

OPEN

Council

26 February 2025

Swimming Pool Support Fund Grant Acceptance

Report of: Phil Cresswell, Executive Director of Place

Report Reference No: C/19/24-25

**Ward(s) Affected: Crewe Central; Broken Cross and Upton;
Bollington**

For Decision or Scrutiny: Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 To note the award of a capital grant of £625,933 from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) to fund energy efficiency measures across three leisure centres within the Borough.
- 2 To note the allocation of grant awarded across the three leisure centres and accept the full grant awarded to the Council for works at Cheshire East owned facilities and to support Bollington Health and Leisure for works at Bollington Leisure Centre.
- 3 To note the supplementary capital estimates of £365,235 for the energy efficiency works at Crewe Lifestyle Centre and £209,961 for the energy efficiency works at Macclesfield Leisure Centre noting a supplementary capital estimate of £50,737 for the works at Bollington Leisure Centre was noted by Environment and Communities Committee on 30 January 2025.

Executive Summary

- 4 Phase 2 of Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund saw £60.5M of capital grants allocated between 325 swimming pool facilities across England to help boost their energy efficiency and keep running costs down.

- 5 Three facilities within Cheshire East were allocated funding from Phase 2 of SPSF as outlined below:
- (a) Crewe Lifestyle Centre was awarded £365,235 for heat recovery and air handling units and pool covers;
 - (b) Macclesfield Leisure Centre was awarded £209,961 for a microfiltration system; and
 - (c) Bollington Leisure Centre was awarded £50,737 for photo voltaic (PV) panels and pool covers.
- 6 Crewe Lifestyle Centre and Macclesfield Leisure Centre are both Council owned facilities and operated by Everybody Health and Leisure via a Leisure Operating Agreement.
- 7 Bollington Leisure Centre is owned and operated by Bollington Health and Leisure who are the ultimate recipient of £50,737 of the total grant.
- 8 The grant claims to Sport England for these facilities are required to be raised by 28 February 2025 to secure the funds by 31st March 2025. Any funds not drawn down by 31st March 2025 are not guaranteed to be carried forward to 2025/26.
- 9 A supplementary capital estimate for the £50,737 allocation to Bollington Leisure Centre was authorised by officer decision and noted to Environment and Communities Committee in January 2025 and funds transferred to Bollington Health and Leisure, as the ultimate recipient, via a grant adherence agreement.
- 10 The Council now needs to claim the grant from Sport England to fund the energy efficiency measures delivered across the three sites.

Full Council is recommended to:

1. Accept a capital grant of £625,933 from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund – Phase 2 to fund energy efficiency investments at Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Macclesfield Leisure Centre and Bollington Leisure Centre;
2. Approve supplementary capital estimates of £365,235 to Crewe Lifestyle Centre SPSF and £209,961 to Macclesfield Leisure Centre SPSF.
3. Note that a supplementary capital estimate for Bollington Leisure Centre was approved in November 2024 and noted by Environment and Communities Committee in January 2025.

Background

- 11 The government's SPSF is a fund administered by Sport England to provide funding to local authorities in England as a support package for public leisure facilities with swimming pools to help manage some of the cost pressures in running these facilities.
- 12 The SPSF was split into two phases.
 - (a) Phase 1 - Revenue: £20m was available to support facilities with swimming pools with increased cost pressures, leaving them most vulnerable to closure or significant service reduction.
 - (b) Phase 2 - Capital: £60m was available from the government for capital investment to improve the energy efficiency of public facilities with pools in the medium to long term.
- 13 The objectives of Phase 2 - Capital of the SPSF were to:
 - (a) reduce the energy consumption level of facilities in receipt of funding, compared to baseline, and support the leisure sector to transition to a position of environmental and financial sustainability.
 - (b) minimise the closure of swimming pool provision, where funding has been provided, to a site to prevent gaps in public leisure provision emerging.
 - (c) reduce the carbon output of facilities in receipt of funding, compared to baseline, in line with the government's Net Zero by 2050 objectives.
 - (d) prioritise support in those areas of greatest socio-economic need (as evidenced by IMD level), where all other factors are equal.
- 14 Local authority applicants for SPSF were asked to co-ordinate a single submission to the fund on behalf of all publicly accessible swimming pools in their area and engage with operators, independent charitable organisations and other tiers of government (e.g. parish councils) managing public pools within their area.
- 15 Cheshire East Council applied for Phase 2 capital grant funding to support a number of sites across the borough and was awarded capital grant funding for specified energy efficiency improvements at three sites.
 - (a) Crewe Lifestyle Centre, owned by the Council and operated by Everybody Health and Leisure;
 - (b) Macclesfield Leisure Centre, owned by the Council and operated by Everybody Health and Leisure

- (c) Bollington Leisure Centre, owned and operated by Bollington Health and Leisure.

- 16 The Council is able to claim the allocated grant funding available to sites once the works are completed/discharged or there is sufficient evidence that the specified works will be completed in accordance with the grant conditions and agreement.

Consultation and Engagement

- 17 No consultation was necessary as part of the grant application and the grant awarded to Cheshire East is for specified works at specific sites.
- 18 For the works at Crewe Lifestyle Centre and Macclesfield Leisure Centre, Everybody Health and Leisure will undertake the necessary engagement and communication with leisure centre users and members over any disruption that may be caused at the sites whilst the specified works are undertaken.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 19 Cheshire East Council is the corporate landlord for both Crewe Lifestyle Centre and Macclesfield Leisure Centre and the energy costs at these sites are funded by the Council directly.
- 20 Any energy efficiency improvements at these sites could provide a revenue benefit to the Council by helping to reduce and manage energy consumption and costs at these sites whilst also helping to improve the building's energy efficiency in line with its net zero ambitions.
- 21 Phase 2 of the SPSF enables the Council to secure funding directly from Government to undertake specified works that will help to lower the energy costs at these sites.

Other Options Considered

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing – not accept the grant	The Council would need to fund the works that have already been completed/contracted. Any works not yet contracted would be cancelled and not delivered.	The Council would add up to £626k of unfunded costs into its capital programme. The Council may not benefit from the potential reduction in energy costs at Crewe Lifestyle Centre and

		Macclesfield Leisure Centre if the works cannot be undertaken/completed.
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Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 22 As a recipient of grant monies from Sport England, the Council must meet the conditions of the grant, grant agreement and the grant adherence letter (for Bollington Leisure Centre). As matters stand whereas the Council signalled acceptance of all the grant funding by signing off on the relevant paperwork, this was done without acceptance of the grant being properly dealt with via governance process. In seeking formal acceptance of the grant funding as set out in Recommendation 1 above (and looking to Full Council to respond positively to Recommendations 2 and 3) this is to rectify matters and allow the grant claims to proceed; Sports England requiring that due process has been adhered to. “

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 23 The Swimming Pool Support Fund grant was offered and accepted by the then Section 151 Officer in February 2024. We have been notified that the grant is closing on 31 March 2025 and that all claims must be made by 31 March 2025, with a final request for drawdown made by 28 February 2025.
- 24 In the absence of flexibility, the main implication is that the Authority may not be able to draw down the full grant sum available and that there is a risk that some costs will have been incurred that are not recoverable via the grant claim.
- 25 Steps have been taken to discuss this with Sport England and they have provided written confirmation that they are prepared to offer some flex for the scheme given the project development issues that have needed to be overcome. Consequently, they have agreed to a drawdown request of £175,717 relating to the Crewe grant in February, payable in March, with the remaining £189,518 for Crewe being requested in March for payment in April. 90% of the grant relating to Macclesfield can be claimed in March for payment in April, with the final 10% being payable until the equipment in Macclesfield is commissioned.
- 26 The £50,737 relating to Bollington has been drawn down from Sport England and has been paid across to the third party operator.

- 27 Sport England have provided a list of required documentation to be submitted with the drawdown requests. Should this work be incomplete within the necessary timeframe then some level of grant funding may be at risk.
- 28 Assuming that the grants can be drawn down in full, or at least to cover 100% of the costs incurred, then the Supplementary Capital Estimate being approved should be sufficient to cover the costs. Should the work need to be completed using Authority resources there is no currently identifiable budget to fund this from. The measures being funded through the grant should lead to greater energy efficiencies which may lead to energy cost savings for the Authority as corporate landlord. This was factored into the eligibility assessments when the grants were applied for.
- 29 Staff undertaking work utilising grant funding should only do so if there is a clear understanding of the terms under which the grant has been offered.

Policy

- 30 This report supports the below Corporate Plan Aims and Priorities

A thriving and sustainable place

Reduce impact on the environment

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 31 There are no direct implications with this report.

Human Resources

- 32 There are no direct implications with this report.

Risk Management

- 33 There are no direct implications with this report.

Rural Communities

- 34 There are no direct implications with this report.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 35 There are no direct implications with this report.

Public Health

36 There are no direct implications with this report.

Climate Change

37 The specified works that the SPSF has been allocated for will help to improve the energy efficiency of three leisure centres within the borough and could help to reduce energy consumption at these sites.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Hayley Kirkham, Interim Head of Neighbourhood Services.
Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A