

Scrutiny Briefing Note

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel have asked to monitor progress on the following issues. This briefing contains the latest position as at 13/10/2020.

Subject: Playing Pitch Strategy Delivery

Purpose of this Briefing Note.

To update Scrutiny Panel on a report which Cabinet will shortly consider in respect of playing pitch investment proposals in advance of an anticipated decision by Cabinet.

Background.

Cabinet formally adopted the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) in 2018, whilst delegating to officers the authority to make necessary changes resulting from negotiations with Sport England and National Governing Bodies (NGB) of Sport. Those negotiations are now complete and the Leadership Sponsor in consultation with the Portfolio Holder will record the necessary changes within the strategy documentation and a corresponding formal Officer Decision Record.

The PPS is a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the available community pitch provision in North East Lincolnshire, not just Council owned pitch provision, but also includes Academy, Schools, Colleges and private Clubs.

The PPS has been developed as a partnership between a range of agencies including the Council, Sport England, National Governing Bodies of sport including football, cricket, rugby union and hockey and local football, hockey, rugby union, and cricket clubs.

The PPS has been developed in 5 Stages A to D, and the implementation phase Stage E, it has been overseen by a Council led Steering Group made up of representatives from: Sport England, England Hockey, NELC Planning, Grounds Maintenance, Estates and Lincs Inspire Ltd, England and Wales Cricket Board, Football Association and Rugby Football Union.

The PPS Stages A to D confirmed that some (identified) playing fields are surplus to requirements and in poor locations in terms of equality and accessibility of provision which could be sold for (Housing) development to provide funds for new improved quality playing fields elsewhere within North East Lincolnshire (NEL).

The provision of new replacement playing fields of equivalent size and improved quality would meet the requirements of Sport England Playing Fields (Policy Exemption 4) and/or if the provision of a new development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility. The provision of which, would be suitably beneficial as to outweigh the loss of the playing field (Policy Exemption 5). The playing fields identified as surplus to requirements (i.e. for Housing developments) currently have no pitch sports participating on them.

The PPS action plan which will be implemented at Stage E of the PPS seeks to put in place sufficient, fit for purpose, quality Community Sports Hub sites, whereby existing multi-pitch sites (which are easier to manage and operate) are maintained and where possible new Community Accessible Sports Hub sites are developed.

The PPS states that exact provision on these new sites should be agreed with the NGBs and Sport England as and when these replacement facilities become available.

This decision is the first part in the realisation of necessary playing pitch improvements at hub sites as set out in the PPS. The report sets out the process of consultation and evaluation which officers have been through with partners and local stakeholders in order to be able to present to Cabinet Shortlisted Options and a recommended investment proposal based on a variety of factors which are set out in this feasibility report.

The Cabinet report will seek Cabinet authority to progress the recommended investment proposal to a planning submission and delegates the authority to officers to undertake all the necessary technical and detailed work to that stage.

Furthermore the report outlines the implications of this important strategic investment, not just in terms of the need to improve the sports, recreation and leisure estate of the council to offer greater opportunities for improved health, wellbeing and sustainable communities but also because of the clear and vitally important interdependencies to the Council's Housing Delivery Programme.

The delivery of the recommended investment proposal is the first phase of the council's obligation (to fulfil its commitment to improve pitch provision) to government agencies and partners such as Sport England and Homes England.

The Proposal

NELC's Project Team engaged external consultants specialising in extensive knowledge and skills in the formation of site requirements using local, national recognised intelligence and methodology to undertake a Feasibility Report of the site, located at Clee Fields, Ladysmith Road, Grimsby will also include the adjacent King George V Athletics Stadium, Weelsby Road, Grimsby to provide the first scheme of investment required to fulfil the requirements of the Playing Pitch Strategy and in turn release land for Housing development.

The process included an evaluation of 19 site variations, leading to four (4) possible options which resulted in the preferred option and this proposal.

The mix of facilities proposed, is in line with the Local Plan and PPS requirements and has been developed in consultation with local stakeholders and potential partners. The feasibility has been developed by using examples of industry best practice, local and across the country intelligence, in order to provide as close to realistic revenue costs and where possible cost neutral proposals.

The outcome of the preferred option will provide access to high quality sporting facilities for citizens in adjacent local neighbourhoods which are in the 10%-30% most deprived in the country; additional Football demand for 3G pitch capacity – to meet training and competitive needs identified in the PPS - and meet Rugby Union demand for additional floodlit training capacity.

The Feasibility Study in line the Playing Pitch Strategy, proposes investment of:

- One (1) floodlit 3G AGP (106 x70m) suitable for Football
- One (1) floodlit 3G AGP (106 x70m) suitable for Football and Rugby including in the specification a World Rugby Rule 22 compliant shock pad.
- A new changing room to serve the AGPs (Clee Fields)

- Car Park Resurfacing (Clee Fields)
- Car Park Extension – Grasscrete, x-grid or similar (KGV Stadium)
- Athletics Track Refurbishment (Track Mark)
- Athletics Track Grandstand and Changing Rooms investment
- Existing Sports Changing Rooms Refurbishment (Clee Fields)
- Grass Pitch Improvements

The Project Team, which includes Lincs Inspire Ltd representatives, would seek an alternative provider, other than the Council, to manage and operate the site once complete. Under existing contractual arrangements, Lincs Inspire Ltd are to be given first refusal (subject to a mutually beneficial agreement being place) to operate the site in the first instance. Until or unless Lincs Inspire Ltd choose not to do so, then other options for operators would be explored.

Reason for Decision

This decision is the first part in the realisation of necessary playing pitch improvements at hub sites as set out in the PPS. This decision determines which investment option Cabinet would like officers to progress through to a planning submission and delegates the authority to officers to undertake all the necessary technical and detailed work to that stage.

This decision is important because of the interdependencies associated with the Council's housing delivery programme. Specifically, that NELC must provide assurance (by way of a detailed planning application) to government agencies including Homes England and Sport England regarding the Council's intention to invest in playing pitch provision. Providing this assurance prevents these government agencies from objecting to any detailed planning application for either the Western and Matthew Humberstone sites. This also means the Council should meet the grant funding it has already secured from Home England to support any future residential developments on Western site.

Mitigation Sites

In mitigation of the surplus pitches, the Council has identified existing and new sites owned by the Council to enhance by way of capital investment, to meet existing and future need for pitches and facilities within the Borough, specifically;

- Phase/Project 1 - Clee Fields,
- Phase/Project 2 – Barrett's Recreation Ground (including the former Grimsby Swimming Pool site),
- Phase/Project 3 - Vacant land at the allotment site at Carr Lane

The proposed phasing of these proposed developments is as they are listed above.

Feasibility Study – Clee Fields/KGV Stadium

A feasibility Study to consider options for investment in facilities at Clee Fields and the neighbouring King George V Stadium has been prepared. The ultimate purpose of the exercise is to provide the Council with sufficient detailed information about the strategic approach to investment, leading to a more financially sustainable and viable mix of facilities.

The combined sites currently comprise:

- Natural turf playing fields
- Disused hockey artificial grass pitch (AGP)
- Sports hall (leased to Clee Fields Management Co. Ltd)
- Former youth centre (leased to Trustees of Fusion Boxing Fit)
- Changing rooms

- Car parking
- 400m floodlit athletics track and infield
- Grandstand with changing rooms, small gym and studio space
- Two (2) Third Generation (3G) 5v5 AGPs
- Car parking.

Evaluation Process

A longlist and shortlist of options have been considered against:

- Strategic Need
- Community Preference
- Capital Cost
- Revenue Generation
- Operating Cost
- Deliverability and Sustainability

Option five (5) in the feasibility report, has emerged as the highest scoring option, and therefore the preferred option, as it benefits from:

- Higher Community Preference Weighting when compared to other options
- Higher Capital Cost Weighting when compared to other options
- Higher Operating Cost Weighting when compared to other options
- Higher Sustainability Weighting when compared to other options.

Preferred Option five (5) proposed site layout plan



Headline Works

Essential and Backlog Maintenance Items
Car Parking Works
Athletics Track Resurfacing
Athletics Grandstand Works
Refurbished Football Changing Rooms
Grass Pitch Improvements
Artificial Grass Pitch Works
2 x 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (1 x Rugby Compliant)
New Buildings
New Pavilion Facility

Capital Costs

The recommended investment proposal will also require a £50K annual capital commitment as a sinking fund as per a condition of the grant from 2022/23 for approximately 25 years.

At this stage, it is proposed that a budget of £3.2m is required to develop the preferred proposal. This is expected to require £2.2m of the Council's capital finance (the internal business case has been approved). Officers will look to secure the other £1m external funding (as yet to be secured) from grant sources such as the Football Foundation to deliver the recommended proposals.

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