

Joint Use Funding 2024/25

Report to the Schools Forum 18 January 2024

Background

- 1.1 At the last Schools Forum, 16 November 2023, the Forum were made aware that the DfE were reviewing the 'exceptional funding' that for many years we have received for joint use leisure facilities. As a reminder, the amounts allocated in 2023/24 were as follows:

Telford Priory	£350,737
Telford Park	£207,031
Shortwood Primary	£90,000
Total	£647,768

- 1.2 These funds are used for the provision of swimming and other sports activities to schools and the wider community, at Oakengates leisure centre (via Telford Priory), Stirchley leisure centre (Telford Park) and Shortwood, Newport and Abraham Darby pools .
- 1.3 At the time of the last Forum we were awaiting the DfE decision and were developing contingency plans in the event that funding was reduced/withdrawn, which included charging schools for use of the council's swimming facilities

DfE decision

- 1.4 On 12 January 2024 the DfE wrote to us as follows:

Based on the information supplied, and after careful consideration, the minister has agreed to approve your request for the financial year 2024 to 2025. This approval is for 1 year only to allow you the time to unwind/transition out of the arrangements for the swimming pools for the 3 schools given funding for these does not fall within the guidance. Funding requests for swimming pools will not be approved in subsequent years.

- 1.5 This is welcome in so far as the funding is secured for a further year and we have more time to develop alternative arrangements for school swimming. By implication it also suggests that into the future we will retain the non swimming elements of joint use, i.e. all of the funds relating to Telford Park (i.e. Stirchley leisure centre) and around £195,000 of the Telford Priory funds (i.e. Oakengates leisure centre).
- 1.6 However it does also confirm definitively that, unless a future government takes a different policy view (perhaps unlikely at this stage) we will have to develop alternative funding arrangements for school swimming from 1 April 2025. This implies charging schools for use of council swimming pools
- 1.7 We will develop plans for financial year 2025/26 over the coming months and keep the Forum and schools generally updated on progress.

Tim Davis
Group Accountant
January 2024