

**Response to questions raised by the LEA Pool Call-in
(Tabled at Children's Services Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2008).**

	FINANCE																		
Question A	Clarity required on financial figures, particularly a breakdown of amounts on inspections and maintenance over the last five years.																		
Response	<p>Council properties have detailed surveys once every five years. The survey covers building, mechanical and electrical installations. Because of its condition the LEA pool was inspected more regularly. Inspections took place in November 2007 and April 2008. All inspections are carried out by independent surveyors and engineers.</p> <p>Repair works were identified for the pool. However, these had to be considered alongside maintenance works for other properties. Some repair works were undertaken when it was essential in order to keep the premises open. There are annual service contracts on the mechanical and electrical installations.</p> <p>The repair and maintenance costs (including service contracts) for the last five years are listed below</p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Revenue</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Capital</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>07/08</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£15,835</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,561</td> </tr> <tr> <td>06/07</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£12,983</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>05/06</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2,411</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>04/05</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,138</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£2,908</td> </tr> <tr> <td>03/04</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£3,191</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Revenue	Capital	07/08	£15,835	£5,561	06/07	£12,983	£0	05/06	£2,411	£0	04/05	£5,138	£2,908	03/04	£3,191	£0
	Revenue	Capital																	
07/08	£15,835	£5,561																	
06/07	£12,983	£0																	
05/06	£2,411	£0																	
04/05	£5,138	£2,908																	
03/04	£3,191	£0																	

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Sharon Menghini, Director of Children's Services (01432) 260039

Question B	Why was the pool allowed to leak for so long and what has been the eventual cost?
Response	All pools lose some water because of evaporation and old pools tend to lose water because of leaks in the tank or plumbing. There have been on-going problem of leaks over the years. In 2001 works were undertaken to replace some corroded pipe work. In 2004 repairs were undertaken to a movement joint and tiles. HALO reported water leaks, and in October 2006 and October 2007 further reports and repairs were undertaken.
Question C	Knowing the running of the pool was costing money, what efforts were made to balance income and expenditure.
Response	<p>In the summer term 2005 it was clear that the income received by the LEA pool was falling significantly and costs were rising. CYPD senior management at that time entered into discussions with HALO to establish how best to use HALO's expertise to manage the LEA pool more effectively.</p> <p>It was agreed that LEA pool would purchase lifeguards from HALO rather than directly employing their own as it had become increasingly difficult for the LEA pool to employ sufficient lifeguard cover. This enabled a much better use of lifeguards between the two swimming pools. It also saved money by ensuring that the LEA pool only paid for lifeguards when the pool was occupied.</p> <p>During 2005 detailed negotiations between the Council and HALO were progressed with a view to a formal transfer of the management of the LEA pool to HALO. This was not possible due to the unwillingness of HALO to take over the liabilities of the pool without the Council injecting capital to ensure that there was reduced risk of further capital works being required.</p> <p>The Council therefore entered into a management agreement with HALO so that HALO managed the LEA pool on behalf of the Council. The objectives of this agreement were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to manage swimming facilities to allow the delivery of the National P.E. Curriculum particularly in Key Stage 1 and 2. • to increase the use of the pool by all sections of the community. • to encourage the use of the pool by those who would not otherwise use them and facilitate their use by people of all ages and abilities particularly those disadvantaged in terms of

opportunity or with special needs.

Pool management costs of £21,000 in 2005/06 were replaced by a management fee at an agreed £12,500. In addition it was recognised that the purchasing economies of swimming pool chemicals and other supplies and equipment achieved by HALO taking over these functions would save further costs.

Employee costs and management and lifeguard cost reduced by £23,000 in 2006/07 through efficiencies created by Halo managing the facility.

However costs have continued to rise with the on-going water losses, rising energy costs and increasing property maintenance costs rising thereby exceeding these savings.

	2003/04	2004/05
Expenditure	£145,727	£173,674
Income	£124,623	£91,749
Operating Loss	£21,104	£81,811

The Cabinet report of 31 July 2008 details revenue considerations in paragraph 14 onwards

REPORT

Question D

Why is there no in depth risk assessment on the advantages and disadvantages of closing the LEA Pool and its effect on the Leisure Pool. Why was there apparently no risk assessment on the consequences and impact on clubs, Schools and general public, especially in view of the likelihood of free swimming for the over 60's.

Response

The Cabinet report of 31 July 2008 contains the capital and revenue issues. There was also extensive discussion with HALO on possible arrangements including timetabling so that both public and school needs could be met. HALO were confident that this could be achieved and a timetable as considered as part of the Cabinet papers.

Since the Cabinet of 31 July 2008 work has taken place to assess the

	<p>opportunities provided by the government's scheme to increase free swimming. The Council is applying for the £67,000 grant for free swimming for over 60 year olds. The revenue implications of this are expected to be that the Council will need to supplement the scheme by approximately £13,000 per annum, based on the swimming pools that are currently open to the public. In addition an expression of interest has been submitted for grant for under 16 year olds. As yet the level of under 16s grant to Herefordshire has not been determined but is also likely to have a financial impact on the Council.</p> <p>Having applied for the over 60s grant and expressed an interest in grant for under 16s the Council can bid for Capital Grant for the modernisation of Pools. The guidance makes special mention of school swimming pools and states that to receive capital grant a school pool would have to provide free swimming to under 16s and over 60s. Assuming the LEA pool is eligible for grant (and this is not yet clear) the grant pot for the first year is only £10 million pounds available nationally. Opening the LEA pool for free swimming for under 16s and over 60s will increase the costs of delivering free swimming across the County as a whole and there is a risk that the whole free swimming scheme will be too expensive to implement. To date the rules for the allocation of Capital Grant have not yet been published. The lack of clarity does mean that at this stage there can be no certainty that repair works would be eligible for grant, as the circular refers to the grant being used for "modernisation". These considerations will form part of the report to Cabinet in Easter 2009.</p>
	SAFETY
Question E	<p>What procedures are to be put in place to ensure children are separated from the general public in the pools and changing rooms? Is supervision going to be as certain and safe as in the LEA pool?</p>
Response	<p>The current and proposed operations at Hereford Leisure Pool (should the LEA pool not reopen in the long term) provide exclusive changing accommodation for each school by gender. This is an improvement on the LEA pool arrangements where different schools shared the same changing areas. The proposed programme of the pools provides for exclusive use of pool space too.</p> <p>Supervision is, and always has been, a management responsibility shared by school teachers/support staff and HALO staff. It has less to do with the physical nature of buildings. This is the case in all pools managed by HALO.</p> <p>Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) continues to work in partnership with HALO to update all relevant policies and</p>

	<p>procedures to ensure that they are robust from a safeguarding perspective. This not only includes the procedures relating directly to the use of the pools, but also covers such issues as recruitment, vetting and training of staff.</p>
Question F	<p>Has the introduction of a designated entrance at the rear been properly assessed and costed?</p>
Response	<p>The Cabinet report of 31 July 2008 refers to this in paragraph 11. HALO believe that this is unnecessary and could set a precedent for every leisure centre used by children. Property Services believed that a link between a new entrance lobby and the main pool was not practical because of how it would affect the Leisure Pool windows and a proposal by HALO Leisure to relocate the boiler room.</p>
Question G	<p>Is the Café area Wi-Fi enabled and accessible to everyone and what is going to be done to safeguard the children if this is the case?</p>
Response	<p>The café is not wi-fi enabled. However, Members should note that most mobile phones are internet enabled and some children do have access to them. This is the case in many public buildings of course. It is a matter for parents/carers, and also for schools and other groups working with children to promote safe practice. HALO staff are trained and in sufficient number that supervision and movement of staff is frequent and good giving ample opportunity to monitor suspicious behaviour in spectator areas.</p>
	<p>GENERAL</p>
Question H	<p>Why has this invaluable and successful asset been allowed to deteriorate and did we not learn any lessons from the Sydonia Pool in Leominster?</p>
Response	<p>Swimming pools are high maintenance buildings as they have a very corrosive atmosphere. The LEA pool has always been a very basic installation and its energy performance poor. This fact is even more significant as energy costs increase and Councils are under greater pressure to reduce their carbon footprint.</p> <p>The Sydonia Pool in Leominster was in a similar situation to the current LEA swimming pool. The pool had reached a stage of being beyond economical repair and in this instance was a health hazard.</p> <p>The pool was replaced, through public consultation and a realistic assessment of the overall swimming requirements in the area.</p>

Question 1	Who took the decision to close the pool WITHOUT consulting local members?
Response	<p>The pool was unable to open because the boiler had failed. There were concerns about leaks and a recent power failure had indicated the inadequate emergency lights within the pool. For these reasons the pool was not opened.</p> <p>At the same time Officers, with HALO and affected schools, acted quickly to establish alternative arrangements so that children could continue to have swimming lessons. The decision was taken to place the matter before Cabinet, given the significant cost implications and the history of use, with a view to providing a longer term and viable arrangement. As part of this process a consultation exercise was carried out, setting out possible options and costs to schools. This formed part of the evidence for the Cabinet report and decision of 31 July 2008.</p>