

**RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER**

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

**1.1 Description of decision**

**That the grant of £252,661 from the ECB Transform Fund, to provide enhanced cricket facilities at Wixams Academy School to support greater grassroots participation (specifically female), be accepted. The grant will enable the provision of 4 lane indoor centre/nets with English Cricket Board approved flooring system and lighting to elite levels.**

**2.1 Date of decision**

21 February 2024

**3.1 Reasons for decision**

The project is building on research undertaken from recent Cricket East facilities strategy, where findings suggested more indoor facilities are required due to a significant shortfall of indoor cricket facilities in both Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.

Women and Girls cricket is a target also identified within Cricket East facilities strategy. New/Improved facilities are required to cope with current capacity and future growth of female participation across the two counties.

**4.1 Alternatives considered and rejected**

None

**5.1 How decision is to be funded**


Grant funding from the ECB of £252,661.

**6.1 Conflicts of interest**

| Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest. | Nature of interest | Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation) | Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation). |
|---|--------------------|--|---|
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The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed 

Date: 21 February 2024

Name of Decision Taker: Tom Wootton

**This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.**

Date decision published: .....22February2024.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: .....4March2024.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

**Bedford Borough Council – Executive Decision**

**Date of Meeting: 21 January 2024**

**Report by: Chief Officer Transport, Highways and Engineering**

**Subject: ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT TO PROVIDE ENHANCED CRICKET FACILITIES AT WIXAMS ACADEMY SCHOOL**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Cricket Easts' facilities strategy suggested more indoor cricket facilities are required due to a significant shortfall of indoor cricket facilities in both Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.
- 1.2 Women and Girls cricket is a target also identified within Cricket East facilities strategy. New/Improved indoor facilities are required to cope with current capacity and future growth of female participation across the two counties.
- 1.3 Cricket East and Bedford College Academies Trust are proposing Wixams Academy becomes a cricket participation and pathway hub to encourage more people (and specifically girls) to play cricket.
- 1.4 Bedford Borough Council is currently onsite expanding Wixams Academy with construction work due to be completed in summer 2024.
- 1.5 Cricket East, Wixams Academy and Bedford Borough Council have submitted a joint grant application to the ECB Transform Fund for enhanced indoor cricket facilities to support grassroots cricket in the Borough.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **To accept grant of £252,661 from the ECB Transform Fund to provide 4 lane indoor centre/nets with English Cricket Board approved flooring system and lighting to elite levels.**

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Partnership between Wixams Academy and Cricket East would be hugely beneficial to Wixams and the surrounding area, whilst also benefitting the school and its students. Cricket is a popular sport and ECB are fully supportive of local county boards like Cricket East to promote further growth of the game, particularly across deprived areas and Women and Girls cricket.

3.2 It would provide opportunities for hundreds of local cricketers to consume the game through community initiatives, coach education, disability offers, performance pathways and talent ID with associated increase in revenue generation opportunities for the school through an increase in community usage. The school would also benefit through coaching opportunities for its own students with Cricket East engaging with the school offering a satellite club based at the school throughout the year.

#### **4. THE CURRENT POSITION**

4.1 There is limited rental of current cricket provision at the school with community usage focused on outdoor sports pitches. This is a typical situation across the Borough.

#### **5. DETAILS**

- 5.1 Cricket East is a collaborative organisation responsible for delivering the England & Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) participation & growth activities and supporting recreational cricket as well as the performance pathway programmes (the path from grassroots to international cricket team) across Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire, creating links between schools, clubs, leagues and the community.
- 5.2 Cricket East published their facilities strategy in early 2023 to govern their investment decisions through to 2034. The ECB's strategy 'Inspiring Generations' challenges the game to create environments where the next generation see the sport as "a game for me". The strategy also places considerable weight on supporting existing clubs and organisations whilst recognising the opportunity for growth in urban areas where demand may be greater than the current supply.
- 5.3 The facilities strategy identified a dearth of indoor cricket facilities across Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire, felt more acutely in the women and girls' game. This is primarily due to the lack of a regional base for the performance pathway programme due to no facilities currently meeting elite design specifications meaning girls and women having to travel to multiple sports halls split across various sub-standard locations across both Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.
- 5.4 New/Improved facilities are required to cope with current capacity and future growth of female participation across the two counties covered by Cricket East with continued growth a strategic aim of the facilities strategy.
- 5.5 Wixams had been identified as a prospective area for investment in elite facilities due to its location and transport links. Engagement between Cricket East and Wixams Academy has identified how investment at this location could support key strands of Cricket East's strategic ambitions in the region, with Wixams Academy becoming the 'home' of girls and women's cricket in the region, and present additional external letting (and additional revenue) opportunities for the school through an investment in indoor cricket facilities.
- 5.6 Due to ongoing construction work at Wixams Academy being led by Bedford Borough Council, Willmott Dixon was commissioned to provide feasibility work into the costs of providing ECB compliant elite indoor cricket facilities for the purposes of a grant application to their Transform Fund. This work proposed four lane indoor centre / nets with ECB approved flooring system and lighting to elite levels at a cost of £252,661.

5.7 The grant application was submitted in the Autumn of 2023 and was approved in December 2023. On acceptance of this grant via executive decision this funding will be drawn down from the ECB and added to the current Wixams Academy scheme budget with work anticipated to begin on the indoor cricket facilities in summer 2024 as part of the construction of the new sports hall at the school.

**6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

6.1 None

**7. KEY IMPLICATIONS**

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>7.1 Legal Issues</b>               | Relevant terms and conditions of the grant acceptance to be checked via legal team. No immediate issues identified.  |
| <b>7.2 Policy Issues</b>              | The proposals and recommendations if accepted as set out in this report directly contribute to achieving the Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2022-2026 goals. Specifically, by supporting the cross cutting 'Well-being' theme. Well-being is defined as – 'to support wherever possible measures to improve our residents' health and well-being including activities that help support physical and mental health'.<br><br>The recommendations do not propose any changes to current Council Policies   |
| <b>7.3 Resource Issues</b>            | Cost neutral to the Borough and the current budget for the Wixams Academy project due for completion in September 2024. The scheme budget will increase by the amount of grant on offer and will be reported in the relevant trends report for capital projects on acceptance and receipt of the grant. Would present additional opportunities to the Academy for external lettings due to the elite nature of the facilities. Also provide further opportunities for supplementary bids / grants for similar outdoor cricket provision through the partnership working with Cricket East. |
| <b>7.4 Risks</b>                      | Risk to current construction programme for usage from September 2024 – construction and project management team have factored the inclusion of the enhanced indoor cricket facilities into the overarching programme with work to commence in March on agreement and receipt of the grant funding. Risk is therefore considered low.   |
| <b>7.5 Environmental Implications</b> | All schools within the Boroughs capital programme are designed and built to be zero carbon in operation and this additional cricket facilities comply with this design guidance.   |
| <b>7.6 Equalities Impact</b>          | The Council has considered whether this report has any equalities impact and determined that the activity will directly advance equality of opportunity particularly across deprived areas and Women and Girls cricket. therefore, an equality analysis is not needed.   |
| <b>7.7 Impact on Families</b>         | Greater opportunities for access to sport and play for local families  |

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| <b>7.8 Community Safety and Resilience</b> | Community safety will be considered in the delivery of services and facility development through facility design and enhancing neighbourhoods.  |
| <b>7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing</b>  | Positive impact with increased and enhanced community sports facilities. This facility will directly contribute to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2027 long-term ambition for Bedford Borough to be a place where everyone is able to be physically active. |

**8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME**

**8.1 The following Council units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:**

Jane Walker – Portfolio Holder for Childrens

Chief Officer – Finance

Chief Officer – Legal

Chief Officer – Environment

Chief Officer – Public Health

**9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS**

9.1 Ward Councillors, Graeme Coombes, Andrea Spice and Marc Frost, are supportive of the proposal. The need to consider traffic and parking issues in the area has been identified and will be considered by Officers in liaison with the Academy.

**10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES**

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|---------------------------|--|
| Report Contact Officer    | Matthew D'Archambaud<br>Chief Officer: Transport, Highways and Engineering |
| File Reference            | N/A  |
| Previous Relevant Minutes | N/A  |
| Background Papers         | None   |
| Appendices                | <i>None</i>  |