

Independent Review of the Operations of all Regional Swimming Pools on the Isle of Man

Terms of Reference

Background

The Department of Education, Sport and Culture (DESC) ("the Department") has a wide range of operational functions, it is not only responsible for operating educational establishments throughout the Island, including thirty two primary schools, five secondary schools and University College Isle of Man, but also oversees Manx Sport and Recreation, which provides facilities for sport and physical activity to all residents.

The Island has three regional swimming pools, all of which are managed by a Pool Board, made up of representatives from each of the local authorities in that area of the Island (South, North & West). Regional swimming pools each receive a subvention from the Department and the local authorities' contribution of 2.5p in the pound equates to approximately 7 – 10% of operating costs

In addition the National Sports Centre, a multi-sport complex, hosts a wide range of initiatives and programmes which are accessed by all ranges of ages and abilities from the four corners of the Island, sits within the Sport, Youth & Recreation Division of the Department. Glencrutchery Swimming Pool is also part of the Department's portfolio and provides specialist swimming provision for people with disabilities. In addition to this pool, Ballakermeen High School has a swimming pool which is predominately used for curriculum swimming at the school. Outside of school time the pool is used for a private swim school and is not currently available for public use.

Regional swimming pools support the community recreation, sport, teaching and wellbeing initiatives of our Island. Specifically, the Our Island Plan aims to support sport, active leisure and recreational facilities and to recognise the link between healthy places, active lifestyles and overall wellbeing in policy choices. The Island currently has a public swimming pool in each geographical area of the Isle of Man (North, South, East and West). The Amateur Swimming Association¹ recommend 11 m² of water per population of 1000 as a benchmark to Local Authorities for urban locations. In England there are on average 13m² of swimming pool provision for community use, per 1,000 population, compared to the Island's provision of 15.12m² per 1,000 population.

Following concerns over financial difficulties experienced by regional swimming pools largely due to inflation and rising energy prices, Council of Ministers has agreed, subject to an independent review of the current delivery model of regional swimming pools that the Department underwrite additional costs that cannot be met by subvention provided. Some detail on the scope of such an assessment is attached to this paper.

Aim

Given the breadth of the Department and its operational nature the Council of Ministers wishes to gain assurance that Governance and management of the Island's regional swimming pools is adequate and that it is adequately resourced to deliver Our Island Plan's health and wellbeing objectives.

¹ ASA, Sport England (2013) Swimming Pools Design; Guidance Note. <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/swimming-pools-dgn-2013.pdf>

The aim of the review is to appraise operational efficiency and effectiveness but also potential structures for the future delivery, including whether these operations are best operated at arms-length from the Department

The effectiveness and efficiency of the current delivery model of all regional swimming pools, including the Department's capability to effectively manage the interface with swimming pool boards, an assessment of policies, practice, procedures, and protocols which form part of those arrangements. In particular, the Review will explore how existing management and organisational arrangements could be improved to provide more effective delivery of community sport, active leisure and recreational facilities across the Island.

It is noted that that this is not a review of the effectiveness of the Island's regional swimming pools operational delivery; it is a review of the effectiveness of DESC's management arrangements for managing the interface with swimming pool boards.

Scope

To achieve its aim, the Review will consider the following:

1. The effectiveness and efficiency of the current funding model and operations of all regional swimming pools including value for money and challenges faced under the current structure.
2. The extent to which the Department provides effective oversight of regional swimming pools it subsidises and whether the roles and responsibilities of those exercising oversight are clear and in particular whether these are fit for purpose in managing the client interface with users/recipients of its services.
3. Changes or improvements which should be made to the way in which the most effective and efficient model of delivery would be for swimming pool provision across the Isle of Man, within the existing cost envelope.

Swimming pools in scope:

- NSC swimming pool– sits within DESC
- Glencrutchery swimming pool – sits within DESC
- Ballakermeen High School swimming pool – sits within DESC
- Southern swimming pool – funded by DESC subvention and Rates
- Northern swimming pool – funded by DESC subvention and Rates
- Western swimming pool – funded by DESC subvention and Rates

In undertaking the review, due consideration will be given to the approaches taken by other Departments and Boards of the Isle of Man Government and to models of good practice in the UK and other jurisdictions. It will also involve a range of stakeholders, and evidence will be gathered from the Council of Ministers, Members, senior officers, operational staff, support staff as appropriate.

Reporting

Subject to the interview and consultation programme being completed in a timely manner, a final report should be submitted to the Council of Ministers by 30th September 2022.

The final report will set out conclusions, policy options and recommendations together with a summary of the evidence that has been gathered to inform the outcomes of the Review.

Department of Education, Sport and Culture