


<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p>22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Sharon Godman Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Swimming provision in the borough- Scrutiny Challenge Session</b></p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Afazul Hoque, Head of Corporate Strategy and Policy
<b>Wards affected</b>	All (All Wards);

### **Executive Summary**

This report sets out the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny Challenge Session on swimming provision in the borough. The Report makes seven recommendations for agreement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Recommendations:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the attached Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Session Report and agree the recommendations;
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response to the recommendations;

## **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session on swimming provision in the borough for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny challenge session provides recommendations for swimming provision in the borough and recognises that residents and schools highly value these provisions and the importance of access for local stakeholders.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

3.1 Covid-19 Pandemic has highlighted the challenges that residents face with accessing local swimming pools. It also magnified local health inequalities with children in Tower Hamlets more likely to be overweight or obese at year 6 than in London or England<sup>1</sup>. Compliance with Covid-19 safety measure such as shielding or self-isolating has acted as a catalyst to an increase in loneliness, sedentary lifestyle and a lack of regular physical activity and exercise.

3.2 Swim England suggests that a single 25 metre pool can generate £7.2 million in social value in community savings and also save the NHS and social care more than £1.2 million. They have also warned that nationally 90% of 7- to 11-year-olds are failing to meet minimum standards that have been brought in for swimming lessons outside of school. Swimming is considered as an essential life skill that, in extreme circumstances, can make the difference between life and death and moreover, it provides a means to rehabilitate people who have been injured aiding their recovery.

3.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a scrutiny challenge session on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021 focussing on the level and quality of swimming provision in the borough and it was chaired by Cllr Denise Jones.

3.4 The challenge session was underpinned by the following:

- Are schools in the borough meeting their statutory duty in providing lessons in swimming and water safety to all primary school children?
- What is the short-term plan (over next 12 months) to provide adequate, affordable and accessible swimming provision for residents (as part of the communities recovery from covid)?
- How the long-term plan is being developed and what will be included in future provision?
- What provisions have ceased since St Georges, Tiller and York Hall were closed? What plans are in place to replace these now?

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<sup>1</sup> [Child Obesity Borough Profile](#)

- What is the communication and engagement plan to inform residents about the short-term and long-term plans?

3.5 The challenge session involved a range of stakeholders including:

- Cabinet Member for Culture, Arts and Sports and supported by council officers;
- Head of Service for Greenwich Leisure Ltd;
- Head Teacher St Saviour's CE Primary School;
- Resident representative; and
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members.

3.6 The challenge session resulted in the committee making the following recommendations:

#### **Recommendation 1**

That the Overview and Scrutiny be provided with the leisure centre review report and be engaged with the:

- Next steps on leisure centre contract extension
- Public consultation and procurement of new leisure contract

#### **Recommendation 2**

That the council examines and supports options for catch up swimming sessions for children who missed lessons because of lockdown and review viability of different swimming programmes offered and how these would be reinstated. That the Mayor should review the budget so that swimming provisions (pre Covid-19) can be reinstated

#### **Recommendation 3**

Greenwich Leisure Ltd and the council to explore promptly how to address the travel challenges faced by schools in the borough so that children can access swimming provision

#### **Recommendation 4**

The council to consider if covid funding or reserves can be used to support swimming provision

#### **Recommendation 5**

The council to examine the different options of keeping St Georges Pool on existing site, noting the strong lobby from residents and cross party support to keep the pool where it is. That details of financial planning for reopening St George's is shared transparently with the Committee

#### **Recommendation 6**

The council to develop a long-term capital investment strategy for leisure centres to ensure that they can be maintained to good standards including where needed major refurbishments. This should also include establishing a Lido and other new swimming provision in the borough. Leisure provision in Borough for the future should consider taking the projected rise in the population on board

## **Recommendation 7**

GLL and council communications to assist with wider reach to parents, dispelling myths swimming in the winter season will cause colds and better visibility of consultations

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The challenge session examined the impact on availability and access to swimming provision in the borough. The recommendations arising from the scrutiny challenge aim to improve access for a diverse range of residents including children and young people, disabled residents, elderly residents and those from low-income families.

## **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
  - Consultations,
  - Environmental (including air quality),
  - Risk Management,
  - Crime Reduction,
  - Safeguarding.
  - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 [Report authors should identify any other specific issues relevant to consideration of this report. Including, but not limited to, the issues noted above. This section of the report can also be used to re-emphasise particular issues that Members must have considered before taking the decision (for example issues that may come up if an objection was taken to court). Note – Paragraph 5.1 MUST NOT be deleted.]

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 There are no direct implications from this report, but financial implications would differ based on the various recommendations in this report. These would be assessed if and when any of these recommendations are brought forward.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The Council has the legal power to undertake the recommendations referred to in the scrutiny report and herewith.
- 7.2 The Council does not have a legal duty to provide swimming lessons to school children or to the wider public generally. However, it has the legal power to

provide swimming should it choose to do so. However, the Council does have a legal duty to provide various public health functions in respect of children and the wider public generally and it is acknowledged that swimming is a significant factor in helping to deliver that legal function

- 7.3 In any event, should the Council choose to deliver this leisure function then the delivery of that function will be subject to the Council's Best Value duty. Therefore, when carrying out any of the recommendations the Council must opt for a methodology of delivering that function which is the best in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- Scrutiny Challenge Session Report: Swimming provision in the Borough

### **Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)**

#### **List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none.

### **Officer contact details for documents:**

Afazul Hoque Head of Corporate Strategy and Policy