

**55. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CABINET BY THE COUNCIL - REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL - A.1 - MOTION TO COUNCIL - "FREE SWIMMING LESSONS FOR CHILDREN"**

Cabinet was aware that, at the meeting of the Council held on 11 September 2018, the following motion had been moved by Councillor Pemberton and seconded by Councillor Gray and, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.4, had stood referred to the Cabinet for consideration and report:

*"That this Council takes the necessary steps to offer, at Clacton Leisure Centre and other suitable venues, up to six free swimming lessons every year for all children under the age of 15 years, in order to see that every child in the District of Tendring can be taught to swim, cope with a riptide or strong current, swim/float fully clothed and learn basic life-saving."*

Members were informed that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.5, Councillor Pemberton had been invited to attend the meeting and explain the motion. However, Councillor Pemberton had informed Officers that, due to his work commitments, he would be unable to attend the Cabinet meeting. He had, therefore, asked Councillor Davis to explain the motion on his behalf.

Cabinet had before it a written submission which had been circulated, on behalf of Councillor Davis, prior to the meeting.

Councillor Davis attended the meeting and formally explained Councillor Pemberton's motion.

The Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder (Councillor Skeels Snr.) then responded, as follows, to the issues and matters raised by Councillor Pemberton in his motion and in Councillor Davis' written and oral submissions:-

*"I would like to thank Councillor Pemberton for his motion; he raises an issue of the greatest significance.*

*As all Members will no doubt be aware, each school has a statutory obligation under the National Curriculum to provide swimming instruction for every child either in key stage 1 or key stage 2.*

*As a result of this, children should be able to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 meters using a range of strokes; and perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations by the time they leave primary school.*

*It is not clear that every school in the District is meeting this obligation and in our role as Community Leaders, we need to try to understand why and if we can support schools to ensure this vital strand of education is taking place.*

*There is far from any guarantee that Free Swimming Lessons provided by ourselves or any other agency, would attract any additional children than are currently participating in a Learn to Swim programme. It would make sense therefore, that we focus our efforts on ensuring our local children are taught to swim 'competently and proficiently' in their primary school, as should be their entitlement.*

*With that in mind, it is my suggestion that we invite the Director for Education from Essex County Council to attend a future meeting of the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss how we can move towards 100% of our local children learning to swim before they leave primary school education.*

*Further to this, it is important the Council does not make decisions in isolation, but through a partnership approach with water safety professionals.*

*In our role as community leaders, I am pleased to inform Cabinet we are actively working with partners in the RNLI, Coastguard, Essex Police and other emergency services to review what additional safety measures could be implemented across the entire stretch of Tendring coastline. Rather than work in isolation, it is a sensible approach to develop a cohesive plan of action with partners possessing wide ranging local and national professional expertise in water safety. This work will continue during the remainder of 2018, with the view of implementing a number of initiatives prior to the 2019 season.*

*With regards to just one of these evolving initiatives, Members may be aware that Swim England and the RNLI provided a Swim Safe course in the sea at Dovercourt Bay during the summer, which was a huge success. This involved children of 7 to 14-years of age learning how to swim outdoors and what to do if they got into trouble in the water. The Council is actively working with these organisations to see if this scheme can be rolled out to other parts of the District in 2019. I will keep Members up to date with progress.*

*Taking all this into account I applaud the spirit of Cllr Pemberton's motion, but I believe there is a better way of achieving the outcomes that we all want."*

Having considered the motion and the supporting submissions:-

It was moved by Councillor Skeels Snr., seconded by Councillor Talbot and:-

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that Council does not support the motion in its original format and that instead the following amended motion be approved:-**

***"That this Council takes the following steps in order to see that every child in the District of Tendring can be taught to swim, before they leave primary school education:***

***(a) the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee invite the Director for Education from Essex County Council to attend a future meeting of that Committee in order to discuss how all schools can meet their statutory duty and move towards 100% of the District's children learning to swim before they leave primary school education; and***

***(b) that Officers continue work with partners to develop a cohesive plan to further improve safety measures across the District's coastline and report back with findings and any recommendations to Cabinet in February 2019, for implementation prior to the 2019 season."***