



Subject:	European City of Sport 2026 Programme
Date:	12 th May 2026
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Ryan Haire, Leisure Development Officer

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

- After Committee Decision**
- After Council Decision**
- Sometime in the future**
- Never**

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide members with an update on proposals to deliver two funding programmes in partnership with sports organisations that will support delivery of the City of Sport Strategy and increase participation in sport and physical activity. The Funding will also help meet the outcomes of the Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to note the contents of the report and;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note that £80,000 underspend from the Support for Sport Fund (Tranche 2) is reallocated to the City of Sport Funding pot; • Agree that the total funding pot for the City of Sport Funding Programme £220,000 which includes £140,000 already approved by members and is allocated as follows • Showcase Events - £100,000 is allocated to sporting organisations for showcase event, with who have already submitted proposals. • Members approve the funding for the showcase events already included in this report • Members approve that officers work with other sporting organisations and allocate the remaining showcase event budget following any relevant due diligence process is followed. • Grassroots Programme - £120,000 is allocated through an closed call expression of interest process with sporting bodies engaged directly to make applications up to a maximum of £10,000.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>ACES Europe have confirmed that Belfast was successful in securing the designation of European City of Sport for 2026 (Jan -Dec). ACES is a non-profit association based in Brussels and award this accolade each year, recognising the best cities, towns and regions across Europe to take part in sport. The successful bid will give the city an opportunity to showcase the excellent sports and leisure facilities provided by Belfast City Council along with the rich sporting heritage of the city.</p> <p>3.2 Following a successful community launch weekend in late January 2026, our focus has now moved from application to delivery and officers are continuing to work with relevant internal services and strategic partners to expand the outline programme of activities and branding opportunities into a robust detailed programme.</p> <p>3.3 Obligations to ACES as a designated European City of Sport for 2026. It is important to note that as a European City of Sport, Belfast must comply with the general regulations as set out by ACES for successful cities these in summary include:</p> <p>3.4 Quarterly reporting submission of reports to ACES commencing from 1 Apr 2026 and focusing on the noted requirements. Each report should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of the activities carried out, • Photographic material, • Media coverage and press impact.

3.5	<p>These reports allow ACES to monitor the correct use and promotion of the title, ensure compliance with the Regulations, and coordinate actions and events in the most effective manner. Therefore, it is important that we ensure the application is followed up, with clear, tangible actions that will meet the aims of the programme which, more importantly, will have a positive outcome for our residents.</p>
3.6	<p>One of the most important aspects of the City of Sport implementation plan is working in close collaboration with our sporting partners, these are the organisations who have expertise in working with grassroots clubs and associations to provide excellent programmes and activities across all ages and abilities.</p>
3.7	<p>A report was submitted to March's SP&R Committee, members agreed to allocate a non-recurrent budget of £140,000 for programmes that will be delivered by our partners.</p>
3.8	<p>As part of yearly Sports Development Programme, Member are advised that the Sports Development team have completed this first open call for our yearly small and medium grants through our Support for Sport programme which have now allocated funding to 72 organizations. Members are advised that not all the budget was allocated and are requesting that the remaining budget of £80,000 will be aligned to the European City of Sport, this will provide an overall funding budget of £220,000.</p>
3.9	<p>Officers are recommending that this overall budget is aligned to two streams of work as follows</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Grassroots programmes to build participation - Total Budget £120,000. 2) Events to showcase the sporting talents of Belfast – Total Budget £100,000.
3.10	<p>1) Grassroots Programme (£100,000)</p> <p>Officers are seeking approval from members to undertake an closed call expression of interest application process for Sporting Bodies to receive funding of up to £10,000. The programme will be worked up in more detail by officers, however the criteria will require that any successful applicant will have to show how their programme aligns to the outcomes included in the physical activity and sports development strategy to increase participation and showcase events. Due to the challenging timelines, we are seeking approval to award funding on completion of the assessment process and report back to members to update on progress of successful projects.</p>
3.11	<p>2) Showcase Events (£120,000)</p> <p>Current Requests for Funding - As part of our work to making a successful application to be awarded City of Sport status, officers have been working with partners on potential showcasing</p>

events that will form part of our implementation plan. A summary of four potential events are outlined below, members are asked to consider funding request from the named organisations who will showcase events align with the European City of Sport outcomes required from ACES.

3.12 Cricket Ireland (seeking a contribution) will be hosting three international events within Belfast over the next 3 months; these Key fixtures include:

Ireland vs New Zealand Test Match (27–30 May 2026)

- The second Test match ever held in Northern Ireland
- Featuring the top-ranked Test team in the world

Ireland vs India

- Expected to be the highest-profile cricket event ever hosted at Stormont
- Previous fixtures between Ireland and India attracted over 100 million viewers
- Presents a unique opportunity to engage Belfast's Indian and wider South Asian communities

Ireland vs Afghanistan (ODI Series)

- A five-match series, with three matches scheduled at Stormont

3.13 Boxing Ireland (seeking £50,000) will be hosting a Commonwealth games international camp in Belfast which will see over 100 competitors from across the world stay in our city to prepare for the Commonwealth games.

Boxing Ireland want to brand the camp as part of the European City of Sport and invite boxers from across the city to attend the elite sparring sessions and engage with the boxers to promote the support.

The cost of the camp will be around £300,000 and Boxing Ireland have requested **£50,000** from Belfast City Council.

3.14 Athletics Northern Ireland (seeking £8,000) have organised a celebration programme for the 50th Anniversary of the Mary Peters Track and to be part of and support the City's status as European City of Sport. The events will involve:

An International Athletics Competition to be held at the Mary Peters Track on Saturday 23rd May, which incorporates the prestigious British Milers International events, and Lagan Valley Athletics Club's supplementary events programme which is a tribute to the 50th Anniversary of the Track. VIP's and athletes who competed in 1976, along with School children who were involved in the original Opening Ceremony have been invited to attend the celebrations.

	<p>In addition, organisers are hoping to hold a special Throws Events weekend as part of the 50th Celebrations, with a "Master class" and seminar attracting international Throws coaches. This will give athletes the opportunity to compete at the International on Saturday 23rd May and then participate in the Specialised Coaching and Seminars on Sunday 24th May.</p> <p>This year is very exciting for Athletics with high profile media coverage at the weekend with the World Indoor Athletics Championships. World Class athlete Kate O'Connor who regularly trains at the Mary Peters Track won a World Indoor Bronze Medal breaking the Irish National Record in the Pentathlon.</p> <p>The amount requested for these events is £8,000.</p> <p>3.15 Members are advised that as work on the City of Sport implementation progresses other sports bodies may request financial support from Belfast City Council for showcase events. We are seeking approval that officers will assess relevant applications via an expression of interest form which will capture future events, costs and outcomes and the Director of Neighbourhood Services will have delegated authority to award funding.</p> <p>3.16 <u>Financial Implications</u> If members agree to the reallocation of £80,000 from our Support for Sport Programme the City of Sport has an overall budget of £220,000. This is included in current revenue budgets</p> <p>3.17 <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment</u> This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/Good Relations and rural needs considerations.</p>
4.0	Attachments
	N/A