

## **CABINET**

<b>DATE</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> December 2022
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Cllr Tom Furneaux, Portfolio Holder Culture, Heritage & the Visitor Economy
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Sharon Wroot, Executive Director Environment, Economy & Resources
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Parks Tennis Funding and Operation
<b>STATUS</b>	Open
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF NO.</b>	CB 12/22/07

### **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS**

The refurbishment of tennis courts on parks will contribute to priorities across the Council's Outcomes Framework supporting the delivery of 'Stronger Economy' and 'Stronger Communities'. The specific focus on securing grant funding to invest in quality facilities in parks will support residents to become more active, develop high quality environments, promote good health & wellbeing, enhance community interaction and support deliver better quality lives.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents the opportunity to apply for grant funding to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to secure investment to improve the condition of tennis courts within parks. This includes recommendations for changes in how tennis courts are operated on parks that would bring forward the introduction of fees and charges to deliver a more financially sustainable operating model.

The report seeks Cabinet approval to apply for grant funding and if successful, proceed with all necessary construction and operator procurement activity, and introduce changes to the operation of tennis courts across Barretts Recreation Ground, Haverstoe Park, and Sussex Recreation Ground.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the submission of a grant application to the Lawn Tennis Association for investment into tennis courts at Barretts Recreation Ground, Haverstoe Park, and Sussex Recreation Ground and subject to a successful grant application:
2. Delegates to the Executive Director Environment, Economy, and Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy authority to ensure that all necessary actions are carried out in order to commence and approve the procurement, and thereafter tender, award and implement refurbishment works to Barretts Recreation Ground, Haverstoe Park, and Sussex Recreation Ground.
3. Delegates to the Executive Director Environment, Economy, and Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor

Economy authority to ensure that all necessary actions are carried out to appoint an operator following appropriate procurement exercises for the delivery of tennis at Barretts Recreation Ground, Haverstoe Park, and Sussex Recreation Ground that includes the implementation of a fees & charges model for parks tennis.

4. Authorises the Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to execute and complete all requisite legal documentation in relation to the matters outlined above.

## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

To enable the Council to submit a grant application to the LTA to secure external funding and subject to the application being successful, implement an operator model for the delivery of parks tennis that includes the introduction of fees & charges.

### **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1 In October 2021, the Government announced it was investing £22m into public tennis courts across Britain. This funding, together with an investment from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) of £8.5m, is aimed at bringing public park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition back to life, for the benefit of their local community.
- 1.2 LTA national insight shows that just 16% of park users are happy with the ability and opportunity to book tennis courts and 40% of people are unaware of where their nearest local park tennis facility is. Nearly three quarters of park players, however, report that they would be keen to play more often if barriers around court quality, booking journey and programming were addressed.
- 1.3 Since early 2022, Officers have engaged closely with the LTA to discuss the potential for investment. There is an opportunity to work with the LTA to invest in and radically improve the quality of the tennis offer in parks across the borough.
- 1.4 In working with the LTA, the following parks across the borough were identified as locations that qualify for potential funding and investment. This assessment was based on a combination of current court quality, latent demand analysis and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranking. LTA demand analysis is based on participation insight from potential recreational players, within a ten-minute drive time catchment of the identified sites. The penetration number in the table below provides a strong evidence base that there is significant interest for social tennis and would therefore support the courts to run sustainably.

<b>Venue Name</b>	<b>Existing Courts</b>	<b>Penetration</b>
Barretts Rec Ground	8	1472
Haverstoe Park	2	871
Sussex Rec Ground	7	1114

- 1.5 In July 2022, the LTA engaged a Technical Services Consultant to conduct site visits to locations targeted for capital works. The purpose of these visits was to confirm current court quality, advise regarding upgrade works required and provide an estimated project cost. The technical reports have been assessed by Officers and the LTA, with the highlights included in Appendix 1.
- 1.6 The Authority will need to look at implementing an operator model, to drive tennis activity and bookings across the borough. There are number of different options to do this ranging from retaining the management in-house to fully outsourcing the management of the court bookings and on court activities.
- 1.7 The limitation of in-house capacity and tennis specialism points to exploring options for outsourcing the operation of the courts. The core advantages of this approach are:
- Income – agreed income through an operator agreement that can be reinvested back into court repairs and maintenance.
  - Technology support – operators will be responsible for uploading courses, managing sign up, booking communications etc.
  - Marketing & communication support – expertise on how to market tennis to park users to drive sign up and, where relevant, income etc.
  - Workforce development – operators are responsible for identifying coaches with capacity to deliver the agreed programme.
- 1.8 The LTA can support with developing an operator agreement, identifying potential operating partners in line with the Authority procurement process and existing leisure contract requirements. Operating agreements may include conditions around maximum court charges, maximum number of courts used for coaching, programme expectations around free tennis sessions and taster days etc, as well as any financial arrangements between the operator and Council.
- 1.9 The change in operation would include the introduction of online bookings, self-access control gates, and the implementation of fees & charges for court bookings. The move to charging for parks tennis courts would be supported by an element of free tennis programming to engage those where cost may be a barrier.
- 1.10 In the case of Haverstoe Park and Sussex Recreation Ground, there are existing agreements in place with established partners for the use of pavilions and amenities within the park. Any operating agreement for tennis will be developed with engagement from existing groups.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1 The application for grant funding to the LTA provides an opportunity to secure external investment into the borough.
- 2.2 The grant investment will place an obligation on the authority to maintain the courts for a 15-year period and the appointment of an operator that develops a sustainable model with appropriate fees and charges to fund future repairs and maintenance will be key.

- 2.3 Tennis courts on parks are currently free of charge with no booking system in place. Therefore, existing users and wider residents may raise concerns around the potential change in operation including the introduction of online booking and charges. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed identifying support around booking technology and cost. There are extensive national examples of where similar parks tennis operating models have been introduced successfully with options around free use programming and appropriate booking support to be considered as mitigation.

### **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1. The alternative is to do nothing, the existing courts are in a poor condition and based on existing budget, without external grant funding, current conditions are likely to remain or deteriorate further.

### **4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1. There is the potential for both positive and negative reputational implications for the Council if successful in applying for grant funding, as this would bring improvements to parks tennis, and the refurbishment of courts would be seen as a positive. However, it should be noted that there may be concerns raised around the introduction of charges, although the need for a level of income to support ongoing repairs and maintenance provides reasonable justification.
- 4.2. It is important to highlight that there have been ongoing concerns raised by residents around the condition of tennis courts and anti-social behaviour with particular focus around Barretts Recreation Ground. Securing external grant funding can support in addressing these challenges.
- 4.3. To support in positive delivery, an action plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service, covering communications requirements and channels to be used.

### **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1. Total cost for works is estimated to be £211,000 (final costs subject to contractor quotes obtained through LTAs procurement framework). Subject to successful grant funding application and criteria, there is the opportunity for this to be funded fully through the LTA investment programme.
- 5.2. If successful, the grant funding includes a 15-year obligation period for repairs and maintenance. The income generated from introducing a charging model for bookings, membership, and coaching on courts will support this, delivering a more sustainable approach.
- 5.3. It is important to note that if the grant were unsuccessful then the scheme would not be able to progress.

### **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. If successful, the grant investment and subsequent refurbishment of tennis courts will improve opportunities to play tennis across the population. This will include improving sporting opportunities for children and young people across tennis courts in parks. The LTA is focused on tennis operators introducing

programmes that cover all ages and standards of players at an affordable price and this is supported through both the LTA Youth Start programme and an element of free tennis offer within programming on parks.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. If successful, the grant investment and subsequent refurbishment of tennis courts will consider environmental implications and opportunities to ensure sustainability and low carbon initiatives are incorporated at every opportunity. This will include contributing to priorities such as developing active environments and promoting active travel to facilities.

## **8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

8.1. At the time of preparing this report, the matter is due to be considered by formal Tourism and Visitor Economy scrutiny panel on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. If the funding bid is successful, this would result in an estimated £211,000 of investment into the Council's Tennis facilities.

9.2. Any revenue implications will depend upon operator agreements that will be put in place following the investment, though it is hoped that these will be largely neutral, without any additional cost to the Council.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. The procurement exercises contemplated will be conducted so as to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, and supported by relevant officers.

10.2. The delegations sought are consistent with an exercise of this nature.

10.3. Officers should note that any award constitutes a further decision and will be subject to completion of an Officer Decision Record. Where key decision criteria are met such Officer Decision Record will be subject to call in. Award and implementation timelines should accommodate this.

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1. There are no direct HR implications.

## **12. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

12.1. If successful, the grant funding would have an impact on tennis court refurbishment and operation in the wards of Haverstoe, Park, and Sidney Sussex.

## **13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

13.1. Not applicable.

**14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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**COUNCILLOR TOM FURNEAUX**  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CULTURE, HERITAGE & THE VISITOR**  
**ECONOMY**

## Appendix 1 – Technical Survey Highlights

Venue Name	Project Scope	Approx Cost
Barretts Rec Ground 4x Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resurface &amp; Paint Courts 1-4, possible areas of rebuilding</li> <li>• New kerbing</li> <li>• New Perimeter fencing</li> <li>• Lite Gate Access system (link to online booking)</li> <li>• Net nets and Posts x 4</li> <li>• Southern 4 Courts removed for tennis use due to high renovation cost</li> </ul>	£88,000
Haverstoe Park 2x Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resurface &amp; Paint Courts 1-2, possible areas of rebuilding.</li> <li>• New kerbing</li> <li>• Retain existing fencing</li> <li>• Lite Gate Access system (link to online booking)</li> <li>• New nets and Posts x 2</li> </ul>	£43,000
Sussex Rec Ground 5x Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resurface &amp; Paint Courts 1-5</li> <li>• New fence line to enclose courts.</li> <li>• Lite Gate Access system (link to online booking)</li> <li>• New nets and Posts x 5</li> <li>• Far 2 courts in the worst condition (containing the 360m<sup>2</sup> root damaged area)</li> </ul>	£80,000