
SWEYNE PARK EXTENSION – YOUTH FOOTBALL PITCHES

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the development of youth football pitches at the rear of Rayleigh Leisure Centre and seeks a decision on how the pitches are to be booked/managed and which club(s) may be involved.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The development of the pitches has been progressing, with initial Ecological and Arboricultural surveys being completed in Autumn/Winter 2007/08. As a result of these surveys, further information was required regarding reptile habitats, with these surveys being carried out in March/April 2008 (due to dependency on weather conditions and the effect on reptile movement). It is anticipated that the planning application for change of use, including details of additional car parking spaces, will be submitted in May 2008, with ground works to begin in Autumn 2008. It is envisaged that the pitches will be available for use from September 2009.
- 2.2 During this period of surveying, officers have been meeting regularly with local clubs and the Essex County Football Association to discuss how best to make use of the pitches once in place.
- 2.3 Council officers have also met with the Football Foundation to discuss options for funding and what partnership work if any would be required, in order to access such funding.

3 CLUB & COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Officers have been undertaking consultations and discussions with both local clubs and the County Football Association for some months. All football clubs in the District were contacted about the plans and offered the opportunity to discuss them further. Six clubs returned the pro-forma detailing their interest, and were invited to a group meeting in October 2007. Of those six, four clubs came to the meeting; the other clubs have not furthered their interest in this project.
- 3.2 The four clubs that remain interested in the project are: Downhall United Youth Football Club, Hambro Colts Youth Football Club, Rayleigh Boys Youth Football Club, Elmwood Colts Football Club.
- 3.3 Discussions with the County Football Association have been focused on the availability of pitches, displacement of teams (can one club be based at the site with the number of pitches offered) and assistance with funding information.

Club Information

Details regarding the four clubs are as follows:-

1. Elmwood Colts Football Club
 - 10 Teams in Club
 - 110-120 members
 - Looking at either booking or leasing options with repair and maintenance responsibility.
 - Cash available as match funding for external grant applications, willing to apply to Lottery & Sport Soccer for funding.
 - Football Association Charter Standard Club
 - Current Match facility: John Fisher and Edwards Hall School
 - Current training facility: Various parks & playing fields including Sweyne Park, Oakwood Park.
 - Interested in use of facility under a lease agreement or just booking individual pitches.
2. Rayleigh Boys Youth Football Club
 - 30 Teams in Club
 - 380 members
 - Cash available as match funding for external grant applications, willing to apply to Football Association and Football Foundation for funding.
 - Football Association Charter Development Club
 - Current Match facility: Fairview, Grove Park, Rayleigh Sports & Social.
 - Current training facility: King Georges Park, Grange, John Fisher, Fairview Park, Grove Park, Love Lane School, Grove Wood School.
 - Looking for sole use of facility under a lease agreement with repair and maintenance responsibility.

3. Hambro Colts Youth Football Club
 - 18 Teams in Club
 - 250 members
 - Cash available as match funding for external grant applications, willing to apply to Football Foundation for funding.
 - Football Association Charter Standard Club
 - Current training facility: Rawreth Lane
 - Current Match facility: Rocheway Adult Education Centre, Rochford.
 - Disability Sports Activities currently undertaken and further planning/development plans in place.
 - Have submitted action plans as part of the Active Rochford, (Rochford's Community Sports Network), funding application to the Community Initiative Fund. Supplying match funding and leading on disability sports project.
 - Interested in use of facility under a lease agreement or just booking individual pitches.

4. Down Hall United Youth Football Club
 - 2 Teams in Club
 - 27 members
 - No cash available to match fund, no response as to possible funding options.
 - Not a Football Association Charter Standard Club
 - Current training facility: Down Hall Primary School
 - Current Match facility: Down Hall Primary School
 - Club are looking to expand year on year.
 - They are only interested in using the pitches on a bookings basis and not having a lease for sole use of the whole area.

4 METHODS OF MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Two potential methods of management of the pitches have been considered. Firstly, for the new pitches to be booked out in the same way as the District's other pitches, as part of the Grounds Maintenance Contract, or secondly, to be leased with full repair and management responsibility to a football club on a peppercorn rent.
- 4.2 Inclusion within the grounds maintenance contract would create an additional cost to the Council of £7,000 per year to cover ongoing maintenance, lining of the pitches, grass cutting etc. However, the pitches would then be available for booking by any junior clubs in the area on either a week by week or seasonal basis.
- 4.3 Leasing to a club would have no direct financial implication to the Council whilst the club was financially stable. If this were the option that Members chose, then discussions would take place with the club around specific details to be included within the lease e.g. number of games to be played on the pitches, timings of the games, accessing potential external funding streams etc. One option would be to grant the chosen club a lease at a peppercorn rent as it would be expected that they would have to assume full responsibility for maintenance, grass cutting etc. However, Members have already decided to review lease arrangements generally with a view to bringing them in line with one another and so any lease which might be negotiated now would need to contain provisions allowing changes if these become necessary as a result of that review.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 From the range of meetings and information gained from the various local junior clubs, and also the Football Association, the first three clubs mentioned in section 3 of the report, namely Elmwood Colts, Rayleigh Boys and Hambro Colts are all well established clubs, operating a number of teams across a range of age groups, all have some level of Football Association Charter Accreditation, and any of the three clubs would appear to be "appropriate" choices for a lease of the area.
- 5.2 Taking the "leasing to a club" option would remove the maintenance cost from the Council but would limit usage of the five pitches to just one club and this club (dependent on the number of teams it operates) may still need to book pitches at other locations around the District. Whilst including the operation of the pitches within the grounds maintenance contract would incur an additional cost to the Council, accessibility to use of the pitches would potentially be available to all clubs in the area and, therefore, addressing the issue of trying to choose one club when all three clubs mentioned above demonstrate similar credentials in consideration of sole use.
- 5.3 Regarding the possibility of accessing grant funding through the Football Foundation scheme, this could be achieved either through working directly

with one particular club or through the option of booking out to a range of clubs.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

Operational Risk

- 6.1 Although all the interested football clubs are well established, if the leasing option was selected, and at some stage in the future the chosen club was to fold, the Council would need to pick up the operation and maintenance of these pitches.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If the booking and operation of the football pitches are to be included within the grounds maintenance contract, there would be an additional cost of £7,000 per annum to the Council. If the pitches were to be leased to a specific club, then it would be expected that the responsibility for the maintenance of the pitches would like with the club and therefore, no cost to the Council.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Board **RESOLVES** to consider the content of this report and to decide whether it wishes to operate the new football pitches to the rear of Rayleigh Leisure Centre:-
- (a) as part of the grounds maintenance contract or;
 - (b) by leasing the pitches to one junior football club and, if option (b) is chosen, which club should be selected for a leasing agreement to be developed.

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Background Papers:-

None

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