

CABINET

DATE	5 th April 2023
REPORT OF	Cllr Tom Furneaux, Portfolio Holder Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Carolina Borgstrom, Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure
SUBJECT	PlayZone Funding
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 04/23/01

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The development of PlayZone facilities will contribute to priorities across the Council's Outcomes Framework supporting the delivery of 'Stronger Economy' and 'Stronger Communities'. The specific focus on securing grant funding to invest in quality small-sided multi-sport facilities will support residents to become more active, develop high quality environments, promote good health and wellbeing, enhance community interaction and support deliver better quality lives.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the opportunity to apply for grant funding to the Football Foundation (FF) to secure investment to construct several PlayZone small-sided multi-sport pitches across North East Lincolnshire.

The report seeks Cabinet approval to apply for grant funding using up to £94,000 of Council investment as match funding for the bid application, and if successful, proceed with all necessary construction and operator procurement activity to deliver PlayZone sites, with initial focus on sites in the East Marsh and Immingham.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approves the submission of a grant funding application to the Football Foundation to develop Play Zone sites in North East Lincolnshire, with an indication of a commitment of up to £94,000 of Council investment as match funding in the worst case scenario, to underwrite commitments from proposed operators, for the bid application in the event of failure and subject to a successful grant application.
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy to commence a procurement exercise to engage a contractor to deliver the PlayZone sites and thereafter award, mobilise and implement such proposal with further authority to take all reasonable ancillary actions to ensure implementation.
3. Delegates authority to the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy to procure and thereafter award to and appoint operators to carry out

the day-to-day management of PlayZone sites with further authority to take all reasonable ancillary actions to ensure implementation.

4. Authorises the Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to execute and complete all requisite legal documentation in relation to the matters outlined above.

REASONS FOR DECISION

To enable the Council to submit a grant application to the Football Foundation to secure external funding and subject to the application being successful, implement an operator model for the delivery of PlayZone sites.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 In March 2022, the Football Foundation (FF) launched a new capital investment programme supported by the Premier League, Football Association and Sport England under the brand of PlayZones. The PlayZones programme aims to engage with local communities across the country to create outstanding sports and activity spaces and tackle inequalities in participation.

- 1.2 The funding targets investment and resource into communities with the greatest need to deliver new or refurbished outdoor small-sided pitches designed for football and other sports and activities that will allow priority groups to be more active (see Appendix 1). The FF funding for PlayZone facilities focuses on the following priority groups:

- Lower socio-economic groups
- Women & girls
- Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions
- Ethnically diverse communities

Therefore, site identification and the funding application need to align to these criteria to increase the likelihood of a successful grant award.

- 1.3 Since April 2022, Officers have engaged closely with the FF to discuss the potential for investment and complete the initial stages of PlayZone project development. There is an opportunity to work with the FF and operating partners to invest in and radically improve the quality of the small-sided multi-sport pitches across the borough.
- 1.4 The project has followed a four-stage application process set out by the FF, these stages and progress to date are set out below.

Stage 1 – Expression of interest:

A local consortium was formed to inform PlayZone application development, led by the Council with wider stakeholder representation from Lincs Inspire Limited (LIL), Grimsby Town Sports and Education Trust (GTSET), Lincolnshire FA and Active Humber. An expression of interest was developed and submitted to the FF in June 2022 setting out the priority places and groups for PlayZones in North East Lincolnshire requesting approval to develop a full application.

Stage 2 – Narrowing the focus & community engagement:

In July 2022, Officers received confirmation from the FF that the Council had

been successful with the expression of interest. The narrowing the focus and community engagement stage was progressed that included discussions with local community groups and organisations, focus group conversations and individual surveys. In total there have been 128 survey responses and 57 participants in focus groups to inform PlayZone site development.

Stage 3 – Community engagement findings & site identification:

The findings from community engagement have been assessed to support inform PlayZone development and in addition, factors such as location, operating partners and access to partner match funding has been considered. At this stage, submitting a funding application to develop PlayZone sites on existing courts at Kent Street and Grant Thorold Park in the East Marsh and a potential new site in Immingham are identified as the initial priority areas for the borough.

Stage 4 – Full application development:

Officers continue work in the background to develop the full funding application subject to Cabinet approval, with two submission windows identified by the FF this year, in mid-April 2023 and September 2023.

- 1.5 The PlayZone programme requires partnership funding, the FF provide 75% grant funding, therefore a match funding contribution of 25% of the total capital cost across a portfolio of facilities is required. It is proposed that across North East Lincolnshire PlayZone funding application, up to £94,000 of Council investment is allocated as match funding to support the grant application.
- 1.6 If successful, the PlayZone grant funding would cover the investment into new or refurbished outdoor small-sided pitches, with works that include pitch surfaces, flood lighting, fencing, smart access control, storage, equipment, and improvements to walkways to sites (see Appendix 1 for more detail).
- 1.7 If successful in securing grant funding from the FF, each PlayZone development would then be progressed on a site-by-site basis. This is due to each site having different requirements based on local need and the importance of future site activation, programming, operation, and maintenance being taken on by an appropriate partner organisation.
- 1.8 The Council has a role to support and enable grant funding and will identify operating partners in line with procurement process and existing leisure contract requirements to operate individual PlayZone sites. The core advantage of the approach to local operating partners include:
 - Site activation & programming – the operator will manage site bookings and programming of the site, with focus on FF priority groups.
 - Repair, maintenance & utilities – the operator can reinvest site booking income back into court maintenance and cover ongoing expenditure.
 - Community based – the vision is for operators to be local to the place, creating community facilities that support residents be more active.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 The application for grant funding to the FF provides an opportunity to secure external investment into the borough.

- 2.2 The grant investment will place an obligation on the organisation accepting the funding to maintain the courts and the appointment of an operator that develops a sustainable model with appropriate fees and charges to fund future repairs and maintenance will be key. To mitigate this risk, PlayZones will be developed on a site-by-site basis once a sustainable operating model has been identified.
- 2.3 The Council is working to identify operating partners that will contribute to the requirement of the 25% match funding, this is to support the Council investment of £94,000. If partners cannot support in the contribution to match funding, then this may reduce the number of PlayZone sites brought forward for development.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative is to do nothing, there are a range of existing small-sided multi-sport courts across the borough that are in a poor condition and based on existing budget, without external grant funding, current conditions are likely to remain or deteriorate further.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. There is the potential for both positive and negative reputational implications for the Council if successful in applying for grant funding, as this would bring improvements to small-sided sports and recreation facilities, and the refurbishment of existing sites or the development of new builds would be seen as a positive. However, there may be concerns raised by stakeholders and residents in wards where facilities are not delivered. The identification of priority places for PlayZones has followed a robust process informed by stakeholder input and community engagement.
- 4.2. It is important to highlight that there have been ongoing concerns raised by residents around the condition of small-sided sports facilities and anti-social behaviour with particular focus drawn out via the community engagement process. Securing external grant funding to develop PlayZones can support in addressing these challenges.
- 4.3. To support in positive delivery, an action plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service, covering communications requirements and channels to be used.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. The total value of the funding application to the FF is for grant funding of approx. £563,000 to support the development of PlayZone sites.
- 5.2. The cost of each PlayZone will be dependent on various factors including site conditions and design requirements. At this stage the guidance from the FF is that a newbuild PlayZone facility will cost approx. £240,000, with lower costs for refurbishing existing spaces at approx. £190,000. If successful in securing grant funding, the cost for individual sites will be developed on a site-by-site basis and where detailed cost estimates escalate beyond the grant funding allocated, then sites will not be progressed due to lack of affordability.

- 5.3. The grant investment will place an obligation on the organisation accepting the funding to maintain the courts and the appointment of an operator that develops a sustainable model with appropriate fees and charges to fund future repairs and maintenance will be key.
- 5.4. It is important to note that if the grant were unsuccessful then the scheme would not be able to progress.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

If successful, the grant investment and subsequent development of PlayZone facilities will improve opportunities for active wellbeing across the population. This will include improving sporting opportunities for children and young people across multi-use facilities, many of whom may have no or limited access to such facilities of any quality and appropriate sessions. The FF is focused on operators introducing programmes that cover all ages and standards of players, making PlayZone facilities accessible for all with areas where deprivation is impacting upon young peoples' activity levels.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

If successful, the grant investment and subsequent development of PlayZone facilities will consider environmental implications and opportunities to ensure sustainability and low carbon initiatives are incorporated at every opportunity. This will include contributing to priorities such as developing active environments and promoting active travel to facilities. Sustainable design will be considered throughout the development of PlayZones with energy efficient flood lighting solutions.

8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

At the time of preparing this report, the matter is due to be considered by formal Tourism and Visitor Economy scrutiny panel on 16th March 2023.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The submission of the grant funding bid effectively commits the Council to up to £94,000 of investment which would be used as match funding alongside other partner contributions. Capital financing costs associated with borrowing would be spread over the useful life of the assets and are estimated to be in the region of £13,000 per annum.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The procurement of a contractor to deliver the proposed PlayZone sites, and thereafter an operator, is consistent with the stated aims and objectives of the Council underpinning its strategic objectives of Stronger Economy, Stronger Communities
- 10.2. The procurement exercises will be conducted so as to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and

supported by relevant officers.

10.3. The delegations sought are consistent with an exercise of this nature.

10.4. Officers should note that an award constitutes a further decision and will be subject to completion of an Officer Decision Record. Where key decision criteria are met such Officer Decision Record will be subject to call in. Award and implementation timelines should accommodate this.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct HR implications.

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

If successful, the grant funding would have an impact on sports and recreation facility development and operation across multiple wards, with initial priority sites in the East Marsh and Immingham.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Not applicable.

14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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ECONOMY

Appendix 1 – PlayZone Design Guidance Highlights

PlayZones are safe, inclusive, and accessible outdoor facilities that bring communities together through recreational forms of football and a range of other sports and physical activities.

PlayZones provide an inspiring and inclusive space for the community to gather, play sport and be active. The spaces need to be inspiring, accessible, engaging and welcoming for all priority groups. As such PlayZones have been designed to be attractive, modern, and safe spaces that communities want to use, with branding and colour schemes to support that. The design below has been produced for illustrative purposes only, and further detail on site branding, signage etc. will be shared with applicants:



Some core points to note on PlayZone design and what the grant funding covers:

- Bookings / Programme – FF research tells us that PlayZones must be bookable if we are to reach our priority groups. Whilst some groups will feel comfortable and able to turn up and play, others need to know that the space can be booked on a day and time that best meets their needs. There can be an element of open access, but a combination is required. The research from the FF also found that activation of the space is as important as the facility itself. Each PlayZone therefore requires a site activation plan that includes programmed delivery of activities on a weekly basis.
- Smart Access – To ensure PlayZones are developed with an access arrangement that delivers on what the FF research tells us, the FF are currently exploring smart

access technology solutions that would support with booking, access, and the management of PlayZones.

- **Size** – All PlayZones have been designed with 30m x 20m pitch dimensions and are based on a new build facility. If a PlayZone is being developed as a refurbishment of an existing space or if the space available for a new build PlayZone doesn't allow for a 30m x 20m pitch dimensions, the design consultants will try to create a design that is as close to the new build dimensions, pitch markings etc. as possible.
- **Fencing** – For both site security and ball flight / retention purposes, all PlayZones should be fenced in high quality, robust steel fencing that will last long into the future. The fence height requirements are set out in each design and differ between 3 – 4 metres dependent upon the sports being played, and the positioning behind goals, hoops etc.
- **Surface Type** – Community engagement is critical to the identification of the right location and design, ensuring that surface type works for the sports and activities identified by the local community. The type of sports being played on a PlayZone will determine the type of sports surface will be installed. Set out in the table below are the FF agreed surface combinations:

Design	Surface Type
Football only	3G non infill synthetic turf
Football & Rugby	3G non infill synthetic turf
Football & Cricket	2G sand dressed synthetic turf
Football & Hockey	2G sand dressed synthetic turf
Football & Netball	2G sand dressed synthetic turf
Football & Basketball	Type 4 polymeric surface

- **Floodlights** – Good quality lighting is essential to making PlayZones safe, allowing a variety of sports to be played and encouraging access in the evenings, all year round.
- **Equipment** – Where possible, PlayZone designs have accounted for sports fixtures being built into the fencing e.g., goalposts, basketball & netball hoops, and fixed fence cricket wickets. Where that is not possible e.g., the cricket wickets needed to activate the centre strip, or more ad-hoc loose equipment, each PlayZone has been designed with a built-in storage solution where such equipment can be held securely.