

REPORT TO: Grants Advisory Committee

31 March 2023

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Cllr John Williams

LEAD OFFICER: Jeff Membery

Update for Dual Use Leisure Facility Grant Funding for 2022

Executive Summary

1. Grants Advisory Committee (GAC) agreed at committee in May 2021 to allocate £50,000 from the Central Government Covid funds to provide some financial support to the Dual Use Leisure Facilities across the District which had remained largely closed throughout the Covid pandemic and the months that followed.
2. This report provides GAC with an update from each centre as to how these funds were spent and the outcomes for each of the centres.

Key Decision

3. No. This report provides information only.

Recommendations

4. Members of the Grants Advisory Committee are asked to note the content of the report and offer comments and/or make recommendations to the Lead Member for Resources as appropriate.

Details

5. Grants Advisory Committee (GAC) met on 28 May 2021 to recommend to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance the criteria and evaluation methodology for applicants to the one-off Dual Use Leisure Facility Grant Funding.
6. A sum of £50,000 was allocated by the Council for Health and Wellbeing from within the Central Government funding for Local Authorities with the purpose of mitigating the impacts of Covid-19.

7. Each of the Centres provides residents with access to the Exercise Referral Scheme and Active and Healthy 4 Life (A&H4L) programme. Following Covid, and centre closures, membership had declined sharply, most likely due to the demographic of people eligible for this scheme and the impact on them of the Covid pandemic.
8. It was proposed that the most effective use of this funding would be to help improve the leisure facility offer with the aim of encouraging the return of existing facility members and attracting new membership, thereby promoting exercise, health and wellbeing post-Covid. The centres had largely remained closed throughout the pandemic and the months immediately following the pandemic.
9. It was anticipated that a small investment into the décor and the introduction of updated equipment and / or facility hire would help to encourage the return of members, provide an attractive offer for new members and help breathe new life into these facilities.
10. It was recommended and agreed that the grants be assessed by officers and signed off by the Lead Member for Finance (Resources). 11 dual use centres were eligible for the scheme of which 7 applied for funding.
11. The funding has largely been spent or allocated for spending and we are now seeing a marked increase in membership referrals. Membership levels have not yet returned to the same heights as before the pandemic but they are now much closer. All centres are experiencing difficulty in attracting new instructors.

Sports Centre & Grant awarded	Proposals for Grant Funding	Actual outputs / outcomes of funding March 2023
Melbourn £8,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds to be used for: refurbish 1 x treadmill • purchase 2 new treadmills • repairs to the trampolines • repairs to the fitness suite floor 	2 treadmills were purchased, and one was refurbished. Used the flooring funds more efficiently by giving the floor a deep clean to achieve the same safety aim. Instead purchased an exercise bike. Trampolines were repaired as planned. The A&H4LScheme has returned. It has taken longer due to loss of 2 key instructors last year. In the process of training another instructor to take on more patients.
Swavesey £14,100.00	Demonstrated clear plans to innovate and promote, including introducing chair-based exercise programmes and Nordic walking, offering a diverse range of activities inside and out.	Been creative with the funding to refurbish/replace gym equipment. Lack of interest in Nordic walking so delayed ordering equipment; established other activity interest instead. Additional purchase of laptop to use for A&H4L. Delays to Astro-turf completed Feb 2023, funds held to buy outdoor gym stations as planned - £7,615.99
Gamlingay £7,454.00	A group of community activists set up a charity to retain the community gym in 2021. New equipment was needed to replace the old. Update décor of gym. Agree a lease arrangement for equipment for 2 years to assist with Exercise Referral Scheme.	The charity has been set up and Gamlingay Leisure re-opened its doors on 25 June 2022. The ability to lease equipment was not possible with charity status. Instead have now embarked on a program of buying newly refurbished equipment, in line with a policy of purchasing sustainably. The whole indoor area has had a complete refresh and deep clean. The exercise referral scheme was re-

		established in September 2022 with a temporary instructor while the main instructor completed the qualification. The scheme is now in full swing, with 16 members inducted.
Impington £8,589.63	To develop the Exercise Referral Scheme as well as attract new non-exercising members to the sports centre. The funding would be used to purchase equipment that can be used for the GP referral scheme but also bolster their current offering to gym members and users and included a variety of gym equipment.	Studio equipment was purchased in October 2021. The A&H4L scheme restarted August 2022 with opportunity to use the new studio equipment alongside the gym, with other member classes following January 2023 making membership more attractive, along with new membership packages.
Sawston £5,817.80	To purchase a new 'Stairmaster' for the gym, along with key equipment/kit for A&H4L patients and to train an additional instructor for exercise referral. The centre is working closely with the Council in piloting a modified Exercise Referral Scheme with clear plans to promote the scheme and innovative ideas to extend current offer.	The 'Stairmaster' has given an extra option to the rower or cross trainer. The other equipment has added to the professional experience for patients on the A&H4L scheme. The scheme is running with one qualified A&H4L instructor (all Centres are experiencing difficulty in attracting new instructors).
Linton £3,372.00	To increase activities and promote the exercise on referral scheme by investing in the training of 2 new members of staff and numerous items of low cost equipment.	Staff training was organised for a member of staff (with restructuring making it unsuitable to send another). In agreement with the funding provider, the remaining money was invested into new dumbbells for the fitness suite. All other equipment was purchased and used to help retain existing / attract new members in addition to preparing for the exercise referral patients.
Bottisham £2,666.57	To re-introduce Exercise on Referral to encourage new clients from the community. And to promote services, including case studies of success stories. The centre plans to extend its operating hours and the application included the training of 2 new members of staff and equipment.	The funding has enabled the centre to purchase new equipment which will be used in the Exercise Referral sessions and to train a member of staff as a Level 2 Gym Instructor and Exercise Referral Instructor. Due to staffing shortages the Sports Centre was closed for a period from October 2021 – January 2022 followed by a period of rebuilding the centre, restarting activities and training new staff. This unfortunately delayed the start of the Exercise Referral Scheme, however a member of staff has now almost completed their training and the scheme will be starting within few months.

12. Summary of Benefits reported by dual use leisure facilities.

- Funding has enabled centres to increase activities since Covid.
- Under difficult circumstances, they are pleased to still provide a varied programme of activities to all ages and abilities, and are committed to building on this in the future.
- Since the pandemic, membership has been increasing but growth has been particularly strong in the last 6 months.
- Active & Healthy 4 Life Exercise Referral scheme is being re-established in all centres, and strong links are being made with local Primary Care Networks/Health Professionals.
- New instructors are being trained in Level 3 Exercise Referral, this does take time and slowly the centres are seeing the benefits.
- New equipment is offering a wider variety of exercises within both a gym environment and outdoors, making it more attractive for Exercise Referral patients and new/existing members.
- Without this funding the centres would not have been financially able to do this themselves and hugely appreciate the support from South Cambridgeshire District Council.

13. Issues

- All centres have found it a challenge to recruit staff, from lifeguards through to duty managers. In addition, some long-term Exercise Referral instructors have left leaving a gap across the district in qualified instructors.
- The maintenance costs required for the upkeep of swimming pools is proving to be an ongoing issue for centres, firstly as a result of long closures throughout the pandemic and now compounded by high energy costs.

Report Author:

Lesley McFarlane. Development Officer, Health Specialist

Lesley.mcfarlane@scams.gov.uk

Telephone: (01954) 713443