

## **REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 JANUARY 2017**

### **MEMBER'S ITEM: SPLASHES LEISURE POOL**

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Regeneration, Culture Environment and Transformation

Author: Bob Dimond, Head of Sport, Leisure, Tourism and Heritage

#### **Summary**

This report sets out a response to an issue, raised by Councillor Stamp, concerning Splashes Leisure Pool

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 Under Medway Constitution Overview and Scrutiny rules (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.1) Councillor Stamp has requested that an item on this matter is included on the agenda for this meeting.

#### **2. The Issue**

2.1. Councillor Stamp has requested that an item be placed on the agenda and the reasons are set out as follows:

'I would like an item to be placed on the agenda for the December meeting of the Regeneration, Community and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the recent outbreak of the Norovirus at Splashes Leisure Pool.

This appears to be a large-scale failing in terms of cleanliness and hygiene, and as Councillors we have a duty to ensure that public health is protected at all times.

I would like a report to explain what happened, what went wrong, whether anyone was at fault, and what can be done to ensure this does not happen again in the future - at Splashes or any of our other swimming pools.

This report should also be in the wider context of the £1 million cuts to Leisure Services, which Medway Council is making over 3 years. We've already had a £350,000 cut during 2016/7, with opening hours slashed and staff numbers reduced at our Leisure Centres. **What will be the impact of the further planned cuts over the next two years? What form will those cuts take? How can public safety be safeguarded?**

The Year 1 cuts have clearly led to staff being overstretched across all of our Leisure Centres (we now have no receptionists at Medway Park, for example, and there are no longer trained external instructors for the classes provided).

Here are some of the questions I have specifically in relation to our swimming pools, which hopefully the Members item will help to answer:-

- What training do staff have? Is it adequate to protect the health and safety of the public? Could it be improved?
- Who is responsible for cleaning?
- What procedures are in place to ensure cleansing standards are maintained?
- Are there emergency/incident response procedures in place in the event of a hygiene issue being discovered?
- If so, what are they and were they implemented at Splashes on this occasion?
- Were the chlorine doses reduced for the purposes of dyeing the pool red on 28 October? Was this appropriate? Was the dose sufficient to protect the public using the pool?
- What managerial oversight is there on a day-to-day basis at Splashes and our other Leisure Centres?
- What is staff morale like? And staff turnover? Are they temporary or permanent staff? Are there enough staff?

It would also be helpful to have input from partner agencies, in particular Public Health England, and information regarding the outcome of their investigations'.

### **3 Director's comments**

As Public Health England have not yet been able to respond to the Council, and following Legal advice, it has been recommended that answers can be provided to the following generic questions:

#### **3.1 What training do staff have?**

Staff responsible for the operation of swimming pools have formal Swimming Pool Plant Operator Training.

This training covers: the responsibilities of pool operators to provide a safe pool environment; causes of water pollution; the importance of good hygiene prior to use of pools; understanding the principles of pool water circulation systems; recommended pool temperatures; and pool water testing for free

chlorine, total chlorine, pH, total alkalinity, calcium hardness, and total dissolved solids.

Staff are also trained to interpret the results of the pool water tests and identify whether any corrective action is necessary.

The training is tested by a range of written and practical assessments.

### **3.2 Who is responsible for cleaning?**

The responsibility for cleaning within Medway Council's sports centres is shared between Medway Norse and centre staff. At Splashes there is a Medway Norse cleaner in the morning between 7am – 9.30am (2.5hrs) and in the evening between 7pm – 9.30pm (2.5hrs) Monday to Friday. Splashes staff clean in-between these times and at weekends.

### **3.3 What procedures are in place to ensure cleansing standards are maintained?**

Cleaning check sheets are in place, which clearly identify the cleaning tasks that need to be carried out. These cleaning sheets are then checked & signed off by the centre management to confirm that the cleaning has been carried out to an acceptable level. This system applies to both Medway Norse and Medway Council staff tasks.

### **3.4 Are there emergency/incident response procedures in place in the event of a hygiene issue being discovered?**

There are robust procedures in place to deal with emergency situations, including hygiene related issues such as dealing with blood, vomit and faeces in and around the swimming pools.

These procedures are checked by the council's health and safety department, as part of the ongoing auditing process.

### **3.5 What managerial oversight is there on a day-to-day basis at Splashes and our other Leisure Centres?**

Each centre has a Senior Sports Officer on shift, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the staff and facilities, including the swimming pools.

Clear operating procedures are in place, including what to do in the event of an emergency. Senior Managers are also available to offer advice and support where necessary.

Medway Norse are responsible for the maintenance of the swimming pools and can be contacted via the 24 hour helpdesk.

### **3.6 What is staff morale like? And staff turnover? Are they temporary or permanent staff? Are there enough staff?**

The sports centres have a defined minimum staffing requirement, which is clearly identified within the Normal Operating Procedures. Centres only open when this requirement is fulfilled.

There are currently a number of vacancies across the sports centres but there is a pool of qualified casual staff, used to cover vacancies, sickness and holiday leave.

Four full time Sports Officers were recruited in November 2016, and are due to start in January 2017.

There are currently no particular staff morale or staff turnover issues.

### **3.7 Further Actions Required**

When the Public Health England report is received an update report will be presented to the next appropriate meeting.

## **4 Risk Management**

- 4.1 This section will be completed when the report is submitted to the Committee once the outcome of the investigation is known.

## **5. Financial and Legal Implications**

- 5.1 At present there is no information upon which to determine how the virus outbreak occurred. Results of the investigation are awaited and will be submitted to the Committee for discussion when the results are known.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Committee is requested to note that a further report will be submitted to the Committee when the outcome of the Public Health England investigation is known.

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### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

None