

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 24th March 2026

Report of: Strategic Director, Place

Title: King George V Playing Field Improvements

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report seeks the allocation of capital funding to provide a financial contribution to the improvements and enhancements of the community sports hub at King George V Playing Fields. Working in partnership with Exeter City Community Trust, the organisation leading the project, the Council seeks to allocate section 106 resources as partner funding towards an estimated £4.09million scheme providing a new 3G artificial grass pitch, two Play Zones and a refurbished changing room pavilion. The grant of section 106 funding from Exeter City Council will be made to Exeter KGV Limited, Exeter City Community Trust's wholly owned company.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Council resolves to approve:

- (1) A maximum budget of £464,948.02 in the form of a grant awarded to Exeter KGV Limited, Exeter City Community Trust's wholly owned company, as a financial contribution towards the improvement of pitches, sports and community facilities at King George V Playing Fields.
- (2) Delegating responsibility to the Strategic Director of Place in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to determine the precise budget up to a maximum of £464,948.02 and to agree and implement grant funding terms with Exeter KGV Limited and Exeter City Community Trust.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.1 The Council has leased King George V Playing Fields to Exeter KGV Limited, Exeter City Community Trust's wholly owned company, who are leading a development programme to improve facilities.
- 3.2 Significant funding contributions from partners, including the Football Foundation, have been awarded to Exeter City Community Trust to complete Phase 1 of the scheme. These are time limited funds based on the funding being secured and works commencing by the end of March 2026

3.3 The benefits to the Council include:

- Delivering on Exeter City Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, promoting participation and inclusivity.
- Delivering on Exeter City Council's Playing Pitch Strategy which has a priority to develop Community Sports Hubs and identifies a shortfall of 3-4 Artificial Grass Pitches across the city
- Meeting the aspirations of the Football Foundation's Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP), identifying the KGV site as a priority location.
- Meeting the local planning obligation to reinvest developer contributions into community infrastructure supports health, wellbeing, and active lifestyles outcomes of the Corporate Plan.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources:

4.1 The scheme will utilise a maximum £464,948.02 of available section 106 contributions that fall within the distance and typology range of the King George V project. Allocating Council funding of £464,948.02 from s106 agreements will:

- Secure match funding from the Football Foundation.
- Fulfil planning obligations to enhance community sports provision.
- Deliver a long-term, sustainable facility with low maintenance costs relative to natural grass pitches

4.2 An element of this funding is connected to a s106 agreement contribution that must be committed by April 2026.

4.3 The Council has not identified any other projects which would meet all these requirements.

4.4 King George V Playing Fields is now on a long-term lease with Exeter KGV Limited, Exeter City Community Trust's wholly owned company therefore minimising the need for any internal non-financial resources to help develop, manage and maintain the site.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 The use of section 106 funds is noted and will fully fund the contribution leaving no impact of the General Fund revenue position.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The Council is the freehold landowner of King George V playing fields and with the consent of Fields in Trust granted a lease dated 17th February 2026 to Exeter KGV Limited, Exeter City Community Trust's wholly owned company to carry out the improvement and enhancement works at King George V playing fields in accordance with the planning permission 25/0197/FUL.

6.2 The Council in its function as the Local Planning Authority has entered into seven different agreements with developers under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, which have secured contributions towards the provision of community and recreational facilities within the locality. Allocation of the section 106 contributions must be in accordance with the terms of the agreements and any contributions not allocated in accordance with the agreements must be paid back by the Council to the developer.

6.3 Prior to providing any financial contribution the Council must enter a formal contract with the recipient to regulate the use of the financial contribution which will include standard claw back provisions in the event the funds are not allocated as required.

6.4 It is not considered that this funding constitutes a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 Members will particularly note the legal aspects at paragraph 6. The Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

8. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

8.1 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equality Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

The programme will seek to achieve a positive impact for residents within protected characteristics groups. The overall project seeks to reduce inequalities and improve physical and mental wellbeing.

9. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

9.1 The King George V improvement programme will enhance the local environmental and sustainability credentials primarily through:

Travel: The project will promote increased walking, cycling and active travel. A new entrance from Bridge Road will be created in proximity to the Exe Estuary walking and cycling route. Improvements to walkways and trails form part of the masterplan that will allow use of the site all year round compared to the challenges of walkers during the wetter months at present. A secure bike storage facility and a repair facility will be installed

Infrastructure: As part of the refurbishment of the existing building the BREEAM Excellent will ensure that efficiency of the building is significantly improved. Future phases of the scheme introduce solar panels and EV charging points. All floodlighting will be LED efficient design. The management of the 3G pitch will be undertaken to assist with ensuring the lifespan of the pitch is maximised, internal and external maintenance of the surface will be undertaken to promote longevity of the surface. The materials used are Sport England and Football Foundation compliant, there is an infill retention policy, containment plan and end of life recycling process. The latest guidance from Sport England and the Football Foundation is here: [Position statement on 3G pitches | Sport England](#)

Waste: ECCT will work with the Exeter City Council Recycling team to ensure that waste on site managed to minimise any waste to landfill. When the second phase building is in place food waste bins will be introduced to recover energy from waste accordingly. During construction we will work with ECC to sort waste and maximise recycling through agreed methods. Initial discussions have taken place and a meeting due to take place imminently to support this area of the project.

Other: The approach to biodiversity net gain is intended to ensure the site remains a green space that is an asset for the city and the addition of the community orchard, hedgerows and additional trees is intended to assist with reducing the carbon reduction target.

9.2 The full Environmental and Biodiversity Net Gain can be found on the Council planning portal as part of the full planning application for the scheme **25/0197** [Related Documents - Exeter City Council](#)

10. Report details:

- 10.1 King George V Playing Fields (KGV) is one of Exeter City Council's most prestigious outdoor sports sites serving as a centre for community club football, mini-soccer and girls soccer in Exeter.
- 10.2 KGV hosts up to six full-sized football pitches, eight mini soccer pitches, and one youth football/rugby pitch, with fully equipped changing rooms for men and women.
- 10.3 The site also includes two tennis courts adjacent to Bridge Road, two play areas, public toilets, and a collection of veteran oak trees.
- 10.4 KGV is highlighted as an important strategic playing field site in both the Exeter City Council Playing Pitch Strategy (Adopted November 2022: [Report - Exeter Playing Pitch Strategy 2022 FINAL.pdf](#)) and the Exeter Local Football Facility Plan ([Exeter Executive summary](#)) Both strategies highlight a shortfall in Artificial Grass Pitches (ATPs) in Exeter and the need for investment in playing pitch stock to improve both the quantity and quality of facilities in the city.
- 10.5 In August 2025, Exeter City Council granted planning permission to improve sport and community provision at King George V Playing Fields.
- 10.6 See ECC Planning portal with reference **25/0197** [Related Documents - Exeter City Council](#)
- 10.7 The King George V site is a long-established community sports hub in Exeter, supporting significant levels of grassroots football (home of Central FC) and recreational use. However, existing natural turf pitches are frequently rendered unplayable due to poor drainage and wear, resulting in lost game time and limited accessibility during winter months.

10.8 The Council has worked in partnership alongside Exeter City Community Trust to agree a lease, grant agreement and service level agreement for the ongoing leadership, management, maintenance and delivery of the playing field site. The Fields in Trust have given their consent for the lease, grant agreement and proposed improvement works to the site.

10.9 The lease was completed in February 2026 and ECCT will deliver Phase 1 of the improvement scheme.

10.10 Phase 1 of the scheme includes:

- Construction of a new 3G Artificial Grass Pitch
- Increased car parking and improvements to disabled parking spaces
- Pavillion refurbishment to include 4 Sport England compliant changing rooms, officials changing rooms, 1st aid room, community space and office. Replacement of public toilets and addition of changing places facility.
- Two Play Zones providing a variety of sports on multi use surfaces: one with 3G surface and the other with a 2G astro turf
- Refurbishment of Changing rooms and public toilets



10.11 Funding

The project has secured significant funding but requires additional contributions to meet total costs.

10.12 Total project cost is £4,096,633, with £3.5 million already secured or pending approval. The key funding sources include the Football Foundation (£2 million), ECCT (£1.2 million), and other stakeholders. Any shortfall in the project funding package will be borne by Exeter City Community Trust.

10.13 The Football Foundation funding model requires significant local match contributions to unlock national investment. The Football funding is contingent upon a confirmed local contribution.

10.14 Allocating ECC funding of £464,948.02 from s106 agreements will:

- Secure match funding from the Football Foundation.
- Fulfil planning obligations to enhance community sports provision.
- Deliver a long-term, sustainable facility with low maintenance costs relative to natural grass pitches

10.15 Section 106 (S106) contributions are legal obligations linked to planning permissions, requiring developers to provide funding or works to mitigate the impact of each development. Each agreement specifies how and when the contribution must be used, and the Council ensures it is spent in line with those requirements.

10.16 Developer contributions should be used to maximum strategic effect and in a timely manner. The Council monitors S106 funding for compliance with specific trigger points, spend deadlines, and purpose as defined in each S106 agreement.

10.17 An element of this funding is connected to a s106 agreement contribution that must be committed by April 2026.

10.18 The Council has not identified any other projects which would meet all these requirements. King George V Playing Fields is the only strategic project that meets the outcomes of the section 106 agreements within a radius of 1km of the developer sites.

Community Engagement

10.19 Extensive community engagement has already been undertaken, involving residents, clubs, schools, leagues, and community groups. Feedback has been overwhelmingly supportive, with respondents highlighting:

- The need for reliable, year-round playing surfaces.
- Opportunities for youth development and women's and girls football.
- Potential for broader community use, including walking football, disability football, and school partnerships.

10.20 This process has ensured that the project reflects genuine community demand and delivers social value beyond football participation. Full details of the community engagement can be found here: [King George V Playing Fields Project | Support | Exeter, UK](#)

10.21 In February 2026, a letter drop was undertaken by ECCT to inform residents of the imminent works and a press release issued on Tuesday 17th February through local press and social media platforms

Programme of Activities

10.22 The site will provide enhanced facilities for Central FC and other grassroots youth and adult teams, engaging thousands of players each season in regular training and matches, whilst also ensuring connections and integration within our own - and other - pathways and networks, inclusive of those run by the Football Association, both locally and nationally.

10.23 The programme for the 3G ATP will engage with a wide range of stakeholders and clubs across the city including:

Central FC
Exeter Strollers
Exeter International
ECCT Masters and Walking Football leagues
ECCT Boys and Girls Development Centres
Exeter College Academies and programmes
Man V Fat
Para Football including Visually Impaired and Deaf hubs
Football for Good

Women and Girls

10.24 ECCT will offer an extensive programme from early years to professional development and later in life recreational football. This includes the Girls Development and Emerging Talent Centres, which provide coaching and support for girls aged 5-16, as well as match play opportunities through the Junior Premier League and the Premier League and English Football League networks, as evidenced by recent visits to Exeter by Crystal Palace and Tottenham Hotspur. This pathway also runs alongside the Exeter College Academy, which interlinks provision with the internal pathway throughout the season, and feeds into the Exeter City Women's Football Club (ECWFC) development team and then to the senior squad, all of whom will have opportunities to use the KGV facility.

10.25 The project will deliver early year's level opportunities through the Tot's and Grecian Girls' programmes and will offer girls only and mixed after schools and holiday clubs for children and young people. Alongside this, an engagement

programme will be offered in collaboration with Exeter City Women's Football Club to ensure inspiration and integration at all levels. ECCT will also work with Exeter Strollers and Exeter City Women's Walking Football Club to help the already rapidly developing pace of walking football through the facilitation of training, matches, and tournament events.

10.26 It is part of the agreement with the Football Foundation to allocate a minimum of 20% of allocations on site to be for women and girls football and a minimum of 30% by year three, and in doing so aim to deliver a strong regional hub - and source of pride - for women and girls football in the region.

11. How does the decision contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan?

11.1 The KGV improvement programme delivers significant benefit towards the Council corporate plan and priorities as set out below:

- Exeter City Council’s Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, promoting participation and inclusivity.
- The ECC Playing Pitch Strategy which has a priority to develop Community Sports Hubs and identifies a shortfall of 3-4 ATPs across the city
- The Football Foundation’s Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP), identifying the KGV site as a priority location.
- Exeter City Council’s Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (2025/25 report), includes KGV as an additional infrastructure project which may also be supported with CIL funding.
- The local planning obligation to reinvest developer contributions into community infrastructure supports health, wellbeing, and active lifestyles

The project significantly delivers against the Council priority for ‘People’ and will:

- Aim to reduce health inequalities through participation in sport and physical activity.
- Support communities to be more healthy, resilient and connect with one another.
- More residents, including those from our priority neighbourhoods and communities, will be participating in leisure and cultural events and activities.
- Support a safe and thriving city with great things to see and do for everyone.

12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

12.1 The most significant project risks and associated mitigation strategies are as follows;

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Project cost inflation	Football Foundation Framework for tendering process. Initial costs have been favourable against the projected costs, refurbishment of the building to meet BREEAM excellent is over budget but value engineering work is being undertaken to ensure the overall project is on

	budget. The contracts will be fixed or capped overall costs to ensure at the stage of awarding contracts risk is minimised.
Capital funding profile	Working with a range of partners to secure funding. Any programme shortfall to be mitigated through ECCT and other external grant funding TBC
Drainage	Soakaway testing of the land will be undertaken imminently to ensure that the drainage as designed is sufficient for the construction of the pitch to deliver a suitable all weather surface.
Later Phase programme delivery	Risk remains unquantified at this stage until funding and viable business models are established

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 Should the Council financial contribution not be provided there is a risk of losing significant match funding from Football Foundation which will ultimately delay and potentially risk successful delivery of the improvement programme

Director: Strategic Director, Place

Author: Place Partnership Manager, Live & Move

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

List of Appendices: