

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Report Title: Football Pitch Improvement Programme

Name of Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 4 December 2023

Report Director: Chief Officer - Leisure and Wellbeing

Portfolio: Leisure and Wellbeing

Ward Relevance: All

Prior Consultation: Leadership Team, Financial Services, Planning Services, Birmingham County Football Association, Football Foundation and Rugby & District Sunday Football League

Contact Officer: Tom Kittendorf- Chief Officer Leisure & Wellbeing

Public or Private: Public

Report Subject to Call-In: Yes

Report En-Bloc: No

Forward Plan: Yes

Corporate Priorities: This report relates to the following priority(ies):
 Rugby is an environmentally sustainable place, where we work together to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. (C)
 Rugby has a diverse and resilient economy that benefits and enables opportunities for all residents. (E)
 Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected. (HC)
 Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation. (O)
[Corporate Strategy 2021-2024](#)
 This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but

(C) Climate
(E) Economy
(HC) Health and Communities
(O) Organisation

Summary: The report outlines a comprehensive 6-year Improvement Programme in partnership with The Football Foundation and seeks formal approval to enter a partnership with Rugby and District Sunday League to enable community funding from The Football Foundation. A request for the appropriate

utilisation of Section 106 funding to be grant funded to Rugby & District Sunday League, to be utilised as match funding towards Football Pitch Improvement Programme projects on Council managed public football pitches.

Financial Implications:

This report seeks to ensure that outlined projects have appropriate section 106 funding assigned and approved, to be utilised towards Football Foundation Pitch Improvement funding.

Risk Management Implications:

Risk management implications include the potential non delivery of the Football Pitch Improvement Programme, should recommendations not be approved, and the return of section 106 developer contributions, to the developer, if not committed to an appropriate project.

Environmental Implications:

Whilst the programme relates to pitch improvements, there are minimal environmental implications arising from this report. The pitches will see improvements to drainage, soil base and turf quality. Use of herbicide and fertilizer will be monitored and agreed as per the regular maintenance expectations of the Council's sports pitches.

Legal Implications:

Legal agreement to be formalised with Rugby & District Sunday League for provision of grant funding towards the Football Pitch Improvement Programme and licenses for their contractor to carry out the works to Council managed public Football pitches.

Equality and Diversity:

Equality and Diversity considerations have been taken into account and the proposed recommendations have a positive impact in terms of improved provision for all communities, and supports the health, wellbeing and safety of all communities.

Options:

- 1) Approve the Football Foundation Programme of Improvements and utilisation of Section 106 funding throughout the 6-year programme of works as set out in the report.
- 2) Reject the grant funding request.

Recommendation:

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT the Football Foundation Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund programme of works including the future utilisation of Section 106 funding and delivery of the projects, be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The successful delivery of the Pitch Improvement Programme projects will improve the quality of publicly available Council managed Football pitches, helping to deliver the Council's corporate priority to support residents to live active lives, with high quality, accessible green space and recreational facilities. While also ensuring appropriate spend of Section 106 money be approved.

Cabinet - 4 December 2023

Football Pitch Improvements Programme

Public Report of the Chief Officer - Leisure and Wellbeing

Recommendation

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT the Football Foundation Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund programme of works including the future utilisation of Section 106 funding in partnership with Rugby and District Sunday Football League, be approved.

Executive Summary

Rugby Borough Council owns and hires various sports pitches across the borough as part of its open spaces provision.

The Council was approached by Birmingham Football Association and Rugby & District Sunday Football League (RDSFL) with regard to a Football Foundation funding stream related to the improvement of grass pitches.

Whilst the Council is not eligible to apply directly for the funding, RDSFL as the local organising committee is. However, the RDSFL does not own any sites and uses the pitch provision offered by the Council.

Through partnership conversation with Birmingham FA and RDSFL, a formal partnership is proposed to carry out a 6-year programme of improvements with an application to the Football Foundation funding stream.

The total programme of improvements has had a specification of works totalling £204,801, of which the Football Foundation will contribute 50%. The remaining £102,399 match funding has been identified through appropriate utilisation of Section 106 contributions collected that are specifically ringfenced for the maintenance of Council owned sports pitches.

The Council would not be required to create a supplementary budget until Year 3 of the project, whereby Section 106 contributions would be brought forward. This would be a net nil budget and will be included in the budget setting process for 2026/27 for approval.

The objective of the 6-year programme will see the Council pitches raised from "poor" condition to "good" condition and protect and enhance community sport within the borough.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Football Foundation has launched a funding initiative, aimed at ensuring that by 2030, there are 20,000 'good' quality grassroots Football pitches across the country.
- 1.2 The Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund is a key part of this initiative and provides eligible organisations with a tapered six-year grant to help sustain pitches already at a 'good' level and enhance pitches that are either considered 'poor' or 'basic'.
- 1.3 Rugby Borough Council is not eligible to apply for this funding directly. Grassroots football clubs and leagues are eligible to apply for this funding, to sustain and enhance grassroots football pitches that they have access to use. Rugby & District Sunday Football League approached the Council with a proposal that it applies for this funding to deliver improvements to Council managed football pitches, that are available for public use.
- 1.4 In partnership with Birmingham Football Association, Rugby & District Sunday Football League carried out examinations of Council football pitches, available for public use at Whinfield Recreation Ground, Ashlawn Road Recreation Ground, GEC Recreation Ground and Alwyn Road Recreation Ground. These examinations were then assessed by representatives of the Grounds Management Association with reports produced stating that all football pitches at these sites have been rated as 'poor'.
- 1.5 The Council's Corporate Strategy 2021-24 Health and Wellbeing Priorities sets out that the Council will:
 - Support residents to live active lives, with high quality, accessible green space and recreational facilities
 - Make sure residents are proud of their borough
- 1.6 The reports produced by the Grounds Management Association have identified maintenance and improvement plans that would raise the quality of all outlined pitches to a 'good' standard. These reports also outline funding amounts from the Football Foundation Pitch Improvement Programme that would be available to support these pitch improvements.
- 1.7 The six-year tapered grants available from the Football Foundation means they will fund a reduced percentage of the initial grant value every two years, with match funding to be made available to make up the difference. This amounts to the match funding meeting one third of the total project cost.
- 1.8 In total, this report requests the utilisation of £102,399 of identified agreed Section 106 contributions, to be used to support **£204,801** of Football Foundation grant funding over the 6-year period, to deliver improvements to the quality of Council managed football pitches available for public use.
- 1.9 This report requests approval for the utilisation of Section 106 funding to be grant funded to Rugby & District Sunday Football League, to be directed as match funding towards Football Pitch Improvement Programme projects on Council managed public football pitches at Whinfield Recreation Ground, Ashlawn Road

Recreation Ground, GEC Recreation Ground and Alwyn Road Recreation Ground. This will be from 2026/27 for years 3 to 6 of the programme.

2. Football Foundation Pitch Maintenance Funding – Site Specific Identification

2.1 In partnership with Birmingham County Football Association, key sites in Rugby to put forward for Football Foundation Funding were identified. The pitches have been subject to recent Pitch Power Assessments, a Football Foundation methodology to assess the quality of grass pitches including turf, soil, drainage quality. The Grounds Maintenance Association has developed individual improvement plans for each site and confirmed the costs required to improve the pitches.

2.2 The individual sites and the proposed investment in to Rugby’s grass football pitches are outlined in the following tables. The ‘Club’ referenced in the table relates to the responsibility of the land owner, therefore the club is the borough council.

2.3 The sites identified are all grass pitch sites owned and maintained by the council and are subject to external pitch hire bookings and are utilised for organised football activity.

2.4 Alwyn Road Recreation Ground

ALWYN ROAD RECREATION GROUND

	Grant	Club	TPC
Year 1	9600	0	9600
Year 2	9600	0	9600
Year 3	6400	3200	9600
Year 4	6400	3200	9600
Year 5	3200	6400	9600
Year 6	3200	6400	9600
Total	38400	19200	57600

2.5 GEC Recreation Ground

GEC RECREATION GROUND

	Grant	Club	TPC
Year 1	6400	0	6400
Year 2	6400	0	6400
Year 3	4267	2133	6400
Year 4	4267	2133	6400
Year 5	2133	4267	6400
Year 6	2133	4267	6400
Total	25600	12800	38400

2.6 Whinfield Recreation Ground

WHINFIELD RECREATION GROUND

	Grant	Club	TPC
Year 1	28800	0	28800
Year 2	28800	0	28800
Year 3	19200	9600	28800
Year 4	19200	9600	28800
Year 5	9600	19200	28800
Year 6	9600	19200	28800
Total	115201	57599	172800

2.7 Ashlawn Road

ASHLAWN ROAD RECREATION GROUND

	Grant	Club	TPC
Year 1	6400	0	6400
Year 2	6400	0	6400
Year 3	4267	2133	6400
Year 4	4267	2133	6400
Year 5	2133	4267	6400
Year 6	2133	4267	6400
Total	25600	12800	38400

3. Section 106 Funding Contributions

- 3.1 Rugby Borough Council delivers a variety of schemes each financial year that are funded via Section 106 funding, where developer contributions are used towards the costs of providing community and social infrastructure.
- 3.2 This report sets out improvement projects to Council managed public football pitch sites that have been identified and approved within Section 106 funding legal agreements, that the Council can now bring forward for implementation, subject to confirmed partnership funding from The Football Foundation.
- 3.3 Section 106 funding from these agreements would not be drawn upon until year 3 of the 6-year project. At which point it will be used to support Football Foundation funding, to continue improved maintenance works to the outlined sites.

- 3.4 The recommendations of the report are to support the proposed improvements to Rugby Borough Council managed pitches at Whinfield Recreation Ground, Ashlawn Road Recreation Ground, GEC Recreation Ground and Alwyn Road Recreation Ground.
- 3.5 An allocation of £102,399 from various Section 106 agreements has been discussed with the Section 106 Officer and confirmed the projects meet the conditions and can be utilised for the projects.
- 3.6 Section 106 agreements B150 and B152 are signed legal agreements between Rugby Borough Council and developers that outline funding to be used expressly towards the maintenance of outdoor sports provision in the borough.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Upon approval that available match funding is available from Section 106 funds, the Council will support Rugby & District Sunday Football League with their application to the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund.
- 4.2 With support from colleagues in the Council's legal department, agreements will be signed with The Football Foundation and Rugby & District Sunday Football League ensuring that funds are utilised to achieve the project aims and all work carried out on Council sites is performed in line with best practice by contractors.

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Subject Matter: Football Pitch Improvement Programme
Originating Department: Leisure and Wellbeing

DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY YES NO

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Doc No	Title of Document and Hyperlink

The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

Doc No	Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A