

**CABINET MEETING – 14 March 2024**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I**

**Title of Report:**

Swimming Pool Support Fund – Phase 1 Revenue: Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre

**Author(s):**

Director of Finance

**Purpose of Report:**

This report seeks approval to provide grant funding to Sports and Leisure Management Limited (“SLM”) to support the operating costs at Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet is requested to approve the award of £68,796 grant funding from the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) to SLM for operating costs relating to energy and chemical use incurred in 2023/24 at Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre, on such terms as approved by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Secretary.

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?** \*Yes

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

The Council submitted a bid proposal in conjunction with SLM in August 2023 seeking revenue funding support for 3 priority venues in the city: Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre; Raich Carter Sports Centre; and Sunderland Aquatic Centre. The funding decision was announced in September 2023, confirming funding approval of £68,796 for the Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre. The funding bids for Raich Carter and the Aquatic Centre were unsuccessful.

It is a requirement of the SPSF that it is specifically used to directly support energy and chemical costs at the approved venue between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. Cabinet approval is required for the payment of the grant to the operator for eligible costs incurred during this period as the proposed grant exceeds £50,000.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

The grant award from Sport England’s SPSF was specifically allocated to the Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre in response to a competitive national funding competition. The Council, working with SLM, applied for revenue grant support for 2 other local venues but those proposals were unsuccessful. A decision to reject this

recommendation would result in the loss of £68,796 grant to support operating costs at the facility.

### Impacts analysed:

Equality	Y	Privacy	N/A	Sustainability	Y	Crime and Disorder	N/A
----------	---	---------	-----	----------------	---	--------------------	-----

**Is the Decision consistent with the Council's Co-operative Values? Yes**

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution?	Yes
--	-----

<b>Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
--	------------

**SWIMMING POOL SUPPORT FUND**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to provide grant funding to Sports and Leisure Management Limited (“SLM”) to support the operating costs at Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre.

**2.0 Description of Decision**

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to approve the award of £68,796 grant funding from the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) to SLM for operating costs relating to energy and chemical use incurred in 2023/24 at Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre, on such terms as approved by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Secretary.

**3.0 Background**

- 3.1 The Council has been successful in recent years in securing significant levels of external funding to deliver priority activities and projects that support the objectives of the City Plan.
- 3.2 In June 2023, the Council identified the opportunity to bid for funding from Phase 1 of the Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) programme, administered by Sport England, working with its sponsor department the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).
- 3.3 The programme was launched by Sport England to recognise and respond to the challenging financial pressures that local authorities, and their leisure operators, were facing because of recent rises in energy and operating costs. The support package was specifically available to support public sector leisure centres with swimming pools and had a national funding allocation of £20 million.
- 3.4 The SPSF programme closely aligns with Sunderland’s City Plan, Healthy City Plan and Health Inequalities Strategy with the main objective to make public leisure venues more accessible to all residents.

**4.0 Project proposal**

- 4.1 The Council, working with SLM, its leisure partner, led the submission of a bid proposal in August 2023 seeking funding support for 3 venues in the city: Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre; Raich Carter Sports Centre; and Sunderland Aquatic Centre. The funding decision was announced in September 2023, confirming funding approval of £68,796 for the Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre. The funding bids for Raich Carter and the Aquatic Centre, totalling £338,744, were unsuccessful.

- 4.2 Applications for funding across the country were significantly in excess of the available funding of £20 million. In total, 103 local authorities and 196 publicly owned leisure facilities with swimming pools have been supported through Phase 1 of the SPSF programme.
- 4.3 In line with the grant conditions for the SPSF the £68,796 grant support must be used for eligible expenditure, relating to energy or chemical costs, incurred at the selected venue between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.
- 4.4 Subject to the above eligible expenditure being satisfied, the Council will transfer the grant through a grant funding agreement to SLM, with appropriate terms and conditions incorporating Sport England's funding and reporting requirements. Ongoing monitoring of the SPSF programme will be undertaken by the Council's Active Sunderland team in consultation with the Council's Finance Directorate.
- 4.5 No additional financial commitment from the Council is required, however existing staff time is required to support with ongoing monitoring and reporting to Sport England.

## **5 Reason for Decision**

- 5.1 The Council submitted a bid proposal in conjunction with SLM in August 2023 seeking revenue funding support for 3 priority venues in the city: Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre; Raich Carter Sports Centre; and Sunderland Aquatic Centre. The funding decision was announced in September 2023, confirming funding approval of £68,796 for the Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre. The funding bids for Raich Carter and the Aquatic Centre were unsuccessful.
- 5.2 It is a requirement of the SPSF that it is specifically used to directly support energy and chemical costs at the approved venue between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. Cabinet approval is required for the payment of the grant to the operator for eligible costs incurred during this period as the proposed grant exceeds £50,000.

## **6 Alternative Options**

- 6.1 The grant award from Sport England's SPSF was specifically allocated to the Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre in response to a competitive national funding competition. The Council, working with SLM, applied for revenue grant support for 2 other local venues but those proposals were unsuccessful. A decision to reject this recommendation would result in the loss of £68,796 grant to support operating costs at the facility.

## **7 Relevant Considerations**

- 7.1 Financial Implications. As set out within the report the revenue grant award of £68,796 has been awarded to the Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre to specifically support energy and chemical costs at the venue. There are no additional financial implications for the Council.

- 7.2 Legal Implications. Under the proposal, the Council would enter into a grant agreement with SLM (as the Council's procured leisure operator for its venues) to transfer the appropriate grant amount as set out above. This will ensure that the funding agreement with Sport England is fully back-to-back and that SLM is required to comply with all necessary external funding conditions.

In addition, as part of the Council's funding bid to DCMS for the specified venue, a subsidy control analysis was undertaken. This confirmed that the grant funding can be provided to the Council, and in turn SLM as operator, as a lawful "subsidy" contributing to specific, eligible expenditure on energy and chemical costs to support the sustainability of a publicly owned leisure facility.

- 7.3 Equalities implications. An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been undertaken for this specific funding award. However, it is anticipated that only positive impacts would result from the award, which is focused on supporting the long-term viability of vital community facilities for all residents.
- 7.4 Policy Implications. As outlined above, the project will make a contribution to the aims of the City Plan, Healthy City Plan and Health Inequalities Strategy.

## **8 Background Papers**

- 8.1 Further information on the SPSF programme can be found here: [Swimming Pool Support Fund | Sport England](#)

