

## CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

### COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Town Hall, Assets and Services Committee Meeting</b>		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Congleton Town Hall</b>
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	<b>Town Hall Manager – Mark Worthington</b>		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>8: Paddling Pool Update</b>		
<b>Background</b>	<p>The paddling pool was passed from Congleton Borough Council to the Town Council just prior to Cheshire East Council being formed as a result of the Local Government Reorganisation process. When the handover took place the Town Council continued to operate the pool on the same basis as it did under Congleton Borough Council, with an officer of the council supervising the pool with the support of seasonal workers which were predominantly students.</p> <p>Due to the shortage of seasonal staff, a formal training course was organised in August 2021 for town council staff, during that course it was identified that the Pool Operating Procedure (POP) the council had inherited was insufficient and out of date. As a result the council invested in updating the POP, provided by an outside company that specialises in pool facilities and pool plant operations, with one of the outcomes of the report stating that the capacity for the area should be 140 users at any one time.</p> <p>Leading up to the reopening of the pool in August 2021 there were concerns about managing the demand for the pool, and it was at that point that we agreed to trial a booking system as we were aware that other similar facilities were doing the same. This was trialled for the last 4 weeks of the season as covid restrictions were being lifted, in reality there was very little demand during that period.</p> <p>Despite not being able to recruit seasonal workers, the pool reopened in May 2022 with a senior member of staff and a casual stalwart. The booking system was used during the whole of this season on the basis of 2 sessions per day, 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 5pm, with a capacity of 140 per session. There were minimal complaints during the 2022 paddling pool season and the staff found it to be far more manageable than before and users said it was a vast improvement which was echoed by some residents on Park Road due to the reduction of vehicular movements, litter being left by people in the queue as well as it being generally quieter.</p>		

**Update**

Following on from that “successful” season we have managed to convince staff to have more flexibility within their contracts which includes being trained in Active IQ Level 3 Award in Small Pools to supervise the paddling pool, this would help up us to increase experience in monitoring the water quality and managing the water pumping and draining systems, without this we cannot operate the pool. We also invested heavily in improving the area around the pool and in the equipment that pumps the water and necessary chemicals into the pool.

Issues were being highlighted by residents that the pool area was rarely full yet they could not gain entry, as a result we reviewed the figures which showed a high level of people that had booked basically did not show up despite us making it clear through the booking system that if they were unable to attend that they would be expected to cancel thus releasing their places for another resident which is done automatically on the system.

Period	Total Bookings	Total Bookings Attended	Total No Shows
27/05/23 to 25/06/23  (4 weeks)	7071	4330	2741

As a response to these issues we are highlighting these figures on a daily basis in an attempt to encourage people to cancel, as well as letting residents know where the problem lies We have also introduced an additional session, so we now have 3 sessions where up to an additional 140 people can use the pool each day. Pool sessions are now 9:30am – 11:30am, 12:30pm-2:30pm and 3:30pm – 5:30pm.

We are being asked why people can't just turn up and come in if some that have booked don't turn up, it seems a very reasonable question but how do you control how many people will turn up at the paddling pool, if we do, what will the reaction be if they can't come in as the pool is again at full capacity– we have been there before.

As an example, on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, a person had booked 5 people to attend a session and turned up as a two, when asked if they had managed to cancel the other 3 places he / she basically turned round and was very dismissive to the member of staff. This is not an isolated incident of people arriving at the pool with fewer in their party than having booked for.

Northwich have a similar pool to ourselves, similar capacity and a similar booking system and they are experiencing the same issues from members of the public as we are.

Since we started to receive complaints we have:

- Increased the capacity by 50% per day

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started educating those that are not turning up to cancel and if possible and necessary prevent frequent abusers of the system from booking in the future.</li> <li>• Started to look at an alternative booking system</li> <li>• Looking at a safe and controllable way to allow entry into the pool area to ensure the capacity is utilised, we are currently discussing this matter with Cheshire East Highways as we have major concerns about lengthy queues on the pavement outside of the pool.</li> <li>• All measures to be introduced are to be designed for the residents to have a safe enjoyable experience and staff protected from abuse, we cannot operate a paddling pool without staff.</li> </ul> <p>Ultimately we see the pool as an asset for the town and we want it to be available to as many residents and visitors as we can but ultimately they have a significant part to play in that ambition.</p>
<p><b>Proposal</b></p>	<p>To receive the Paddling Pool Updates report and have an open discussion to progress the points raised within the report.</p>