

CABINET

27 June 2025

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEISURE AND PUBLIC REALM

A.5 DELIVERY OF FOUR NEW PLAYZONE ACTIVITY HUBS FOR THE DISTRICT

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Following a successful funding bid by the Council to contribute towards the delivery of four new Football Foundation Playzones in the district, this report requests Cabinet permission to accept the grant, agree the Council's financial contribution and subject to the outcome of final business plans, continue the project through to completion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has an opportunity to install four new "Playzones"; which are modern, largely free to use intergenerational multi activity hubs around the Tendring District, at a total cost of £1,119,257, with 75% match funding from the Football Foundation (FF).

Playzones are modern, high quality, floodlit multi use activity hubs and community-led spaces, which were designed as part of a FF programme to target inequalities in physical activity. With the Playzone concept linking strongly with the themes and objectives in the Council's Sport and Activity Strategy and the potential to secure FF funding, the Council submitted an expression of interest for the scheme in early 2024 and in May of that year, following acknowledgement that the EOI was successful, a decision by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Public Realm agreed the following:

'To accept £25,000 of capacity funding from the FF for the PlayZone scheme, to take the project through a community engagement process and up to and including the submission of a full bid for up to 3 of these facilities to be installed at locations in the district.'

This provided Officers with authority to take the project through a community engagement process and up to and including the submission of a full bid for 'up to 3' of these facilities to be installed in the district. Although the EOI referred to 3 Playzones in Clacton, Harwich/Dovercourt and Walton, the actual number was to be determined with the FF and partners through the community engagement process – so the number was able decrease or increase, if appropriate and agreed by the Council.

The four Playzone locations listed below are proposed as the development sites, and were agreed following deliberation by a consortium of partners and subsequently through community consultation:

1. Clacton Leisure Centre
2. Bathhouse Meadow, Walton on the Naze
3. Cliff Park, Harwich
4. Crossways, Jaywick Sands.

Note: Further information about the consultation is set out later on in this report.

This project aligned with the Sport and Activity Strategy objectives by developing new free to use facilities in key locations around the district, which can support improved social outcomes and impact positively on reducing instances of crime and Anti-Social behaviour. Importantly, by using these hubs to provide a balanced, exciting and modern activity programme, they can positively impact on improved physical health, mental/emotional wellbeing, social engagement and inclusion. All of which have the potential to contribute significantly towards a place-based approach to active wellbeing and importantly the challenges surrounding the delivery of social care services in the district.

The recent Active Lives survey from Sport England shows an improvement on all the indicators for adults in Tendring. The data for children however has not changed significantly for *** years. The opening of free to use facilities has the power and potential to improve these statistics and subsequently improve obesity rates for young people in the district.

Playzones support the provision of a balanced activity programme and will include a well thought out mix of formal and informal sessions, which meet the needs of local people and impact on rates of participation in physical activity. The Council will need to work with a variety of local organisations in advance of project completion, in order to develop the Playzones programme. This process will be led by the Council's Community Sport and Activity Manager, who will be taking forward delivery of the new strategy.

The total breakdown for the cost of delivering the project is set out below, together with the grant funding offered and match funding required by the Council:

Playzone Location	FF Funding Offered (£)	Match Funding Required (£)	Total Cost (£)
Clacton on Sea	200,653	66,884	267,537
Jaywick Sands	192,167	64,054	256,221,
Harwich	249,824	83,274	333,098
Walton on the Naze	196,801	65,600	262,401,
Total Project Cost	839,445	279,812	1,119,257

The proposed facilities have been costed through the FF framework process and include design fees, project management, construction, project contingencies and risk mitigation costs. The FF have confirmed that all Playzone projects around the country to date have completed within the budget allocated. It should be noted however that any additional cost will be at risk to the Council, so strong project management will be required throughout the process. The Council will need to accept the FF funding offered through this report and enter into a funding agreement which is covered in the legal section. Furthermore, the 25% match funding will need to be agreed and it is proposed to finance this from a mix of section 106 funding with the balance funded from the Corporate Investment Fund. This is covered in the finance section of this report. Consideration will also need to be given to the ongoing maintenance costs for the pitches and the risk of any income derived from the facility, not being sufficient to fund this amount. In order to progress the project through detailed designs and planning permission, £40,000 of the Council's match funding contribution will require committing through this report.

Through a recent restructure, the Council have employed two new posts within the Council's Sports Facilities Team. This includes a Project and Procurement Manager, who will Project Manage the construction of this project and provide the resources required to work with the design team and contractor. In addition, a new Community Sport and Activity Manager has been recruited to deliver on the objectives adopted through the Sport and Activity Strategy. This will include working with a variety of organisations to programme the facilities and bring

opportunities for physical activity 'closer to where residents live'. Learning from previous projects, together with designated resources provided by the FF, this project will be subject to the development of a comprehensive management system, which will include a Project Initiation Document (PID), control measures for risk and regular reporting through a Capital Project Delivery Board. In addition, the Council is able to utilise the balance of capacity funding received for this project from the Football Foundation towards resourcing. This currently stands at £14,500, but this amount is required to be spent by 31 August 2025. In addition, there is potential to utilise the funding already received from the FF which is currently apportioned to cover resources already funded, e.g. salary costs.

In order to progress the project, the Council is required to enter into a 'Joining Agreement' with the FF, which is a formal document that allows an organisation to become part of the FF's Framework Alliance Contract for the duration of a project. The framework promotes collaboration among all parties involved, ensuring best value and quality for grant-funded projects. It is also designed to provide services including contract administration, cost management, Health & Safety compliance, and independent testing to international quality standards. This will reduce the risk of increased capital costs and manage quality control of the project. Importantly, this will also provide the Council with sufficient resources to progress the project and utilise specialist and professional expertise. Without engaging the professional teams, it is unlikely that the Council could progress such a project within the scope of other workstreams and existing 'in year' projects. It is estimated that construction will commence in February 2026 and with a 12 week build period, will be open in the spring of 2026.

Following approval of this stage of the project, the Council will be engaging with local organisations to discuss future management and operation of Playzones. It is important to set out that although the Council is leading on this project to provide evidence-based activity opportunities for local communities, other organisations could operate/manage Playzones following construction through a licence agreement. Future operational use of facilities and reference to consulting with local organisations about future management of these proposed facilities. This will be key in advance of Local Government Reorganisation, to understand how the facilities will be managed into the future. This will need to be established prior to submission of the funding bid. This process will also include detailed programming of the facilities to ensure there is a balance struck between free to use sessions for local people and hired sessions for organisations (although some of these are likely to be free at the point of use). The programme balance will ensure there is enough income derived from the facilities to cover the cost of annual maintenance. A high-level business plan has been appended to this report, but following Cabinet agreement, Officers will work with local organisations to finalise this process and develop a final business plan for approval prior to progressing to the construction phase.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Agrees to accept Football Foundation funding of £839,355 towards the development of four new Playzones at Clacton Leisure Centre, Dovercourt (Cliff Park), Jaywick Sands (Crossways) and Walton on the Naze (Bathhouse Meadow), with a total project cost of £1,119,257; furthermore, agrees for the Assistant Director, Sport, Culture and Health, in consultation with the Corporate Director,**

- Governance to enter into a funding agreement on behalf of the Council;**
- b) Agrees to contribute £204,643.88 from section 106 monies and £75,168.12 from the Corporate Investment Fund, making a total of £279,812 match funding towards this project;**
 - c) Agrees for the Assistant Director, Sport, Culture and Health, in consultation with Legal Services to enter into a Joining Agreement with the Football Foundation, to become part of the Football Foundation's Framework Alliance Contract for the duration of the project;**
 - d) Agrees for the Assistant Director, Sport, Culture and Health, in consultation with Legal Services to enter into a Pre-Construction Services Agreement with McArdle Sport, Edge Public Solutions and Sportslab UK to undertake the detailed design proposals and submit planning applications for the new Playzones, under the pre procured Football Foundation Framework;**
 - e) Subject to (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) above agrees for £40,000 of the Council's agreed match funding contribution set out in (b) above to be committed towards the Playzones design phase and costs of submitting Planning Permission.**
 - f) Subject to (a),(b),(c) and (d) above, agrees for the Assistant Director, Sport, Culture and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Leisure and Public Realm to submit Planning Permission applications where applicable, for the four facilities listed in the executive summary;**
 - g) Agrees that following consultation with local organisations, decision making for future management options for the Playzone facilities is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Public Realm in consultation with the Assistant Director, Sport, Culture and Health, Corporate Director, Governance and Corporate Director, Finance; and**
 - h) Agrees that approval of final business plans and associated actions, including the decision to enter into a JCT agreement with McArdle Sport for the construction phase of the Playzone Project be delegated to the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance and Leisure and Public Realm in consultation with the Corporate Director Finance, Assistant Director, Sport, Culture and Health and Legal Services.**
 - i) Subject to (h), above, agrees the inclusion of four new Playzone facilities within the Capital Programme in 2025/26, with a total budget of £1,119,257;**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

Agreeing this report will progress the delivery of four new Playzone facilities in the district, which is a project set out in the action plan of the Council's approved Sport and Activity Strategy, through to completion.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 1. Not to progress the project any further:** Such a decision would result in the projects being cancelled, and loss of £839,355 of external funding. As this project is a key action in providing new free to use facilities in focus areas of the district, as set out in the Sport and Activity Strategy, a key route to delivering a Council objective would be lost.
- 2. To scale down the project and deliver fewer Playzones in the district:** This would reduce the project costs and resourcing implications involved, but would in turn reduce opportunity and a platform for increased activity levels across our communities.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

This project is listed in the Council's Sport and Activity Strategy as one of the actions to support delivery of objectives. A specific action in the strategy sets out an ambition to construct new Playzones in the district and agreeing this funding to develop the detailed proposals, which advance this action.

In addition, the installation of PlayZones would contribute to the following priorities:

- Raising aspiration and creating opportunities.
- Working with partners to improve quality of life.
- Pride in our area and services to residents.

The Sport and Activity Strategy lists 'Evidence Based District Wide Sport and Activity Offer to Meet Local Needs' as a key objective'. This sets out the following:

The Council will actively work with local people, communities and key partners to ensure more local people have access to sport and physical activity opportunities. Together with continuing to provide traditional and mainstream sports through the council's sports facilities and local sports clubs, it should be recognised that more informal activity might be more appealing to significant areas of the population, due to a wide range of factors, including age, access to transport and levels of deprivation.

Key areas of focus will be:

- *Using research available, work with communities and key partners to identify priority facilities and activities for local people.*
- *A varied and continually evolving activity programme at the Council's sports facilities*
- *The formation of 'activity hubs' on the land surrounding each of the Council's sports facilities, in Clacton on Sea, Dovercourt Bay and Walton on the Naze*
- *Working with clubs and community groups to provide both traditional and informal activity sessions around the district*

The installation of Playzones is subsequently listed in the Sport and Activity Strategy Action Plan, as one of the ways the Council can impact on encouraging more local people to become active.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Playzones project was included in the action plan to support delivery of the Sport and Activity strategy which was subject to a formal consultation process.

Through that consultation process, sports clubs raised the lack of sport and activity space available around the district and also a lack of opportunity for some minority sports. In addition, stakeholders referred to more 'free to use' activities and increased opportunities for family sessions, to build on projects such as 'Parkplay' which has been offered through the Local Delivery Pilot (LDP) scheme. Further to this, consultees were keen to ensure the older population were included in sport and activity, to improve issues surrounding social isolation and related health matters. All these points support the delivery of free to use activity spaces, which allow residents of all age ranges to participate in organised and informal sessions.

In addition, the need for more free to use facilities around the district was raised during the consultation process for the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Council worked with a consortium of partners to develop proposals for consultation with local people. The partners included Essex Police, Essex Football Association, Community Voluntary Services Tendring, Essex Health Alliance, Active Essex, Sport for Confidence and other Council services. In addition, consultation was undertaken with Town Councils and other organisations in relation to options for sites.

Summary of Playzone Consultation Results

The consultation results from the resident consultation process for Playzones reveal a strong community consensus on the need for these facilities across the Tendring District. The majority of participants agree that PlayZones are necessary, although a smaller group disagrees. This indicates a general support for the initiative.

Regarding the usage of activity areas, the most popular choice is free-to-use sessions, with 422 responses. This is followed by casual pay-and-play sessions (138 responses), programme sessions (107 responses), and session-led activities (95 responses). These preferences highlight the community's desire for accessible and varied recreational opportunities.

PlayZones are seen as highly beneficial for social activities, with 347 responses indicating this as the most significant benefit. They are also valued for their role in helping people meet and make friends (255 responses), become active (217 responses), and remain active (209 responses). Additionally, PlayZones foster a sense of community (147 responses), provide inclusive activity spaces (131 responses), offer safe environments (130 responses), and support group-led sessions (92 responses). Overall, PlayZones are appreciated for promoting social interaction, physical activity, safety, and inclusivity, enhancing the well-being and sense of community among respondents.

PlayZones are also recognised as an investment to tackle inequalities and provide access to safe and inclusive facilities. The FF has identified four underrepresented groups less likely to be physically active. Among these, women and girls (189 responses) have the highest representation, followed by disabled individuals and those with long-term health conditions (66 responses), low-socio-economic groups (34 responses), and ethnically diverse communities (24 responses). The largest group, with 213 responses, does not consider themselves to fall within any of these underrepresented groups, indicating that PlayZones serve the broader community as well. A significant number of respondents (84 responses) prefer not to disclose their group affiliation, which may reflect privacy concerns or a lack of awareness about the importance of identifying with these groups.

When asked which PlayZone they would use, respondents showed a clear preference for Cliff Park in Harwich, with 440 responses. This is followed by Clacton Leisure Centre in Vista Road (55 responses), Walton-on-the-Naze in Bathhouse Meadow (30 responses), and Jaywick Sands in Crossways Recreation Ground (13 responses). These results suggest that Cliff Park is the most popular choice, while Walton-on-the-Naze and Jaywick Sands are less favoured. It should be considered however, that Jaywick Sands is a target location for the Sport and Activity Strategy and this consultation process, should be viewed as one indicator of need and demand.

In terms of sports preferences, football is the most popular sport across all locations. For Walton-on-the-Naze, Bathhouse Meadow, football received 18 responses, followed by

basketball and netball (11 responses each). At Clacton Leisure Centre, Vista Road, football received 32 responses, followed by basketball (23 responses) and netball (22 responses). Cliff Park in Harwich saw football as the top choice with 282 responses, followed by basketball (138 responses) and netball (99 responses). Finally, at Jaywick Sands, Crossways Recreation Ground, football received 6 responses, followed by basketball and netball (4 responses each).

Overall, the consultation results highlight the community's strong support for PlayZones, emphasising their role in promoting social interaction, physical activity, safety, and inclusivity. Cliff Park in Harwich is the most preferred location, and football is the most popular sport across all sites.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	YES	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Significant effect on two or more wards ✓ Involves £100,000 expenditure/income
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	N/A

Following consultation with the Council's Legal team, the funding agreement comes with detailed monitoring and compliance regime, which will need to be completed for compliance. Furthermore, there is a prohibition on disposal or otherwise of the facility without prior written consent of the FF. This may impact on the Council's flexibility and choice in the future on these sites. Due to three of the four proposed Playzones being installed on existing hard surface play areas, this is not considered a change from the current position. The final site at Harwich, Cliff Park was the most well received on the facilities, during the consultation process. There are also, clawback conditions, should the funds be used for unintended purpose, which is not considered a risk.

Under the Football Foundation's (FF) Framework Alliance Contract, the Council needs to sign a Joining Agreement with the Foundation. This means the FF will act as the main Client, and the Council will be an 'Additional Client'. This agreement allows the Council to work with the FF and other partners to ensure the project is successfully delivered. It also lets the Council award a contract to the Playzone Provider under the approved framework.

The project will follow a "Two-Stage Design & Build" approach. The contract will be a JCT Minor Works Design and Build Contract (2016), including Pre-Construction Services. The goal of this approach is to build strong relationships between the Council and the project team. Stage one involves initial planning and design. The second stage of the contract will not be initiated until funding is awarded and Cabinet have agreed to proceed.

If this report is approved, the Council will move to stage 4 of the Playzone Delivery Process, as detailed in the 'Milestones and Delivery' section of this report. In stage 4, the Council will enter into a Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA) with listed providers. The Playzone Provider (PZP) will then work with the Project Team to develop detailed design proposals and submit a full planning application.

During this stage, the Framework Management Contractor (FMC) will:

- Draft the contract documents including the PCSA
- Agree on the project schedule
- Work with the PZP to ensure the project delivers Best Value and agree on the final Contract Sum
- Review and challenge the detailed design process
- Fulfil duties under Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

Once additional surveys and detailed design are completed, the PZP will submit a planning application on behalf of the Council. The PZP will handle any queries from the Planning Team and meet any conditions of a successful award. Depending on discussions with the Planning Team, the project may require:

- No planning application (for refurbishing existing MUGA pitches)
- A minor application
- A full application

As with previous FF projects, entering into this framework is a pre-condition of securing FF funding and there is no mechanism to opt out if there remains a willingness to continue. It will enable the Council to award contracts to pre-procured suppliers, through their collaborative framework.

The Foundation has pre-procured three roles which are key to taking the project through to completion of a funding bid, which are as follows:

1. Framework Management Consultant (FMC) – Edge Public Solutions
2. Specialist Testing Consultant (STC) – Sportslab UK
3. PlayZone Provider (PZP) - McArdle Sport

Each contractor in the Framework Alliance was procured through a fully compliant open procurement process through the United Kingdom's 'Find a Tender' procurement rules. The FF has three sets of procured contractors for different regions of the country and the above list which have been appointed to oversee the Tending schemes (subject to the approval of this report) cover East of England, London, and South.

Tender / Pricing

After submitting the planning application, the FMC and PZP will agree on the "Contract Sum". The FMC will gather all project information, finalize the Employer's Requirements, call-off contracts, warranties, and other necessary details. Once planning permission is obtained and the design is finalized, all project costs will be identified, resulting in an agreed Contract Sum.

Contract

This process concludes with an agreed contract ready for execution, subject to a successful grant award and Cabinet decision from the Foundation. There will be a two stage contract process, which would ensure the Council was not bound to move to the construction stage, if there were complications during the final planning and design phase. Following Planning Permission, the Council will enter into a JCT agreement with the main contractor, McArdle Sport.

Future Operational Management

It is possible for the Council to work with partners to manage any of these facilities, through a licence agreement. Although this will require approval from the FF, this report will provide authority for discussions to take place with a view to establishing agreements where appropriate and agreed by the Portfolio Holder.

Section 106 (S106) funding

This project will use Section 106 funding towards the overall project costs. S106 refers to legally binding agreements made between the Council and developers as part of the planning permission process. These agreements are designed to mitigate the impact of new developments by requiring developers to contribute towards local infrastructure, services, and community facilities. Contributions can include funding for affordable housing, schools, healthcare, transport improvements, green spaces, and as in this case, leisure amenities.

X **The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

No further comments to add to the content of the report.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications of this Decision

The table below sets out the breakdown of costs for the construction of four new Playzones for Tendring, including the Football Foundation funding offered and the match required from the Council.

Playzone Location	FF Funding Offered (£)	Match Funding Required (£)	Total Cost (£)
Clacton on Sea	200,653	66,884	267,537
Jaywick Sands	192,167	64,054	256,221,
Harwich	249,824	83,274	333,098
Walton on the Naze	196,801	65,600	262,401,
Total Project Cost	839,445	279,812	1,119,257

The Council has received a formal offer from the Football Foundation for the 75% contribution towards the project, as set out above. It is important to set out that the Football Foundation require the 25% match funding as an overall contribution towards the total project costs; and this does not need to be individual to each Playzone facility.

The costs include all design fees and pre-construction works required. The budget has been costed through a detailed technical phase, with budget costs set through work with the proposed contractor. As such, it is not anticipated that capital costs will increase. If they do however, it should be noted that the risk will fall to the Council. In this eventuality, a further report will be brought forward for consideration, with an opportunity to withdraw at that stage. Any finance committed/spent at this point will be lost. It should be noted that FF funding will be paid in arrears for the project and the Council will need to claim funds back during the project.

In order to progress the project through detailed designs and planning permission, £40,000 of the Council's match funding contribution will require committing through this report. If the Council decide not to commit to the construction phase, it should be noted that this sum will not be recoverable.

The total project costs include a contingency budget of 5%. There has been significant risk built into the budget costs and the FF have confirmed that all of the Playzone projects completed to date, have been completed within the budget allocated. In addition, the Council completed a FF funded project in 2022 which was managed through this process. The project was delivered under the approved budget allocation and the project was considered to be of a high standard.

Match Funding

The Council's 25% contribution of £279,812 to the overall project will be funded as follows:

Section 106 funding: £204,643.88

Balance to be funded from the Corporate Investment Fund budget: £75,168.12

Total match funding contribution: £279,812

**Total currently available within the Corporate Investment fund is £4.457m*

All the section 106 agreements above have been agreed with the Council's Planning team and our appropriate for use on this project.

Pricing of this Facility

Due to the purpose of these facilities, it is aspired to have minimal charging at the point of use. Following agreement of this report, the Council will build on work already undertaken with partners, to fully programme the facilities with a balance of free to use sessions and chargeable sessions (although some of these will also be free at the point of use). A balance programme however will include hiring the facilities for a charge to organisations, which would be used to offset any ongoing maintenance costs.

Business Planning

Outline business plans are provided for all sites in the appendices, but a summary of the projected profit and loss accounts are set out below. These are based on standard templates required by the Football Foundation during the application process. Expenditure includes maintenance costs, software to support access and booking arrangements, training and marketing. It is important to state the expenditure also includes the allocation of a sinking fund to replace the pitch at the end of its lifespan. This is not a requirement of the funding, but best practice to ensure a new pitch can be laid, once the useable life of the current surface is over. A more detailed breakdown can be found in the appendices.

Following agreement of this this report, the Council will work with partners to develop the Playzone programme and detailed business plans to ensure there is a balanced schedule of activity, which meets the Football Foundation funding agreement, section 106 agreements and financial requirements of maintaining the facilities.

Clacton Leisure Centre

Overall site Summary	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Income	£0	£25,200	£25,956	£26,735	£27,537	£28,363
Expenditure	£5,004	£14,426	£15,600	£18,485	£16,820	£17,965
Surplus /Deficit	-£5,004	£10,774	£10,356	£8,250	£10,717	£10,397

Overall site Summary	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Income	£0	£24,960	£25,709	£26,480	£27,274	£28,093
Expenditure	£5,004	£14,426	£15,600	£18,485	£16,820	£17,965
Surplus /Deficit	-£5,004	£10,534	£10,109	£7,995	£10,455	£10,127

Jaywick Sands

Overall site Summary	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Income	£0	£25,440	£26,203	£26,989	£27,799	£28,633
Expenditure	£0	£14,926	£16,115	£19,015	£17,366	£18,528
Surplus /Deficit	£0	£10,514	£10,088	£7,974	£10,433	£10,105

Walton on the Naze

Overall site Summary	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Income	£0	£21,400	£22,042	£22,703	£23,384	£24,086
Expenditure	£5,004	£10,739	£11,901	£13,698	£12,503	£12,819
Surplus /Deficit	-£5,004	£10,661	£10,141	£9,006	£10,881	£11,267

As set out above, it is estimated that each pitch has enough income within the high-level programme, to ensure all costs are covered. This would include a sinking fund,

Resource Implications

The decisions set out in this report will provide the resourcing to take the project through to completion of the projects. The recruitment and appointment of a new Project and Procurement Manager will provide sufficient resourcing towards delivering this project, which will ensure capacity is in place to oversee the project and manage the Council's relationship with the design team. Furthermore, the Council's Community Sport and Activity Manager will lead in developing the programme and working with organisations with consideration to manage the facilities on an operational basis.

In addition, the Council is able to utilise the balance of capacity funding received for this project from the Football Foundation towards resourcing. From the total figure of £25,000 the balance stands at £14,500, but this is required to be spent by 31 August 2025. In addition, there is potential to utilise the funding already received from the FF which is currently apportioned to cover resources already funded, e.g. salary costs. This would result in an additional resourcing budget of £25,000, which could be used to buy in bespoke resourcing if necessary.

External Funding

The Council has been highly effective in attracting a significant amount of external funding towards priority projects for Sport and Activity provision over the last 3 years and the table below is a summary of the projects which have been funded, or part funded, through successful grant funding applications.

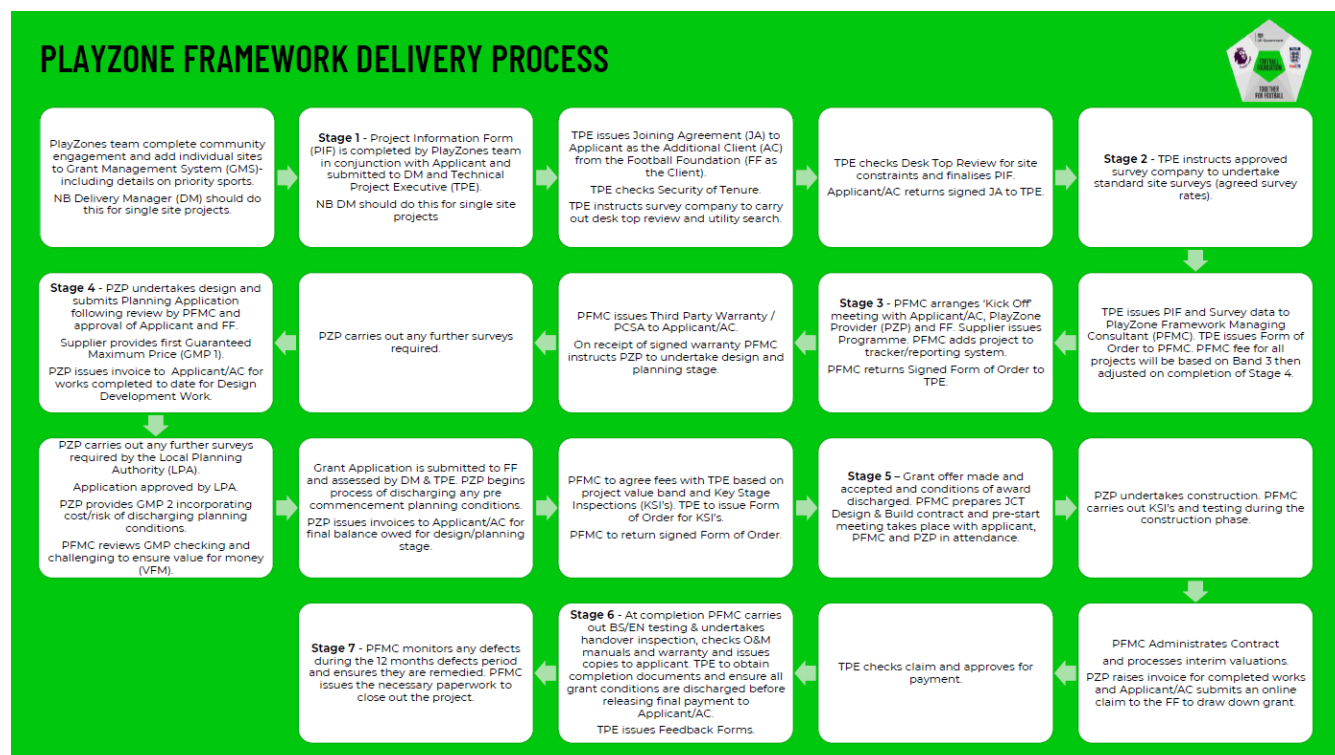
Project	Funding Source	Amount (£)
Playzone Project	Football Foundation	839,355
New 3G Pitch at Clacton Leisure Centre	Football Foundation	343,751
Clacton Leisure Centre Heating System	Salix Finance	1,204,481
Government contribution towards increased energy costs at the district's three sports facilities	Sport England (Swimming Pool Support Fund phase 1)	388,000

Government contribution towards new Building Management System and Air Handling Unit at Walton on the Naze Lifestyles	Sport England (Swimming Pool Support Fund phase 2)	94,500
Small Grant towards Active Wellbeing Centre Feasibility Study	Sport England	10,581
Total received (including this report)		2,880,668
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:	
Although there are no significant comments over and above those set out elsewhere in the report, it is important to highlight that the decision to continue with the project and its inclusion within the Capital Programme remains subject to the determination of the final business case. Any money spent from the Council’s own resources in the interim period is therefore a risk that is accepted by the Council.		
USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY		
The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:		
A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	The appointment of external organisations to manage this process through to the submission of a bid, will ensure there are sufficient resources in place to manage the project and not draw on vital internal resources. In addition, the Council will be engaging with external organisations, to understand appetite for managing/operating these facilities following construction.	
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	This report will agree to progress the Playzones project up to and including the submission of a funding bid to FF. This will allow full consideration of all the project implications, prior to Cabinet determining how to proceed.	
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	This project will be informed by the management and learning of previous projects managed by the organisation. In particular, other projects funded by FF, which share the same procurement and contract pathways.	
MILESTONES AND DELIVERY		
The following table sets out the estimated timescales for the Playzone scheme to achieve Planning Permission and be in a position for construction. Following Cabinet approval, it is estimated that this will be completed by 31 December 2025.		

Task	Duration (Weeks)
PFMC arranges 'Kick-Off' meeting with Applicant / Additional Client (AC), PlayZone Provider (PZP) and FF	2
PFMC Issues PCSA Which is Completed by Applicant / AC and Issued to PZP	1
PFMC Instructs PZP to Undertake Detailed Design Phase (DDP) and Prepare Planning Application	1
PZP Completes DDP/Further Surveys and Provides Planning Application for Review	5
Planning Application is Reviewed and Approved by The Applicant/AC and FF	1
Planning Application is Submitted and Validated by the LPA / PZP Provides GMP 1	1
PZP Carries Out Any Further Surveys Required by LPA / Planning Application is Approved by LPA	13
PZP Provides GMP 2 Incorporating Cost Risk Associated With Planning Conditions	1
GMP is Reviewed by PFMC to Ensure Value For Money (VFM)	1

Following the milestones above, there will be a lead in period of 4 weeks, with an estimated date to start on site in February 2026. The average construction period is 10-12weeks, so it is projected that the four Playzones will be completed by spring 2026.

The following graphic sets out the entire Playzone process, from inception to delivery and if this report is approved, the Council will move to stage 4 of the process.



ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

The following are considered to be the key risks in delivering this project:

Risk	Description	Likelihood	Impact
Budget overruns	There is potential for the project to increase in cost throughout the development. This has been mitigated by a thorough process of feasibility by the FF.	Low	Medium

	<p>If further costs are incurred through the planning stage such as Traffic Impact Assessments, Ecology or Noise Impact Surveys, this will fall on the Council to fund. Due to the sites selected, this is not considered a high risk.</p> <p>If, through circumstances within the Council's control, it is decided not to continue with the project prior to the construction contract having been signed, the FF reserves the right to seek payment for any costs it has incurred. Should it be for circumstances beyond the Council's control the FF will not seek recompense.</p> <p>In order to progress the project through detailed designs and planning permission, £40,000 of the Council's match funding contribution will require committing through this report. If the Council decide not to commit to the construction phase, it should be noted that this sum will not be recoverable.</p>		
Ground conditions	Poor ground conditions can lead to delays in construction and an increase in project costs. The FF have commissioned appropriate surveys to mitigate against this and three of the four facilities are being constructed on existing multi use games areas.	Low	High
Contractor performance	Poor contractor performance can impact on delivery. The FF framework has pre-procured contractors, design team and project management through a framework, which should mitigate against future challenges.	Low	Medium
Planning permission	There is potential for challenges through the planning process. The consultation which was undertaken for this project will mitigate against this. If planning permission is not approved for specific projects, the Council will not be committed financially (outside of any costs already committed/spent).	Low	High
Underutilisation	There is potential for the facilities to be underused following construction. The consultation process and the work	Low	Medium

		which will be undertaken on the programming for each Playzone will mitigate against this.		
Ongoing Maintenance Costs		There is potential for income derived from each Playzone being insufficient to cover ongoing maintenance costs. As this cost will be £6,000 - £9,000 per annum for each site, this could impact on the ongoing condition for each facility.	Medium	Low

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The FF PlayZone scheme is an innovative initiative aimed at creating safe, inclusive, and accessible outdoor sports facilities across England. Launched with funding from the Premier League, The FA, and the Government through Sport England, the programme seeks to tackle inequalities in physical activity and access to sports facilities by focusing on communities with the greatest need

1. Objectives and Goals:

- **Community Engagement:** The scheme emphasizes the importance of community involvement in the design and management of PlayZones. Facilities are developed in partnership with local communities to ensure they meet the specific needs and preferences of the area
- **Targeted Investment:** The programme prioritizes investment in lower socio-economic groups, women and girls, disabled people, and ethnically diverse communities. By doing so, it aims to provide equal opportunities for all to engage in sports and physical activities
- **Multi-Sport Facilities:** PlayZones are designed to support a variety of sports and activities, not just football. This includes built-in equipment for sports like cricket and basketball, making the facilities versatile and widely usable

2. Impact and Reach:

- **Facility Development:** The programme aims to deliver over 240 PlayZones by 2025, creating new or refurbished outdoor mini-pitches that cater to both football and other sports
- **Community Benefits:** By providing high-quality sports facilities, the PlayZone scheme helps to foster community spirit, encourage physical activity, and improve overall well-being
- The FF PlayZone scheme represents a significant step towards reducing inequalities in sports participation and ensuring that everyone has access to safe and welcoming sports facilities.

From the list of priority groups set out by the FF, the Council's expression of interest focussed

on providing facilities for the following:

- Lower socio-economic groups
- Disabled people and people with long term health conditions

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

In the period prior to the submission of planning applications for Playzones, work will be undertaken with local organisations on future management options. This has the potential to provide opportunities for local people to develop a wide range of skills, which could support future employment.

IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO DEVOLUTION AND/OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Ongoing costs: As covered elsewhere in this report, there is a risk that ongoing costs will not cover annual maintenance costs and the facilities will deteriorate. This is being mitigated through the programming work to be undertaken by the Council's Community Sport and Activity Manager and work with external organisations with regards to future management arrangements.

Future Priorities: A future Unitary Authority might not prioritise the promotion of community hubs such as Playzones as part of a place based approach to tackling a range of issues. As such, the facilities may deteriorate through a lack of investment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

The installation of Playzones will have the following implications to the Council's Climate Change Strategy:

Carbon Emissions from Construction

- The construction phase may generate carbon emissions due to the use of materials like synthetic surfacing and steel fencing
- Transport of materials and use of heavy machinery also contribute to the carbon footprint.

Biodiversity and Land Use

- Installing Playzones on open space will involve using green spaces at Harwich, which can reduce local biodiversity and natural carbon sinks. The schemes at Clacton, Jaywick Sands and Walton however, will be built on existing hard standing surfaces.

Long-Term Environmental Benefits

- Encouraging active lifestyles reduces reliance on motorised transport for recreation, indirectly lowering emissions.
- Well-used outdoor spaces can foster community stewardship and support broader sustainability goals.
- These facilities will encourage residents to be active closer to their homes and have the potential to reduce the car vehicles.

Opportunities for Sustainable Design

- These facilities will utilise LED lighting, which will significantly reduce the environmental impact of floodlights.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

<p>Crime and Disorder</p>	<p>The facilities are intended to be safe, inclusive, and welcoming for all, particularly targeting lower socio-economic groups, women and girls, disabled people, and ethnically diverse communities.</p> <p>The Department for Culture, Media and Sport affirm that the HM Prison and Probation Service support a vision for the role of <i>'sports-based interventions in tackling and reducing crime and preventing contact with the criminal justice system.'</i> Increasing opportunities for young people to become more active can lead to positive social outcomes and sport is a recognised diversionary activity which has the power to educate about team dynamics and how work ethic and endeavour can improve life chances and quality of life. Working with local clubs and organisations to encourage more people to use to utilise Playzones has the potential to decrease antisocial behaviour and pathways to crime in our communities.</p>
<p>Health Inequalities</p>	<p>Through increasing participation in physical activity levels in the district, there is a tangible prospect that local health statistics will continue to improve, with enhanced wellbeing and life expectancy levels for local people.</p> <p>Tendring has the highest under 75 mortality rate, at 388 per 100k population, in Essex. In 2021, 43.5% of Tendring residents described their health as "very good", which was an increase from 42.0% in 2011. Those describing their health as "good" fell from 35.9% to 35.2%. The proportion of Tendring residents describing their health as "very bad" remained 1.5%, while those describing their health as "bad" was 5.1% (similar to 2011).</p> <p>Tendring has historically low physical activity levels, compared with the County, Regional and National averages.</p> <p>In an area with challenges in terms of pockets of deprivation, transport links and historically low participation rates, as largely free to use facilities, Playzones would remove 'price' as a barrier to participation. Furthermore, it would provide hyperlocal facilities for key communities in the district.</p>

Importantly, with innovative intergenerational programming these activity hubs will impact on the challenges of adult social care. The elements of this are summarised below:

Improved Physical Health

- **Enhanced mobility and strength:** Regular movement helps maintain muscle mass, joint flexibility, and balance, reducing the risk of falls and injuries
- **Chronic disease prevention:** Physical activity lowers the risk of conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity
- **Pain management:** Gentle exercises can alleviate discomfort from arthritis and other chronic conditions

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

- **Mood enhancement:** Exercise stimulates endorphin production, which helps reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety
- **Cognitive benefits:** Staying active supports brain health and may slow cognitive decline in older adults

Social Engagement and Inclusion

- **Reduced isolation:** Group activities encourage social interaction, helping to combat loneliness and build community connections
- **Empowerment and independence:** Being physically active can boost confidence and support individuals in maintaining daily living skills

Finally, increased activity levels can improve system-level benefits, which impact on wider social costs as follows:

- **Cost savings:** Preventing health deterioration through physical activity can reduce demand on health and social

	<p>care services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce wellbeing: Encouraging activity among care staff can improve morale, reduce absenteeism, and enhance productivity
Area or Ward affected	St Pauls, Walton, Harwich and Kingsway, West Clacton and Jaywick

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

In recent years, the importance of accessible and high-quality sports facilities has become increasingly evident. Communities thrive when they have safe spaces where individuals of all ages can engage in physical activity, fostering not only physical health but also social cohesion and community spirit. Recognising this, the FF has launched the PlayZones Programme, a transformative initiative aimed at creating inclusive outdoor sports facilities across the country. This is consistent with the evidence base set out in the Council's Sport and Activity Strategy and agreed as part of the action planning for delivery.

The PlayZones Programme is a collaborative effort funded by the Premier League, The FA, and the Government through Sport England, with a substantial investment of £100 million. This ambitious programme aims to develop over 240 PlayZones by 2025, focusing on areas with the greatest need. These PlayZones are designed to tackle inequalities in physical activity by providing high-quality, accessible spaces for football and other sports, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be active and engaged in their community.

Through both the evidence base established through the strategy development and consultation undertaken to inform the Council's Corporate Plan, we know that quality free to use facilities are important to residents. By delivering this project, the Council will provide our communities with modern facilities that will encourage participation in sports, promote healthy lifestyles, and strengthen community bonds. These PlayZones will serve as vital hubs for local residents, offering a safe and welcoming environment for physical activity and social interaction.

Football Foundation

The FF is the United Kingdom's largest sports charity, and the Council have collaborated on previous projects, such as a new 3G Artificial Grass Pitch at Clacton Leisure. Their key objective is to support grassroots sports facilities across England, ensuring every community has access to high-quality places to play. The FF has developed a procurement Framework as a complete package that ensures best value for the level of quality required of grant funded projects.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

Cabinet report on the Council's draft Sport and Activity Strategy, 12 March 2024

[Microsoft Word - Sport and Activity Strategy March 2024 Final Version Final](#)

Football Foundation Playzone Scheme, 15 May 2024

[Decision - Football Foundation Playzone Scheme](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

APPENDICES
N/A

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