



Title of Report:	Accelerated Approval Pathway for Externally Funded Capital Projects
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 June 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)	
Strategic Theme	P3 Creating Conditions to Deliver Opportunities for our Borough P5 Governance, Quality & Continuous Improvement
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Head of Funding Unit

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	Long-term objective

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	L&D Capital Projects Approx £2-£3m p.a. (funded element variable)
Included in Current Year Estimates	Yes
Capital	100%
Code	Will be assigned per project
Staffing Costs	Staff time

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	N/A

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to request approval for an accelerated approval pathway for Leisure & Development Capital Projects in receipt of external funding and subject to strict external funding deadlines.

2.0 Background & Approvals to Date

2.1 In 2014 Members adopted the Council 4 Stage Capital Approval Process:

1. Stage (1) work; approve Strategic Outline Case (SOC) to undertake proportional Scoping, Feasibility and business case work (*£ circa 1% total capital cost estimate*);
2. Stage (2) work; approve Outline Business Case (OBC), complete Procurement to Final Tender Report and produce Full Business Case (*£ circa 2% - 3% of total capital cost estimate*);
3. Stage (3) work; approve / appoint winning tenderer, sign contract and manage construction (*£ up to 110% of total capital cost estimate*);
4. Stage (4) work; approve handover of asset into service and manage operations.

2.2 In May 2024 the Leisure & Development Committee were presented with the Capital Project listing for Leisure & Development which included c.65 projects with a total cost of c.£70m at various stages of the 4-stage capital process.

A summary of the L&D projects at each stage of the capital process was provided:

- Stage 4 (In-use): 18 projects at a cost of £8.1m.
- Stage 3 (Construction): 9 projects at a cost of £7.2m.
- Stage 2 (FBC): 14 projects at a cost of £55.2m.
- Stage 1 (OBC): 6 projects at a cost £1m.
- Stage 0 (SOC): 17 projects with no cost estimate.

2.3 In June 2024 Council agreed a new assessment process for the scoring and prioritisation of the proposed capital projects. The purpose of this was to ensure that Council develops capital projects that meet a recognised need, are affordable and deliver the highest benefit for the community.

2.4 In June 2024 Members were informed that the overall Capital Programme is heavily subscribed and currently unaffordable within the planning horizon for the following 5 years. Capital projects are financed in the main by a mix of Public Works loans, capital reserves, asset disposals and external grant funding. Council has been successful in reducing its loan financing from a peak of £76m to below £50m in recent years and securing substantial levels of external funding from government on major projects, which has eased pressure on Council resources.

2.5 The development of the capital projects list continues to be hugely reliant on external funding. However, this can present significant challenges when funders requirements and deadlines cannot be achieved due to the Council's lengthy 4 stage approval process for Capital project approval. Failure to achieve strict funding deadlines puts external funding at risk. This recently presented as an issue for Council's PEACEPLUS capital projects and approval was sought from Council to approve an accelerated approval pathway to ensure the funding was not put at risk.

2.6 In May 2026 Council granted approval for 2 PEACEPLUS projects to progress from stage 1 to completion under delegated authority. Without this accelerated approval

pathway, the funding deadlines could not be achieved, the funding would be withdrawn, and the projects would be at risk of not proceeding.

- 2.7 The accelerated approval pathway was specific to 2 x PEACEPLUS Projects, namely Causeway Trails (Layde Path, Cottage Wood & Ronán's Way) and Girona Coastal Path, Portballintrae Project.

The Stage 1 reports were presented to the L&D Committee, and the following process was agreed for their progression and completion in line with the funder's requirements and timeframes:

1. Agreement that the PEACEPLUS Partnership continues to progress these projects under delegated authority from Council, proceeding to complete all Capital Project Stages through to completion.
2. Agreed that should the funding situation change a report will be brought back into Committee requesting any necessary approvals.
3. Details of Tender Assessments and Reports to be taken to Capital Projects Working Group (CPWG) for review and approval prior to proceeding to each Stage.
4. Information and update reports at each stage are to be brought to the L&D Committee to update elected members on progress and costs.

This approach recognised the need for continued robust scrutiny and good governance around Capital Projects decision making.

3.0 Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the accelerated approval pathway for externally funded projects where the funding would be at risk if the acceleration was not applied.

The following pathway is recommended:

1. Stage 1 reports brought to L&D Committee for approval.
2. Funding Unit progresses these projects under delegated authority, proceeding to complete all Capital Project Stages through to completion.
3. Tender Assessments and Reports to be taken to Capital Projects Working Group (CPWG) for review and approval prior to progressing to the next stage.
4. Information reports, including tender reports will be presented to the L&D committee as each stage is progressed.
5. Should the funding situation change a report will be brought back into Committee requesting any necessary approvals.