

EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES OF 30 SEPTEMBER CTEOSC

23. FREE SWIMMING INITIATIVE

23.1 Mr Toby Kingsbury, Sports Facilities Manager, told members that the BHCC was one of only two local authorities in Sussex to offer the full scheme to both over 60s and children aged 16 and under. The funding for this initiative had ceased in July 2010, but the Council had decided to continue the scheme for the remainder of the school summer holiday. This would be extended for children aged 11 and under until 31st March 2011, because reducing childhood obesity was a key target. The extension of free swimming had been made possible by the continued support funding of the PCT. Of the 18 authorities researched, BHCC was the only one who had extended this initiative to the end of the financial year.

23.2 Figures showed that there had been an increase in number of swims since the initiative started. It would be hard to measure the impact of ceasing the scheme, except for those aged 11 and under, until later in the year. The future of the scheme was uncertain, but the Council would talk to the PCT about it towards the close of the year. Mr Kingsbury also reminded the Committee of the intention to develop a leisure card scheme offering discounted rates for residents in receipt of certain benefits.

23.3 A question was asked about whether the abolition of PCTs, to be replaced by GPs consortia, would have an impact on sports provision. Ms Murray told members that talks needed to continue with those who would hold the finance. A member of CTEOSC suggested that the Council looked at the example of Tower Hamlets who offer swimming and gym use on prescription. Mr Kingsbury agreed to provide information about the funding and pricing of the GP referral scheme in the city. This currently operated for gyms but could be explored in relation to swimming. A letter had been received from the Older People's Council expressing its concern about the withdrawal of free swimming for the over 60s.

23.4 According to a member, a white paper was expected in the next 3 months which would give local authorities greater power in relation to public health. However, it was not clear whether this would attract additional funding.

23.5 RESOLVED – The Committee noted the success of the Free Swimming and were advised of the extended version of the scheme.

