

Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub – Progress Update	
Executive Summary	This report seeks to update the Cabinet on the progress made to date on the delivery of the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub project.
Options considered	Not Applicable as the report is an update only.
Consultation(s)	Not applicable as the report is an update only.
Recommendations	That the Cabinet note the update on the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub project.
Reasons for recommendations	To keep the Cabinet updated on the progress of the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub project.
Background papers	

Wards affected	Fakenham
Cabinet member(s)	Liz Withington, Portfolio holder for Community, Leisure & Outreach
Contact Officer	Steve Hems, Director for Service Delivery

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	<p>DEVELOPING OUR COMMUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing further the leisure facilities provided across the district.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	There is budget provision in the Capital Budget 2026/27 to support this work.
Council Policies & Strategies	

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	No exempt material

Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Full Council – 20.12.2023 Full Council – 27.3.2024 Cabinet – 8.9.2025
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1. Purpose of the report

1.1. This report seeks to update the Cabinet on the progress made to date on the delivery of the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub project.

2. Introduction & Background

In response to a call for applications under Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund programme in March 2022, North Norfolk District Council developed a proposal for the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub facility in partnership with Fakenham Town Council and the District Council's leisure contractor, Everyone Active. This proposal envisaged an £11million project to extend the existing Fakenham Sports Centre facility at Trap Lane in the town to include a 25-metre four-lane swimming pool with moveable floor, extended gym and fitness studio facilities, 3G all-weather pitch and environmental improvements to the existing sports hall building.

Although the initial submission was unsuccessful Government announced that the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub project, would receive funding support in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 22nd November 2023.

Funding confirmation was delayed by the calling of the general election however work continued to prepare for the expected funding decision.

3. Proposals and Options

3.1. Main Build

The construction works began in October 2025. Once site set up work had been completed the Pavillion building was demolished, freeing up the footprint of that building to allow circulation space for the large construction vehicles. The sports centre continues to operate on a reduced basis with the gym, and a class space relocated into one half of the sports hall and the other half of the sports hall being utilised for school use, whilst maintaining site security and user safety.

The ground has been levelled in the area of the new swimming pool and the pads for the steel frame have been installed.

Work is progressing on the existing sports hall area with progress being made in all areas of the dry change, village change and reception areas.

Whilst there have been delays in some specific areas of the work, these have not to date impacted on the programme due to re-timetabling of works.

3.2. UK Power Networks

It was identified during the design phase that there was a need to increase the power available to the site. This requirement was increased due to the inclusion of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) as the removal of gas boilers for the existing sports centre increases the power requirement further. The upgrade of the substation serving the site has been subject to a lease for the land on which the substation stands. This lease has taken some considerable time to resolve. This is in part due to changes that UKPN asked for in relation to the orientation to the substation cabinet and subsequent issues with ensuring that the technical plans and legal plans matched.

The substation upgrade maximises the power available to the sports centre within the capacity of the off-site cabling. Any further increase in power to the site would require upgrading to the UK Power Networks network off the site and a further substation installation.

3.3. Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)

The inclusion of the PSDS works within the project triggered a full redesign of the Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) scheme for the project. To avoid additional costs the decision was made to delay commencement of the M&E works until the redesign had been completed. The redesign works have now been completed and sent to the architects for coordination with other plans. It is anticipated that these works will now begin on site. Again, resequencing of the programme has mitigated and completion delay to date.

The inclusion of the additional air source heat pump to serve the existing sports centre means that the gas boiler will be decommissioned. This has resulted in the need to change the design of the underfloor heating from the original design wet system to electrical heating.

The impact of the inclusion of the PSDS works on the overall timetable is now thought to be low risk however it has extended the full closure period for the centre from one week to three weeks at the end of the programme.

3.4. 3G Pitch

During the planning application process, it was identified that the statutory objection relation to the derelict and unused cricket pitch was likely to cause delays to the planning permission and therefore jeopardise the project completion date beyond the deadline set by Government for completion of the project. The 3G pitch did not form part of the Levelling Up funded works but formed part of the match funding commitment.

The decision was therefore made to decouple the 3G pitch from the main application. Officers have continued to work closely with officers from the Football Foundation, who grant fund provision where strategic need is identified. The application for funding to the Football Foundation has now been submitted and associated with this an application for planning permission has also been made.

It is likely that Sport England will still object to the loss of cricket pitch provision. The current wickets, which will be lost to the 3G pitch installation, have been out of use for some considerable period of time. Sport England would wish to

see provision on the same site, but this is not possible as the land to the north of the current location is not in the Councils control, being Fakenham Town Council owned. Fakenham Town Council have stated that they wish to retain the remaining land at Trap Lane for general community use and do not wish to commit to maintain the grounds to the standard required for "outfield" cricket standard.

On the 27 March 2026 the Football Foundation confirmed that a Capital Grant for the provision of a 91m x 55m FIFA Quality 3G Pitch had been awarded to North Norfolk District Council.

3.5. Cashflow

The last two valuations have been considerably lower than anticipated within the cashflow forecast due to the delay in ordering the steel frame and the holding off of Mechanical Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) works to allow for the redesign for PSDS inclusion to mitigate abortive costs. It is projected that these will re-balance from May onwards.

The way in which the Government releases funds to the Council has been simplified with a greater proportion of the grant funding released during the autumn of last year. This means that, even with the changes in spend rates the grant provided to date covers the full expected spend until the next tranche of grant funding.

3.6. Contingency use

Within the contract price a contingency sum has been allowed for in common with any such project. This amount allows for unforeseen works to be addressed without needing to seek funding outside the original contract.

The risks associated with unforeseen works is increased in relation to below ground works, the majority of which will be completed by the end of May, this far without any issues.

Internal stripping out of the existing sports centre has identified an issue with water ingress arising from the guttering system to the main building. The gutters are internal to the roof structure. The ingress needs to be resolved prior to the refitting works so that new finishes are not damaged. The Leisure Contract with Everyone Active includes an appendix which sets out the relevant responsibility for certain works between the Council and Everyone Active. Within the Lifetime Replacement Responsibility Matrix, guttering is identified as the responsibility of the contractor and roof works as the responsibility of the Council.

The identified cost of the remedial works is £49,201.57. In order to ensure that these works do not impact on the project timetable a contract variation has been issued. Discussions have taken place with Everyone Active to split the costs of the work equally between the two parties.

The use of contingencies will continue to be closely monitored throughout the remainder of the project and remain client (Council) side for control and approval processes.

3.7. Current Risks

As with all projects of this nature there is a risk associated with delivery of the project. The biggest risks presently relate to aspects which impact on the timetabling of the project.

The original deadline for the completion of the Levelling Up Fund works of the 31st March 2027 provided the most significant timescale risk, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have announced that the new deadline for completion of works for all projects is the 31st March 2028. Whilst this removes the issues of funding deadlines from this project the timetable remains important due to the incurring of additional costs by this Council should the project run beyond the current completion date for the swimming pool and sports centre element of the project.

Additional construction costs beyond the contingency allowance remain of concern, however the majority of below ground works are now complete and therefore the risk of unforeseen works are reduced. Monthly financial statements are prepared by the project team QS and details approved and expected variations (use of contingency) which is carefully monitored and managed by the project team and council officers.

The pool hall steel is on the project critical path and there is a current 4–5 week delay to site installation. This delay results from the supplier no longer being able to warrant the paint treatment and as a result there is a need to identify an alternative paint system within the budget parameters. However, this has now been obtained and the steel frame ordered. Other work is being re-sequenced within the programme to reduce the impact of the delay – cost of which remain a contractor risk.

3.8. Engagement

The Council's Communications Team continue to promote progress stories through our social media accounts to keep the community informed and updated.

Other related content has included the story of Eric Mason, founding committee member of Fakenham Swimming Club, which launched in 1978, who visited the build at Trap Lane and expressed how excited he was to have the new pool.

Other stories are planned throughout the timescale of the remaining project.

4. Corporate Priorities

- Developing Our Communities
- Developing further the leisure facilities provided across the district.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

Comments from the S151 Officer:

This is an update report only, no decisions to be made by committee.

6. Legal Implications

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

This is an update report only, no decisions to be made by committee.

7. Risks

Outlined in section 3.7.

8. Net ZeroTarget

This matter was covered in the approved report to Full Council on 20 December 2023, relating to the wider project.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

This matter was covered in the approved report to Full Council on 20 December 2023, relating to the wider project.

10. Community Safety issues

This matter was covered in the approved report to Full Council on 20 December 2023, relating to the wider project.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

This report seeks to update the Cabinet on the progress made to date on the delivery of the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub project.