

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 12 JUNE 2013**

**PORTFOLIO: ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE**

**REPORT FROM HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**SUBJECT: THE MANAGEMENT OF PAVILIONS AND FOOTBALL PITCHES**

**1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 That from the 2014/15 football season, clubs shall be required to make their own setting up arrangements on match days and that staffing resources provided by the Council shall be reduced to emergency call-out cover.
- 1.2 That a savings target of £25,000 shall be identified for the service for 2014/15 within the MTFS.
- 1.3 That stock condition surveys and pitch surveys shall be undertaken where appropriate in order that a strategy for improvements can be determined. The outcome of which shall be reported for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget process.
- 1.4 That approval is given for capital expenditure of £56,700 for the subdivision of the pavilions at Fairview and Ashingdon to enable the play groups and sports users to operate independently. Subsequently, leases or market rental arrangements shall be agreed in accordance with the Council's normal policy.
- 1.5 That no further action shall be taken at the current time in respect of the offer made by the Town and Parish Councils to take over the management of these facilities.

**2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE No: 27/12**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 As part of the review of expenditure on grounds maintenance, the costs of running the pavilions and providing football facilities have been assessed. This indicates an annual net cost of £99,000 comprising £37,000 for cleaning and maintenance of pavilions, £25,000 for utilities, £41,000 for marking out and pitch cultivation, plus £36,000 for weekend staff cover on match days. These costs are offset by an income of approximately £40,000 per annum.
- 3.2 In March a consultation was undertaken with football clubs, the play groups who use the pavilions and the Town and Parish Councils, to assess their response to a series of options. These included:-
  - (1) Retaining the existing weekend cover arrangements for football match days and increasing fees by 50%.

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- (2) Retaining existing fee levels but reducing the weekend staff cover to provide an emergency resource only, leaving the clubs to make their own arrangements on match days.
  - (3) For the clubs or Town/Parish Councils to manage a pavilion at a given site. The grounds and football bookings would still be managed by the Council and a club would not be able to secure exclusive rights. A payment would be made by the Council for providing this service.
- 3.3 A total of 14 responses were received, one from each of the play groups (two), four from Town and Parish Councils, seven from football clubs and one from the Essex County Football Association.
- 3.4 The consensus of opinion on the football options were to favour Option 2, to retain the existing fee levels, but for the clubs to take on responsibility for match day arrangements. It is considered that this option could save in the order of £18,000 in staffing costs, which together with reductions in heating and cleaning costs should provide annual savings in the order of £25,000 from 2014/15.
- 3.5 Initial surveys have been undertaken of the pavilions at King George V grounds, Ashingdon and Fairview open space in Rayleigh. These indicate that a significant capital investment will be required in the longer term. It is considered, however, that these two pavilions should be sub-divided in order to reduce energy consumption and enable energy usage by the two activities to be accurately apportioned and service costs recharged more appropriately.
- 3.6 The proposed works include the construction of partitions to physically segregate the buildings and subdivision of the currently shared sanitary facilities. It will also include the installation of either separate heating systems and/or zone valves, to control the flow of water in the heating system and thermal insulation works. An estimate of £56,700 has been identified for this purpose, which is included in this year's capital programme.
- 3.7 Once the buildings have been subdivided, it will be possible to determine a more realistic rent or alternatively offer a lease to the play groups. Any new leases will be agreed by the Portfolio Holder in accordance with our existing policy.
- 3.8 Expressions of interest were made by the Town Council and Hullbridge Parish Council to take on further responsibility for the management of pavilions and the football pitches on match days, subject to further information being provided. This further information cannot be provided until stock condition surveys are undertaken of the relevant facilities. It is, therefore, intended that no further action is taken in respect of these expressions of interest, until these surveys are completed.

**4 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Further information regarding the consultation responses is available on request. The play groups did make the point, which is acknowledged, that they have taken on additional responsibilities since the demise of the main grounds maintenance contractor. It is appropriate to identify that these groups currently pay only a session rate for the use of the facilities, yet leave items in storage on a permanent basis.
- 4.2 Of the responses received from football clubs, one expressed a preference to secure a lease for the whole premises. The club concerned already have a lease for the part used as a licensed club. This matter will be considered separately by the Portfolio Holder once the stock condition survey has been undertaken.
- 4.3 It is also noteworthy that the Essex County Football Association were opposed to any changes and were concerned about the financial impact of the proposed changes in a sport that provides health, well being and social benefits.

**5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 A series of alternative options were considered as part of the consultation process over the management of pavilions as detailed in paragraph 3.2, which ran for one month. There is an option to retain the current football servicing arrangements and the level of charges, but this would restrict the potential for financial savings.
- 5.2 With regard to the proposed structural works at Ashingdon and Fairview Pavilions, there is an alternative option of taking no further action until surveys have been completed of all of the facilities and clear district wide priorities have been established.

**6 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The predicated savings are based upon estimated contract values for providing weekend contract cover or for using in-house staff. Assumptions have been made in respect of the potential savings that could be achieved by introducing revised cleansing schedules and being able to reduce heating costs, following the completion of the improvement works.
- 6.2 The increased burden placed upon football clubs and day nurseries could have a cumulative impact when consideration is given to the other economic challenges they face. Increasing service costs or rent could result in some clubs or day nurseries being unable to sustain the current level of activities and, therefore reduce the availability of such facilities to the community. This could result in the Council investing capital to fund improvement works, only to find subsequently that the premises are vacated, with little prospect of a return on their investment.

**7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 It is anticipated that the proposals contained within this report will provide revenue savings in the order of £25,000 on-going from 2014/15.
- 7.2 The capital works to the pavilions will be funded from the allocation for 2013/14 of £56,700 in the current capital programme which was agreed by Council in January 2013.
- 7.3 The cost of undertaking stock condition surveys of the buildings and undertaking pitch surveys can be contained within existing budgets.

**8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 None.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Head of Environmental Services**

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

For further information please contact Richard Evans (Head of Environmental Services) on:-

Phone: 01702 318044

Email: richard.evans@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.