
TITLE: Service Level Agreement Funding (Leisure Centres and Sport Facilities) 2019-20

Committee: Finance & Assets Committee

Date: 26th September 2019

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1. ISSUE

- 1.1. To agree initial funding allocations for the 2019-20 financial year for leisure centres and sport facilities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. Members are recommended to approve the allocations as set out in 4.1.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Grants are offered to leisure facility providers to support material improvements to their services, whether through capital improvements, programme developments or (less often) organisational developments. In all cases the outcomes sought are to strengthen the long-term sustainability of the facility, to extend the activity opportunities for the local community, or both.
- 3.2. The grants are offered so far as possible on a rolling programme, which supports the principle of funding being project-led. Providers are therefore not required to submit applications by any particular deadline, and it can be assumed that proposals will continue to be submitted through the year.
- 3.3. The annual budget for this programme is £30,881.

4. ARGUMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. Submissions have been received from:

Anglian Learning Trust on behalf of Bottisham Sports Centre (Bottisham Village College)

Proposal: Works to make good pool wall fracture, refurbishment of pool plant and replacement of disabled pool hoist and pool cover

Anticipated Cost (net of prior budgetary provision) £28,000

Grant requested £21,573

No partnership funding has been proposed for this element, but the works form part of a wider renewals project, to which the Trust is making a significant commitment (further detailed below).

Grant recommended

£10,000

Comments:

Members may be aware that the Centre was originally operated by an independent trust; the Village College took on responsibility for the community operation when that trust ran into difficulties in 2008. With some adaptations to opening hours and staff structures, community use has continued since that time, and the Centre remains part of the East Cambridgeshire facility network, albeit under the auspices now of Anglian Learning.

The repairs to the pool plant have emerged during a project to re-line the pool tank and refurbish the changing facilities (which is part of a wider programme to modernise the school campus as a whole). The budgeted project cost is £175,000, of which Sport England is contributing £75,000, and the Trust is funding the balance. Advisers to the Trust had initially enquired about the possibility of ECDC contributing to this scheme, but were advised that funding of that scale would be beyond the scope of the SLA programme.

Refurbishment projects of this kind often give rise to unforeseen costs, particularly where pools are concerned. In this instance, additional works have been found necessary to make good a leak in the end-wall of the pool-tank – at a cost of just under £15,000 - and to renew elements of the filtration plant and circulation system, at a quoted cost of £21,573. These additional works therefore total some £36,500. The Trust had allowed for a contingency provision of £18,000, but this still leaves a shortfall of around £18,500. At the same time, the Trust has recently been advised that both the pool hoist (for disabled users to gain access to the pool) and the pool cover need replacing, at a total cost of approximately £10,000. The total shortfall including these equipment replacements is therefore around £28,000.

The Trust is conscious of the potential issues of using educational funding to support external usage, and has therefore asked ECDC to consider a contribution towards this shortfall.

Taken in isolation, it is difficult to consider these works or renewals as improvements; and the filtration works and equipment replacements, though unforeseen in the immediate sense, could be regarded as deferred maintenance, which would normally be met from revenue streams. The Centre budget for 2019-20 shows a projected surplus of £17,883, which if achieved would clearly cover the equipment replacements, for example. In this instance however the request needs to be seen in the context of the wider improvement project - which will substantially benefit community users, and which as noted above has been funded by the college in conjunction with Sport England. Officers therefore propose a contribution towards the shortfall, through a grant of £10,000 - the balance to be met from the Centre's budgeted revenue streams.

Soham and District Sports Association (Ross Peers Sports Centre)

Proposal: Installation of new gym floor in fitness suite; provision of lockers and kit-storage for users

Anticipated Cost £5,450

Grant requested £5,450

Grant recommended £5,450

Comments:

This project is one element in a wider programme of improvements, being carried through where possible by staff at the Centre, and otherwise through maintenance funds. This has included improved lighting and décor in the entrance foyer, making good the floors and ceilings in the changing areas, and development of a stronger and more coherent brand for signage and notices.

In the gym, décor and lighting are similarly being improved; two unwanted structural platforms are being removed, allowing a more flexible use of space and equipment layout; and new weights equipment has been purchased (supported by a small grant from the Mick George Community Fund). While no formal partnership funding is being put forward for this specific element, the commitment of staff time and partnership funding therefore more than match the funds requested. The flooring would help to complete the modernisation of the space, and improve its functionality; and it is also proposed to install a small number of lockers and some open shelving for customer use (which will help to keep working areas clear).

The cardio-vascular equipment is also dated, and options for its replacement are under background consideration, but this will be somewhat more costly and is not thought immediately practical. The further development of an exercise studio in Squash Court 2 – previously put forward for support but deferred by the Community Services Committee pending a full business plan for the Centre – is currently on hold, as the refurbishment of the gym is felt to be more urgent.

Officers remain of the opinion that given the age and condition of the Centre as a whole, an integrated programme of renewals is needed, and that this can only be meaningfully understood alongside a parallel plan for the development of the business. A concerted strategy of this kind would provide the necessary context for more structural changes – such as those previously proposed to the squash court area. The inherent scope and complexity of this exercise however means that it requires further consideration. The Centre Management Team are exploring potential improvements to the reception areas, exercise studios, external storage (which would relieve pressure on the existing spaces) and bar area; but no details have so far been developed.

Officers agree that it would not be helpful to the Centre's development to hold back immediate small-scale projects – which are otherwise supportable – while the longer-term strategy is formulated; and the recommendation above reflects this view. Further grant proposals however are likely to require detailed development and supporting business analysis prior to recommendation, and officers will stress this to the Centre Management Team, if the Committee agrees with this approach.

- 4.2. If the recommendations above are supported, £15,450 – almost exactly half of the annual budget – will have been committed.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The proposed funding allocations fall within the existing budget.
- 5.2. The proposals relate to general facility developments, which do not affect any particular participation group or protected characteristic. No new equalities implications therefore follow from these proposals.

Background Documents

None

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