

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

INFORMATION

meeting date: 19 OCTOBER 2021
title: RIBBLESDALE POOL SWIMMING LESSONS
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Committee with an update on the challenges being faced in delivering swimming instruction at Ribblesdale Pool

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives - In contributing to making lives safer and healthier
- Corporate Priorities - To ensure a well-managed council providing efficient services through identifying customer need and maximising use of resources.
- Other Considerations - None identified

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council has faced difficulty recruiting Swimming Teachers for several years and because of repeated unsuccessful recruitment internally, swimming teaching has been arranged through a partnership with private providers. The first in 2017 was followed in 2018 with a different provider who provided teachers up until the enforced closure of Swimming Pools in March 2020.

2.2. A tender exercise for teaching provision was carried out in preparation once it was known that Pandemic control measures were being relaxed. It was hoped that the previous providers would show interest, but no compliant tenders were submitted.

2.3 It has been possible to deliver a limited amount of swimming instruction in meeting the needs of Ribble Valley schools, through an existing Part-Time teacher and a casual teacher. However, this is only a short-term arrangement due the permanent staff member seeking re-deployment for health reasons. Consequently, the Council facility may shortly become one of a few in the country where swimming teaching is not offered to enable young people and adults learn this important lifesaving skill.

3 ISSUES

3.1 From the many unsuccessful attempts to recruit swimming teachers; (ten over the last 5 years), it has becoming apparent that our rate of pay is not competitive with other providers, especially for anyone who needs to commute to the Pool.

3.2 There no longer appears to be a desire to become a swimming teacher among young people who commence working at the pool as lifeguards, to upskill and pursue the Level 1 and 2 Teaching qualifications. There is a considerable cost commitment; (approximately £1,000 in respect to Swim England Level 1 and 2 awards), and those that do become qualified gravitate towards organisations with preferable rates of pay to ours. Currently, the lifeguard rate of pay; (£9.08 p.hr.) is similar to that of a

Swimming Teacher; (£10.41 p.hr.). Consequently, it is not surprising that new recruits take a life saving qualification at a fraction of the cost of the swimming teaching ones and without the added responsibility attached to the role of teaching.

- 3.3 A specific avenue of recruitment focused on attracting school leavers across Ribble Valley in the form of Lifeguard/Swimming Teacher apprenticeships. Two positions were advertised aimed at young people in an arrangement with Burnley College. Attempts to raise awareness of their availability included attendance at School leaver careers fayre in Clitheroe and promotional support through Swim England. There was only 1 applicant who did not turn out to be suitable.
- 3.4 Whilst the partnership arrangement with external providers worked reasonably well when in operation; the absence of a tender submission, despite indications to expect one, indicates the problems that agencies also face in recruiting swimming teachers. A private provider could submit a rate of pay for the teaching service which far exceeds our in-house rate; (£20.00-£25.00 per hour for example were the rates expected as part of the contract agreements).
- 3.5 Enquiries about the resumption of swimming lessons are fielded daily, as people refer to difficulty in enrolling at other neighbouring pools due to large waiting lists. Whilst we are unable to offer an indication as to when learn to swim will be available, options continue to be investigated to find a solution which is sustainable.
- 3.6 One option is to establish a partnership with the Institute of Swimming (I.O.S.) and Swim England to support the aquatic workforce needs going forward. Having identified the training needs and number of teachers required to deliver the programme, learners are identified by the I.O.S. through an advert followed by a telephone screening process and are set up with a learner agreement to Level 1. On achieving Level 1 the learner then proceeds to complete volunteer hours over 6 weeks. At that stage the council decides if they want to sponsor the learner through a level 2 qualification and then as a contracted Swimming Teacher. The I.O.S invoices the Council for the learners who have been sponsored through the training process at the agreed rate. The Teaching courses can be provided at Ribblesdale Pool using instructors provided by the I.O.S. Those taking up teaching positions will be required to enter into an agreement which binds them into paying back the cost of the training should they leave the Council before completing the agreed period of employment with the Council as a teacher. This is a new option which is being actively explored.
- 3.7 The daytime use of pool water space is largely allocated to school swimming and the unavailability of lessons will reduce usage significantly. Whilst the additional space might please the existing swimmers attending public sessions and Swimming Club, overall swimming participation will inevitably fall if young people are unable to learn to swim.

4 **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – Swimming lessons make a significant net contribution to the overall income of the pool, if lessons cannot be provided the income from other uses will not be a substitute for lessons income.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None on the context of this report.
- Political – None in the context of the report
- Reputation – A primary role for any pool is teaching people to swim. Being unable to do this results in residents becoming increasingly unhappy with the pool being

unable to provide this service as they are frustrated in having to travel further afield to access this life skill and perhaps join waiting lists for providers elsewhere.

- Equality and Diversity – Not everyone has access to a car for travel to another pool or the financial resources to be able to pay for private tuition.

5 **CONCLUSION.**

5.1 Learning to swim is a life skill which in many cases is taken for granted. The challenge the Council has faced over the past few years is not unique to Ribble Valley, though several specific factors locally have undoubtedly impacted on the ability and attractiveness to recruit and retain swimming teachers.

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