

23rd July 2024

REPORT NO. OS2440

Key Decision? No

**SWIMMING POOL SUPPORT FUND GRANT TO FUND ENERGY IMPROVEMENT
WORKS AT ALDERSHOT POOLS**

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report outlines the details of the grant of £208,350 received by Rushmoor Borough Council from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF).

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Approve the acceptance of the grant to fully fund the purchase of two swimming pool covers and the installation of photo voltaic panels at Aldershot Pools and Fitness Centre.
- Recommend to Council the addition of £208,350 into the 2024/25 Capital Programme funded by the SPSF grant.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. In 2023, the government announced that it would be making £60m available for local authorities as a support package for public leisure facilities with swimming pools. The fund was split into two phases:

- **Phase I - Revenue:** £20m available to support facilities with swimming pools with increased cost pressures, leaving them most vulnerable to closure or significant service reduction.
- **Phase II - Capital:** £40m available for capital investment to improve the energy efficiency of public facilities with pools in the medium to long term.

Sport England also made £20m of Lottery funding available to supplement the government's £40m capital fund in Phase II, in order to increase the number of facilities benefiting from these facility improvements.

After seeking advice from industry experts, Strategic Leisure, it was agreed that an application to Phase I would not be appropriate as the focus was on facilities at risk of imminent closure. However, an application to Phase II was

submitted, with a view to improving the energy efficiency of the existing facility.

On 30th January 2024, the Council was informed that its bid to Phase II had been successful, and that it had been awarded £208,350.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Rushmoor Borough Council operates a single facility with an indoor swimming pool - Aldershot Pools & Fitness Centre. The centre was built in 1975 and, as is typical for a facility nearing 50 years old, is not as energy efficient as a modern building and in need of interventions to improve energy efficiency and reduce running costs.

The facility is currently operated by Places Leisure under a 'cost-plus' arrangement, whereby Rushmoor Borough Council pays a fixed fee to the operator to run the centre, with any profit or loss borne by the Council. Therefore, any intervention which reduces energy consumption, and consequently running costs, has a direct financial benefit to the Council.

- 2.2. This project will positively contribute towards two of the published priorities of '*Your Vision, Your Place – a vision for Aldershot & Farnborough 2030*':
- People: Healthy and green lifestyles.
 - Place: A thriving local economy – kind to the environment.

It will also have an impact on a key objective within the council plan:

- Place 5: Continue progress towards our goal of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 through reducing emissions in our facilities and operations.
Source: [Council plan 2022-2025 \(rushmoor.gov.uk\)](https://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/council-plan-2022-2025)

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

General

- 3.1. Rushmoor Borough Council's application to the SPSF focussed on two priority projects:
- 3.1.1. The purchase and installation of pool covers to both the main and learner pool in order to conserve heat and reduce evaporation overnight.
- 3.1.2. The purchase and installation of photo voltaic (PV) panels either within the swimming pool site or on neighbouring council-owned buildings to provide clean, sustainable and cost-effective electricity to run the facility.

The application was successful on both counts and the Council has been awarded £208,350, broken down as follows:

- £48,350 for pool covers
- £160,000 for PV panels

3.2. The conditions of receiving the grant are as follows:

3.2.1. The facility must remain open for a period of ten years from the completion of the project.

3.2.2. Rushmoor Borough Council must withhold public communication about the funding until it is advised by Sport England that public communication is approved. This is to allow sufficient time for all local authority funding agreements to be agreed across the portfolio and then publicly disclosed. Any public communication latterly made should be cleared with Sport England prior to release.

3.2.3. The funding is to be spent by 31 March 2025.

3.3. Aldershot Pools serves the whole of the borough of Rushmoor as its only public swimming facility. As the only Council owned pool, it was the only site within Rushmoor eligible for the fund.

Alternative Options

3.4. No alternative options have been considered.

Consultation

3.5. No consultation was deemed necessary.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

4.1. The acceptance of the award carries little financial risk to the Council. The funds provided by the grant should entirely cover the cost of undertaking the two projects. The SPSF grant administrators have confirmed that project management costs can be included in the project.

4.2. Should Aldershot Pools close within a period of ten years from completion of the project, then *'the local authority applicant may be liable to replay the funding. Sports England and DCMS will take into account unforeseen circumstances if this is the case but reserve the right to recover the funding'*.

4.3. The project delivery team will ensure that the terms of the award are adhered to at every stage, mitigating any risk of breaching the terms.

Legal Implications

- 4.4. Acceptance of the award is subject to the terms and conditions described in Section 3.2.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.5. The grant money will be paid to Rushmoor Borough Council at the point of placing orders associated with the project to reflect the actual spend. This may be in several instalments. This means that there is no risk of having to repay any award monies unless the Council fails to meet the terms of the award.
- 4.6. The data submitted for the funding application calculated that the interventions would reduce electricity consumption within the centre from 553,920KwH to 440,370KwH per year, a reduction of around 20%, equating to a saving of around £28,000 per year. It also showed a reduction in gas consumption from 1,102,896KW to 982,896KW per year, around 11%, equating to a saving of c.£7,500 per year. Both these figures were calculated using actual expenditure from 2023-24.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.7. There are no equalities impact implications associated with this project.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. In conclusion, it is proposed that Cabinet approves the acceptance of the £208,350 Swimming Pool Support Fund grant. The proposed interventions will contribute to a significant reduction in energy consumption at Aldershot Pools, making the centre more energy efficient and providing a financial saving.

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