

## **Activity Planning -2012-2022 Ten Year Plan Strong Communities - Swimming Pools**

### **The main matter that the Council is being asked to consider is....**

- The levels of service for Swimming Pools throughout the District.
- A change to the current funding policy for the Swimming Pools activity.

### **1. Council direction**

The direction provided to staff by the Council in December 2010 was to:

- Consider partner/advocate role as well as provider
- Discuss the provision of this activity with the Thames High School. Look at the partnership and other opportunities for the replacement of the Thames Pool.

### **2. What the activity does**

The Council owns and manages the Thames Centennial Pool. The Pool has professional, well trained staff. The Pool provides a range of programmes, including Learn To Swim and Thames Swim Squad Coaching. Year round swimming is available with a water temperature target of 28 degrees.

The Council also supports provision of other pools in the District - in Whitianga, Whangamata and Coromandel. These communities have access to modest aquatic facilities, at relatively minor cost to the Council and, perhaps most significantly, little requirement for management oversight. Community based organisations are empowered to run and manage these pools in a way that best suits them. The level of service available outside of Thames is considerably lower than that provided by the Thames pool.

### **3. What the legislations says**

Despite the benefits of the provision of swimming pool, they are not required to be provided and there is no legislative requirement for the Council to be involved in the Swimming Pools activity.

The provision and/or funding of swimming pools is mainly historical, aimed at maintaining and improving the general well-being of people and communities.

The Department of Labour, through the Health & Safety in Employment Act 1992, provides recommendations on staffing levels at public pools. Staffing levels at the Thames Centennial Pool comply with these guidelines. Because the Council is not responsible for staffing levels at the smaller community pools, compliance at these pools is unknown.

### **4. Proposed activity objective**

The proposed activity objective for the Swimming Pools activity is:

*To provide and support the provision of aquatic facilities and services to promote community wellbeing.*

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NB: This is different to the objective stated in the 2009-2019 Ten Year Plan which was to provide Council owned pools. The proposed objective is more aligned to the Council's direction.

### 5. How this activity currently would contribute to the Council Outcomes

The activity will contribute to the achievement of the Council Outcomes as follows:

| Council Outcome            | The Swimming Pools activity...  |
|----------------------------|---|
| A prosperous district      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Swimming Pools activity has the potential to contribute to this outcome through swim meetings and events, which attract visitors to the area over several days.</li> </ul> |
| A liveable district        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides recreation and leisure opportunities. By providing opportunities for exercise and activity it promotes community health.</li> </ul>                                   |
| A clean and green district | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Swimming Pools activity does not directly contribute to this outcome.</li> </ul>   |

### 6. Things to be aware of

#### ***Thames Centennial Pool***

- Increasing demand for aquatic programmes are creating a relatively new issue.
- During 2010 the Council began offering Learn To Swim (LTS) classes at the Thames Pool and these have been over-subscribed. Attendance in 2011 is following the same trend. Thames Community Board approved a new Aquatics Programme Manager position in late 2010 in recognition of this growing demand, and to grow this sector of the activity.
- Additional programmes such as Squad Training, and adult swimming (fitness and aquarobics) have been introduced, but there is still demand and capacity at the pool for more development in this area.
- In addition to this, the upskilling of staff (all now hold LTS Instructor qualifications; Pool manager is a qualified assessor) are leading to requests from other pools in the region and beyond for the services of staff, both as assessors for staff in these out lying areas and to provide LTS instruction.
- There is a potential revenue stream for the Council from these services which, if it develops, would off-set operational costs.
- It will need to be signalled to the community that the current pool is not likely to last beyond the next 7-10 years and, should the community desire to have an aquatic facility and services available year-round in Thames, then a replacement project needs to be urgently progressed.
- In the Draft Annual Plan for 2011/12 the Thames Community Board have committed \$100,000 to investigate the development of a combined sports complex including a possible aquatic facility, replacement grandstand and a dry court facility at Rhodes Park .

#### ***Community Pools***

- While there is provision for an aquatic facility in the proposed Whitianga Multi-Sport Complex, there is nothing more specific at this stage, and the Council has not allocated funds towards the provision of a complex in the 2009-2019 Ten Year Plan.

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- There is anecdotal evidence that Mercury Bay Area School may be considering an upgrade to the school pool (currently available to the community under a Service Level Agreement with the Council) and there could be merit in the Council consulting further with the School about this with a view to a future partnership opportunity.
- The Council's support for community pools in Whitianga, Whangamata and Coromandel is currently funded from the Social Development activity. The staff recommendation for the Social Development activity is for a reduction in the level of service which would result in funding for these community pools being withdrawn.

### **7. A word from our community....**

- The 2010 community prioritisation survey shows that "providing public swimming pools" sits 26<sup>th</sup> of the 27 activities surveyed. This activity remains a low priority activity, as determined by the community, when compared to other Council activities.
- The Thames Centennial Pool has revamped the quality of the Learn to Swim (LTS) programmes offered and is now capable of educating all ages and levels of swimmers and non-swimmers from baby through to the elderly. The leap in numbers from spring 2010 for the LTS programmes and general admissions are an indication that the community is becoming more involved in the Pool's aquatic programmes and using the facility at a higher rate than ever before.

### **8. Strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats**

- A weakness with the Thames Centennial Pool is the limited life left of the pool and the deteriorating plant and infrastructure.
- A weakness is that different levels of service (and costs) apply in different parts of the District.
- There is an opportunity to continue growing and developing the LTS and Swim Squad programmes.
- There is an opportunity to seek sponsorship (i.e. naming rights, signage etc) for the Thames Pool.
- In Coromandel, there is an opportunity to formalise the funding provided by the development of a Service Level Agreement between the Council and the Pool provider.
- There is an opportunity to explore the possibility of a partnership with Thames High School for co-location of a community aquatic facility.
- There is an opportunity in Whitianga to explore the possibility of a new partnership with the Mercury Bay Area School.
- There is a threat that resources are being duplicated with both Thames and Mercury Bay Community Boards pursuing options for new aquatic facilities that may be competing for the same funds or funding sources.

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### 9. Proposed levels of service options

The following options are proposed regarding the swimming pools activity:

#### **Option 1: Maintain existing levels of service, with an improvement focus**

This means...

- Aquatic facilities and services will continue to be provided at existing levels (i.e. Council owner/operated pool in Thames. Community pools in Whitianga, Whangamata and Coromandel).
- A variety of services and programmes are available at public pools.
- Most of the aquatic training programmes are self funding (with the exception of equipment costs)
- Using the public pool is affordable.
- The public pool is well managed.
- Explore possible partnership with Thames High School for a combined school/community pool. Should this partnership not eventuate, identification of a suitable site for a replacement pool.

#### **Option 2: Reducing costs**

This means...

- Removing funding for Community Pools.
- Reduced levels of aquatic services at Thames Pool.
- A reduction in levels of aquatic services at the Thames Pool would involve reduced opening hours by removing the Mon-Fri 6am-8am lane swim time and closing on Saturdays. This would be a reduction in staff costs.
- It should be noted there is likely a loss of income from the closure.
- There is a risk that the public who currently use the facility early morning and Saturday's will not be satisfied with this option.

#### **Option 3: Increase services**

This means...

- Defining what the 'provision of an aquatic facility as part of the Whitianga Multi-Sport Complex' means. As part of this exercise, the possibility of a partnership with Mercury Bay Area School should also be considered.

### 10. How is this activity managed?

The Council owns, manages and staffs the Thames Centennial Pool.

The Council has Service Level Agreements in place between Mercury Bay Area School in Whitianga and Whangamata Community Pool Incorporated for the provision of pools in these communities.

In Coromandel, Council supports the provision of a local seasonal pool through the Coromandel Community Board's Treasure Chest Fund. Consequently, there is no Service Level Agreement in place.

### 11. What do we currently spend on this activity?

As a proportion of the Council's annual budget for the 2011/2012 year, the Swimming Pools activity represents approximately 0.42% of total spend.

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| 2011/2012 Draft Annual Plan                                  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Operating Expenditure (excluding internal interest cost)     | \$0.42m        |
| Capital Expenditure  | \$0.01m        |
| <b>Total budgeted spend for Swimming Pools for 2011/2012</b> | <b>\$0.43m</b> |
| Total Budgeted spend for Council for 2011/2012               | \$100.97m      |
| Total percentage of budget spent on Swimming Pools           | 0.42%          |
| 2009-2019 Ten Year Plan                                      |                |
| Operating Expenditure (excluding internal interest cost)     | \$3.63m        |
| Capital Expenditure  | \$0.08m        |
| <b>Total budgeted spend for Swimming Pools for 10 years</b>  | <b>\$3.71m</b> |
| Total Budgeted spend for Council for 10 years                | \$1,295.64m    |
| Total percentage of budget spent on Swimming Pools           | 0.29%          |

### 12. How this activity is funded, and why.

The Swimming Pools activity is currently funded as follows:

*Funding rationale summary as outlined in the 2009-2019 Ten Year Plan*

The benefits of swimming pools can be attributed to the wider community in terms of health and social cohesion. In addition, swimming and other water skills are seen to be essential in an island country like New Zealand where so many people enjoy boating and swimming in rivers and the sea. This is especially true of the Coromandel Peninsula with its extensive coastline and harbour facilities as well as many beautiful beaches. The provision of facilities where people can receive education about water safety, and can learn safe practices associated with water activities is important to minimise accidents involving water. The community benefits from having fewer deaths by drowning as a result of the confidence and water skills learned in a swimming pool. Despite this, the Council on the whole sees the benefits accruing to the communities in which they are available.

*The funding mechanisms used to fund operating expenditure are:*

| General Rates | UAGC | Targeted Rates   | Fees & Charges | Grants & Subsidies |
|---------------|------|--|----------------|--------------------|
|               |      | Land value by Board - 20-39%<br>Fixed charge by Board 60-79% |                |                    |

*The funding mechanisms used to fund capital expenditure are:*

| Develop. &/or Financial Contribution | Borrowing | Asset Sales | UAGC | Depreciation | General Rates | Targeted Rates | Fees & Charges | Grants & Subsidies | Lump Sum Contribution |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| ✓                                    | ✓         | ✓           | ✓    | ✓            |               | ✓              | ✓              |                    |                       |

NB: currently only the Thames Pool is funded under the Pools activity.

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Staff recommend changing the funding policy for this activity, slightly, to make it more consistent with the Libraries activity thereby ensuring a more consistent and fair funding approach across activities.

Staff recommend changing the funding mechanisms used for operating expenditure to:

| General Rates | UAGC | Targeted Rates               | Fees & Charges | Grants & Subsidies |
|---------------|------|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 20-39%        |      | Fixed charge by Board 60-79% |                |                    |

NB: currently only the Thames Pool is funded under the Pools activity.

### 13. Staff recommendation

- In light of the Council's direction to align the annual rates increase to CPI, staff recommend Option 1: Maintaining existing levels of service, with an improvement focus *and* changing the funding policy for the Swimming Pools activity, shifting 20% from targeted rates to general rates.
- Note: This conflicts with the staff recommendation for Social Development where funding for community pools would be removed. It would be possible to adopt option 1 and transfer the funding of community pools to this activity with subsequent changes to the activity funding.