



## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 26 July 2022

REPORT TITLE:	GRASS ROOTS FOOTBALL – GRANT ACCEPTANCE, VIREMENT OF COUNCIL MATCH FUNDING AND PAVILION CONTRACT AWARD APPROVAL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report details the result of two years of successful partnership development work with the Football Foundation.

Previously, a report seeking committee authorisation to develop partnerships and specific sites, to develop the Council's grassroots football offer was taken to Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure (TCCL) committee on 23 November 2020. This approach was approved.

An update report was taken to TCCL committee on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The report advised that should funding be awarded, there would be a further report to TCCL committee to seek authorisation to accept the funding.

Since TCCL committee on 8 March 2022, the Football Foundation have offered grant funding to develop two facilities mentioned in the previous committee reports:

- At Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre, The Football Foundation has approved a capital grant offer of **83%** of a total project cost of **£968,317**, subject to a maximum payment of **£806,600**. This money is for the development of a standard size 3G pitch and car park with approximately 115 spaces, it also includes the refurbishment of the existing changing rooms on site to meet the required standard.
- Within the grounds of Woodchurch Leisure Centre, on the disused former athletics track behind the Leisure Centre itself, The Football Foundation has approved a capital grant offer of **59%** of a total project cost of **£1,861,902**, subject to a maximum payment of **£1,090,092**. This money is for the development of a supersize 3G pitch and pavilion containing (but not exclusive of) changing rooms, showers, toilets, social area, commercial kitchen and equipment store.

The grant offer letters, are standard requirements for grants of this nature. The Football Foundation has advised that these are non-negotiable, again a normal position taken by grant funders. The Council has well established and successful processes for delivering major grant funded projects.

This report seeks authorisation to (1) accept the grant offers, (2) vire monies within the approved Capital Programme to provide the Council's contribution towards these projects and (3) enter into a contract to procure the pavilion at the Woodchurch Leisure Centre site.

As a matter of protocol and as part of the development of the grant submissions, the procurement framework exercise for the pitches has been managed by the Football Foundation. As a minimum, the Football Foundation grant awards cover the costs associated with the construction of the pitches. The following companies were successful in their bids to the Football Foundation:

- Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre – Fieldturf Tarkett SAS
- Within grounds of Woodchurch Leisure Centre – Lano Sports NV

These projects contribute towards the following priorities in The Wirral Plan 2021 – 2026:

- Safe & Pleasant Communities
- Brighter Futures
- Active and Healthy Lives
- Sustainable Environment

These projects also help to deliver the facilities and health and wellbeing outcomes associated with Wirral's recently approved Sports and Physical Activity Strategy.

The matter affects all Wards within the Borough and is a Key Decision.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Tourism Committee authorises the Director of Neighbourhood Services to:

- 1) Review the grant offer letters and associated conditions attached in Appendix 1 and 2 for Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre and Woodchurch Leisure Centre and accept both grant offers from the Football Foundation.
- 2) Vire match funding of **£114,000** from an existing approved Capital Programme Budget - 'Health & Safety - Condition Surveys', and vire an underspend of **£68,000** from 'Wirral Tennis Centre 3G' project to a newly established, 'Woodchurch Leisure Centre supersize 3G pitch and pavilion' budget.
- 3) Award the tendered pavilion contract to Lyjon Construction Ltd, in the sum of **£859,867.13** with regards to the development of the facility based within the grounds of Woodchurch Leisure Centre (part of the overall project and the procurement element for which was managed by the Council).

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

**To enable the projects to proceed for the following reasons:**

- 1.1 The Football Association and Football Foundation have targeted Wirral as an area for special consideration, in terms of attracting grant aid towards the development of new Artificial Grass Pitches. This is in direct response to the exponential growth in grassroots junior football over the past few years in all age groups and all abilities (both in the men and women's game) throughout Wirral.
- 1.2 As stated in Wirral's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy – the Borough is approximately fourteen artificial grass pitches short of meeting demand. This is evidenced in Wirral's Local Football Facility Plan.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 Do not progress: This would have a negative impact on the Council's image and reputation with strategic partners in the football community including Tranmere Rovers FC, Liverpool FC, Everton FC, Merseyside Sport, Sport England, Cheshire FA and the Football Foundation. The Council would not have to invest any of its own funds, but similarly would not receive any capital or revenue grant funding. A new facility would not be developed which would significantly impact on the present and future communities in Wirral. Adverse socio-economic impacts would be compounded and there would be no commercial income from kitchen sales and pitch bookings. Finally, the Council would need to accept a deteriorating stock of grass pitches and increased ongoing maintenance costs.
- 2.2 Permit other organisations to develop proposals: A core objective for the Council is to take responsibility and grasp opportunities to develop commercial leisure facilities. It should not be left to external organisations to develop and manage sites of such strategic importance. Where possible external organisations should be encouraged to develop proposals 'in partnership' with the Council in order to meet the pitch shortage.
- 2.3 Council does not enter into grant funding partnerships with external partners and underwrites the full cost of these building these facilities: Disengage the partnership with the Football Foundation and fund future sites solely with Council funds – this was rejected as the Council would otherwise have had to find approximately £2m of internal funding for these two sites alone.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 On 23 November 2020 and again on 8 March 2022 the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee resolved amongst other matters, to approve and support the development of the business case and grant application process to the

Football Foundation for an Artificial Grass Pitch site at Woodchurch Leisure Centre and Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre. This was subject to Council approval for the match funding from the capital programme.

- 3.2 The demand for football in Wirral is extremely high. The Borough currently has a shortage of grass and/or artificial grass pitches, with many clubs having to travel outside of Wirral to play and train.
- 3.3 The Football Foundation has selected Wirral Council as a 'Beacon Authority' in England, to recognise the solidity of the partnership and the quality of work being delivered. Demand for these facilities far exceeds supply.
- 3.4 Football provides a diversionary activity, which reduces the cost and social impact associated with crime, substance dependency, poor mental and physical health and other forms of deprivation. Football creates opportunity for social mobility in our deprived communities.
- 3.5 Wirral is an area of 'strategic focus' for Cheshire FA and the Football Foundation. The Borough has some of the highest demand for grassroots and competitive football in the country, but equally some of the lowest available facility provision. Wirral has some of the most deprived lower social economic groups, with associated anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder and poor health statistics. Football is seen as a way to engage people and help reduce deprivation.
- 3.6 These pitches should not be considered primarily as a commercial income generator. However, there is commercial income for the Council associated with the ownership and management of all-weather pitches. There will be no maintenance costs in year one due to a twelve-month defect guarantee, post completion. Surplus income could be reinvested back into grassroots football, to save on-going costs the Council would otherwise incur.
- 3.7 Both projects are financially viable and can be operated from the income generated with surplus income reinvested back into the service.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The capital funding for these projects is being sourced by Grant Funding from the Football Foundation and the Council's Capital Programme as set out in this report.
- 4.2 To provide the Council's match funding for these projects, a virement within the approved Capital Programme is required:
  - £68,000 is to be vired from the Wirral Tennis Centre 3G project to the Woodchurch 3G and pavilion project budget, leaving a positive contingency

surplus of >£10,000 in the project budget. This has been agreed in principle with the Director of Neighbourhoods.

- £114,000 is to be vired from the Health and Safety Building Surveys budget and into the Woodchurch 3G and pavilion project budget, leaving a positive contingency surplus of >£10,000. This has been agreed in principle by the Director of Regeneration and Place (as the number of surveys required has reduced).

- 4.3 These virement requests are based on the previous budget position, before the exact sums of grant monies were offered and the exact tendered cost for the pavilion at Woodchurch was known. Impact of virement requests on budget lines can be referenced to the table below:

<b>Pre virement</b>					
<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>	<b>Council Borrowing</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Project Cost</b>	<b>Budgetremainder / overspend</b>
Wirral Tennis Centre 3G and car park	£ 806,600.00	£ 240,000.00	£ 1,046,600.00	-£ 968,317.00	£ 78,283.00
Woodchurch 3G and Sports Pavilion	£ 1,090,092.00	£ 600,000.00	£ 1,690,092.00	-£ 1,861,902.00	-£ 171,810.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 1,896,692.00</b>	<b>£ 840,000.00</b>	<b>£ 2,736,692.00</b>	<b>-£ 2,830,219.00</b>	<b>-£ 93,527.00</b>
<b>Post virement</b>					
<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>	<b>Council Borrowing</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Project Cost</b>	<b>Budgetremainder / overspend</b>
Wirral Tennis Centre 3G and car park	£ 806,600.00	£ 172,000.00	£ 978,600.00	-£ 968,317.00	£ 10,283.00
Woodchurch 3G and Sports Pavilion	£ 1,090,092.00	£ 782,000.00	£ 1,872,092.00	-£ 1,861,902.00	£ 10,190.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 1,896,692.00</b>	<b>£ 954,000.00</b>	<b>£ 2,850,692.00</b>	<b>-£ 2,830,219.00</b>	<b>£ 20,473.00</b>

- 4.4 Operational, maintenance costs and a contribution towards the Council's staffing costs are being met from the revenue generated by both projects as set out in the business plans for the projects. A part of this revenue funding will also cover the Council's capital financing costs for the projects. The Council will use existing budgets to support the running of these facilities once they are completed.
- 4.5 The Council will be solely responsible for any project cost overruns. This is mitigated by the arrangements set out in the risks section of this report and contingency sums are built into the grant funding to cover any eventualities. In addition, the Football Foundation have confirmed that they understand the current financial climate and are willing to enter into discussions should any cost overruns happen
- 4.6 The grant has a clawback period of 21 years and during that time there are requirements to keep the facilities to a certain standard. Allocations for maintenance are built into the grant funding arrangements and business plans to cover these costs.

## 5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Football Foundation require the Council to put a restriction on the title to the site in a standard land registry form. This is to protect the grant. The restriction will prevent the Council from selling the site or granting a lease without the consent of the Football Foundation. This is a normal protection from a grant provider.

## 6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The delivery of these projects will be undertaken by a multi-disciplinary project team within the Council. The members of the team have the skills and experience, and a proven track record of delivering major grant funded projects in the regeneration and leisure areas.
- 6.2 Upon completion, the facilities will be managed by the Neighbourhoods Directorate.

## 7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council will manage this project through a Risk Register which will be monitored at the monthly project team meetings. Progress will be reported and monitored by the Assistant Director for Libraries and Leisure (the Senior Responsible Officer) through the Leisure and Libraries Programme Change Board.
- 7.2 The Council would be responsible for any cost overruns under the Grant Agreement. To mitigate this an experienced project team would deliver the project. Contingency funding (both within the grant sums offered and also the Council's own budget lines for each project) have been built in, to meet any unlikely overrun costs. The Football Foundation have also agreed to discuss, in partnership with the Council, any significant cost overruns created by current international matters affecting trade and supply of materials/labour.
- 7.3 The Council has taken time to work collaboratively with the Football Foundation, to navigate and understand the Terms and Conditions associated with the grant offer letters for both facilities, and it has concluded that there are no other conditions which should prevent the acceptance of the grant funding offers for both facilities.
- 7.4 The specific grant offer letters and their associated risks/conditions are attached in Appendix 1 and 2. The Council must abide by these conditions if it decides to accept the funding offers.
- 7.5 In relation to point 7.4, lead officers extrapolated the key risks and conditions, which were considered to be of higher risk and resolved these in partnership with The Football Foundation. These specific key risks/conditions and their mitigating narrative can be viewed in Appendix 3
- 7.6 Longer term, there are some operation risks associated with the running of a 3G pitch, these include:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Anti-Social Behaviour / damage	Pitches are flood lit until 10pm and are monitored by CCTV. Sites are secured during non-operational times.

On-going maintenance	Income from pitch bookings and secondary sales goes into the annual maintenance budget. A sinking fund is also required to replace the turf after approximately 10 years, subject to inspection.
Injury	Access for emergency vehicles provided, first aid kit on site, trained staff in emergency first aid.
Cardiac Arrest	Automated External Defibrillator on site as standard.
Management of facility and steering group, grant reporting, evidence of expenditure, claims.	An internal multi-disciplinary, multi-skilled project team is being established and will report to Andrew McCartan the SRO and Assistant Director – Leisure, Libraries and Customer Engagement.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Through its partnership development work, Wirral Council was awarded 'Beacon Status' by the Football Foundation – marking the exemplary work achieved in partnership engagement.
- 8.2 Members have been consulted at key stages during the development lifecycle of the projects.
- 8.3 In January of 2021 a live consultation all member event was held on MS Teams and included external partners from Cheshire FA, Football Foundation, Sport England, representatives of the three professional Merseyside Football Clubs, and the PR company Good Relations. There was unanimous support for the facilities and the development approach.
- 8.4 Wirral residents have been consulted through the 'Have Your Say' consultation platform and have made their positive feelings clear and approve of both facilities.
- 8.5 A board spectrum of Wirral's footballing community, its wider community groups and its charities have been consulted and have shown clear support for the development approach, the securing of funds, the Council's contribution and the associated health and well-being outcomes.
- 8.6 Both facilities have partner clubs signed up to them. This ensures the facilities are bought into, that they have secure bookings and that they will generate the required income and footballing outputs and outcomes.

- 8.7 As part of the planning process key stakeholders have been consulted on the design and development of these facilities.
- 8.8 Internally, a project steering group of representatives from key departments was developed. This steering group included but was not exclusive of the following services: leisure; commercial; procurement; finance; legal; assets; planning.
- 8.9 The design of the facilities was done through an internal and external steering group of key partners, who contributed expertise and experience into the final products submitted to planning authority for approval.
- 8.10 Both facilities are required, as part of the grant conditions, to have a multi-organisational steering group. This will be driven in partnership by Wirral Council, Cheshire FA and the Football Foundation and will include representatives of the partner clubs, other clubs and wider charities interested in supporting diversionary and health and well-being activities on site.
- 8.11 The Councils' public relations and communication department are working in partnership with lead offers to design a programme of information release and publicity for the two sites to alert the public of the good news and the opportunity to use the facilities. This also feeds into the commercial agenda and maximising revenue streams.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The delivery of both new and improved playing pitches and facilities represents an important step in how we implement and deliver the outcomes of the Sports & Physical Activity Strategy and help our residents to take up physical activity and remain active throughout their lives. The new 3G provision will cover every facet of the planned strategy outcomes and pillars of success in creating - Active people, Active partnerships, Active places and Active open spaces for our residents and communities.
- 9.2 By engaging with our communities across these themes, we aim to engage with all our residents, ensuring a collaborative and inclusive approach to meet the needs of our communities. The Sport and Physical Activity strategy will support in the reduction of inequalities across the borough, from a sport and physical activity perspective, and remain ambitious about delivering more support and services for our residents, to ensure that they have access to the best quality resources and leading facilities.
- 9.3 An equality impact assessment was completed alongside the first committee paper submitted on 23 November 2020.



## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are several considerations regarding the impacts of artificial grass pitches, including being a source of microplastics, at end of life they are not easily recycled, they contribute to urban heat islands and drainage issues. Natural grass acts as a carbon sink and is an important home to microbes, insects and worms, artificial grass does not have these benefits. However, these considerations need to be balanced against the reduced maintenance emission savings and artificial pitches can be used more frequently contributing to public health and well-being. The environmental impacts have been considered and will be minimised/mitigated.

10.2 Pavilion:

- The proposed pavilion at Woodchurch Leisure Centre is a single storey, traditionally built, pitched roof construction. It is robust in its construction and economic in its footprint, meeting the design and spatial standards dictated by the Football Foundation.
- The pavilion has been designed on an 'insulation first' approach to reduce energy costs when in use. Insulation levels specified are above the Building Regulations recommendations and will achieve significant early savings in energy costs to the Council.
- Water use has been minimised by designing in timed (push button) showers and wash basin taps.
- Recycled materials will be used throughout where possible; for example, the foundation sub-base will be re-used crushed concrete.
- All timber products will be sustainably sourced, e.g. roof truss timber, changing room benching.
- Achieving a particular BREEAM rating was not part of the original brief; however, the inclusion of the items listed above would give this building a BREEAM 'good' rating.

10.3 Pitches:

- Effective water management: where possible designing and installing SUDs systems, and attenuation tanks/ponds.
- Retaining topsoil onsite
- Proactive supply chain management: we design/specify materials and components, for our supply chain to use, that have lower environmental impact - for example LED floodlighting.
- Infill retention: infill retention designs to ensure migration of microplastics into the wider environment is correctly managed.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 This project has been designed to have Wirral communities at the heart of both its delivery and outcomes. In addition to the global offer that is presented in the delivery of sport and activity related opportunities, the project has developed strong and meaningful relationships with the local Woodchurch Community and the significant

local knowledge and social capital which can considerably enhance the value added at the site.

- 11.2 A flexible, positive and innovative relationship is being developed with Carr Bridge Community Centre who will play a pivotal role in its management and operation, providing financial benefits to both parties and puts the community at the heart of the delivery model. This will in turn allow Carr Bridge Community Centre to develop income funding streams that deliver health and social outcomes, using the pitch and pavilion as the vehicle for delivery, whilst helping to sustain the organisations own financial sustainability during an uncertain future.
- 11.3 This project exemplifies the positive impact of local co-designed programmes and the increased opportunities they provide for local partners to be part of the solution, meeting the needs and building on the strengths of local people and organisations and engendering strong levels of trust with the people that services are there to benefit.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1**

Grant Offer Letter and Conditions: Wirral Tennis and Sports Centre 3G pitch and Car Park

### **Appendix 2**

Grant Offer Letter and Conditions: Woodchurch Leisure Centre 3G pitch and Pavilion

### **Appendix 3**

Table of key grant acceptance conditions, risks and approaches/mitigations – as discussed in partnership with The Football Foundation

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Wirral Council Sports and Physical Activity Strategy

Wirral Council Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2022

Wirral Council Local Football Facility Plan 2018

Wirral Plan 2021-2026

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE	23 November 2020
TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE	8 March 2022