



Title of Report:	Funding Applications
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 June 2023
For Decision or For Information	For Information

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Director of Leisure & Development

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Members that officers may need to make significant funding applications over the summer months for strategic capital projects previously prioritised by Council.

2.0 Background

Officers anticipate that funding opportunities may open over the summer months and that these capital funding programmes are likely to have relatively short application windows as follows:

- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - Levelling Up Fund Round 3.
- Special European Union Programmes Body - Peace Plus.
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - Shared Prosperity Fund.

If the Council is to compete favourably within these anticipated funding opportunities, officers will need to progress the application materials which normally take 2-3 months.

The absence of Committee and Council meetings over the summer period will limit the opportunity to secure the required decisions from the Members, without which the likelihood of making successful bids will be significantly reduced but even with timely decision-making, success is not guaranteed.

3.0 LUF funding opportunities

In LUF Round One the Council made one application as follows:

- Portrush Recreation Grounds £1.6m: successful.

In LUF Round Two the Council made two applications as follows:

- Ballycastle Leisure Centre for £8.1m: successful.
- Coleraine Leisure Centre £14m: unsuccessful.

There is an opportunity to reapply for Coleraine Leisure Centre in Round Three, but the chances of success are likely to be greater if Council was able to deliver the benefits of the new Leisure Centre with a significantly smaller grant from LUF, i.e. find another major source of partnership funding to reduce the ask from LUF. This is based upon the Council's relative share of the funding available for Northern Ireland remaining in Round 3.

At a total project cost of c.£26m, LUF and Growth Deal are the only funding opportunities of the required scale in the foreseeable future. In the absence of successful applications to both these funds, a new leisure centre in Coleraine is not currently a realistic objective for the short to medium term.

In March 2023 Council agreed to afford the redevelopment of Coleraine Leisure Centre a high priority in future grant applications and committed to investing in development costs of up to £1m to progress the project to detailed design for full planning application to allow it to avail of major funding opportunities.

4.0 LUF and a potential Growth Deal match funding opportunity

It is highly likely that some of the existing priority 1 Growth Deal projects will not survive the Strategic Outline Case process and Members may decide to remove them or reduce them from the programme over the coming months to ensure affordability within the set funding allocation.

The indicative funding allocation for any projects removed from the Growth Deal will be available for Members to either/or relocate to increase the budgets of some of the surviving

projects (as actual costs are better understood) or to redirect to other priority projects that meet the Growth Deal criteria.

The Council also has a requirement to maximise its own partnership funding to the Growth Deal (minimally 10% overall) which is a very significant challenge given the scale of the Council's current borrowings.

Introducing a new priority project to the Growth Deal which Council is already planning to invest some of its own capital into would have two benefits:

- It would reduce the cost of that project to the Council; and
- Any funding that the Council could afford to invest into that project would count towards the Council's requirement to part fund the Growth Deal.

Council previously prioritised Growth Deal projects in March 2021, having agreed the current list of priority 1 projects (which includes Dunluce Castle and Mountsandel Fort). The next projects on the priority 2 list are Coleraine Harbour ranked 14th and Council Leisure Centres (both Coleraine and Ballycastle) ranked 15th.

The Coleraine Harbour project is not at the required state of readiness to avail of the Growth Deal opportunity in the next few months as no defined project or indicative cost is available. Furthermore, it has recently come to light that the Harbour Commissioners have extended a current lease by 15 years giving tenancy rights to an existing lessee.

The Coleraine Leisure Centre project is however at a much more advanced state of readiness with an Outline Business Case approved for a project cost of c.£26m and a recent Council decision to progress the project to detailed design and planning. This advanced position combined with the last opportunity to avail of a more modest LUF round 3 funding bid (as outlined above) makes it the preferred project for inclusion within the Growth Deal which will be a decision for Members after the Summer recess.

5.0 PEACE funding opportunities

In 2018 Council applied to PEACE IV for the development of community sports facilities at the new Ballycastle shared education campus as follows:

- £2.8m for capital and programme costs: successful

The deadline for full capital grant expenditure was December 2023. As a result of planning and procurement delays with DE/EA, the project was delayed by 18 months which meant that the spend deadline could not be met and the Council was forced to withdraw the project from the PEACE IV programme last year.

Officers have consulted with SEUPB and are confident that a reapplication for the project would be successful and that it would remain eligible for the programme even if the construction contract had been signed and the construction commenced (planned for March 24).

The project has since been retendered and the Council made a decision in March 23 to proceed to make a financial commitment of £3.8m to the capital costs of the project and to reapply to the SEUPB Peace Plus programme to fund this commitment. Contracts are now signed and the Council is fully financially committed.

There is no guarantee of a successful PEACE reapplication for the project and if an application was unsuccessful, the Council will be liable for the full cost of the £3.8m and associated revenue costs.

6.0 Shared Prosperity funding opportunities

The Northern Regional College (NRC) is close to completing a £50m+ project for a new FE College building adjacent to Anderson Park, Coleraine.

This has the potential for a major positive impact on an area of the town that is greatly in need of regeneration.

The budget for the new college includes a £20k allowance for ground works that could make an initial contribution to upgrades to Anderson Park. To build upon this, officers have also received positive indications for other regeneration investments in Anderson Park as follows:

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Green Spaces) of up to £1m.
- DfC town centre regeneration funding of up to £1m.

Officers are currently completing a Strategic Outline Case for the regeneration of Anderson Park to support these bids for capital grant funding with no commitment for Council funding and any subsequent decision to proceed subject to Committee/Council approval.

7.0 Next Steps

Members are asked to note the following actions to be undertaken by officers with respect to significant funding opportunities, should they arise during the summer recess:

1. To progress funding opportunities for Coleraine Leisure Centre via applications to LUF, noting the narrative regarding the possible inclusion within the Growth Deal programme combined with an indication of a direct Council capital investment aligned to affordability limits.
2. To make an application to PEACE Plus capital programme for the new community sport facilities at the Ballycastle Shared Education Campus for Capital costs and programme costs.
3. To submit a bid to the Shared Prosperity Fund for the development of Anderson Park, Coleraine for capital and programme costs, on the basis of possible match funding from DfC.