



## **Overton C E Primary School Swimming Pool: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**



The following FAQs relate to the current situation with the swimming pool: the school no longer has the resources to support it and cover its share of the costs so has given the school governors and Lordsfield Swimming Club (LSC) the opportunity to devise an alternative model to manage and fund it. This involves LSC seeking to secure the lease on the pool directly from Hampshire County Council. This process is underway. It is hoped that these FAQs help to explain more clearly and in greater detail the situation, and help to allay some of the anxieties expressed in the community since the announcement was made that the school could no longer support the pool.

**It is advised that these FAQs be read for background and understanding prior to the public meeting scheduled for Monday 25 September, 7.30pm, at the school.**

### **How many schools in Hampshire have swimming pools?**

The county council supports 14 school swimming pools in maintained schools. Other school pools do exist but they are 'unsupported'. Being 'unsupported' means that the school must fund all significant repairs. Ours is a 'supported' pool so repairs are covered by the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that the school and club share the cost of (20% paid by the school, 80% paid by the club). The SLA costs £3,303 annually. Many outdoor school pools have closed due to the high running costs and poor condition.

### **Who owns the pool? Doesn't it belong to the village, not the school?**

The pool is on Hampshire County Council (HCC) land and the council are the legal owners of the site and all its facilities. Whilst it is a school decision whether or not to close the pool, the school cannot make an independent decision as to the future of the pool as it is owned by HCC. Consultation with HCC is necessary.

### **How much does it cost to run the pool each year?**

The total cost for an annual 14 week swimming season is around £20,000 which includes the Service Level Agreement (SLA), water, chemicals, gas, and electricity. Currently LSC pay 80% of these costs based on usage over a season. In addition, the school incurs the training costs of its staff. The £20,000 does not include capital expenditure which can be significant, although some capital items are covered by the SLA. It also does not include the actual cost to the school of resourcing the pool in terms of staff time.

### **Lordsfield Swimming Club (LSC) pay 80% of this cost so why can the school not fund the remainder?**

The school's budget is under considerable pressure this year and for the foreseeable future. Significant savings have been made already. A staff restructure took effect in September 2017. The school has had to reduce its Learning Support staff from 15 to 11. The governors looked carefully at all areas of the school's budget and concluded that the school's stretched resources must be targeted on achieving the best possible educational outcomes for its pupils.

### **Can't LSC or the community make up the school's share of the pool's costs?**

The cost to the school of running the pool is not purely financial. Managing the pool takes up a considerable amount of school resource, particularly the time of the school caretaker, business

manager and head teacher. The governors have concluded that this model is no longer sustainable when there are so many other pressures on school staff.

**The club has offered to fund all operational costs related to the pool so why is a new model of management needed?**

See answer above. At present, the head teacher is the 'Pool Operator/Manager'. This role carries a wide range of legal obligations and responsibilities to ensure that the pool is run safely. It also gives rise to legal liabilities in the event that anything goes wrong. The school takes this role and its health and safety obligations extremely seriously. The governors have concluded reluctantly that the level of management resource required to carry out this demanding role is no longer sustainable, when balanced against the many other competing priorities that the school faces in continuing to deliver an excellent education to the children of Overton.

**Doesn't the National Curriculum require the school to provide swimming lessons?**

All maintained schools must provide swimming instruction in Key Stage (KS) 1 or 2. Pupils should be taught to swim competently over a distance of at least 25 metres using a range of strokes and be able to perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations. The National Curriculum does not prescribe how this is delivered and many schools rely on public swimming facilities. Overton Primary School would continue to meet this requirement by taking KS2 children to Testbourne School by minibus if its pool closed.

**Who is legally responsible for the pool?**

Health and safety requirements specify that the head teacher is the responsible person for the school site. The head teacher must ensure that there are competent trained staff on site to manage and operate the swimming pool. Any legal claims relating to the pool are claims on HCC's insurance. In other words, the insurance indemnifies HCC employees. LSC is insured separately.

**Can the pool be leased to third parties, such as Lordsfield Swimming Club?**

HCC must be satisfied that the legal obligations of 'pool operator' are clearly allocated. The head teacher must be confident that the hirer/lessee is competent to manage the facilities during the hire period. Lordsfield Swimming Club meets these requirements under current arrangements, but the county council will not permit a pool to be leased to a third party to be managed on a full time and commercial basis. HCC will require a full business plan to demonstrate the future sustainability and funding behind any future operating model. LSC has met with HCC – business planning is underway to secure the lease on the pool.

**Who maintains the pool currently?**

Overall responsibility lies with HCC under the SLA, although day to day maintenance and management is carried out by the school caretaker, staff and LSC volunteers, most notably Mr David Edwards.

**Could the pool be covered to enable it to open for a longer season?**

There are three types of swimming pool: outdoor, indoor or covered outdoor. The school pool is too outdated to upgrade to an indoor pool. This would be prohibitively costly and it might be better to consider the feasibility of building a new community pool elsewhere in the village. In practice, a covered outdoor pool would not extend the season for a significant period when set against the extra cost. A glass cover could cost in the region of £70,000.

**Can't the school ask parents to pay more through the voluntary contribution?**

The voluntary contribution is just that and the school cannot require parents to pay it. It is used to help provide a whole range of curriculum enrichment activities each year, including swimming.

The voluntary contribution is currently levied at a rate of about £15 per child. In recent years the school has struggled to raise this relatively modest sum from many parents so it cannot be viewed as a sustainable funding stream for the future.

### **What action is the school and LSC taking?**

School staff (head teacher and business manager) and two of the governors have been meeting regularly with the trustees and chair of LSC to explore options. Discussions have also been taking place with HCC, Overton Parish Council, ORC and local borough councillors. A meeting was held with HCC on 6 September at which it was stated that HCC is serious about leasing the pool to LSC as long as its criteria for financial viability, health and safety, and commitment of sustainable human resources are satisfied. **A public meeting is scheduled to be held at the school on Monday 25th September at 7.30pm for the community to find out more.**

### **What is the purpose of the public meeting on Monday 25 September?**

This will be an opportunity for the community and pool users to meet with those people from the school and LSC who have been working hard to devise a new operating model and to secure the lease of the pool from HCC - to hear about this work and the current situation (as we start to put together the business plan), to have questions answered and importantly find out how they can help keep the pool operational and available in the community. The meeting is designed to be positive, pro-active and forward-looking and people are asked to attend thinking about what commitment they can make to the future of the pool in terms particularly of physical help with all aspects of running the club and operating a safe pool. *'Ask not what your pool can do for you, but what you can do for your pool!'*

It is anticipated that people attending the public meeting will have read these FAQs as background information, and to help in managing the meeting, it is requested that people ideally submit their questions in advance by emailing Lauren McCann (LSC Chair & Trustee) at [chair@overtonswim.org.uk](mailto:chair@overtonswim.org.uk) or by physically posting their questions (along with their name) in to the box provided at Overton Chemist, Winchester St.

### **What is the deadline for resolving the pool situation?**

Initially, a deadline of 31 December 2017 was set by which an alternative and sustainable funding and management model was to be agreed if closure of the pool was to be avoided. This deadline was agreed by the school's full governing body due to potential further restructuring requirements and to give time to put this in place for the end of July 2018. LSC and governors are now putting together a business plan to try to secure the pool's lease directly from HCC. It is likely that this will be an iterative process and could take around 6 months. It is hoped that this work can be completed and the lease secured ready for the summer swimming season starting in late May 2018.

### **What can I do to help?**

Please do attend the public meeting on Monday 25 September to find out more, including how you can help. We'll need more funds and more people to help share the load of running our own pool if/when we are successful in securing the lease.

If you would like any further information, please contact either Lauren McCann (LSC Chair/Trustee), Fiona Wyeth (head teacher) or John Mitchell (Chair of Governors)