

Strategic Leisure Facility Contributions for Area South

Strategic Director: Vega Sturgess, Strategic Director – Operations and Customer Focus
Assistant Director: Steve Joel – Assistant Director – Health and Wellbeing
Service Manager: Lynda Pincombe – Community Health and Leisure Manager
Lead Officer: Lynda Pincombe – Community Health and Leisure Manager
Contact Details: e-mail: Lynda.Pincombe@southsomerset.gov.uk
Telephone: 01935 462614

Purpose of the Report

This report provides an update on the planning obligations accrued by the Council that could be used for the development of strategic sports facilities in Area South.

Public Interest

This report provides members with a summary of the money received from residential housing development that could be used to develop or improve sports halls, swimming pools, indoor tennis centres, theatres and arts centres or artificial grass pitches in Area South.

Recommendation

That members note the report.

Background

Members requested at the 4th June 2014 Area South Committee that a report on strategic leisure contributions accrued for Area South should be presented to members later in the year.

Policy context and rules

The Community Health and Leisure team currently responds to Planning Application Consultations of five or more dwellings and where appropriate seeks planning obligations from the developer, in line with planning policy, for both local and strategic leisure facilities in order to ensure sustainable development.

When requesting contributions from a developer, officers are obliged to comply with national planning policy guidance and all obligations requested must meet three key tests to ensure that they are necessary, reasonable and related in scale and kind; otherwise the developer will not be obliged to pay them.

In terms of sport and leisure facilities, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to have policies that are:

'Based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreation facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'

Needs assessments for leisure facilities were first developed by the Community Health and Leisure team in 2006 and were based on the facility types set out in the Planning Policy 17 Companion Guide. These needs assessments are fundamental in ensuring that the team has the correct evidence base to support obligation requests. The development and maintenance of needs assessments requires substantial officer time and without having done this work, the Council would not be in a position to seek all of the contributions currently requested from developments. Current needs assessments and standards of provision were approved by District Executive committee in March 2012 and are due for review when a new local plan is in place.

Until Needs Assessments were developed in 2006, £0 was secured by the Council for off-site leisure contributions. By the middle of this year, around £3million in off-site leisure capital and revenue contributions have been secured across the district as a direct result of the work that the Community Health and Leisure team has undertaken to develop a robust evidence base

It is a Council Plan priority to enhance and develop the network of Leisure and Cultural facilities in South Somerset and the health benefits of adequate sports and recreation facilities and their impact on reducing anti-social behavior within communities is now well evidenced. Therefore this area of work is one of high importance for the Community Health and Leisure team.

Types of leisure contributions sought

The Community Health and Leisure team currently seeks obligations towards local leisure facilities for the following facility types:

- Equipped Play Areas
- Youth facilities (e.g. MUGAs, skate parks)
- Playing Pitches and Changing Rooms
- Community Halls

Local facility contributions are normally used to enhance or build new facilities in the same settlement or parish as the development if they are not provided on the development site itself.

Strategic leisure facilities (in the context of the local authority area) are larger or more specialist facilities attracting a higher number of users. They have larger catchment areas and a high proportion of users are likely to travel to them by car or public transport. They tend to be located in centres of high population (e.g. Chard, Crewkerne, Langport/Huish Episcopi, Yeovil, Wincanton) for viability reasons. For some facility types there may only be one of its kind in South Somerset; located to best serve the needs of the entire district.

Based on national policy guidance, the Community Health and Leisure team currently seeks obligations for the following types of strategic leisure facilities:

- Sports Halls
- Swimming Pools
- Artificial Grass Pitches
- Indoor Tennis Centres
- Theatres and Arts Centres

There is a detailed process that is followed by officers to calculate the precise contribution required from a particular housing development. Before a final consultation response is submitted to Development Management by the Community Health and Leisure team, officers seek comments from ward members and the appropriate town/parish council on the team's recommended obligations required to mitigate against the impacts of a development. The team also liaise with Area Community Development Officers at this point with respect to any community hall contributions that may be requested.

In the event of viability issues relating to a particular development site, Development Management has an agreed Viability Protocol in place. In such instances, any requirement for strategic contributions are the first to be removed; with contributions towards local facility provision taking priority.

Once the level of planning obligations payable by a particular developer have been agreed, the precise detail on when they are triggered and how they should be spent is usually detailed within a Section 106 (S106) agreement. Development Management have the responsibility for ensuring contributions are spent in strict accordance with signed legal agreements and money is only transferred to the capital programme for expenditure by the Community Health and Leisure team following authorisation by the Assistant Director for Economy. On occasion, contributions are transferred to third parties, such as a parish or town council, for project delivery.

Contributions secured for local facilities are normally required to be spent within five years or ten years for strategic leisure facilities. However, some legal agreements (usually Unilateral Undertakings) do not place any time limit on when leisure contributions need to be spent.

Report

The body of this report aims to summarise the sums for strategic leisure facilities that have already been triggered, paid to SSDC and unallocated to a specific project.

As of August 2014 there was a total of £123,041 available for new strategic leisure facility projects in Area South

The overall total the can be split down further as follows:

Available for any one or more strategic facility	£79,096
Swimming pools	£ 4,438
Sports Halls	£11,882
Octagon Theatre	£ 9,010
Indoor Tennis	<u>£18,615</u>
	£123,041

Strategic sport and leisure contributions collected and detailed above are not associated with a particular site at present.

In addition, currently there is approximately £130,000 of strategic contributions available in Area North, £49,000 in Area East, and £109,000 in Area West. A small proportion of these contributions could instead be allocated to centrally located strategic facilities within Yeovil if that were the preference of members.

How Strategic leisure contributions have been spent on improving leisure and cultural facilities in Area South

To date a total of £693,887 has been spent or allocated to strategic projects in Area South. The following facilities have been built or improved through strategic contributions:

- A new 3G artificial grass pitch at Westfield Academy
- New cricket nets at Westfield Academy sports hall to support junior cricket development
- A new fitness facility and refurbished sports hall and changing at Preston Academy.
- Refurbished outdoor hard courts at Westfield Academy which have benefited community netball provision and are now available for casual tennis.
- A new artificial grass pitch at Yeovil Recreation Centre, primarily for community hockey, but has also been used for football and tennis provision.
- Outdoor Education Centre, Yeovil Country Park

Financial Implications

No new implications.

Corporate Priority Implications

Securing strategic leisure obligations contributes to the Health and Communities Focus of the Council Plan:

- Maintain and enhance the South Somerset network of leisure and cultural facilities, optimising opportunities for external funding to promote healthy living.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Background Papers: none
