

CABINET
23 DECEMBER 2019
TRANMERE ROVERS
REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Councillor Janette Williamson, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources said:

“Tranmere Rovers Football Club (the Club) is one of the Council’s trusted partners and delivers a range of functions and services that supports the Council in achieving its objectives and outcomes of the 5 year Wirral Plan.

In September the Council entered into a Partnering agreement with the Club that highlights the excellent relationship we have, the extent of our work together and our joint ambition for the future.

Prenton Recreation Centre delivers a whole range of functions and services that would otherwise fall on the Council and its budgets to fund. By providing this small capital grant to the Club to enable the centre to be a first class venue for community services, this enables cost avoidance on the council’s revenue budgets.

I am pleased to be able to work with the Club on supporting them to jointly deliver our objectives and beneficial outcomes to our residents in addition to demonstrating significant social value”.

REPORT SUMMARY

Tranmere Rovers Football Club (the Club) has a long and successful history of working in partnership with the Council to deliver commissioned services on behalf of the Council and to deliver services that are not commissioned or paid for by the Council but support the delivery of beneficial outcomes to Wirral residents.

In September 2019 the Council entered into a Partnering Agreement with the club that highlights our good historic relationships and our ambition to work together more transparently for the benefit of the residents of the Borough. The club is a key anchor institution within Wirral and provides many functions that support the Council’s 20 pledges. Some of the functions are provided on a commissioned basis but the majority are provided by the club as an ethical community organisation. If the club ceased to provide these functions, the Council would have to provide alternative provision which would be the Council’s financial position under strain.

The club have approached the Council for a 50% grant of expenditure for Prenton Recreation Centre associated with physical improvements to the Recreation Centre, allowing the Club to enhance education, community sport and international business programmes. The value of grant requested along with details of what the expenditure is for and how it will be spent is provided within the exempt appendix as public

disclosure of this may impact on the ability of the club to enter into negotiations with the supplier on contract price.

The Council is able to agree the grant under its General Power of Competence and the grant will be funded from the Council's existing capital programme. Therefore, as the revenue impact of the Capital Programme has already been included in the 2019/20 budget approved by Full Council in March 2019, there are no adverse financial implications or implications for the council taxpayer as a result of awarding the grant.

This is a key decision which affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

That the request for financial assistance for a grant is approved in line with the grant conditions set out in the Appendix 1 to the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The functions and services that are provided out of Prenton Recreation Centre support the Council in delivering its objectives and outcomes of the 5 year Wirral Plan. If the centre was not in operation, these functions would fall upon the council to deliver from already overstretched budgets.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.2 Not to approve the request for financial assistance for a grant from the Club. This would result in the Club not being able to continue to support Wirral Residents in the current way due to unsafe facilities and would potentially result in the closure of these facilities leaving additional demand on the Council to support communities. This would result in an additional financial pressure on the Council to provide these functions when the Council is currently facing a very challenging financial position and may result in other areas of Council functions ceasing if the Council wanted to continue to provide the services current provided by The Club at Prenton Rec.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Tranmere is a club which is firmly rooted in its community and is committed to harnessing the unique power of football to engage with and improve the lives of those at risk of social isolation, whether through poverty, unemployment, mental or physical health issues, or any other reason. They are also a dynamic and forward-thinking club, with diversified activities which offer many training and employment opportunities for local residents, and a rapidly growing football tourism and elite football development businesses, which bring significant cash into the local economy.
- 3.2 The club has an excellent track record of measurable delivery and success, in both our charitable and our wider commercial work in the Wirral community, driving economic growth and improving the lives of some of the Borough's most vulnerable people, as well as giving locals a sense of pride and identity in their own professional football team. Working hand in hand with Wirral Council will enable both parties to achieve more, and faster, than either could alone.
- 3.3 The Wirral Plan sets a long-term plan to bring about real change – not just in what can be achieved but in the way it is delivered. The Club are committed to working in partnership to deliver the corporate objectives and their ambition is to work with all partners in the public, private and community sector to achieve higher aspirations and to achieve a better Wirral.

Prenton Park Recreation Centre

- 3.4 The project involves making physical improvements to the Prenton Park Recreation Centre (Rec Centre), allowing the club to enhance the services and programmes it provides to the local community.
- 3.5 The Rec Centre offers various community and education programmes based around the following themes: health & wellbeing; education provision; community engagement; and sports participation. The Rec Centre is the base for Tranmere Rovers in the Community, education services and the hub for the International business and cultural exchange. Existing facilities include a full-sized multi-sport hard court, a community café, a gym, four classrooms and two social suites. (note the gym is currently closed due to the use of old equipment)
- 3.6 Tranmere Rovers in the Community deliver numerous projects to people from the age of three to eighty taking part in a variety of diverse activities using the power of football to reach a multitude of vulnerable groups. The programmes seek to engage & increase individuals' confidence, build friendships and learn life skills such as teamwork and communication in addition to benefiting their physical health & wellbeing. The Club also provide services to those with mental health issues, disabilities, older people and the homeless.
- 3.7 More than 350 people per week benefit from the facility during the daytime, and the facilities are fully utilised in the evenings. The scope of programmes/activities delivered include (but are not limited to):
- Dementia friendly social groups for the elderly & their carers (regularly engages up-to 15 people/week)
 - Active Rovers – men's over 50's walking football (engages 70+ week & have now entered multiple teams into local leagues).
 - National Citizen Service programme that develops citizenship & social skills to prepare vulnerable young people for adulthood and helps them reach their potential.
 - After-school homework clubs and holiday activities.
 - Special needs/disability dance lessons.
 - Adult learning courses (since 2017, 25% participant moving on to further education, 25% now in employment and 75% internal employment from catering course).
 - NHS use of community gym for weight management/physio referral, helping improve the lives and wellbeing of local Wirral patients.
 - Hosts staff training on domestic abuse.
 - Inclusive sports participation for all.
 - Links with various charities signposts participants to other community services.
 - Workshops & sports sessions for people recovering from substance abuse.
 - Female only sessions.
 - Disability groups.
 - Girls development centres.
 - School Tournaments.
 - Breakfast clubs for children in care.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 If the Cabinet were to agree to provide financial assistance to the Club in the form of a grant, this will be provided under the General Power of Competence and by funded from slippage in the 2019 – 2025 Capital Programme. There will be no revenue implications of this funding and therefore this will not impact on the ability to fund the Council's day to day services.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The grant will be subject to State Aid regulations. Typical State Aid routes for this type of project include de minimis and GBER (General Block Exemption Rule). Article 55 of the GBER (aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures) exemption applies to the cost of investing in the construction and upgrading of such infrastructures but not the maintenance of existing assets.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no adverse resource implications from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The risk is that the outcome measures arising from the grant are not met thereby the grant does not provide value for money

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 An Overview and Scrutiny Session was held on 11 September 2019 for members of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees with the Chairman of the Club, Mark Palios to discuss the Partnering Agreement. This included a Q and A session. As part of that Scrutiny meeting, members were also given the opportunity to hear the details of the funding request and challenge the governance process and assurance for this.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 No specific implications for equality as part of this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no negative environmental and climate change implications within this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Shaer Halewood
Director of Finance & Investment
Tel: 0151 691 8688
Email: shaerhalewood@wirral.gov.uk

EXEMPT APPENDICES

Appendix A Request for financial assistance in the form of a grant.