

Committee	Dated:
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	9 September 2020
Subject: Hampstead Heath Swimming COVID-19 Temporary Arrangements – Winter Swimming Season	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
Report author: Bob Warnock, Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	

Summary

This report sets out the COVID-19 temporary Winter Swimming Season arrangements which maintain the Social Distancing measures introduced to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and visitors.

The report also provides an update on the actions taken to implement the outcomes of the Swimming Review 2020 and an update on the 2020 summer swimming season.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members agree the Support Scheme arrangements as outlined in paragraphs 30-40.
- Members agree for the Chair and Deputy Chairman to have delegated authority to agree changes to the Winter Season Proposals in response to further Government Guidance.

Main Report

2020 Summer Swimming Season

1. The Hampstead Heath Swimming Facilities re-opened on Saturday 11 July 2020. Between 14 - 17 July 2020 the facilities closed whilst changes were made to the online booking arrangements, following swimmers feedback. Consequently, a new booking platform was launched on Friday 17 July and swimming recommenced on Saturday 18 July 2020. Swimming session tickets are purchased in advanced and bookings can be made online, or via a dedicated telephone booking line.
2. To comply with the NHS Test and Trace requirements, swimmers contact details are retained for 21 days.
3. Notable temporary changes at the facilities have included the installation of COVID-19 site specific signage, temporary barriers and one-way systems tailored to each swimming facility.

4. An additional Children's Concession at £1.20 was introduced at the Lido Family Swimming Sessions for the summer season only.
5. Since swimming reopened on 18 July the demand for sessions has been very high. As of 1 September, there is the opportunity for 2,150 people to swim each day, across the Bathing Ponds and Lido.
6. The online booking refund policy was amended on 9 August, following feedback from swimmers. Tickets can now be automatically cancelled up to 24 hours before the session is due to take place. To date, no sessions have been cancelled due to storms.
7. There has been positive feedback on the online booking process and the cap on the number of swimmers per session, with many swimmers commenting that the facilities are not overcrowded and feel safe.
8. We have received mixed feedback on the requirement to book a session ticket in advanced, which was implemented following Government Guidance. Some swimmers found that making an advanced booking reduced spontaneity, whilst others favored being able to make a guaranteed booking.
9. Anecdotally, staff believe that swimmers who have additional access requirements have used the facilities more regularly over the Summer Season, due to the ability to make an advanced booking which guarantees entry within a defined time period.
10. During the Summer Season a free Carer ticket was made available to allow swimmers to be accompanied by a Carer where required. It is proposed to retain this arrangement as part of the Support Scheme.
11. A review of the Summer Season will be undertaken during the autumn. A report will be presented to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (HHCC) on 19 October 2020, and to Members of this Committee on 25 November 2020.
12. A short online survey has been conducted, seeking feedback from swimmers on the COVID-19 secure arrangements. The Superintendent will provide a verbal update at the meeting.

2020/21 Winter Swimming Season

13. The Winter Swimming Season will commence on Monday 21 September 2020.
14. The arrangements for the Winter Swimming Season are outlined in appendix 1 and take account of the Government Guidance dated 9 July 2020.
15. These arrangements have been discussed with the Hampstead Heath Swimming Forum and shared with the Sports Advisory Forum and the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.
16. The Hampstead Heath Swimming Forum met virtually to discuss the arrangements. A recording of the meeting can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/ublpGQzpPik>. The Superintendent will provide a verbal update to summarise the feedback received on the Winter Season arrangements at the meeting.

17. The Superintendent has received a proposal from the Winter Swimming Club, who are seeking to delay the commencement of their winter season licence. As outlined in appendix 1, it is proposed to delay the commencement of the licence to 28 October 2020 and for the facility to remain open to the public and Lifeguarded until 25 October 2020.

Implementing the outcomes of the Swimming Review 2020

18. Since March 2020, the following outcomes of the Swimming Review 2020 have been implemented.

Lifeguard Training

19. All Lifeguards have completed RLSS COVID-19 training sessions, these have been signed off by our Trainer Assessors. Weekly training sessions have taken place taking account of the Hampstead Heath COVID-19 Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work. The Lifeguards also took part in a number of trial sessions at the Lido and Bathing Ponds prior to reopening.

Additional Lifeguards & Stewards

20. Additional Seasonal Lifeguards have been recruited and a minimum of 3 Lifeguards are on duty at each facility.
21. Stewards have been checking swimmers into the sessions at the three Bathing Ponds and the Lido.
22. The bathing and facility loading have been carefully monitored since reopening on the 18 July 2020. Consequently, it has been possible to gradually increase the number of swimmers at each session, whilst maintaining the COVID-19 Secure Operational Arrangements.

Contactless Payment Technology

23. Contactless payment is being implemented as agreed by the Management Committee of 11 March 2020.
24. Contactless payment arrangements are being progressed and Officers have been working with Lloyds Bank to procure contactless payment devices, wristband season tickets and the development of a Heath App. All these elements are currently being tested and it is hoped that this will be available for the commencement of the winter swimming season.
25. Season ticket holders will be contacted ahead of the reintroduction of season tickets to explain the process for the use of the wristband. Expiry dates will be extended to cover the period of closure of the facilities due to COVID-19 Government Guidelines, and the suspension of the season ticket.
26. The Heath App will enable payments to be made, wristbands to be activated and managed and will also provide the opportunity to message season ticket holders to provide a range information, such as closures and renewal alerts. It will also

be possible to expand the Heath App to include the Athletics Track as a second phase of the implementation programme.

27. Radio frequency data identification (RFID) enabled wristbands will be used for both season ticket holders and will be an option for day visitors.
28. Small personal effects lockers have been procured. These will enable safe storage of personal effects such as phones, cards and wallets. The RFID wristband will be used to unlock the locker, avoiding issues with lost keys.
29. The option to facilitate online booking via the Heath App is also being explored. This would provide an integrated system and add functionality to the online booking capability.

Support Scheme

30. One of the Swimming Review outcomes was to establish a Support Fund, this aligns with the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018 –2028, Outcome C, the Heath is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors. The focus is to create accessible environments for more diverse visitors by removing barriers that may exist for different groups who experience more exclusion or disadvantage than other groups.
31. The Support Scheme will operate under the following 3 arrangements: Concession and free swimming; Working with Partners and Volunteering.
32. Concessions and Free Swimming - A comprehensive range of concessions are already in place, which provide a 40% discount of the adult ticket rate to our facilities for a range of people.
33. Concessions apply to the following: Freedom Pass; Disabled Card; Job Seekers Allowance; Student; Under 16's.
34. A free morning swim is available for under 16's and over 60's.
35. Free Carer access is maintained, to assist visitors accessing facilities, such as the swimming facilities.
36. Working with Partners - Officers will engage with Local Authorities and other Partners, such as the NHS to make them aware that free and concession swimming opportunities are available for different groups who experience more exclusion or disadvantage than others.
37. This arrangement has been in place for a number of years and has continued throughout this summer, to provide a number of organisations and groups with opportunities for free and concession swimming.
38. The existing Prescriptions for Health initiative is also being explored. A similar scheme for health walks operates successfully on the Heath.

39. Volunteering - Time Credits - Heath Hands currently work with Time Credits, a charity that supports Volunteer organisations to provide vouchers in recognition of volunteering contributions. Individuals who undertake volunteering activities through Time Credits are able to exchange their vouchers for a range of services and activities.
40. This scheme is already in place and has been operating successfully for a number of years. The scheme currently allows vouchers to be exchanged for free swimming day tickets and could be extended to include season tickets. This also aligns with Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018 – 2028, Outcome D, greater number and diversity of people taking care of the Heath.
41. Members views on the Support Scheme proposals are sought.

Cyclical Works

42. The City Surveyor will provide an update at the meeting.

Capital Project – Swimming - Safety, Access and Security Project

43. The Gateway 1 Report has been agreed by the Director of Open Spaces.
44. A Capital Bid has been submitted as part of the 2021/22 Annual Capital Bidding process.
45. If Capital Funding is agreed, a Gateway 2 Report will be prepared and discussed with Members of the Swimming Forum, Sports Advisory Forum and Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee before being presented to this Committee. Once agreed this will then be submitted to the City of London Corporation Projects Sub Committee.

Equality – Test of Relevance

46. Following the HHCC meeting on 9 March, the Test of Relevance which was included in the HHCC and HHMC meeting agenda pack was updated. The updated Test of Relevance was presented to Members of the HHMC at their meeting on 11 March 2020, where a report on the Outcomes of the Swimming Review 2020 was considered. A copy of the updated Test of Relevance is attached at appendix 2.
47. The Test of Relevance prepared in relation to the Summer Swimming Season temporary online booking arrangements is attached at appendix 3.
48. The Test of Relevance prepared in relation to the Winter Swimming Season temporary arrangements is attached at appendix 4.

Finance

49. A full review of income and the costs associated with providing swimming during the summer season will be undertaken during the autumn. A report will be

presented to Members at their meeting on 25 November 2020, and will set out the level of subsidy for swimming over the summer season, taking into account income raised from online and phone bookings, and the increased costs of managing the facilities due to COVID-19.

Risk

50. There is a risk that lockdown measures could be reintroduced, or that the Government Guidance changes and the facilities are required to close or more stringent control measures are necessary.
51. There is also the risk that facilities may have to close at short notice if staff need to self-isolate.
52. Unauthorised swimming at the Bathing facilities and the non-lifeguarded Ponds remains a significant concern. Staff continue to undertake patrols around the ponds and barrier tape and signage has been deployed to discourage unauthorised swimming. Evening patrols across the three Bathing Ponds have been in place throughout the summer to prevent unauthorised access once the facilities close. These overnight patrols have been undertaken by the approved Corporate Security Company.
53. The Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work have been updated to reflect the revised temporary Winter Swimming Season operating arrangements.

Communications

54. The Communications Plan has been updated and outlines the steps that the City Corporation will take to provide clear messaging to swimmers around the changes at the swimming facilities as we move into the Winter Swimming Season.
55. Whilst COVID-19 is still a risk, clear communications are critical to provide messaging on the operating arrangements, season tickets, payments, concessions and the support scheme.

Conclusion

56. Due to COVID-19, Officers have developed plans for the Winter Swimming Season to enable the swimming facilities to remain open, in-line with Government Guidance dated 9 July 2020.
57. These arrangements will be kept under review taking account of the most recent Government Guidance. Officers will also consider changes to the Royal Life Saving Societies Guidance and feedback from swimmers and staff.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Winter Swimming Season Proposals
- Appendix 2 – Test of Relevance Equality Analysis (11 March 2020)
- Appendix 3 – Test of Relevance Equality Analysis (30 July 2020)

- Appendix 4 – Test of Relevance Equality Analysis (28 August 2020)

Bob Warnock

Superintendent, Hampstead Heath

T: 020 7332 3322

E: bob.warnock@cityoflondon.gov.uk