



PART B:	RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL
REPORT TO:	POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE:	16 JUNE 2022
REPORT OF THE:	PROGRAMME DIRECTOR – PLACE AND RESOURCES PHILLIP SPURR
TITLE OF REPORT:	NORTON COLLEGE ASTRO-TURF REPLACEMENT FUNDING REQUEST
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report is to consider the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding of up to £108,000 towards the total project cost of replacing the astro-turf pitch at Norton College.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Policy and Resources Committee:

- (i) Advises Council whether funding of 90% towards the estimated total project cost for the replacement astro-turf pitch at Norton College up to a maximum of £108,000 should be provided;
- (ii) The provision of any grant is subject to 10% match funding from the College, a robust procurement process being undertaken by the College, the provision of a community use plan, and completion within 2022/23; and
- (iii) Agreement of any procurement process and community use plan is delegated to the Programme Director for Place and Resources in consultation with the S151 Officer and the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Supporting the recommendation set out above would provide Norton College with the facility they need and would allow for community use of a facility otherwise not currently within the town for local residents.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 Price fluctuations and increasing costs are a feature of many schemes at this time and this project will be no exception. It is proposed that any additional costs incurred or an increase in prices should be a risk borne by Norton College should RDC grant assistance be provided.
- 4.2 Supporting individual requests for funding may mean an increase in requests from other organisations and groups from across Ryedale looking to secure CIL funding. This represents a further risk that Members and Officers could be overwhelmed by requests and as there are currently no strategic plans in place to direct usage of these funds, decisions on any future requests would need to be made on a case by case basis. It is the view of Officers that there is currently insufficient time and capacity within the Authority at this time to prepare a policy for use of CIL funds.
- 4.3 If the available CIL monies are not utilised and allocated to existing schemes, at this time Officers are unsure on remaining CIL funds will be utilised within the new North Yorkshire Council. Funds may be ring-fenced for the area in which they were collected, or they could be collated into a single central pot for use across the new Council area.
- 4.4 Should funding not be allocated to Norton College, it is possible that of the remaining options, there will be no astro-turf facility. Other options include doing nothing, removal and changing of the sand on the surface at a cost of c£30-40,000 providing a further 2 years usage, or securing the future of an astro-turf facility through a potentially costly lease agreement.
- 4.5 Norton College operates as an academy overseen by a trust (Evolution Schools Learning Trust) and is the only college within the Trust. As an academy the College is outside of Local Authority control and has greater freedom than state schools over various aspects of its operation including its finances.
- 4.6 Funding for this scheme is not on RDC's Forward Plan for 2022/23. As this is a request for in excess of £100,000 of revenue funding, it is likely to require approval from North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) as part of the Section 24 process under Local Government Reorganisation. Exact details of this process are still to be determined.

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Current school based leisure provision in Ryedale is through the Northern Ryedale Sports Centre at Lady Lumley's School in Pickering where RDC holds a Joint Use Agreement for use of the facilities by Everyone Active outside of school hours, and an annual grant to support the operation of Malton Community Sports Centre at Malton School, which outside of school hours and usage is also available for community use.
- 5.2 The Ryedale Sport and Active Lives Strategy 2013 – 2023 has a vision for 'everyone in Ryedale to enjoy an active, adventurous, and healthy lifestyle as an integral part of everyday life, encouraging more people, to become more active, more often'. The Strategy aims for more people to be taking part in sport and active recreation and whilst not specifically identifying school based leisure provision directly, it does identify a number of ways of supporting this aim including continuing grant support for

other third party sport and leisure facilities in Ryedale, namely Helmsley Outdoor Pool and Malton Community Sports Centre (MCSC), and supporting improvements to village halls/voluntary clubs infrastructure, play areas through Section 106 / CIL applications.

- 5.3 The Ryedale District Council Plan references healthy lives, sport and leisure and recreation in the following way:

‘Our Communities: Strong, Inclusive and Attractive’ states ‘we will promote health and wellbeing for all by offering leisure facilities and access to physical activity. We will work with our leisure provider and other partners to expand access to these opportunities and identify funding streams that will support our aims’.

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

- 6.1 A direct written approach was made to the Policy and Resources Committee of Ryedale District Council (RDC) by Norton College making a formal request via the letter to seek CIL funding to support the refurbishment of the astro-turf pitch at the College for use by both the students and as a community facility.
- 6.2 The letter of application was also sent to Norton East and Norton West RDC Elected Members.
- 6.3 Norton College currently has on site two full sized grass pitches which in the summer is converted to an athletics track and cricket pitch, a smaller area used for hockey, and an astro-turf pitch, however this is not currently in use. The astro-turf pitch was installed in 2008 and through regular usage by the school and external users over 12 years it had become worn out. Use of the facility for football and hockey was suspended on the advice of the College’s insurers in February 2020. It remains in an unusable condition and the facility is out of bounds to both school PE groups as well as external users.
- 6.4 Images of the current pitch provided by Norton College show that whilst the fencing around the pitch is in good condition, there is severe wear on the facility, with a worn carpet surface, and drainage issues when the weather is poor and as a consequence the pitch is contaminated with dirt, silt and moss. This is confirmed by a pitch condition survey undertaken by Notts Sport for the College.
- 6.5 In December 2021 Notts Sport also provided the College with an estimated cost for a replacement facility to address the issues found with the original pitch including the construction of the base and drainage issues, in addition to the replacement of the synthetic surface. It should be noted the funding requested is for a new surface only and not a new base – this would have an additional cost attached. As an estimate, no specific specification has been developed at this time. The site has existing floodlights and these, like the fencing, are not included for repair or replacement within the estimate provided. It is this estimate from Notts Sport that forms that basis of the College’s ask for financial support.
- 6.6 Over the last 12 years the facility was maintained in-house by the College until a point in time when the condition became unserviceable. In 2017 Norton College commissioned a specialist company to undertake a facelift of the surface and this

extended the life for a further year. It was then around this time that the facility was deemed unusable.

6.7 Without a usable astro-turf pitch the College is unable to fully develop its sports offer to deliver the curriculum, and extracurricular activities are also impacted. Examples of this provided by the College include:

- Hockey (unless on grass which significantly restricts development) or tennis cannot be offered in either curriculum or extra-curricular time;
- Netball has to be taught inside in the sports hall which means a class of 28 would share one court. During games therefore 50% of the class would be 'waiting' for their turn. On the astro-turf, they could have 2-3 courts. This would increase opportunities in both lesson times and extra-curricular clubs;
- A reduction in standard of assessment levels is being noticed – some students are competent players who would gain higher grades if the College could access the curriculum more sufficiently (tennis in particular, but hockey and netball are also impacted);
- The College's sports teams are suffering from poor performances and missed opportunities to participate. As all schools play on astro-turf Norton College therefore no longer attend hockey inter-school and regional fixtures - teams become demoralised as they cannot compete on an unfamiliar surface. Previously the College had hockey teams at all age groups and tennis teams for U13's and U15's – these now do not exist.
- Delivery of some specific courses has also been impacted. In particular Level 3 BTEC Sports Practical Performance where the opportunity to include hockey as a sport has had to be substituted for football which does not suit all students.
- Having to relocate sports from outside into the sports hall has a knock-on effect in reducing the opportunity for other sports such as gymnastics to be taking place inside.

6.8 Through the installation of a new astro-turf facility, the College has identified the following additional uses for the facility beyond being used to deliver the curriculum as it currently takes place:

- Re-introducing hockey and tennis to the curriculum as a school sport;
- Hockey teams being entered into local festivals and competitions;
- Netball outside (with more courts for continuous practice and more time to develop);
- More recreational sport taking place;
- Relieve pressure on the sports hall by moving more sports outside, so increasing time for badminton, basketball, gymnastics or other indoor sport
- The opportunity to bring alternate games back for Year 10 sports rotation (futsal, handball, tchoukball, ultimate frisbee etc);
- The facility will provide a space to play outdoors in all-weather when the grass is too wet or frozen but the weather is fine. Currently this scenario results in two PE groups pairing up, and ultimately means that the planned curriculum lesson is collapsed or significantly adapted; and
- The College would also be able to reinstate its links with primary schools through football, hockey and tennis festivals.

6.9 College staff feel that replacing the astro-turf pitch and making this facility available for all students once again will see improved assessment grades, an improved

involvement in physical activity time, improved team performances, extra-curricular provision strengthened and broadened, 6th Form options extended in curriculum and during enrichment, greater practical sport options for Cambridge National and BTEC courses at Year 10 to Year 13, and it will help to secure the future of PE as a viable A Level subject at the College. With future Post-16 educational reforms, Norton College will have to offer A Level PE as BTEC's (currently offered) will be discontinued. From 2023/24 the College will therefore need a higher level facilities such as an astro-turf pitch.

- 6.10 Norton College has stated a commitment to making this facility available to the public outside of school hours. The College has indicated that a 'reasonable charge' would be made for external usage which would be used to cover maintenance, energy costs for the existing floodlights, administration and staffing for the supervision of the facility. It is however noted that any additional staffing costs are likely to be minimal as the College already have some facilities, which are staffed and open on an evening and at weekends. An electronic booking system is already place and this can be adapted to suit changing needs.
- 6.11 Norton College anticipate the facility to be open to the community for use during the same times as the existing fitness suite – currently weekday evenings 4.30pm - 9.30pm and weekends 7.30am - 12.30pm. The College anticipates that weekend opening could be extended beyond the current fitness suite in line with demand. Similarly to the usage expected by the College, community usage is envisaged to be mainly around football, tennis, hockey and netball. Any RDC financial support would be subject to putting in place a community use agreement with the College to ensure that out of hours use of the facility is maximised.
- 6.12 Currently Norton residents must travel around 2 miles (the equivalent to a 40 minute walk) to the Malton Community Sports Centre which is the closest similar facility. Should a facility be made available in Norton, residents will be within a radius of an approximately 15 minute walk. There is also currently a significant housing development planned for Norton with the potential for around 700 new homes. This facility would be a great asset to both existing and new residents.
- 6.13 Norton College have stated that they wish these facilities to be fully inclusive and to support the entire community in accessing facilities at the site. College Trustees like to see the site in use after hours and feel this brings so many benefits, be it income generation to maintain facilities for all; security of the site whilst in use; providing employment opportunities; or simply just to improve community perception of the College as a truly integral part of the community. Whilst the College has not generated an independent evidence base to support this request, their understanding is that the town is growing, and the sports and fitness facilities will become stretched as demand increases. The facility at Malton Community Sports Centre is viewed as being football-focussed and in demand, however Norton College feel that the astro-turf would not only give extra access for football, but also additional options for hockey, netball and tennis.
- 6.14 A recent estimate received by Norton College to install a replacement astro-turf pitch indicates an estimated cost of £120,000. There are however limitations to this estimate that should be considered. As a budget estimate, it has been provided to give an indication of scale of likely potential costs but given the current climate there is significant potential for an increase in costs and variations in the availability of the required materials. Additionally, the estimate has been provided by Notts Sport Limited – they would not deliver the scheme directly but would project manage the scheme

and appoint subcontractors to complete this work. This particular company were approached due their ability to offer a Department for Education approved lease financing arrangements, as at this time the College had no other way of financing the scheme.

- 6.15 Independent verification of these costs has been sought by RDC and it is Officers understanding that a budget of £120,000 is a figure that can be expected to be seen for a sand dressed astro-turf pitch of this size. It should be noted that this is only for the surfacing; if a new base is required, this could add £50,000 to the total. As this is not included in the College's ask, this is a financial risk that would sit with them.
- 6.16 Norton College has stated that they are able to provide 10% cash match funding towards the costs of this project equating to £12,000 based on the estimate received.
- 6.17 The College has clearly stated in its initial letter of request that without significant external financial support, replacement of the pitch is beyond their financial capacity. Like many small secondary schools, the College states they currently have no financial reserves so at this time any capital spending would have to be funded from the education revenue budget. A lease option has been considered, as referenced above in 6.13, but this is not felt to be a financially viable proposition for the College.
- 6.18 Norton College have confirmed that the lease option is not affordable from a financial perspective. It is considered to be very much a last resort option to follow the leasing route and to do this at the level of the estimate, other school priorities will ultimately have to be changed. At this time Norton College do not feel in a position to take on this financial commitment. Alternative funding requests have been made, albeit unsuccessfully, to the Football Association, Sport England and England Hockey.
- 6.19 Currently RDC has approximately £3 million of unallocated CIL funding, however a current Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2022/23 is being prepared, so this figure may change.
- 6.20 Officers have also reviewed the current situation in relation to any remaining S106 funds but there are insufficient funds remaining which would be able to support such a scheme in this geographical location.
- 6.21 Maintenance is crucial if the life span of the facility is to be maximised. Norton College has committed to ensuring the pitch is maintained through weekly brushing either by existing staff or the current grounds maintenance contact, and two specialist visits per year to ensure the pitch remains in good condition.
- 6.22 Following the submission of the request being considered by this report, a further request for financial support for the replacement of fitness suite equipment, again utilising CIL funds, has been received from the College.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:

- (i) Financial

RDC currently holds approximately £3 million of CIL funds.

Given the revenue value of the request being made, it is expected that this request will also require a Section 24 Local Government Review approval. The exact process for this is still to be determined.

(ii) Legal

Officers will seek advice from Legal if the offer of a grant is made to ensure any grant agreement and terms and conditions are fit for purpose. The specific requirements as outlined in the 2.1 will also be included in this agreement.

(iii) Environmental, Ecological, Climate Change and Carbon

Advice from the Climate Change Officer has been requested and it is noted that having a sports pitch in both Malton and Norton and promoting active travel at each site would decrease traffic emissions by reducing the number of car miles needed to reach the sport centres.

Artificial turf is not of benefit to biodiversity/ecology compared to a natural turf pitch as artificial turf blocks assess to the soil beneath for insects and other animals. As single plastic item, an astro-turf pitch is composed of a range of polymer and rubber type materials. At present they are not widely recyclable but do potentially have a long lifetime depending on maintenance.

Research into the ground and air pollution from artificial turfs varies; however, there is potential for toxicological and environmental contamination from the materials during water run-off and release of volatile organic gaseous emissions into the atmosphere.

It is however appreciated that potential for contamination is minimal and there are no other viable options if an all-weather surface is to be installed.

(iv) Equalities

An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed prior to the offer of a grant if agreed by Members.

(v) Staffing

There is expected to be a limited impact on RDC Officers, however if the offer of a grant is made by Members, this will require capacity from both the Economic Development and Finance teams to make the grant offer and manage and monitor the grant until the scheme is completed.

(vi) Planning

RDC Planning Officers confirmed that RDC does currently hold CIL funding and there is a sufficient amount available to cover the costs requested by Norton College. To date it has been thought that a significant proportion of the CIL monies held by RDC would be required to provide a new school in Norton. The status of this need is currently uncertain. It was also noted that the way in which CIL funds will be utilised from April 2023 onwards has not yet been determined.

Officers also highlighted that there is currently no prioritisation process in place for Members to follow and any requests would need to be considered on a case by case basis, however this could result in additional demands on capacity within the authority.

(vii) Health and Safety

There are not anticipated to be any Health and Safety implications for Ryedale District Council as a result of any decision.

(viii) Crime & Disorder

As a grant being provided to an external organisation, there are not expected to be any crime and disorder implications for RDC. The project is to replace an existing and now unsuitable facility. Ongoing management of the site including security will be overseen by Norton College.

(ix) Data Privacy

As a grant being provided to an external organisation, details of the recipient and grant awarded will be retained in the same manner as other RDC grant recipients.

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Background Papers:
Request for Funding from Norton College

Background Papers are available for inspection at:
Please make a request to the Economic Development team

