Council

17 December 2025
Public excluded
Grounds of public exclusion: Section 7(2)(a) Protection privacy natural persons

20. *EA Networks Centre Service Level – Swim Squad*

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Executive Team Member	Sarah Mosley, *Group Manager: People & Facilities*

Summary

- The purpose of this report is to seek direction from Council as to Council's future role in the direct provision of the Swim Squad Programme.
- Since the last officer report in October 2023, officers have successfully introduced a number of operational changes to Swim Squad Programme to improve its profitability, however, Ashburton Swim Team (AST) have voiced concerns and either resisted or rejected a number of proposed options or changes.
- While the Council has directly employed coaches for the Swim Squad since Council assumed the Community Pool's operation, (just prior to EA Networks Centre opening), the duties "to *arrange for instruction and coaching in swimming and associated aquatic sports and disciplines"* is one of Ashburton Swim Team's constitutional purposes.
- Officers acknowledge that if the recommendation is adopted,
    - there will likely be short to medium term disruption to competitive youth swimming within the Ashburton District while another service provider/model is introduced by AST. This will directly impact the 67 current swim squad members
    - Ashburton Swim Team Committee and 67 swimmer families are likely to strongly and publicly disagree with this decision
    - Officers will commence employment change process with the two affected Council employees (approx. 1 FTE) who currently provide swim squad coaching services.

Recommendation

1. **That** , subject to consultation with affected staff (as provided in point 2), Council will cease providing a Swim Squad Programme on 28 June 2026 (or sooner subject to coach availability or alternative provider emerging).

2. **That** officers will commence consultation with affected staff regarding potential redeployment or other options.

Attachments

Appendix 1 Squad Options Document with AST Reply

Appendix 2 AST feedback to draft Swim Meet Agreement – 25 July 2025
[Withheld from public release due to external document source.]

Appendix 3 Ashburton District Council & Ashburton Swim Team Agreement: Coaching Services at Swim Meets

Appendix 4 Email communication 7-13 August 2025

Background

History

1. Over the years, competitive youth swimming within Ashburton has produced a number of successful swimmers and athletes who have gone on to be successful in a number of other sporting endeavours.

2. When Council took over the operation of the Ashburton Community Pool and subsequently moved to EA Networks Centre, existing squad coaching staff transferred across. Council has continued to offer the Swim Squad Programme through the employment of a swim coach(s). This programme is a progression beyond the Learn to Swim Programme, where instructors teach tamariki and rangatahi water safety and basic swim technique.

3. Officers undertook a detailed review of the Swim Squad Programme in 2023, separating its income and costs (to the extent possible) from the Learn to Swim programme.

Service Levels & Commitments

4. In 2022 a MOU was created to provide some structure and guidance to responsibilities of both parties (Council & AST). While the MOU was signed and honoured by both parties, there was greater onus on Council, which included paying for coaches time at swim meets.

5. Following Council's decision on 4 October 2023 (below), officers provided AST with a discussion document on 19th October 2023, which included 8 alternative service delivery options (Appendix 1).

> *"That the Audit & Risk Committee recommends that Council considers outsourcing swim coaching with first right of refusal given to the affected parties".*

6. In December 2023 officers gave notice to terminate the MOU, to enable the opportunity for an alternative service delivery model to commence 1 July 2024. While initially officers thought the opportunity of an alternative service model might appeal to AST, this did not eventuate.

7. Both ADC and AST have invested time and effort (7 meetings, many emails and 3 LGOIMA's during October 2023 to August 2025) trying to advance the situation, however, the parties differing views remain strong. Members of AST met with the Mayor and the Chief Executive on separate occasions and they also emailed the Mayor and Councillors as a group on multiple occasions.

8. During the meeting on 22 March 2024 AST said the committee agreed that after reviewing the 8 service delivery options provided (and the opportunity to put forward any other desired option) the only option they will accept is the status quo.

Officers shared their preference was an option whereby they become only the facility provider (i.e. swimming was treated exactly like all other sporting groups at EANC), however are willing to accept an 'Improved Status Quo' (Option B) that resets the responsibilities and addresses some cost redistribution between parties.

9. At times, interactions have been challenging however, officers have continued to move forward as they want competitive swimming to succeed. Over the last two years officers gave AST suggestions of additional funding organisations (other than their annual application to the Lion Foundation due to reducing amounts), and explained the Sport NZ Travel Fund criteria and they received $800. Additionally, officers provided raffle prizes when asked for their club fundraiser (29/11/25) and have provided other prizes previously.

The current operation

10. Currently of the 67-Swim Squad members, those that also attend swim meets pay an annual subscription directly to AST which covers their competitive registration and contribution to the committee's operation. Squad members also pay a weekly fee to Council (s28.4 Fees and Charges) with the intention that direct costs are covered. Whether this is achieved or not is dependent on the assumptions regarding overheads (staff, facility wide and council) and if sole use of swimming lanes should incur charges.

11. 2023-24 financials show the squad income didn't cover direct coach labour cost by circa $24,135 , in 2024-25 it was -$18,746, and officers believe the income for 2025-26 will result in a reduced loss of circa $9,834. In effect, these loses are offset through rates.

12. Since moving to a 'modified 'status quo' operation in April 2024, officers efforts resulted in two 6 monthly fee increases to address a fee discounting error since COVID-19, introduction of endurance swimming option to compliment the competitive programme and from 1 July 2025 all coaching costs associated with competitive swim meets are now borne by the swimmers directly or the coach volunteers their time, so as not to pass any costs onto the swimmers.

13. Since 1 July 2025, Council's coaches have willingly elected to volunteer their time at swim meets. While the coach's willingness to volunteer their time is commendable, it is an industry norm that Swim Coaching is a paid position for all aspects (training and at swim meets), therefore, if the current coach was to leave or change their mind, Council could not require our current or any future coach to continue to provide their time at swim meets on a voluntary basis.

14. [redacted] Council also created a draft Swim Meet Agreement (final version - appendix 3) for AST to review. The agreement provided all parties (ADC, AST and the coach themselves) with confirmation as to the parties' respective responsibilities at swim meets.

15. Officers thought that multiple focused agreements on specific topics (vs a single, comprehensive agreement), would be more practical and establish a strong foundation for the relationship between ADC and AST to move forward. Correspondence with AST on this draft Swim Meet Agreement continued through mid-2025, with AST also writing to the Mayor and councillors to outline their concerns with the agreement.

16. On 25 July 2025, AST shared their feedback on the draft Swim Meet Agreement (appendix 2).

17. Council made amendments to the draft agreement) to reflect AST's feedback. The Mayor also replied to AST's email reinforcing the previously stated deadline for AST to sign the agreement and also stated that "*If AST does not sign the agreement and therefore does not commit to work with ADC, Council is likely to reconsider its decision about continuing to provide coaching services as part of the next Annual Plan process.*" (Appendix 4).

18. While Council did not receive a signed agreement on the 8th of August, AST's reply provided greater clarity of their view of the role:

    "*The purpose of AST is to be the entity that swimmers need to register with to enable them to swim competitively and to facilitate accommodation and travel (upon coaches' instructions). Accordingly, AST's position is that there no need for any agreement between ADC and AST (inclusive of the agreement currently in negotiation) and that ADC should engage directly with swimmer families.*

    With this clarity, ADC's next email reply stated that officers will conclude all communication and interactions with AST on operational swim squad matters accordingly.

19. For the above reasons, officers consider the ongoing provision of swim coaches and the squad programme is potentially untenable. Officers consider it is therefore timely for Council to consider ceasing the provision of these services on or before 28 June 2026. As two Council employees are affected, if Council adopts the officer recommendation, staff will begin a consultation process with affected employees.

Future Swim Coaching Options

20. A recent review of AST's constitution (detailed below), expands their purpose beyond the scope and or desire of the current committee (point 18). It states AST purpose is:

> *2.1 To promote, foster and encourage swimming and associated aquatic sports and disciplines.*
>
> ***2.2 To arrange for instruction and coaching in swimming and associated aquatic sports and disciplines.***
>
> *2.3 To promote, organise and/or conduct competitions, carnivals, tournaments, training camps and entertainments both relating to swimming and associated aquatic sports and disciplines and also unrelated to swimming and associated aquatic sports and disciplines, (in the later case for the purpose of furthering, extending, assisting, fostering or providing financial support for swimming and associated aquatic sports and disciplines or individuals or affiliated clubs and/or other members);*
>
> *2.4 To affiliate with swimming New Zealand (Incorporated) and to do all acts matters and things incidental thereto.*
>
> *2.5 To promote attitudes and behaviour conducive to good conduct and fair play; and*
>
> *2.6 To do all other acts matters and things as are incidental to or conducive to the charitable purposes described above in this clause 2.*

21. Given this, the onus of providing coaching services is AST responsibility to determine their next step. This could result in them engaging a third-party or partnering with another club. Depending on AST's selected arrangement the swimmers may continue to swim at EA Networks Centre as a squad or not, or swimmers may just use our pool for independent practice.

Income

22. Based on current squad members remaining until 30 June 2026 the estimated income for the remainder of the financial year is $67,000 ($58,719 in 2024-25). However, once consultation commences the estimate income (circa $67,000) will drop as some swimmers would likely join neighbouring clubs sooner than later and only swim at EANC for remote/ad hoc training sessions before the date of ceasing service.

23. Traditionally AST host a regional swim meet "Ashburton Splash" annually in May. They hire the main pool for 2 days and in 2025 they paid Council $3,913 +GST for this hire. During this swim meet trained members of AST and their volunteers used the specialist pool timing equipment and met all the sporting regulations enabling the event to be FINA/record capable. The Canterbury West Coast Swimming Calendar includes Ashburton Splash 2-3 May 2026, however, there is a risk that they could decide not to host this swim meet any more, or host it at a neighbouring facility.

24. AST and their volunteers also provide services to enable the specialist timing equipment to be used at Mid-Canterbury Counties, and Aoraki swim meets at EANC. The organising body pay AST for their services and ADC for pool hire (2024-25 this totalled $2,200+gst). If AST no longer wished to provide timing services (and no longer receive payment directly from the swim meet organisers), Council would likely lose these events or need to train alternative resource to manage the timing equipment to provide the same level of service.

Expenses

25. The largest direct cost associated with Squad swimming is the coach labour. As Council is no longer paying for coaches to attend swim meets (or if we do, that cost is directly recoverable from the swimmers who attended the meet) the YTD expense is $[redacted], vs the total for 2024-25 was $[redacted] with this including $[redacted] for labour at swim meets.

26. There is no provision for the Squad Swim Programme to contribute towards the lane hire fees for their training sessions. Due to being an 'inhouse activity' this has always been treated this way, however neighbouring council's that have an external provider supplying coaching services, have a negotiated rate of [redacted]% listed lane hire fees.

27. There are also other direct (consumables, training equipment, uniforms, staff training, computers) and indirect costs (manager oversight, facility and Council overhead) with the provision of the Swim Squad Programme.

Assets

28. The equity from the Allenton Swimming Charitable Trust contributed approximately $97,000 to the community fundraising campaign for EA Networks Centre. Council used this money to support the purchase and installation of a specialist timing system for swim meets. This asset with current book value of $4,979 is the property of Council, with estimated replacement cost of the system is unknown however the initial capital value in 2015 was $168,440.

29. Council owns 7 backstroke ledges (required for swim meets), which if purchased now cost approximately $1,500 per unit. AST owns 3 units, thus allowing each lane to be used in swim meets.

30. AST owns many plastic chairs (estimate 300) which are used for additional seating during a swim meet. The chairs along with all other equipment associated with Squad Swimming (that is not used daily) is stored in a large container (AST purchased) at the back of EANC free of charge. This was provided when AST indicated they had an urgent need to remove the chairs from existing off-site storage. The initial agreement in return for free storage was that EANC would have access to utilise these – however recent enquiries demonstrate AST now want income in return for use.

Summary

31. While officers believe the changes made to date have been required, the time and internal resource cost (GM People & Facility, Sport & Recreation Manager, Swim School Manager, Legal Counsel) over the last two years has been significant. Officers have continued to try and find a way forward balancing Council's needs while maintaining the programme so not to disadvantage the squad swimmers. Officers have continued to try and find a way forward balancing Council's needs while maintaining the programme so as not to disadvantage the squad swimmers. However, when AST refused to sign the Swim Meet Agreement, officers believe the relationship had reached a point where it would be timely for Council to review the delivery of the Swim Squad Programme, even if this ultimately resulted in a loss of swim meet and potential squad income for Council.

32. The proposed change in service level addresses the current anomaly of Council being directly involved in the provision of one sport. Instead, swimming as a sport will be treated like other sports in the district (and at EANC) with Council continuing to assist with providing facilities that sporting groups may choose to utilise. This recommendation also aligns to Council's stance that the service provides private benefit and that ultimately should not be subsidised by rates.

33. If Council ultimately decides to stop this service following consultation, this will be very impactful for the current swimmers and competitive swimming as a sport within Ashburton for a period of time. However, like other councils that have ceased providing a Swim Squad Programme, market forces will ultimately prevail and alternative arrangements may emerge once known within the industry.

34. Given the timing and duration of the Annual Plan process (adopted 30 June 2026), officers recommend targeted consultation with affected staff and key stakeholders and interested parties (mid January to mid February 2026). This meets consultation requirements for both local government consultation and employment related processes. A second report (18 March 2026) that includes feedback regarding the level of service change should enable Council to make its final decision on this matter.

Options analysis

Option one – Continue to provide Swim Squad Programme (Status Quo)

Advantages: • Council continues to provide opportunities for local youth to easily take part in competitive swimming. • Direct Swim Meet income received by EANC and the wider economic development spend associated with a 2 day swim meet continues. • AST volunteers likely to continue to provide timing equipment services to enable other swim meets at EANC.	***Disadvantages:*** • Inequity between how Council treats Swimming compared with other sports. • Continuing with a fractious relationship (Council and AST) -i.e. AST unwilling to sign Swim Meet Agreement . • Officer time disproportionately focused on a low income generating activity.
Risks: • With no Swim Meet agreement with AST, ADC has no health and safety or employment controls of the tasks, expectations or environment that their coaching staff may face at swim meets. • Officer burnout and or growing reluctance to focus energy on the Swim Squad Programme – potential to lead to staff attrition.	

Option two – Discontinue providing the Swim Squad Programme (recommended)

Advantages: • Council provides facilities to enable sporting bodies to utilise. • Council will negotiate lane hire rates and agreements with any organisation in the future. • The future request for budget to replace the specialist timing equipment would be at Council's discretion based on likely swim meet income compared with obligations to AST, • The challenging relationship between ADC and AST in its current context will cease	***Disadvantages:*** • Change management processes will commence with the coaching staff. Where redeployment into existing vacant roles or if external funding for target populations groups exists, a new part time opportunity may arise. [redacted] • Swim meet income may decrease or cease. • Specialist timing equipment may not be used for a period.
Risks: • Negative media or community reaction to the decision.	

Option three – Uplift Swim Squad Programme fees

35. This uplift would need to cover all direct and indirect coaching and management overhead costs. An estimate of $40,000 has been calculated for overheads for other self-funded roles within Council, so this would be the base.

Advantages:	***Disadvantages:***
• Council continues to provide a Squad Swimming Programme. • Private benefit of this programme is met by swimmers.	• Uplift in cost is unlikely to be accepted by participants, with some swimmers likely to stop the sport and other joining a neighbouring squad swim programmes. • No contractual agreements between ADC and AST about service levels and responsibilities, yet the relationship continues.
Risks: • Negative media or community reaction to the uplift in fees. • Council would continue to operate the Swim Squad Programme but it's pricing could exceed the price swimmers are willing to pay, therefore causing a greater financial loss than the current situation.	

Legal/policy implications

36. All employment related decisions are bound by the Employment Relations Act 2000. Council will be informed of the outcome following the change management process with staff.

37. Council's Community Engagement Policy adopted in 2024 outlines when Council will and the reasons why it might not engage with the community over particular decisions. This ensures the level of engagement is appropriate to the decision or action intended to be taken by Council. While this decision will be significant to those directly impacted by the decision, it scores "low" using the Significance Tool (contained within the Policy). However, due to the proposed level of service change directly impacting some members of the community, targeted consultation is recommended and aligns to the LGA consultation principles.

38. Council adopted the Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy on 27 July 2022. Clause 2.14 of the action plan "Encourage and assist community sports clubs to access the funding, coaching and learning opportunities provides" was assigned to Sport Canterbury (funded in part by ADC) to assist with accessing opportunities, therefore this report's recommended action is not inconsistent with the strategy and Council will continue to support Swimming as a sport by providing a high quality, fit for purpose facility.

39. The recent government announcements regarding rates capping and the structure of local government has the potential to impact the services offered by Councils in their facilities. While the form and impact of the reform is not yet known, the approaches of neighbouring Councils vary, with Christchurch and Selwyn outsourcing such services but Timaru remains an in-house model.

Climate change

40. This recommendation makes no impact on Council's carbon footprint or climate change as whole.

Review of legal / policy implications	
Reviewed by In-house Counsel	*Tania Paddock; GM Legal & Democracy*

Strategic alignment

41. The recommendation relates to Council's community outcome of "*a district of great spaces and places.*"

Wellbeing		Reasons why the recommended outcome has an effect on this wellbeing
Economic	✓	Less direct swim squad income and associated expenses. There is also a likely decrease in swim meet income.
Environmental		
Cultural		
Social	✓	Social aspects of competitive youth swimming will no longer depend on Council's involvement.

Financial implications

Requirement	Explanation
What is the cost?	If the recommendation is adopted, there would be no cost except officer time. Subject to employment change management processes and targeted public consultation, a future report to Council (in March 2026) could amend the 2026-27 Annual Plan by: - Swim Squad Fees $0 - Coaches Salaries $0 - Swim Meet Income $0 [redacted]
Is there budget available in LTP / AP?	N/A
Where is the funding coming from?	N/A
Are there any future budget implications?	No
Reviewed by Finance	Erin Register; Finance Manager.

Significance and engagement assessment

Requirement	Explanation
Is the matter considered significant?	No
Level of significance	Low
Rationale for selecting level of significance	The number of people directly affected by this service level change is small when compared to the district as a whole. Direct engagement with Ashburton Swim Team regarding alternative service provision options commenced in October 2023. In August 2025 AST committee were advised that Council will review the provision of the service at the next Annual Plan. Officers are unaware whether AST has shared this information with their members.
Level of engagement selected	1. Inform/Comment

Rationale for selecting level of engagement	The matter is not significant to the district as a whole. However it impacts a select group of users (directly impacted or previous connection with AST) who would likely have strong views, as at this point of time there is no known alternative provider. For this reason, some targeted consultation is recommended as outlined below under next steps.
Reviewed by Strategy & Policy	Mark Low; Strategy and Policy Manager

Next steps

42. Officers need to carefully manage the change process with staff, therefore the public excluded nature of this report and information will remain until that process is sufficiently underway.

Date	Action / milestone	Comments
17 December 2025	Report and decision to remain in public excluded until officers commence change management processes with directly impacted employees, key stakeholders and interested parties.	
Mid January 2026	1. Officers to commence change management process with affected employees (14 January).	
	2. Officer to redact and then share Council report (17 December 2025) with key stakeholders and interested parties., providing survey link for feedback (15 January).	
	3. Officers to publish a media release.	
4 February 2026	Resolution (17 December 2026) included in Council meeting minutes.	
11 February 2026	4 Week public and staff consultation period concludes.	
18 March 2026	Second report to Council for final decision regarding Council's role in the provision of Swim Squad Programme.	
[redacted]	[redacted]	

Significance and engagement assessment tool

Criteria	Assessment
Strategic assets	Low
Impact on the community	Low
Community interest	Medium
Impact on Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua	Low
Financial cost	Low
Levels of service	Medium
Environmental / climate change impact	Low
Overall risk	Low
Total HIGH	0
Total MEDIUM	2
Total LOW	6
Overall level of significance	*Low*
SIGNIFICANT?	*No*