

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 3 JULY 2012

Title:

REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE USE OF OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

**[Portfolio Holders: Cllrs Stephen O’Grady and Mike Band
[Wards Affected: All]**

Summary and purpose:

To present the summary findings of the review of the Council’s historic approach to the provision of outdoor sports facilities; recommend policy principles to change to this approach and to endorse and acknowledge community sports clubs.

How this report relates to the Council’s Corporate Priorities:

The proposals contained within this report will contribute towards a number of the Council’s corporate priorities.

- Leisure – Through improving opportunities for all to take part in sport and recreation, and protecting the status of recreation grounds for formal and informal recreation.
- Improving Lives – The provision of a high quality and well maintained sports and recreational areas that will improve the quality of life for children, young people, adults and the more vulnerable in society.
- Value for Money – The proposal should potentially bring financial savings to the Council whilst maintaining a high quality provision of grounds maintenance services and sports facilities in the borough. It will also ensure our activities are customer focused whilst providing good value for money.
- Environment – Seek to improve the carbon footprint of sports facilities across the borough, through better energy usage and improved energy conservation.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The recommendations arising from this report are intended to ensure equality of treatment of all users of the Council’s outdoor sports facilities and will have beneficial implications for social inclusion, equality, participation and community cohesion. Compliance will be sought in all arrangements with sports facilities in regards to the requirements of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and provide and promote equal opportunities for all.

Climate Change Implications:

Seek to improve the carbon footprint of sports facilities across the borough, through better energy usage and improved energy conservation practices in regards to pavilions and associated electrical systems.

Resource/Value for Money Implications:

The recommendations contained within this report have the potential to yield ongoing revenue savings for the Council. It is likely the Council will be required to invest capital funds into this project; however this should be viewed as an 'Invest to save' process. The process is expected to take up a lot of officer time.

Legal Implications:

Each lease negotiation and potential devolving of maintenance responsibilities will require the input and guidance of both our legal and property services.

Background

Summary of sports facility review findings

1. Information on the Council's recreational open space assets, who uses them, and in what capacity, has historically been poor. Following consultation with the clubs involved, a review of arrangements was completed in 2010 to identify all Waverley-owned outdoor sports sites and their users and the nature of the agreement; if any under with the Council.
2. At the time of the review Waverley Borough Council owned, or is associated with the management of 23 recreation grounds, parks, commons or gardens where formal sporting and recreational activity is undertaken. Sixty-three sports clubs and recreation ground committees use these grounds, of which:
 - 28 held leases on the land
 - 5 had a management agreement in place with the Council, and;
 - 30 used the grounds on a "pay to play" basis.
3. The different agreements for each site appear to have evolved organically over time, and some appear to have been in place for many decades without review.
4. The 'ad-hoc' way in which these arrangements have been managed over time means that there is significant inequality in the way that different clubs/sports associations are treated or supported. For example; some have leases with full repairing and maintaining responsibilities for both pavilion and ground and receive very little, if any, assistance (technical or financial) from the Council, whilst others have leases to maintain just the interior of pavilions, with low rentals yet the Council heavily subsidises the sport facility.

5. Different arrangements exist with other sports clubs/associations where they are governed by a non-binding 'management agreement' in which roles and responsibilities are not clear and which, in practice result in significant input from the Council and no financial contribution from the club. Furthermore, these arrangements leave questions of liability open, potentially exposing both the clubs and the Council to claims. It also limits the funding opportunities available to sports clubs who wish to improve the facilities they use.
6. A large number of clubs currently make use of the facilities on a "pay to play" basis, but this too is not without problems, most notably that the cost of administering this process, of maintaining the pitches and buildings involved, and of monitoring use, significantly outweighs the revenue generated from hire charges. Furthermore, some of these clubs have significant memberships and are keen to take 'ownership' of their facilities. The historic lack of a consistent approach to the issuing of leases means that only the most vocal and proactive organisations have taken such aspirations further.

Introduction

7. In order for the Council to approach future negotiations in a fair and equitable way when dealing with sporting organisations it is suggested that following policy principles are adopted by the Council and used as a guide throughout the process.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

1. Align the management of outdoor sports facilities with Waverley Borough Council's Corporate Priorities.
2. Encourage the securing of leases for formal sporting activity on outdoor sports facilities to benefit both clubs, sport associations, recreation ground committees and the Council and so enable external funding applications.
3. Standardise formal arrangements with clubs/sports associations/recreation ground committees through the securing of lease frameworks and management agreements.
4. Recognise those sports clubs and associations carry out work in their communities and those that deliver our corporate priorities and consider this when negotiating on lease rentals.
5. Maintain some 'Pay to Play' sites to enable sporting opportunities for all.
6. Incorporate and adopt sustainability principles and carbon reduction targets when improving sports facilities and pavilions and ensure that clubs, sports associations and recreation ground committees consider this also.

8. In addition to the sports facilities review and in line with the Council's carbon management policy many of the current pavilions could be significantly improved in the carbon footprint. It is proposed that a review takes place of all facilities and identifies what options are available. Ongoing surveys of our sports pavilions will identify works needed to keep our facilities up to standard, they will also look at more sustainable practices in terms of materials used and energy efficiency of the facility. This initial investment by the Council should be viewed as an 'invest to save' project and should enable more favourable lease negotiations for Waverley and make proposals more attractive to clubs when taking on full repair and maintenance leases.

Phased Approach

9. Any changes to existing arrangements which are significant in number will require officer input and will therefore be difficult to accommodate within existing resources. Therefore it is proposed that a phased project plan approach be adopted which is to be agreed with the Portfolio Holders.

Conclusions

10. The Council is responsible for a wide range of outdoor sports facilities across the borough and these are managed and made available to users in a variety of different ways. This means there is currently considerable inequality of treatment across the board.
11. Leisure, Improving Lives and Value for Money are three of the Council's top five corporate priorities and the sports clubs, sports associations are positive ambassadors delivering these priorities throughout the borough whilst also evoking a high level of community engagement.
12. A phased programme of negotiation, devolution and price rises is recommended to balance the current anomalies in funding subsidy.
13. Capital investment is likely to be required in order that all pavilions subject to lease negotiations are brought up to standard and incorporate practices that promote better energy consumption. The Council could 'Invest to save'; it is believed this will allow more favourable negotiations with clubs, sports associations and recreation ground committees.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive:

1. endorses the recommended policy principles; and
 2. instructs officers and the portfolio holder to commence to deal with anomalies in funding and continue to negotiate leases based on the policy principles.
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Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Name: Matthew Lank

Telephone: 01483 523190

E-mail: matt.lank@waverley.gov.uk

Kelvin Mills

Telephone: 01483 523432

E-mail: kelvin.mills@waverley.gov.uk

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