
SWEYNE PARK, RAYLEIGH, EXTENSION (FORWARD PLAN REF. 12/07)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress being made in relation to the Sweyne Park Extension Project, and in particular, to gain approval to the design lay-out of the site. The report also seeks Members' views on the future management / usage of the facility.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 As part of the development of the former Park School site in Rayleigh, there are six acres of land that have been designated as open space land and, more specifically, for use as football pitches (preferably junior and mini pitches as there is a shortage within the District compared to adult pitches).
- 2.2 This land was transferred by the County Council to the District as part of the overall package that also involved land for the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and is located to the rear of Rayleigh Leisure Centre, adjoining the existing Sweyne Park open space.

3 PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 Following the completion of the leisure centre, an arrangement was made with Wimpey Homes, who are building on the opposite side of the site, for them to locate their compound on the "pitches site" on a temporary basis. In return, Wimpey agreed not only to remove all their equipment/rubble etc., but also to reinstate the area of land that they occupied, undertaking ground works which left the area in a state ready for seeding. This work has now been completed.
- 3.2 Over the last few months, and in order to maintain the area in a reasonably tidy condition, it has been cleared of vegetation and weed growth. Wimpey, as part of their planning conditions, have also now completed the installation of a new bridle path that is marked on the design lay-out, included as Appendix A to this report.
- 3.3 A planning application has been submitted for change of use for the pitches and associated car parking, with an anticipated timescale of the end of October for this application to be considered by the Development Control Committee.
- 3.4 A report was taken to the West Area Committee of 4 September 2007 which also gave information on the progress of this project. Members of the Area Committee acknowledged the progress that has been made so far and were keen to see the project further developed, with a view to having the pitches in use by September 2009. There were a number of comments from members of the public attending the Area Committee that, whilst in favour of the pitches, did make reference to the extra traffic that could be generated in this area.

-
- 3.5 Consideration has also been given to trying to access external funding to assist the financing of this project and, as a result, officers have been in discussions with the Football Association about the possibility of grant funding under the Football Foundation banner. This has included site meetings with the Football Association's representative and the commissioning of a Soil Assessment and General Advisory Report outlining the approximate costs of the various elements of the project. This is a pre-requisite of a funding application, and the initial indication is that a bid for this project could be successful.
- 3.6 A quotation has been obtained for the pitch preparation works that includes general ground works, drainage, seeding etc. This quotation is from a specialist contractor, previously employed by this Authority, who is fully aware of the particular issues associated with the type of ground conditions in this area of the County and is considerably cheaper than the estimated costs detailed in the consultant's report mentioned above.
- 3.7 Access to external funding could be further enhanced by working in partnership with a local junior club. An approach was received from Rayleigh Boys Football Club, expressing their wish to use the site as their "home base" and putting forward options for management of the site that involved them maintaining the pitches at their cost.
- 3.8 In order to fairly assess all the usage/management options, a letter was sent to all football association affiliated junior clubs in the District requesting them to register their interest in use of the site. Five replies were received from Rayleigh Boys Football Club, Hambro Colts, Downhall United Youth Football Club, Rayleigh Raiders Girls and Ladies Football Club and Hawkwell Athletic Football Club. A follow-up meeting has been arranged with these five clubs for 4 October, to gather further details about each of the clubs and their proposals/requirements. It is hoped that information from this meeting with the clubs can be brought to this meeting of the Executive Board for consideration.
- 3.9 As previously mentioned, Appendix A shows the proposed lay-out of the site, which includes the suggested number of pitches, additional car parking, the new bridle path constructed by Wimpey and its general position in relation to Sweyne Park and Rayleigh Leisure Centre. The aim of the design is to make the most of the available space, locating the pitches in the most appropriate location and taking account the pitches to car parking ratio, which with junior pitches is particularly important. The proposal is to have a mix of five junior and mini pitches, as a need for both has been identified.
- 3.10 The proposed lay-out would avoid having to divert the newly constructed bridle path and also keeps the pitches further away from the neighbouring houses and site spine road. It also brings into use the remote square of land that up until now has been part of Sweyne Park.

- 3.11 With regard to costings for the project, the actual creation of the pitches could be met within this year's budget allocation of £50,000. A further budget bid of £75,000 is being made for 2008/09 in respect of the cost of providing the car parking and changing facilities. The size, and therefore the cost, of the changing facilities may be influenced by the conditions attached to any external funding if a bid is successful.
- 3.12 Subject to approval of this design lay-out and approval of the planning application, the target for the pitches to come into use is September 2009.

4 NEXT STEPS

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| 4.1 | • Meeting with junior clubs | 4 October 2007 |
| | • Planning Application determination | December 2007 |
| | • Finalise lease/management arrangements | November 2007 |
| | • Commence pitch preparation works | January 2008 |
| | • Submit funding applications for external grants | Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 |

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of the initial ground preparation works can be met from this year's budget allocation of £50,000. Further funding will be the subject of a budget bid in the 2008/09 budget setting process and also applications for external grant funding (including possibly in partnership with a junior club).

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Executive Board **RESOLVES** to agree to the lay-out of the site and to give a view on the future management/usage of the site.

Jeremy Bourne

Head of Community Services

Background Papers:-

None

For further information please contact Jeremy Bourne on:-

Tel:-

E-Mail:-

If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

