

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**29 June 2004**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES FUND – SOUTH WIGSTON**

**PART A**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek agreement to the acceptance of a grant totalling £1,432,856 from the Big Lottery Fund (formerly the New Opportunities Fund) as a contribution towards the construction of a new sports hall, fitness suite and changing accommodation at South Wigston High School

**Recommendations**

2.
  - i) That the grant of £1,432,856 for South Wigston High School from the Big Lottery Fund be approved
  - ii) That the contingent liability to repay the grant be noted.
  - iii) That the Director of Education be authorised in consultation with the Lead Member for Education, the Director of Resources and the County Solicitor to accept the offer.

**Reasons For Recommendations**

3. The proposal for a new sports hall and fitness suite at South Wigston High School is one of a portfolio of 16 projects that were submitted to NOF prior to March 2003 in a bid to receive grant aid towards their construction. The portfolio of project applications represents a total fund of £3.355M of grant aid available to improving sports facilities at Leicestershire schools subject to approval from the New Opportunities Fund.
4. At its meeting of 4th May 2004 the Cabinet resolved to accept an offer of grant from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for the first of these projects (new sports changing accommodation at Blaby Stokes Primary School) and authorised the Director of Education in consultation with the Lead Member for Education, the Director of Resources and the County Solicitor to accept further offers of grant from NOF where the project cost was less than £1m.
5. The proposed sports hall application at South Wigston has been approved by NOF with an offer of grant of £1,432,856 and is the only project within the portfolio that has a cost in excess of £1M.

6. The school and surrounding communities lack access to good quality physical recreation facilities. This siting of a new sports hall and fitness suite at South Wigston High School is likely to have a positive impact on the health and well being of local school age children and members of the wider community. South Wigston High School have raised £140,000 towards the cost of the project.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

7. The Council is required to accept grants within 2 months of the offer being made. In this instance the offer was received on the 27<sup>th</sup> April and an extension to the 16<sup>th</sup> July has been granted from NOF.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

8. The decision to bid for £3.355m was taken by the Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2002

### **Resources Implications**

9. Subject to accepting the grant offer and fulfilling the terms and conditions of grant, the sum of £1,432,856 for South Wigston High School would be available to the Authority as a contribution towards the construction of the new sports hall.

10.

Cost of Work	£	Grants / Funding Source	£
Construction of 33m x17m sports hall with fitness suite and changing accommodation	1,573,856	NOF	1,432,856
		South Wigston High School	140,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573,856</b>		<b>1,573,856</b>

11. The contingent liability in the event of defaulting on the grant contract is detailed in the terms and conditions of the grant offer. In the case of South Wigston High School the New Opportunities Fund reserves the right to seek full or part repayment of the grant for up to a 20 year period from completion of the works, if the Authority breaches any element of the terms and conditions of the grant which include making the facility available for community use.
12. South Wigston High is a Foundation school. In this case the contingent liability for breach of terms and conditions of grant lies in the first instance with the school and its governors.

## **Comments of the Director of Resources**

13. There is a possibility that proceeding with this project could jeopardise the County Council's ability to reclaim VAT on its "exempt" activities. Work is in progress to assess the impact and acceptance is conditional upon the partial exemption limit not being breached, as this would have significant resource implications.

The County Solicitor has been consulted on the content of this report and her comments incorporated.

## **Members Advised under Sensitive Issues Procedure**

Mr G A Boulter, C.C.

### **Officers to Contact:**

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NB. The detail of this report follows in Part B

# **NEW OPPORTUNITIES FUND – SOUTH WIGSTON HIGH SCHOOL**

## **PART B**

### **Background**

14. In November 2001 the LEA was given an indicative allocation of £3.35 million by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to build or modernise facilities for PE and Sport in schools including outdoor adventure activities. Following Cabinet approval a portfolio of projects was submitted to NOF by the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2002 for their initial (Stage 1) approval. LEAs were encouraged to submit a portfolio comprising a main list and reserve list totalling up to 25% above the indicative allocation.
15. On the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2002 the LEA was informed that its portfolio of projects could proceed to Stage 2 in the application process. Stage 2 project submissions were compiled and submitted to NOF prior to the March 2004 deadline. The work involved in this included:
  - producing evidence that there is likely to be community use of proposed facilities.
  - assessing the implications of the proposals, if any, in terms of legislation designed to preserve the integrity of school playing fields.
  - ensuring projects will meet appropriate technical specifications.
  - ensuring cost-estimates are thoroughly checked and verified.
  - that all applications and use of proposed facilities comply with Leicestershire County Council Equal Opportunities Policy.
  - producing evidence to substantiate any external funding indicated by individual schools at Stage 1.
  - In terms of strategic management of the process, the LEA is required to indicate that the required Portfolio management group will include partners from health, housing and crime reduction agencies

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

16. New and upgraded PE and Sport facility proposals that are successful at the stage two process will increase opportunities for children and members of the community to take part in sport and physical recreation. Evidence of an appropriate Equal Opportunities Policy is a condition of any grant award from the New Opportunities Fund.

### **Community Use of the Sports Hall**

17. It is proposed that the responsibility for the day to day management of the new sports hall and fitness suite lie with a specialist contractor. Subject to member approval for the construction of the new building an appropriate process will be managed by the school to appoint a leisure contractor to operate the new sports hall and fitness suite.

## **Background Papers / Previous Reports**

18. Further background information on the New Opportunities Fund PE and Sport programme for Leicestershire County Council is contained in the Director of Education's report to Cabinet, 3rd December 2002.