
- 4.2 As part of the 2021/22 budget process the Council agreed a saving of £100,000 from the £180,000 budget for free swimming for the under 16s in Inverclyde. The Education and Communities Committee is asked to consider proposals to support swimming in Inverclyde with a reduced budget of £80,000.
- 4.3 Despite the policy intention of the free swimming it has in reality not resulted in increased uptake of swimming amongst young people with approximately 18,000 fewer visits per year in 2018/19 than in 2015/16. (54,934 visits in 2015/16 reducing to 36,914 visits in 2018/19).
- 4.4 Research undertaken by another authority prior to removing free swimming in 2018 found that the majority of those who took up a free swim would be willing to pay something. The research also found that the actual cost of providing a swim for an individual was approximately £10. Because the Waterfront Leisure Pool is expensive to run then it is estimated that the subsidy will be more. This means that if any charge is introduced, swims will still be heavily subsidised.
- 4.5 Officers have worked with Inverclyde Leisure using the 18/19 usage to consider a range of options that will enable all young people in Inverclyde to access free swimming. The table below showing usage was used to aid calculations:

Days	Overall	Non-Holidays (excluding 9 – 11 am at weekends)	Holidays (excluding 9 – 11 am at weekends)	Non-Holidays (9 – 11 am)	Holidays (9 – 11 am)
Weekdays	23,387	9,460	13,927		
Weekends	13,527	7,759	3,294	1,752	722
Total	36,914				

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed to change the way that Inverclyde Leisure are paid for free swimming. Currently they receive a block grant of £180,000 to support free swimming for under 16s resident in Inverclyde. It is proposed to change this to a fee per swim. This means that Inverclyde Leisure will only be paid for the swimming sessions actually used.
- 5.2 Option 1

This option proposes to change the free swimming to holidays only and a 2 hour slot for free swimming during weekends for 9 am – 11 am.

The cost of this option is approximately £100,000. The intention would be to allocate the additional funding for the free weekend slots from the GTVO fund. This proposal means that 51% of current swims used would be free.

The advantage of this proposal is that it allows access to free swimming during the holidays and all year round.

The disadvantage of this option is that it is more expensive than the allocated £80,000 and further funding would need to be found elsewhere. The average cost per swim of £4.60 when families have to pay may be prohibitive for some families.

5.3 Option 2

This option proposes to subsidise every swim by £2 and have a 2 hour slot for free swimming during weekends from 9 a.m. -11 a.m. This means that the average cost for an under 16 swim would be £2.60 throughout the year and the option of free swimming would still be available every week. This would cost £88,000. The proposal would be to allocate the additional sum of £8,000 from GTVO.

The advantage of this option is that free swimming is still available every week and all swims are subsidised.

The disadvantage of this option is that there is still a cost for families during the holiday period.

5.4 Option 3

This option is the same as option 2 but allocates money from the GTVO fund to further subsidise swimming during the holidays. An extra subsidy of £1 per swim could be applied during the holidays which would cost approximately £19,000. This would bring the cost of holiday swimming down to £1.60 per under 16 during the holiday period. This option would make it more affordable for families during the holiday period.

This option would cost approximately £27,000 in addition to the £80,000 allocated to support swimming.

5.5 If a charge is considered Inverclyde Leisure will ensure that families will benefit from a family swim package.

5.6 The Corporate Management Team recommends Option 3. If approved, the extra money required to fund this option should be allocated from GTVO.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Communities	GtVO	1.4.21	Up to £27k		Based on Option 3

6.2 Legal

N/A

6.3 Human Resources

N/A

6.4 Equalities

Equalities

- (a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

X

YES

NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

- (b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

X

YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.

NO

- (c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

x

YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

NO

6.5 Repopulation

A thriving leisure service will encourage population in Inverclyde. Family friendly leisure policies will encourage families to live in Inverclyde.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 Budget Consultation 2019: 64% of respondents supported the budget saving proposal regarding free swimming only being available during the school holidays.

Budget Consultation 2017: 49% of respondents supported the introduction of a charge for swimming for under 16 year olds.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 N/A.