1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform members of the background to the difficulties of merging Southend’s two swimming clubs and set out the options to resolve this issue and enable Southend-on-Sea to provide the best opportunities to develop swimming from grassroots through to elite swimming.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That members note the disappointment that despite considerable efforts including a 12 month period of external mediation and support from the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA)\(^1\) Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club and the Borough of Southend Swimming Club have not agreed the creation of one club or the allocation of water time to enable the best outcomes for swimming development and pool use to be achieved.

2.2 Therefore it is proposed that Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club and the Borough of Southend Swimming Club are given notice (three months) that they are required to form one club by the 1\(^{st}\) October 2011. If after this three month period the Clubs have not formed one club their swimming pool hire will be withdrawn from the 1\(^{st}\) January 2012, and the Council in partnership with Parkwood Community Leisure (PCL) and with the full support of the ASA will create a new swimming club in Southend that will enable swimming to develop to its full potential as per Option 2 (3.1).

3. Background

3.1 Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club has been using the council swimming pools since 1969 and the Borough of Southend Swimming Club has been using council swimming pools for at least 20 years. The Borough of Southend Swimming Club was established when members of Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club broke away and created a separate club.

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\(^{1}\) The ASA is the swimming governing body that looks after the sport throughout England and are committed to improving and developing the sport for everyone.
3.2 The clubs over a considerable number of years have had a problematic relationship with each other, the leisure operators (currently Parkwood Community Leisure) and Southend-on-Sea Borough council. During the last two years the council has been proactive in its dealings with the clubs and endeavoured to broker a positive relationship between the two clubs with the support of the ASA.

3.3 In 2009 a Swimming Review was undertaken by the authority that undertook consultation with a variety of stakeholders including both the Club Chairs and Head Coaches of Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club and Borough of Southend Swimming Club and the ASA. All parties involved agreed with the following outcome from the review, which was approved by the elected members:

“The important role of accredited Swimming Clubs is recognised in providing swimming and diving, training, development and competition. A stronger viable club for Southend could be achieved if both Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club and Borough Swimming squads were amalgamated.”

3.4 In order to facilitate the formation of one club, the Council subsequently led protracted negotiations to merge the clubs into one single club for over a year before the new Southend Swimming and Diving Centre opened, the council engaged two voluntary mediators to work with the clubs to enable them to be able to access the new facility as one new club.

3.5 The ASA fully supported this process and are of the strong view that if the clubs do not merge into one, that swimming in Southend will never meet its full potential and would be detrimental for future development of the swimming pathway from grass roots, to elite level swimming. Therefore the ASA offered the clubs the following incentives to become one club:

- ASA Officer time to support the process – that would have included the fast tracking of Swim 21 accreditation² for the new club.
- The ASA would have committed direct funding for at least 1 x coaching post.
- The ASA would base an embedded tutor in Southend to support the delivery of UKCC/CPD courses.
- The ASA would allocate an apprenticeship opportunity to Southend.
- The ASA would work with all agencies to create full time integrated aquatic teaching/coaching posts.
- There would be ASA investment into creating sustainable school club links ensuring a seamless pathway from school to clubs.

In addition senior ASA officials met with representatives from both clubs to facilitate the smooth implementation of the transition from two clubs to one.

² Swim 21 Accreditation – is an ASA scheme that is dedicated to creating the best possible swimming experience for all and to raising the quality of swimming provision across all areas. Swim 21 is a guarantee of quality provision and is a development tool that allows swimmers, teachers, coaches and those responsible for developing swimming programmes to continually improve.
3.6 It became obvious however, that this process would not be concluded by the time the new facility was open and Council Officers, representatives from the ASA and both Clubs met on the 5\textsuperscript{th} October 2010, the result of which is detailed below:

- The Council expressed its disappointment that the clubs had been unable to date to agree to become one club, with all the associated benefits that this would bring, and it was confirmed that the aspiration of the authority was that there would be one swimming club in Southend.

- The ASA representatives clearly expressed their view, that one club would be considerably beneficial for the future swimming in Southend.

- Both clubs representatives were presented with a time table for water time for the new pool that had been compiled with support of the ASA.

- The clubs were required to work together to identify and agree individual clubs usage of the new pool, from the times that have been allocated for club use.

- The Clubs were advised that this allocation of pool time was for a three month period only, to enable the clubs to take the opportunity to further discuss and agree a 'one club' for Southend. If agreement can be reached their maybe some flexibility in how we allocate future water time and constructive support for the new club.

- However if the clubs did not decide to form one club, the Council and Parkwood community Leisure will review terms and conditions for hire to include a criteria that clubs will need to meet to enable the pool to be booked and best utilised. The criterion is not yet in place and would be subject to advice from the ASA.

- The Council set out the intention to have one learn to swim scheme provided by the centre operator up to level 5 following which swimmers will be passed to the clubs, for potential membership.

3.7 A further meeting was held on the 20\textsuperscript{th} October 2010 and both the Chairs of the clubs had agreed on how the water space would be allocated, with both separate and shared/integrated water sessions having been identified by both clubs. The ASA had been working with the clubs and their Head Coaches to support the process. The shared/integrated sessions were on Monday and Friday evenings. This was considered a major breakthrough as both clubs had never agreed to work in this way previously. It was also stated that both clubs agreed with the general principle that one club would be formed.

3.8 The new pool opened on the 15\textsuperscript{th} November 2010, a Monday, and was due to host the first shared/integrated evening sessions for both Clubs. Unfortunately, for reasons that are difficult to comprehend, this did not happen and at no time since have the Borough of Southend Swimming Club and Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club shared water time.

3.9 Subsequently conference calls were undertaken between the ASA, Club Chairs and Officers from the authority and for the remainder of the 3 month interim period it was agreed that Borough of Southend Swimming Club would have the pool on Monday evenings and Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club on Thursdays and Fridays.
3.10 In the meantime all parties were working with clubs with a view to them forming a new club. Borough of Southend Swimming Club did agree to dissolve, however, Southend-on-Sea Swimming club held an EGM on Tuesday 7th December, at which they decided not to dissolve.

3.11 The relationship between the two clubs continued to be problematic since the opening of the Southend Swimming & Diving Centre (SSDC). The swimming club time table replicates the hours agreed for the initial 3 months operating period as per 3.7. However, neither club is happy with the arrangements and nor can agreement be reached in regard to the reallocation of existing slots and additional evening sessions.

This is resulting in the under utilisation of the pool, for time that has been identified for club use, and is proving unsatisfactory for some groups of swimmers who are disadvantaged by the impasse between the clubs.

It should be noted that the Learn to Swim scheme up to Level 5 is now operated by Parkwood Community Leisure, the model of delivery was introduced for the operation of the scheme which is now exclusively run by Parkwood Community Leisure and proving very successful:

- At Warriors Swim Centre there were 62 lessons per week with 544 participants and 82% occupancy.
- At Southend Swimming & Diving Centre there are 82 lessons per week with 689 participants and 86% occupancy.

3.12 At this point it should be noted that if the Council were to offer the clubs all the water time that they requested, it would severely impact and restrict community/public access, the ASA position is that having two clubs duplicating provision is denying the wider community opportunities and limiting achievement level.

3.13 The only way that more water time could be identified for public swimming sessions and community use would be via the formation of one club, which would enable the optimum use of the water space available.

3.14 The Diving Club used to be a part of Southend-on-Sea Swimming Club, when the club transferred to SSDC, a new diving club, with a new model of delivery was established and based at SSDC via support from the ASA and led by Parkwood Community Leisure. Via funding from the ASA a Head Coach for Diving is now based at SSDC and has enabled the diving programme to grow and developed exponentially since transferring from Warriors Swim Centre and is continuing to grow:

- At Warriors Swim Centre there were 4 lessons per week with 26 participants and 65% occupancy.
- At Southend Swimming & Diving Centre there are 20 lessons per week with 158 participants and 79% occupancy.
3.15 **Options**

Please see 2 options detailed below:

1. That we maintain the status quo – do not renegotiate the water space and allow the two clubs to carry on as they are as per the current water allocation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That the current arrangement would continue with minimum input from the authority or Parkwood Community Leisure.</td>
<td>Both the local authority and the leisure operator would continually be required to act as arbiters between the two clubs, with no positive resolution to be found.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neither club would ever develop to their full potential, with the limited water space shared between two clubs, or produce top quality competitive athletes.</td>
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<td>The authority would not see the development of the facilities full potential from the capital investment of £13.5 million.</td>
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2. That the clubs are given a three month notice period to form one club by 1\textsuperscript{st} October 2011, during this period the authority and the leisure operator will work with the ASA to undertake the background work to establish a new club. If after this three month period the clubs have not formed one club, their swimming pool hire will be withdrawn and the Council in partnership with Parkwood Community Leisure (PCL) and the support of the ASA will create a new swimming club in Southend that will enable swimming to develop to its full potential the new separate swimming club will be allocated all club swimming time available.

The new club would require the recruitment of a Head Coach as per the newly established diving club and become the competitive outlet for the “Borough Training Scheme”. There is a need to offer a professional service, which will lead to consistency in team leadership and the development of a sustainable and vibrant programme and Swim 21 accreditation.

The new Swimming Club would initially have 4 training squads – each squad would have a squad coach which is responsible for all coaching issue relating to the squad and would be supported by a squad manager who would be responsible for all administrative duties within the squad, as required by the squad coach. These two people work jointly to provide an excellent delivery service to the customer.

There would be a Borough wide competitive training scheme with direct links to the following:

- Schools swimming lessons and competitions.
- Local Authority swimming lessons.
- To use the new Swimming Club purely as a competition outlet.
- Introduce ‘Young Olympians’ swimming competitions.
- The ‘Training Scheme’ to operate with a minimum of 1 full time and 1 part time coach, plus administration support.
- Ensure that a balanced programme of community swimming is maintained and developed alongside competitive swimming.
The new Swimming Club would operate from fees generated from its members. All Club members pay an annual membership fee of £50.00. This fee covers insurance and also covers their registration to the ASA to allow them to compete in competitions. They would also pay monthly training fees ranging from £24.00 - £50.00 a month and would be paid every month by direct debit to the leisure centre operator under the contract arrangements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>The new club would enable the better use of the facilities thereby maximising the full potential for club swimmers.</th>
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<td>Long term athlete development</td>
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<td>Smoother performance pathway</td>
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<td>Better integrated pool time for swimmers</td>
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<td>Better voice for swimming with the Council and Leisure operator</td>
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<td>Financial model for club – more sustainable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Better integration of the learn to swim scheme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increase skill base</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not a duplication of volunteering roles eg. Chair, secretary, treasurer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increases resources going to the development of swimming</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Cons | That the two clubs may decide to use facilities outside the Borough                                     |
|      | May invoke adverse publicity against the local authority                                               |
|      | The two clubs are currently seen to underachieve at performance level by the ASA                       |

4. **Corporate Implications**

4.1 The establishment of one swimming club in Southend sits comfortably alongside the Council priorities of:

- Becoming a high performing organisation
- Embed a high performing culture across the authority
- Improve community engagement, participation and satisfaction.

4.2 **Financial Implications**

At this time the Council subsidises the clubs’ usage of the swimming pools. If it was agreed to establish one club it would be intended that this would be cost neutral to the Council (see 3.11).

The Leisure Management contract is awarded under deficit guarantee and provides a global subsidy for all of the leisure centres which includes swimming. Any new arrangement for the swimming clubs is unlikely to impact financially on the operation of this contract.

4.3 **Legal Implications**

4.3.1 The ASA have been through this process in different parts of the country and have assured us that there should not be any legal challenge to our establishing one club.

4.4 **People Implications**
4.4.1 That Southend would have a stronger swimming club delivering quality swimming coaching and lessons from grassroots through to competitive swimming.

4.5 Property Implications

None at this time.

4.6 Consultation

4.6.1 The Swimming Review was undertaken in 2009 and subject to public consultation that included clubs, schools, ASA etc.

4.6.2 In addition the two clubs have been part of a process for over a year and are fully aware of what is required not only for the benefit for the towns swimmers but for their members.

4.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

4.7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Leisure Centre Service.

4.8 Risk Assessment

4.8.1 In the first instance:

- Clubs continue to fail to engage with the one club process
- Negative feedback from club members

4.9 Value for Money

4.9.1 Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Leisure facilities are subsidised by the authority. The one club option (option2) would result in better utilisation of facilities, and improved outcomes for swimmers and will increase value for money.

4.10 Community Safety Implications

4.10.1 Approval of option 4 would be expected to attract more young people to participate and could be considered as diversionary activities.

4.11 Environmental Impact

N/A

5. **Background Papers**

Swimming Review
Pool Time Tables (Warriors & Southend Swimming & Diving Centre)