

Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) Ramsgate Leisure Centre solar photovoltaics (PV)

Cabinet:	25th April 2024
Report Author:	Lindsay Reynolds (Decarbonisation Surveyor)
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Ruth Duckworth, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Property
Status:	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision:	Yes
Ward:	Central Harbour (Ramsgate)
Previously Considered by:	N/A

Executive Summary:

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy in the world to legislate a binding target to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Following the release of the Sixth Carbon Budget, the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson agreed to legislate a new target to reduce the United Kingdom's emissions by 78% by 2035. Kent County Council produced a Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway and reported on the risks to Kent due to climate change. These include flash floods, droughts and heat waves which could cause disruption to homes, businesses and transport as well as risks to health.

Thanet District Council called a Climate Emergency on Thursday 11 July 2019 and made a pledge to:

- make Thanet District Council net zero by 2030 in our core carbon footprint (this includes emissions we have direct control over e.g. the estates and activities that we own and manage)
- address emissions that Thanet District Council has partial control over (those outside of the core carbon footprint e.g. projects, procurement and social housing) as soon as possible, and by 2050 at the latest.
- support KCC, the Government, business, industry and the community to make Thanet as a whole net zero by 2050.

Thanet District Council submitted bids to both phases of Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund and was successful for both phases. For Phase I, TDC was awarded **£380,561 in revenue costs** to cover maintenance, heating and chemicals at Ramsgate and Hartsdown Leisure Centres, and recently, for Phase II, we have been awarded up to **£674,740 in capital costs** for Solar PV installation and variable speed filtration pumps for

Ramsgate Leisure Centre. There is a delivery deadline to meet, which is 31st March, 2025. We need to have spent the funding and delivered the scheme by this date.

The objectives of Phase II Swimming Pool Support Fund is to reduce the energy consumption compared to baseline, minimise the closure of swimming pool provision, reduce the carbon output compared to baseline, and prioritise areas with greatest socio-economic needs.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

1. Notes the progress achieved and the outcome of the SPSF grant funding award;
2. Approve the use of the Swimming Pool Support Fund capital grant of £674,740 to fund the installation of Solar photovoltaic (PV) installation and variable speed filtration pumps at Ramsgate Leisure Centre.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

Thanet District Council called a climate emergency on 11th July 2019 and pledged to become net zero by 2030. As part of this, Thanet District Council must decarbonise its core estate, which includes Ramsgate and Hartsdown Leisure Centres. Without the Swimming Pool Support Fund from Sport England, it is unlikely that Thanet District Council would be able to fund this scheme from core budgets.

The current monthly electricity bill at Ramsgate Leisure Centre is approximately £19,000. With the solar PV array the monthly bill will be approximately £11,700, a saving of £7,300 (38.7% saving). This translates to an annual saving of over £88,000 and, over 25 years, this saving is estimated to be £2,600,000.

There will also be a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions, with a reduction of 63.3 tonnes of CO₂e every year. This solar installation will have a system lifetime of 25+ years, providing a reliable source of energy and returns on investment over time. In total, the rooftop solar, LED lighting (which Your Leisure are committed to delivering outside of this fund) and variable speed filtration system (which has been included in this grant funding) will save more than half (55%) the annual electricity bill at Ramsgate Leisure Centre, equating to over £125,000 annually.

These savings are significant in the context of current pricing and are in the main due to increased costs associated with large changes in energy cost. Your Leisure have managed these increases over the last few years, applying for support as when available.

The newly proposed sharing agreement that replaces the existing management agreement allows for a proportionate distribution of savings, allowing for ⅓ to be allocated to Your

Leisure for reinvestment, $\frac{1}{3}$ to be allocated into a fund to be allocated by TDC towards Your Leisure activity and the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ being distributed directly to TDC.

Value for money will be secured by following the Council's procurement process.

Legal

The Climate Change Act 2008 places national targets on the reduction of emissions by 2050. The Council has powers to do anything an individual could, under the power of general competence in the Localism Act 2011. This includes taking steps to reduce Council emissions, which contribute to the local and national targets.

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy in the world to legislate binding targets to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Following this, TDC called a climate emergency and committed to the pledges as set out above. The TDC Net zero strategy and action plan is the first step in TDC's journey to meeting these pledges. Within TDC's net zero strategy, the first priority is to decarbonise its estate, which includes both Ramsgate and Hartsdown Leisure Centre.

Risk Management

It is important to address greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the serious risks of climate change e.g heatwaves, sea level rise, flash floods and societal disruption. This climate disruption will mean that some areas of the world will become uninhabitable and there could be food insecurity worldwide.

These risks are made clear in the IPCC's report "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability" which assesses the impacts of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. It also reviews vulnerabilities and the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate change.

The Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway (CCRIA) was produced in 2019 by KCC; it describes the changes Kent might face, and the potential risks to Kent's society, economy and environment.

It explains:

"Understanding the potential future impacts of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers is crucial for future prosperity, environmental quality, and health and wellbeing of communities.

Based on the Met Office's UK Climate Projections (UKCP) for the south east, by 2080

- summers are likely to be hotter by around 5°C to 6°C
- winters are likely to be warmer by around 3°C to 4°C
- summer rainfall is likely to decrease by 30% to 50%
- winter rainfall is likely to increase by 20% to 30%
- sea level rise is likely to increase by 0.8m.

The impacts of climate change are likely to be felt acutely in Kent with its long, strategically important coastline, large number of properties at risk of flooding and warm summers compared with the rest of the United Kingdom. It is imperative that the impacts of climate change are considered alongside other drivers of change including economic fluctuations, population growth and demographic shifts.”

The risks of not acting, or delaying acting, on climate change will affect us all, but the poorest in society will suffer the greatest risk, for example, through the rising cost of food and the lack of financial resilience to disasters. If we do not act quickly, the risks of ecological breakdown and extreme heating will get worse. It is important that we address climate change now as a matter of fairness and equality.

The Stern Report demonstrated that the cost of doing nothing to combat climate change far exceeded the cost of tackling climate change. The cost of living crisis will not get better, but worse if we ignore this emergency. The benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting and so we will act now.

There is a risk, if the recommendations in this report are not approved (and are either amended, or rejected), that TDC may have to return the grant funding to Sport England as we will not be able to fulfil the delivery timescales, of which is the 31st March, 2025.

Although it is unlikely that TDC will over-spend this grant award, due to the structural survey suggesting that the rooftop solar PV system will not be as large as our bid and proposal to Sport England, TDC will monitor costs throughout the duration of the project delivery, and if necessary, will make necessary adjustments to ensure we keep to budget. In the bid, TDC also included project management costs of 15% and a 10% contingency to ensure the risks of over-spending are minimal.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- To foster good relations between *people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*

- Ramsgate Leisure Centre provides a diverse and extensive programme of activities. The wet side programme offers essential swimming lessons for all age groups, preschool to adults. Local primary and secondary schools participate in 32 sessions per week across 15 local schools, with an extensive and varied public swimming programme providing an average of 70 sessions per week, also included are: parent and toddler, inclusive & accessible to all swim sessions, ladies only and specific sessions for 60+. The facility facilitates competitive and non-competitive clubs as well as Lifesaving.
- Your Leisure is committed to reducing health inequalities through removing barriers in accessing healthy lifestyles and has an extensive outreach programme for our community to become more active. This includes Kent County Council Wellbeing and Everyday Active which provides opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people to be active focusing on increasing participation for the over 55s, these programmes supplement the facility programme at Ramsgate Leisure Centre.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- To keep our district safe and clean
- To protect our environment
- To create a thriving place
- To work efficiently for you

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Please read the Net Zero Strategy attached. A summary of the document is set out below:

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) published its most detailed report on climate change in 2021 showing that the warming of the planet is due to human activity. The world is heating up due to the extraction and burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) to power our homes, transport and industry. The production of emissions (mainly methane) from the agricultural industry also plays a part. Worldwide agricultural practices are also responsible for over 90% of worldwide deforestation, as forests are cleared for food (mainly meat) production¹.

These emissions will cause extreme heat waves, drought and floods which will affect people's health, infrastructure and food production, and the Isle of Thanet will not be immune from these effects. Heatwaves, fires and floods have already been seen around the world, including the UK this summer. We are on the brink of world wide disruption.

- 1.2 To reduce emissions, the UK needs to stop using fossil fuels, and instead produce renewable electricity by solar, wind and nuclear. Everything that can be run on electricity needs to be run on electricity e.g. transport, heating and some industrial processes.
- 1.3 In 2019, the UK became the first major economy in the world to legislate a binding target to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

1.4 Reaching net zero is a matter of equality. Climate change will disproportionately affect the poorest, youngest/oldest and disabled. For example, these groups will be affected by heatwaves more than others in society.

The cost of living crisis will also get worse due to climate change as the price of food and other items increase in a disrupted world. It is therefore important that we address climate change now.

1.5 Thanet District Council called a climate emergency on 11th July 2019.

This included the following pledge:

- Pledge to do what is within our powers and resources to make Thanet District Council carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions;
- Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible;
- Continue to work with partners across the County and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies;
- Investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment;

1.6 As the meaning behind the specific terms in the initial pledge became more explicit, it became necessary to update the pledge. This includes using the words “net zero” instead of “carbon neutral” as net zero is a stronger commitment. Carbon neutral means that you can offset emissions by supporting projects such as solar farms. However, these projects do not directly remove/absorb emissions from the atmosphere. Net zero means that any leftover (residual) emissions must be absorbed by carbon sequestration projects and directly removed from the atmosphere e.g. woodland creation projects. This is why net zero is a more robust term.

1.7 The updated net zero pledge which was recommended by the cross party Climate Change Cabinet Advisory Group is as follows:

- make Thanet District Council net zero by 2030 in our core carbon footprint (this includes emissions we have direct control over e.g. the estates and activities that we own and manage)
- address emissions that TDC has partial control over (those outside of the core carbon footprint e.g. projects, procurement and social housing) as soon as possible, and by 2050 at the latest.
- support KCC, the Government, business, industry and the community to make Thanet as a whole net zero by 2050.

In order to make these targets possible we will:

- call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the targets possible;
- continue to work with partners across the county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies;

- investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment

1.8 Ramsgate and Hartsdown Leisure Centres have been included in Thanet District Council's [Net Zero Strategy](#) and [Carbon Reduction Plan](#), as they are leased to Your Leisure with the assumption that Thanet District Council would run the operation of these leisure centres if they were not leased. We will need to reduce our electricity use and source renewable electricity (~730 tonnes) to reduce our emissions associated with electricity. Addressing the emissions from TDC owned and managed offices and leisure centres is priority 1 in the net zero strategy.

Sport England announced the administration of the government's [Swimming Pool Support Fund](#) (SPSF) which provides £60 million to local authorities in England as a support package for public leisure facilities with swimming pools. This fund was split into two phases,

- Phase I - Revenue: £20m is available to support facilities with swimming pools with increased cost pressures, leaving them most vulnerable to closure or significant service reduction.
- Phase II - Capital: £40m is available from the government for capital investment to improve the energy efficiency of public facilities with pools in the medium to long term.

Thanet District Council submitted bids to both phases and was successful for both phases. For Phase I, we were awarded **£380,561 in revenue costs** to cover maintenance, heating and chemicals at Ramsgate and Hartsdown Leisure Centres, and recently, for Phase II, we have been awarded **£674,740 in capital costs** for Solar PV installation and variable speed filtration pumps for Ramsgate Leisure Centre. There is a delivery deadline to meet, which is 31st March, 2025. We need to have spent the funding and delivered the scheme by this date. The objectives of Phase II of SPSF are:

- Reduce the energy consumption level of facilities in receipt of funding, compared to baseline, and support the leisure sector to transition to a position of environmental and financial sustainability.
- Minimise the closure of swimming pool provision, where funding has been provided, to a site to prevent gaps in public leisure provision emerging.
- Reduce the carbon output of facilities in receipt of funding, compared to baseline, in line with the government's Net Zero by 2050 objectives.
- Prioritise support in those areas of greatest socio-economic need (as evidenced by IMD level), where all other factors are equal.

1.9 The operator of Ramsgate Leisure Centre, Your Leisure, have been committed towards taking action to reduce energy consumption. For example, the pool and air temperatures have been reduced by 1 degree centigrade since December 2022. Operational teams have been challenged to ensure high standards of energy efficient housekeeping, such as ensuring lights are turned off when areas are not in use. Your

Leisure has a policy of changing any defective / failing lighting for LED equivalent where possible.

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 As part of the Carbon Reduction plan, which was commissioned by LASER Energy, the core carbon footprint of TDC was calculated. This included the buildings TDC owns and manages as well as the two leisure centres which are leased to Your Leisure. The total carbon footprint was 4054 tonnes and was dominated by:

- The heating of the estates and leisure centres
- The diesel used in our fleet, especially in the waste carrier vehicles

2.2 The first priority in the net zero strategy is to address the emissions from TDC owned and managed offices and buildings, including the two leisure centres.

2.3 The Net Zero Strategy and Carbon Reduction Plan is attached.

2.4 In procuring and tendering this programme, TDC anticipates using the LASER Energy Framework (Lot 4) and our internal procurement manager is reviewing the proposal and access agreement. This service offers support with survey and design, writing the specification, full project management of the scheme from start to finish, and tendering the work through a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). LASER have confirmed over 20+ suppliers and installers are on the Framework and are currently delivering similar rooftop solar panel installations on other leisure centres.

3.0 Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting of 16 April 2024 made the following recommendation to the Cabinet:

“Consideration be given by the Cabinet that all new buildings in Thanet should have solar photovoltaics (PVs) installed on them as a planning condition where physically possible.”

4.0 Options

4.1 Approve the recommendations 1-2. This is the recommended option to enable progress and the delivery of the scheme, and to ensure TDC takes advantage of the awarded grant funding from Sport England.

4.2 Amend the recommendations. This option is not recommended as in order to deliver the scheme to Sport England’s deadline (31st March 2025), TDC will need to tender and award the contract to an installer as soon as possible.

4.3 Reject the recommendations. This option is not recommended as TDC have pledged a climate emergency and subsequently developed a net zero strategy and Carbon

Reduction Plan, which includes decarbonising its estate, including Ramsgate Leisure Centre.

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Reporting to: Andreea Plant (Head of Property)

Annex List

Annex 1 - Net Zero Strategy

Annex 2 - Carbon Reduction Plan

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell (Director of Corporate Services - Section 151)

Matthew Sanham (Head of Finance and Procurement)

Legal: Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)