



Committee and Date

Item

Public



Whitchurch Swimming Pool – Agreement for CIL Funding

Responsible Officer:	Mark Barrow		
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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Chris Schofield		

1. Synopsis

This report is to seek cabinet approval to award £980,000 of CIL funding towards the design and build of Whitchurch Pool and Fitness Centre.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The design and build of a new swimming pool and fitness centre at Whitchurch, on the site of the now derelict former pool and youth centre, is a flagship project for Shropshire Council. The new centre supports the economic growth in Whitchurch and provides the town with a modern facility that supports the health and wellbeing of the local community.
- 2.2. Whitchurch is a large market town in Shropshire, with significant growth and expansion proposed in the coming years. The new facility will support the many requirements of a growing community, alongside deriving several benefits that support all 4 of the council priorities. For example:
 - a. Healthy People- Access to fitness facilities and supporting wellbeing.
 - b. Healthy Economy – Investing in our market towns and supporting local jobs.

- c. Healthy Environment – A sustainable and low carbon building
 - d. Healthy Organisation – Lower long term financial running costs.
- 2.3 An EOI (Expression of Interest) was submitted to IIG (Internal infrastructure Group) to request £980,000 of CIL (Community Interest Levy) funding to support the design and build of the new centre. This request for funding was essential to complete the construction phase of the project. This report was reviewed across all lead departments and discussed formally as a collective at IIG on 01/02/2024, where it was recommended to award CIL funding towards this project, based on the following provisos .
- a. To ensure that the funds are to be utilised for infrastructure and not to support fixture and fittings of the leisure centre.
 - b. Due to the level of funding requested (above £500k), this application is subject to cabinet approval.
- 2.4 Given the value of the funding requested, this application is being brought to cabinet to approve the recommendation at IIG to approve the application and in turn adhering to the financial regulations.
- 2.5 To note the EOI has recently been updated to reflect the practical changes since the original EOI was submitted in November 2023, however this does not materially impact the recommendation of the IIG, and importantly the amount of CIL funding being requested.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Cabinet approves the allocation of £980,000 of CIL funding to support the design and build of Whitchurch Pool and Fitness Centre

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4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The predominant risk to the Council should approval not be granted, would be the inherent financial shortfall in the business case towards the completion of Whitchurch Pool and Fitness Centre. Should funding not be agreed, in order to mitigate the risk, there is a likelihood that additional borrowing will be required in order to ensure the project is fully funded.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The project to design and build Whitchurch Pool and Fitness Centre was approved by full Council in September 2022. It was stated at this time that the Capex budget was an initial estimate, However, once full costs were finalised this application for

CIL funding was submitted, to contribute to the overall development and is essential for the completion of the Construction Phase.

- 5.2. CIL income from new development can be spent on anything that constitutes "infrastructure" as defined by Regulation 216 of the 2008 Planning Act and the CIL Regulations (as amended). This includes but is not limited to roads and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools and other educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, and open spaces.
- 5.3. This application is deemed an appropriate use of CIL funding, as it meets the guidance of defined infrastructure, that mitigates the impacts of new development and supports the wider community.
- 5.4. This project is identified within the recently revised Place Plan for Whitchurch, as approved by Cabinet on 13/03/24 as a priority B project. A priority B project is defined as necessary to improve areas and in particular to support the growth expectations set out in the current and emerging Local Plans. There is the expectation with priority B projects that the Council may use CIL funding to support these projects.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The approval of funding to support the new leisure facility will support several environmental and ecological outcomes which will help deliver positive climate and carbon reduction benefits. These include:
 - a. The re-use of a 0.25 hectares brown field site.
 - b. **Energy and fuel consumption:** The building will be built to BREAM excellent standard and will be the first 'all electric' leisure facility in Shropshire operating on zero carbon energy. The new centre will also support local access to leisure and fitness facilities, therefore mitigating the need for local people to travel greater distances to both exercise and socialise.
 - c. **Climate Change Adaptation:** The new layout and design will increase the amount of greenspace and increase the amount of flood plain available, helping to reduce climate-related flood risk downstream in the town, and supporting local ecology. The local availability of the centre will help improve the physical and mental wellbeing of residents in Whitchurch in the context of climate-related impacts.
- 6.2 The centre is not expected to have any direct implications for **Renewable Energy Generation** or **Carbon Offsetting** or **Mitigation**.

7. Background

- 7.1. A Shropshire Council flagship initiative to design and build a new swimming pool and fitness centre at Whitchurch, was given full approval at Council in September 2022.

- 7.2. Once costs for the project had been finalised, an Expression Of Interest (EOI) was submitted to IIG for review to seek CIL funding for £980,000, that would be essential to complete the construction phase of the project.
- 7.3. The project was initially reviewed by lead officers across departments, and an initial recommendation to approve was noted. This was then discussed at the formal IIG meeting on the 01/02/24, where the group recommended approval for the application, subject to ensuring that funding was allocated for infrastructure only on the build, and also that cabinet approval is required given the amount of funding sought.
- 7.4. CIL income from new development can be spent on anything that constitutes "infrastructure" as defined by section 216 of the 2008 Planning Act and the CIL Regulations (as amended). This includes but is not limited to roads and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools and other educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, and open spaces. Shropshire Council recognises that infrastructure needs vary from place to place and priorities vary over time in response to different development pressures.
- 7.5. The Whitchurch swimming pool is included as a project within the Infrastructure Funding Statement agreed by Cabinet on 13th December 2023 where potential CIL funding would be directed subject to the Council's approval process. The project has also been included on the recently updated Whitchurch Place Plan approved by Cabinet on 13th March 2024. It is therefore considered this is a suitable project to consider the application of CIL funding. The IIG consideration recognised that this was a priority project for the area, and one which had local member support. There are sufficient CIL local funds available in the Whitchurch Place Plan area to support this project at the scale proposed.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. This report seeks cabinet approval to agree the recommendation of the Council's Internal Infrastructure Group to approve £980,000 of CIL funding towards the design and build of Whitchurch Leisure and Fitness Centre.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: Cllr Gerald Dakin
Cllr Tom Biggins
Cllr Peggy Mullock

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Internal IIG EOI -Whitchurch Pool Nov 2023

Appendix 2 – CIL EOI Decision Report Whitchurch Swimming Pool
