
COMMUNITY SPORTS FACILITIES GRANT PROPOSAL - LITTLEPORT

Committee: Operational Services Committee

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[X58]

1. ISSUE

- 1.1 To consider a grant recommendation under the Community Sports Facilities Grants programme.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are recommended to approve a grant of £10,000 to Littleport Leisure as set out in 4.1

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The built leisure facility stock in East Cambridgeshire comprises the Hive (owned by ECDC and operated by GLL) and a number of older centres operated by local trusts and academies, which are self-financing, with user charges roughly covering their normal operating costs. The centres have historically received advisory support and modest grants from ECDC to support capital improvements, and develop their services.
- 3.2 The overall budget for such grants has – until this year - been £32,000 per annum, and this has necessarily limited the scope of potential projects. The new Community Sports Facilities grant programme is budgeted at up to £300,000 over a three-year period (to March 2025). The expansion in funding opens up the scope of the scheme, and presents an opportunity to upgrade facilities and develop services to meet contemporary standards.
- 3.3 The balance to be struck between responding to new opportunities, and addressing immediate issues, is however likely to vary between the centres and over time. As previously noted, most of the sites in East Cambridgeshire are dated, with associated liabilities for repairs and refurbishments – roofs, plant and internal finishes being among the most obvious. It is also clear that in general, business levels have not yet recovered to those before the pandemic; typical recovery rates appear to be around 75%, and the leisure sector as a whole remains financially stressed; it is perhaps fortunate that none of the free-standing trusts has a swimming pool, with the associated energy costs. It is therefore likely that some of the trusts will need support in re-balancing their operations over the next year or two. Officers therefore believe that some

pragmatism may be required in supporting the trusts, while not defaulting purely to reactive repairs and maintenance. It is hoped that the focus of projects will over time shift to investments with long-term added value.

- 3.4 From discussions with the trusts over the summer, two proposals have been received in time for consideration by this Committee, and for reasons of process are being presented separately.

4. ARGUMENTS

- 4.1 **Proposal:** Sanding, re-sealing and re-marking of sports hall floor, Littleport Leisure Centre

Anticipated Cost	£15,000
Partnership Funding (Trust)	£3,000
Grant requested	£12,000
Grant recommended	£10,000

4.2 Comments

- 4.2.1 The sports hall is part of the school (LECA) estate, though with extensive community use outside of school hours, and this is reflected in the award recommendation. It is not currently clear however that the work is seen as a priority for school, or that any financial contribution would therefore be forthcoming; officers will endeavour to provide an update on this at the meeting.
- 4.2.2 Restorative work of this kind is usually required at intervals; the need for it here may have been accelerated by the range and level of usage, and there are also some indications that the original installation was flawed (this is outside the control of the trust, as the build was commissioned by the County, but is under discussion between the parties). Periodic work of this kind would not normally be considered a priority for funding, but it has been put forward for consideration because the cost involved, following the disruption to business caused by the Covid pandemic, would undermine the momentum to the centre's recovery. Any support should therefore be considered as a reflection of these wider circumstances.
- 4.2.3 This project was originally put forward by the Trust for consideration earlier this year, but deferred pending the introduction of the new funding programme. As there is no specific mechanism by which the project could have proceeded at the trust's risk, but delay would have obstructed the outcome of the work, officers are asking the Committee to consider the project on its merits. The work has been scheduled for completion while this report is in preparation in order to fit with school programmes, and because the summer is a relative off-season for sports hall programmes generally.

5 **RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 Members are recommended to approve a grant of £10,000 to Littleport Leisure as set out in 4.1.

6 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT / CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 The proposed funding allocations fall within the existing budget.
- 6.2 No equalities implications follow from these proposals.
- 6.3 There are no direct positive or negative carbon impact implications for ECDC.

Background Documents

None

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