

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny and Overview Committee – 10th November 2021
Report for: Information
Report of: Executive Member for Culture and Leisure

Report Title

Use of land for Sporting Facilities

Summary

Part one of the report sets out how the Council works with local communities in letting land for sporting and physical activity.

Part two of the report sets out processes adopted by Trafford Leisure (CIC) in hiring land and facilities that it manages on behalf of the Council.

Recommendation(s)

That Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report

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Background Papers: None

Council's policy of letting land to organisations for sport and physical activity.

1. Introduction

1.1 In 2018 the Council approved **Trafford Moving** a comprehensive Physical Activity strategy for the borough. Trafford Moving was developed with stakeholders around both communities and localities and aims to reduce health inequalities by increasing the number, type, and sustainability of opportunities for residents to be more active in their everyday lives. Working with key stakeholders a detailed assessment took place of existing policies, the physical environment, and crucially the role that family, schools and local community organisations could play in supporting residents to be more active.

1.2 Trafford has a strong and vibrant community and voluntary sector. Many of the boroughs sporting clubs and organisations are rooted in local communities, where they have delivered activities and invested in facilities for decades. Equally, it is often these trusted and valued community assets that are best placed to support the objectives of Trafford Moving and encourage more people to be more active each day.

2. Background To Long Term Security Of Tenure

2.1 In 2016 the Council approved a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for the borough, refreshed in 2019. The Playing Pitch Strategy is a key strategic document that focuses on quality of pitches, outdoor facilities and assesses current and future demand based on population trends.

2.2 Trafford's PPS sets out how the Council will work with stakeholders to maintain and improve facilities and protect the long-term sustainability for future generations and covers pitches and outdoor facilities for the following sports...

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

The Council fully recognises the value that community groups and organisations offer in providing opportunities for sporting and physical activity across the borough. A key recommendation of the PPS was that the Council adopt a process that supported and enabled local organisations to secure a 25-year lease on sites they use for their core activities on playing fields, parks and open spaces.

3. Summary of Application Process

3.1 To be eligible clubs and organisations must demonstrate that they are the primary or exclusive users of the pitches they are seeking long term tenure for, via an expression of interest, accompanied by a detailed business plan and in addition provide evidence of consultation with the local community and other site users. Access by wider users and local communities is encouraged and protected by a community use agreement.

4 Wider Community Access - Community Use Agreements

4.1 It is a requirement of the Long Term Security of Tenure (LTST) that each club enters into a Community Use Agreement. In developing Community Use Agreement, clubs are required to consult with the wider community on access and set out how they will encourage community participation and contribute to the priorities within Trafford's Physical Activity Strategy.

4.2 The overall aim of a Community Use Agreement is to provide clarity and ensure access by the wider community is not hindered outside of the club's "core" hours. Community use agreements are tailored to reflect the needs of each site and are reviewed and monitored as part of the ongoing support offered by Trafford Council officers in ensuring the terms of the LTST are met. Governing Bodies and Sport England also provide support in developing Community Use Agreements which are often required as a prerequisite to securing funding. Each site in Trafford is different and several sites which are subject to a LTST, remain fully open to public access. Where fencing is required to secure land and facilities, this will be subject to the individual lease arrangements in place, and where required may also be subject to planning conditions.

5 Decision-Making Process

5.1 All applications are thoroughly reviewed by officers from legal, finance, estates, parks and open spaces to ensure due diligence. Each case is then considered in detail by the Leisure Board, chaired by the Exec Director of Place who has delegated authority for deciding applications. Issues relating to suitability of the applicant, land ownership including any covenants that may be in place, are considered in detail and where appropriate additional specialist advice sought to ensure that the Council discharges its duties in line with current guidance and legislation.

6 Enabling More People to be Physically Active

6.1 Trafford is a borough that has a rich tapestry of countryside, parks, gardens, and open spaces - all of which are valuable local assets that underpin the Council's corporate priorities around improving health and wellbeing and developing a green and connected borough. Enabling more people to participate in physical activity is a key factor in delivering these strategic objectives. The Council is in the process of refreshing **Trafford Moving**, originally approved in 2018. This refreshed strategy is more closely aligned to the wider determinants of health and wellbeing and the benefits that physical activity can bring to individuals and local communities. In addition, the borough has recently

benefitted from national and regional funding to develop a walking and cycling strategy that will promote participation in walking and cycling through improved access and infrastructure.

7 Balancing the Benefits of LTST.

7.1 In implementing the LTST policy the Council had to consider the benefits that the scheme could bring set against its own limited resources to support the long-term improvements of the sites and meet future demand. Many of the borough's sites and facilities were rated as standard or poor within the PPS. The LTST has enabled clubs and organisations who, in many cases are long term users to apply their expertise and knowledge to improve sites and access funding and investment that is not available to the Council. Overall, the LTST process provides an opportunity to support physical activity in a sustainable way, one that provides ownership to local communities to invest in the sites for future generations use.

7.2 Currently there are 13 applications covering the sites listed below. 12 of the 13 have been approved by the Leisure Project Board and are being progressed. The scheme will seek to protect and improve the quality of 45 football pitches and all three of the borough's athletics stadia. The clubs applying make up 61% of the 558 teams who use Trafford football pitches meaning the scheme will benefit thousands of football players. There are

| Site | Applicant | Leisure Project Board |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Clarendon Rd Playing Fields | Sale Sports Club | Approved |
| Beech Fields | Timperley Villa JFC | Approved |
| Smith's Field | Unicorn JFC | Approved |
| Grove Park | Altrincham FC | Approved |
| Salisbury Playing Fields | Broadheath Central FC | Approved |
| Lees Field | Urmston Meadowside | Approved |
| Timperley Athletics Track | Altrincham & District AC | Approved |
| St Brides Fields | Old Trafford Sports Club | Approved |
| Shawe view Stadium | Trafford FC | Approved |
| Longford Athletics Stadium | Trafford AC | Pending |
| Crossford Bridge | CBMA | Approved |
| Chassen Rd (Shawe View Rec) | Trafford FC (Junior Sec) | Pending |
| Ashton Park | AoM JFC | Approved |

See appendix 1 for case studies.

Part 2. Trafford Leisure – Letting of facilities

8. Background

8.1 Trafford Leisure, Community Interest Company (CIC) on behalf of the Council, manage a range of local community facilities. These include 32 football sites with 148 playing pitches, Altrincham Golf Course and 5 Leisure Centres. At each of the facilities there are a range of hire options available to the public depending on the facility type and

event. Bookings are taken for sporting and non-sporting activities and fall into 2 general categories

- Block Bookings - taking place over a minimum of 10 weeks for the same time and day.
- Event Bookings - one off booking, sporting or non-sporting

9. Letting Play / Football Pitches

9.1. All individuals, clubs and organisations wishing to make a booking must complete an application form which is considered by Trafford Leisure. Hire costs are standard across the borough and bookings are taken from Trafford and non-Trafford residents. Sub-letting of the hire is only approved by exception and Trafford Leisure reserves the right to refuse any application, cancel or terminate any booking considered appropriate. All hirers are issued with conditions of hire including a code of conduct which clearly set out the responsibilities of the hirer, including limiting the impact on the surrounding area and maintaining good relations with residents, including compliance with local bye laws. In addition, a football code of conduct is in place between the teams the Football Association (FA) and Timperley and Manchester leagues who hire facilities. The code of conduct is enforceable and places greater personal responsibility on the team and players. Trafford Leisure ensures fairness in bookings by considering the needs of both large and small clubs in allocating pitch space while trying to balance needs of local residents .

10 . Limiting the Impact on local communities

10.1 Trafford Leisure Football Manager acts as a single point of contact between clubs, leagues, council, and residents to ensure terms and conditions are adhered to and also to quickly identify and solve issues as they occur. All bookings at sites are timetabled, staggered, and managed to ensure the football clubs, residents and community all have the opportunity to access the sites and facilities.

10.2 Trafford Leisure prides itself on being a good neighbour to the communities that it serves. All efforts are made to ensure that those hiring facilities, its members and general users are considerate of residents especially as they arrive and leave facilities. Within the condition of hire, users are asked to be respectful of local communities and refrain from causing any nuisance such as littering, additional noise pollution or other. To ensure that bookings are carried out according to the hire agreement, Trafford Leisure has the right to access the event and ensure all conditions are met. Regular inspections are carried out by Trafford Leisure Football Manager. Most reports from residents relate to car parking and the speed of cars leaving local sites during the football season. Where there are reports Trafford Leisure management team liaise with clubs and local communities to try and resolve issues as they arise. Trafford Leisure works closely with the council events team to coordinate community events and with Amey who maintain pitches and car parking facilities to ensure that issues are reported, and sites are maintained.

11. Operating Agreement

11.1 Trafford Council is currently reviewing its service specification and operating agreement with Trafford Leisure. A revised agreement will be in place that closely aligns outcomes with the strategic objectives of the Council and ensures that effective performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms are in place. In addition, the Council are reviewing how football is managed across the borough and will work with stakeholders such as the FA and local leagues to review its arrangements with Trafford Leisure and Amey to ensure that football is managed in a sustainable way with a clear specification and contract in place.

12. Conclusion

12.1 Both Trafford Leisure and local clubs play valuable roles in contributing to the key objectives of Trafford Moving by supporting residents to be more active and improve their health and wellbeing. Trafford Leisure will continue to work with local communities and ensure that any negative impact experienced by residents through the hire of local pitches is limited and dealt with speedily. The review of how football is managed across the borough will also look at how issues are mitigated and addressed effectively. The council will continue to work with local clubs and ensure that the terms of the lease are met and that all Community Use Agreements support residents to enjoy active lives and contribute fully to the objectives of Trafford Moving. The process of awarding long term security of tenure to community organisations has checks and balances in place which are monitored. Overall, the process has supported the sustainability of x local clubs across the borough while bringing in much needed investment to improve facilities and ensure that sport and physical activity is sustainable for future generations.

Appendix 1

Case Study 1 - Altrincham & District Athletics – Timperley

Currently the club has a shale track, whilst useable it's not very accessible and versatile limiting the types of activities the club can host, it's also a limiting factor highlighted in the borough's Playing Pitch Strategy. The club has been able to build up the necessary investment to convert the track to a rubber-crumb and improve accessibility at the facility. To protect their investment the club wished to secure a long-term lease through the LTST process, to ensure they could maximise the return on their investment but also so they were in a position to also apply for additional funds in the future to continue improving the facility. The benefit to their members and the wider community is access to a better quality facility, which increases opportunities to be more active.

Case Study 2 - Grass Pitch Improvement Fund

A number of the clubs who are in the LTST process have been able to secure direct investment from the Football Foundation to improve their pitches. 7 of the current applicants have secured a total of £80k to improve their grass pitches, funding the council wouldn't be able to access. The funding was enabled by the LTST as they clubs were able to evidence they were part of a process that would enable them to have long-term tenure.