

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 23rd November 2020
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Culture and Leisure

Report Title

Playing Pitch Strategy: Long Term Security of Tenure Process

Summary

Set out the detail of the LTST process and seek Executive support with the process of awarding LTST to community sports clubs in Trafford

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Executive:

- 1. Support the LTST and process of disposal as outlined in the report below**
- 2. Acknowledge that these disposals will be at undervalue but will deliver social benefits to the local communities.**
- 3. Delegate decision making on future LTST applications to the Director of Place including the grant of leases of up to 25 years at undervalue, under the terms of this report.**
- 4. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Place to negotiate and agree the terms of the leases**
- 5. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Governance and Community Strategy to complete any documents required to give effect to the proposals contained in this report.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Tom Haworth
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Appendices;
Appendix A: List of EOI by Club, Site and Location
Appendix B: Decision Making Criteria

Background Papers: None

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	This report is linked the boroughs Playing Pitch Strategy 2019 and supports the following corporate priorities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green and Connected • Health and Wellbeing
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	Not applicable
Financial	The management of the LTST process will be undertaken within existing Council budgets. The impact on income, particularly for Trafford Leisure, and corresponding maintenance budgets will be assessed on a case by case basis, along with the effect of disposal at undervalue. It is expected that the process will provide better value for money for all stakeholders.
Legal Implications:	Legal will draft and complete the leases once Heads of Terms are agreed.
Equality/Diversity Implications	There are no adverse implications in relation to equality and diversity in relation to this report and its contents. A process has been established to ensure access to Open Space and Playing Fields is protected to ensure there are no material restrictions to access. The stakeholders (community sports clubs) all have well developed Equality and Diversity statements, plans and strategies in place
Sustainability Implications	Not applicable
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	The scheme will require ongoing officer input to ensure that the outcomes of the paper are being delivered and to ensure the effective project management of the LTST scheme.
Risk Management Implications	The risks associated with this project are low, the key risk are clubs not being able to fulfil their obligations under the scheme, to mitigate such a risk, if this is the case, facilities will return to the management of Trafford Leisure on the council's behalf.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The health and wellbeing implications are indirect, securing the sustainability of pitches will in-turn ensure residents have good quality facilities to use and will sustain and increase engagement in sport and physical activity.
Health and Safety Implications	Not applicable

1. Background

This paper seeks to provide an update on the Long Term Security of Tenure process for community sports clubs in Trafford and seeks support to progress

current expressions of interest and to develop an expedient decision making process for future expressions of interest.

2. Long Term Security of Tenure Process

2.1 The process was a key recommendation of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS, 2019). The PPS is a key strategic document that focuses on playing pitches and outdoor facilities in the borough it was originally adopted in 2016 and refreshed in 2019 and covers the following sports;

- Football
- Cricket
- Rugby Union
- Rugby League
- Hockey
- Athletics
- Tennis
- Bowls

It's also a key strategic document in relation to planning and funding from National Governing Bodies of sport and Sport England. The strategy focuses on quality of pitches and outdoor facilities, and current and future demand based on population size.

2.2 Trafford's PPS sets out how the Council will work with stakeholders in sport to sustain maintain and improve facilities in the local authority area. The LTST process is one of a set of recommendations from the strategy's action plan, which aims to improve and sustain outdoor facilities used by residents for sport and physical activity in Trafford.

2.3 The process will enable community clubs to secure a 25 year lease on sites they use for their core activity on playing fields and parks and open spaces in the borough.

2.4 To be eligible clubs must demonstrate that they are the primary or exclusive users of the pitches they are seeking long tenure for, via an expression of interest a business plan, and provide evidence of consultation with the local community and other sites users, whose access will be protected via a community use agreement, successful clubs will also be supported by regular engagement with TMBC officers to ensure the terms of the LTST are met and the clubs have the support they need to fulfill the terms of the lease.

2.5 The scheme also enables the club to be responsible for maintenance on the site and will allow the club to pay a peppercorn rent as part of the scheme, under the lease agreement; the fees that the club would normally pay for pitch hire would be invested into pitch maintenance.

3 LTST: Benefits

The scheme has a number of benefits, which include;

3.1 Investment – currently the Council has limited budget for long-term facility

improvement, the budget available to maintain facilities is not enough to meet current and future demand. Only 10% of the 211 pitches in the borough are rated as 'Good' quality. Having security of tenure will enable community sports clubs to secure investment that the Local Authority cannot access. The security will also encourage clubs to invest more of their revenue into the sites they use. Our engagement with clubs, in particular football clubs, has shown that clubs invest significant amounts of their own funds (£1500-3000 a season) into pitch improvements as the current maintenance services provided are not sufficient to improve and sustain pitch quality.

- 3.2 Pitch Quality – pitch quality is a limiting factor in club growth and decreases opportunities for residents to be physically active in the borough, a large number of the facilities across the sports covered in the PPS are rated as standard or poor. Cancellations of fixtures and events are common and have a detrimental impact on people's experiences with sport in the borough.
- 3.3 Improving pitch quality is a major aspect of the LTST process. As stated previously, as part of the process clubs will be enabled to be responsible for the maintenance of the pitches and ancillary facilities they use for their 'core' activities. These community clubs have in some cases been using the sites they occupy for decades and as such are the best placed to understand the best way to improve and maintain the facilities they have taken responsibility for.
- 3.4 The current pitch maintenance program is basic. Amey provide grass cutting, which is often not frequent or flexible enough to meet club's needs, meaning they have to commission extra cutting themselves at their cost, and Trafford Leisure, who facilitate pitch bookings, provide some pitch remediation works, erection and removal of goal posts, line marking and manage changing facilities. The issue of these services is that they are generic and basic and not bespoke to each site, this means that much needed one-off and seasonal maintenance is not undertaken meaning pitch quality deteriorates and will continue to deteriorate.
- 3.5 Clubs working towards LTST as part of their business plan will need to set out a site maintenance plan, this plan will be supported by their National Governing Body (NGB) and the Grounds Management Association (GMA) and ensures that under the clubs stewardship the sites quality will be sustained and improved over time.

4 LTST: Access and Protecting Wider Community Use

- 4.1 As part of the scheme each club will also need to enter into a community use agreement. This agreement ensures that, under LTST, access to the sites by the wider community will not be hindered outside of the clubs 'core' hours and ensures these agreements will also ensure the community clubs will proactively seek to promote physical activity and encourage participation.

5 LTST: Impact

- 5.1 The process will result in a reduction in revenue from pitch fees for Trafford Leisure, however this will be mitigated because some sites are not eligible for LTST as they are used by multiple users. The initial loss of income relating to the

sites managed by Trafford Leisure in Appendix A is approx. £19k. Currently Trafford Leisure is allocated a budget from the Council (via Amey) of approx. £60k for the maintenance services detailed earlier. If this budget is retained as clubs secure security of tenure, it can be better used to improve sites not eligible for LTST. Although as stated earlier it's important to reiterate that the revenue lost by Trafford Leisure will be spent by the clubs on-site maintenance, which exceeds the amounts typically spent by Trafford Leisure. The Council's draft budget report to Executive in October 2020 also includes proposals for savings in parks/pitch maintenance from community groups taking on greater responsibilities, and the LTST would support this approach, if approved.

6 LTST: Current position

- 6.1 The Council has received 10 EOI's to date and a further 2 community clubs have requested an EOI form, three of these are in process of receiving a lease, the remainder are still pending, with EOI's which date back to mid-2018.
- 6.2 The leases will be let at a peppercorn and so will be disposed of at below best value. These usually require full Executive approval but given the potential number and frequency of Expressions of Interest it is requested that future decision making is delegated to the Director of Place to award LTST.

7. Summary

- 7.1 The LTST process provides the Local Authority an opportunity to enable physical activity in a sustainable way and provide ownership to local communities to invest in the sites they use day to day to be active.
- 7.2 The scheme will serve to secure facilities for the future ensuring that our current and future population can be active and play sport at facilities that are high quality and fit for purpose, which will ensure residents of all ages have a positive experience of sport and physical activity, which is fundamental for sustaining engagement
- 7.3 By applying the LTST process across the sports covered within the Playing Pitch Strategy the Council can enable more residents of all ages to be active across the borough.

Other Options

- i The alternative option is to do nothing and continue with the current management arrangements. Whilst a feasible option the medium to long-term implications could be adverse. A majority of the borough's pitch stock (90%) is rated as standard or poor and in need of bespoke one off or ongoing maintenance that the current service cannot provide as there isn't sufficient budget to do so, which will be worsened if this budget is reduced. This situation could be worsened if any of the current basic service is reduced via other pressures (financial/capacity). The subsequent impact is that pitches will continue to deteriorate in quality to a point where they can no longer be used for organized sport and activity.

- ii Do nothing and not providing security of tenure remove the option for clubs to take advantage of external funding which the council cannot access, taking no action may also reduce the likelihood that clubs will invest their time and funds in assets that they have no security over, this will further compound the issue of quality and participation identified above and in this report

Consultation

Officers have consulted with community sports clubs, appropriate National Governing Bodies of sport and internally to look at sustainable options for pitch maintenance. LTST provides the best course of action to resolve the issue of securing the future of the borough pitch stock. Those clubs who have engaged in the expression of interest process have engaged with other users of the site to obtain their support a process which will be repeated in the drafting of the community use agreements

Reasons for Recommendation

1 Support the LTST and process of disposal as outlined in the report below

The sites being used by sports clubs are with park and open spaces, which are protected in planning policy. To enable the Council to proceed with granting a lease the formal process of disposal is required and it is being disposed of (technically) under value, although in real terms the assets are being protected and sustained by the community sports clubs

2 Delegate decision making on future LTST application to the Director of Place

At this stage the Council has a back log of 10 LTST applications, it is anticipated that once the process is formalized there will be an increased number of EOI's at a frequency that may make it impractical to seek Executive input. Whilst the decision making process will sit with the Director of Place there is an auditable process of decisions via the Leisure Project board, chaired by the Director of Place, which sits behind each expression.

Key Decision Yes

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? Yes

Finance Officer Clearance: PC

Legal Officer Clearance: TR

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE *(electronic)*



To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.

Appendix A:

Club/Assoc	Site	Location	EOI	Plan
Broadheath Central	Salisbury Fields* Navigation Rd* Hale Croft*	Timperley	Yes	Yes
Crossford Bridge Management Assoc	Crossford Bridge	Sale	Yes	Yes
Altrincham Athletics Club	Timperley Athletics Track	Timperley	Yes	Yes
Crossford Bridge Management Assoc	Crossford Bridge	Sale	Yes	Yes
Old Trafford Sports Club	St Brides Playing Field	Old Trafford	Yes	Yes
Sale Sports Club	Clarendon Playing Fields**	Sale	Yes	Yes
Trafford FC	Shawe View	Flixton	Yes	Yes
Unicorn Athletic JFC	Smith's Fields*	Timperley	Yes	Yes
Timperley Villa JFC	Beech Fields*	Timperley	Yes	Yes
Altrincham Juniors Football Club	Grove Park*	Altrincham	Yes	Yes

**indicates site is managed by Trafford Leisure on behalf of TMBC*

***site and booking is jointly manage by Sale Sports Club and Trafford Leisure*