

Thursday, 29 July 2021

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure**Leisure Services****Exempt Information**

None

Purpose

To outline the proposed options and plan for the:

- Update of the Council's Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Assessment, to also include:
 - a review of the playing pitch strategy
 - a new open spaces assessment
 - a feasibility study for the Gungate Leisure facilities offer
- The refurbishment of the Castle Grounds tennis courts.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director Operation and Leisure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure to enter into contract with the most economically viable quotations received for:-
 - the Council's Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Assessment
 - the Council's open space assessment
 - the Gungate leisure facilities feasibility study
 - the refurbishment of the Castle Grounds Tennis Court facilities
2. Endorse the approach outlined in the report.
3. Approve the release of the allocated Section 106 funds as detailed within the report.

Executive Summary

The Council must renew both the current open spaces assessment and the Indoor and Outdoor Facilities Assessment as part of the required data and evidence required for the local plan. Unfortunately, the expertise required to undertake this detailed assessment is currently not available in house.

The Gungate leisure facilities feasibility study will ensure that services are fit for purposes and meet national requirements for the future.

The tenders will be promoted via the Council's Intend system and will be in the form of two separate tender's i.e.

- the assessments and feasibility studies
- the castle grounds tennis court refurbishment

It is envisaged that by awarding the contracts in this way that it will provide better value for money.

The castle grounds tennis courts refurbishment will ensure that the Council has good quality playing facilities for the future.

Financial Implications

The anticipated cost of the areas of work are shown below together with the funding source: -

Scope of work	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Open Spaces Assessment	£24k	GS0404 30403 Local development framework.
Indoor/Outdoor Sports Pitch Assessment	£68K	Section 106 – PM4725 R6727
Gungate Leisure Facilities Feasibility Study	£25k	Section 106 – PM4725 R6727
TOTAL	£112k	
Tennis Court Refurbishment	£120k	Section 106 (contained within the Capital Programme) – CP2859

The figures above are estimated and have been provided by officers based on previous work and like-for-like projects undertaken by authorities local to Tamworth.

All of the above work can be met from existing section 106 monies. The funding for the open spaces assessment is section 106 that has been transferred to revenue in readiness to spend.

The letting of one tender to incorporate three standalone pieces of work should provide a reduction in the cost compared with tendering for each piece in isolation.

The tennis court refurbishment will be met from solely from section 106 monies which have been already been approved in the Capital Programme for 2021/22.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

Consideration has been given to recruiting an in-house team with the required skills to undertake the assessment/feasibility work. However, given the current difficulties the Council (and other Councils) are having in both recruiting and / or retaining planning and regeneration posts, there is a significant risk that the team could not be established within the required timeframe to complete the work required for the local plan and service review. Current resources cannot support the delivery of this work.

Equalities Implications

Each of the assessments will consider demographics and user accessibility. Each will also contain a detailed impact assessment.

Sustainability Implications

Consideration of these matters collectively will ensure that none are undertaken in isolation. In completing each area of work in this way it remains relevant, fit for purpose, future proof and as sustainable as possible at the current time.

Background Information

Leisure Strategy

Following the restructure of Council services in 2018, Leisure Services were identified as an area for further service review in 2019/20. The early preparatory work identified that a new Council Leisure Strategy would potentially be required to encompass all documents and policy within one as the Council has previously not completed a full Leisure Strategy.

The authority is completely focused and resourced to deliver the corporate plan including the Reset and Recovery programme as well as significant regeneration programmes and as there is no statutory duty on the authority to hold a Leisure Strategy at this time it is not considered viable. Therefore, in discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure, the Leisure Strategy will be delayed until resources can be allocated or statute dictates.

The data produced from the indoor and outdoor sports facilities assessment, the open spaces assessment and the Gungate feasibility study will enable the authority to make informed decisions on its leisure offer for Tamworth in the interim.

Indoor and Outdoor Sports facilities Assessment

The Council's five year Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Assessment was due to be undertaken in 2019 and was delayed further with the covid19 pandemic. This assessment was last fully reviewed in 2008 and subsequently refreshed in 2013. Due to the changing demographic of Tamworth and the impact of covid19 in sports facility usage it is proposed to undertake a full update of this document.

Open Space Assessment

The global Covid19 pandemic in March 2020 resulted in a delay to these timelines and an unprecedented shift on the use of the Council's open spaces for personal exercise. It is therefore proposed that the Council's open spaces assessment is updated to both reflect this continued high demand and usage to support the evidence required for the local plan development.

National planning policy requires that local plans should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure and sports facilities.

In order to appropriately plan to achieve this objective, the Council need to be able to establish what existing and future needs are/will be, and whether the existing facilities are capable of meeting those needs. Having appropriate evidence will also support the council in seeking appropriate contributions from developments towards the provision of suitable facilities.

Therefore, both the Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Assessment and the Open Spaces assessment are required to be undertaken to provide the evidence for the local plan.

These are significant pieces of work that are strategically linked and will require time and expertise that is not currently available in-house. It would therefore be appropriate to appoint external consultants with experience of carrying out this type of work to deliver the project to ensure that the evidence is found to be sound at a local plan examination.

The tender will deliver three principle pieces of work, those being an updated open spaces assessment, an updated indoor and outdoor sports facilities assessment, a new leisure facility feasibility assessment for Gungate, which in turn will inform a review of its Community Leisure Services within Tamworth Borough Council and its strategic priorities.

Gungate Leisure Feasibility Study

The current proposals for the development of the Gungate site include a leisure facility and as such, a feasibility study is required to understand both the current community need and the most economic delivery method for the site. It is recognised post pandemic that these health and wellbeing activities will play a vital within the community.

Castle Grounds Tennis Courts

The castle grounds tennis courts were last resurfaced in 2008. Since that time the surface has become uneven and difficult to maintain to the required playing standard. In addition, the floodlights are outdated and expensive to run, whilst the caging to the surrounding area is now beyond economic repair.

It is proposed that the courts be resurfaced with an all-weather surface primarily still to be used for tennis but with the capability of delivering other sports such as football and basketball. The caging will be replaced, and the floodlights upgraded to more efficient LED lamps. These works will be tendered separately to those above. It is anticipated that this work will commence later this year with completion in the new year.

Report Author

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