

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

6th May 2025

Report Title: Football Foundation Home Advantage Programme

Submitted by: Service Director - Commercial Delivery

Portfolios: Leisure Culture and Heritage

Ward(s) affected: Cross Heath, Crackley & Redstreet, Kidsgrove & Ravenscliffe

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
The report provides Cabinet with the details of the Football Foundation's Home Advantage Programme and seeks approval to enter into a funding agreement to improve local football facilities that the Football Foundation select.			
<u>Recommendation</u> That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorises the Deputy Chief Executive in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage to develop detailed grant applications with the relevant football clubs for funding via The Football Foundation Home Advantage Programme and enter into any funding agreements as necessary. • Approves the procurement of suitable contractors to carry out the improvements to those sites selected by the Football Foundation once detailed specifications have been developed within available grant funding limits. • To authorise the above mentioned officers to ensure any agreements are fulfilled, enter into suitable contracts to deliver the improvements and to ensure any necessary leases are completed. 			
<u>Reasons</u> It is appropriate that the Council works with local groups and funding agencies to support the growth of local sports. The improvements to the outlined football facilities have been developed in partnership with the Football Foundation, Staffordshire Football Association, Newcastle Town Football Club, Kidsgrove Lads and Dads, and Chesterton Football Club. These projects seek to make vital improvements to each site, enhance and protect the quality of outdoor sports facilities in the Borough, and aims to maximise external funding opportunities without the need for match funding form the Council. Expressions of Interest			

have been submitted, and the outcome of these bids is due shortly from the Football Foundation.

1. Background

- 1.1** The Council is seeking to secure external investments improvements to a number of outdoor football facilities across the Borough through the Football Foundation's Home Advantage Programme.
- 1.2** The key aim of the Football Foundations Home Advantage Programme is to encourage accredited football clubs to secure a long-term lease (for a minimum period of twenty five years), for outdoor grass football pitches and support their long term sustainability.

2. Issues

- 2.1** Following consultation with Staffordshire Football Association, Newcastle Town Football Club and Kidsgrove Lads and Dads, in January 2025 expressions of interest were submitted to improve the sites they use at the Whammy, Birchenwood, and Chesterton Football club. Depending on the needs/aspirations of the football club the expressions of interest focused on site improvements in the following areas; site security, changing facilities, pavilion/club house plus project development costs.
- 2.2** The Football Foundation is due to announce which sites have been successful for the programme, these may include The Whammy, Birchenwood and Chesterton Football clubs. Should any of these sites be successful the Council will work with the clubs to develop each project with Football Foundation support through webinars, workshops and learning tools. Pre-application grant support will also be provided by the local CFA and Football Foundation Delivery Manager.
- 2.3** The grant application consists of a number steps and each step must be completed before the next one can start:
 - a) submit the project development cost application;
 - b) submit a grass pitch maintenance fund application;
 - c) agree the heads of terms;
 - d) submit a home advantage programme capital grant application;
 - e) agree the lease between the Council and the football club, league or charity;
 - f) claim the home advantage programme capital grant.
- 2.4** Taking the above point into account, it is the Football Foundation's preference that all projects can commence on site over the Spring and Summer of 2026.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1** That Cabinet authorises the Deputy Chief Executive in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage to develop detailed grant applications with the relevant football clubs for funding via The Football Foundation Home Advantage Programme and enter into any funding agreements as necessary.

- 3.2 Approve the procurement of suitable contractors to carry out the improvements to those sites selected by the Football Foundation once detailed specifications have been developed within available grant funding limits.
- 3.3 To authorise officers to ensure any agreements are fulfilled, enter into suitable contracts to deliver the improvements and the ensure any necessary leases are completed.

4. Reasons

- 4.1 The improvements to the football facilities have been developed in partnership with the Football Foundation, Staffordshire Football Association, Newcastle Town Football Club, Kidsgrove Lads and Dads, and Chesterton Football Club. These projects seek to make vital improvements to each site, enhance and protect the quality of outdoor sports facilities in the Borough, and aims to maximise external funding opportunities without the need for match funding from the Council.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 At this moment in time, no other options are available to the Council, that will both deliver significant investment onto outdoor football pitches whilst at the same time encouraging accredited football clubs to take on a long-term lease for their individual site. The Council's policy supports the use of long-term leases and therefore this approach is suitable.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 The Council will have to enter into funding agreements with the Football Foundation to secure the grant funding.
- 6.2 A key condition of the grant funding will be that the Council will have to enter a twenty-five-year lease with each of the football clubs.
- 6.3 The procurement of contractors/specialist advisors to deliver the project will be compliant with the Procurement Act 2023 Public Contracts Regulations 2024 .

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 This funding application will improve outdoor football facilities and accessibility to the sites, increasing their appeal to residents, and helping to support their long their long-term sustainability. There are no specific equality impacts as the sport seeks to support all to participate.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 The Home Advantage programme allows the Council to apply for up to £250,000 per project for the football club, charity, or league (inclusive of £25,000 project development costs), plus up to an additional £25,000 for the Council to support the completion of leases and project development costs.

8.2 The Football Foundation Home Advantage Programme does not require any match funding from the Council. The Council will however need to pay for the works then reclaim the money from the Football Foundation.

8.3 All projects will be managed within the maximum available funding per project which is up to £250,000.

9. **Major Risks & Mitigation**

9.1 There are several risks with projects of this nature, and these will be proactively managed through small working groups including Council officers, Staffordshire Football Association, the Football Foundation, and Newcastle Town Football Club, Kidsgrove Lads and Dad's, and Chesterton football Club.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 This project focus on



11. **One Council**

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

The grant funded programme supports local clubs to manage their sites better and become more sustainable in the long term. It is in the Council's interest to ensure that sports clubs are sustainable.

One Digital Council ☒

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Green Council ☒

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.

12. **Key Decision Information**

- 12.1 The total value of the grants available to the Council are up to £250,000 per project plus and additional £25,000 to the Council to support the completion of leases and project development costs.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 13.1 None

14. **List of Appendices**

- 14.1 None

15. **Background Papers**

- 15.1 None