

4th December 2017

Community and Housing Committee

Disabled Access Improvements – King George’s Playing Fields Bowls Facility

Report of: *Stuart Anderson – Deputy operations Manager*

Wards Affected: *Warley*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 King George’s Playing Fields is home to two of the Council’s three public amenity lawn bowls greens and the two resident clubs of Brentwood Bowls Club and Central Essex Bowls Club respectively.
- 1.2 Due to the age of the greens and a lack of investment over the last decade the infrastructure, in particular access arrangements is limited and not suited to a modern club wanting to attract new Members from all walks of life including and especially those with limited physical mobility.
- 1.3 The report before Members is requesting an agreement in principle to apply to both the Health and Wellbeing Board and also the Disabled Facilities Grant to jointly fund access improvements to the public bowling greens in the form of new DDA compliant ramps and steps leading to the lower of the two public greens.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Members to agree in principle to a project to construct new DDA compliant access ramps and steps to the lower public bowls green at King George’s Playing Fields.
- 2.2 Members agree to Officers applying to the Health and Wellbeing Board and also the Disabled Facilities Grant to fund the project.

2.3 Members delegate authority to Officers to engage with both Brentwood Bowls Club and Central Essex Bowls Club to progress a final design for the access point and then if successful in obtaining funding to proceed and complete works before the start of the 2018 playing season.

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 King George's Playing Fields is home to two of the Council's three public amenity lawn bowls greens which are also home to the two resident clubs of Brentwood Bowls Club and Central Essex Bowls Club.
- 3.2 The first green was constructed in the 1960's with the second added in the late 1970's due to the demand on the facilities.
- 3.3 Due to the age of the facilities they understandably do not meet current legislation in terms of access and in particular disability access.
- 3.4 The clubs have been enquiring with the Council to improve access to the site for a number of years but due to resource restrictions this has, to date, sadly not been possible.
- 3.5 The two resident clubs have well over a hundred members between them with both clubs being active in trying to recruit new members throughout the playing season, especially those that may have restricted mobility. Both clubs also have active social sections which form an important part of the bowls experience for many that may otherwise not interact on such a varied and frequent basis. This undoubtable would have a positive effect on the individuals mental well being.
- 3.6 The access ramp and steps to the lower of the two public greens is now in a state of disrepair and no longer fit or safe to use without immediate action prior to the 2018 season. This will mean that only fully abled bowlers will be able to use the lower green which is likely to impact on the clubs ability to utilise this facility.
- 3.7 The proposed works are to rebuild and widen the degraded access ramp and steps to the lower green to meet current DDA standards and to also widen the access ramp to the club house leading from the main park, again in line with current DDA standards.
- 3.8 It is anticipated, pending a final design, that these works will cost in the region of £20,000 - £25,000.

3.9 There are currently insufficient funds within the Council's own resources to undertake the works needed to instigate these improvements and, so it is Officers intentions to apply to both the Health and Wellbeing Board and also the Disabled Facilities Grant to fund these works in there entirety.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1 Initial discussions with Officers associated with each funding stream have indicated that they feel the project would be viewed favourably as the improvements have the ability to positively affect hardier to reach groups such as:

- The elderly who find bowls an achievable form of not only exercise but also socialisation with others.
- Those with limited mobility who wish to undertake a sporting activity of a gentler nature.
- Those with general health issues [such as excess weight or joint concerns] that again wish to undertake exercise but a more limited or gentle nature due to their physical abilities.

4.2 Age, weight and disability are all high-profile issues for the NHS and society at this current time and so the works to try and increase usage of the bowls facility through greater access would certainly go towards supporting not only local health objectives but national ones as well.

4.3 Whilst the works will improve a Council asset it will also have the added positive objective of being a supportive action towards the resident bowls clubs in helping them to attract additional members form other groups of the community that they may not have been able to target previously

4.4 Should Members be minded not to support this scheme and instruct Officers to proceed with grant applications then the current ramp from the park to the lower of the two greens will need to be closed indefinitely or until alternative funding can be found. In the current climate it is unlikely to be from existing Council resources.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 To allow Officers to progress applications to the Health and Wellbeing Board and also the Disabled Facility Grant scheme for funding to improve the ramped access to the bowls facility at King George's Playing Fields.

- 5.2 To allow for the degraded and now unusable disabled access to the lower green at King George's Playing Fields bowls facility to be rebuilt in line with DDA requirements to improve and enhance access to the facility.
- 5.3 To ensure that works can be completed before the commencement of the 2018 playing season.

6. References to Corporate Plan

- 6.1 To ensure the provision of efficient and effective services to our residents and businesses.
- 6.2 Providing increased customer satisfaction in the quality of Council services.
- 6.3 To Increase access to the Borough's leisure opportunities.
- 6.4 Making Brentwood a Borough where people feel safe, healthy and supported.

7. Implications

Financial implications

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- 7.1 The funding is available in principle from the Disabled Facilities Grant and the Health and Wellbeing Board to fund this project, but this would be subject to grant conditions. If the Funding cannot be secured through Grant funding, then the expenditure would potentially be funded through Capital receipts.

Legal Implications

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- 7.2 Councils have a general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which would enable the steps described in this report to be taken. More specifically section 2 Local Government Act 2000 enables Councils to take such steps to improve the social and environmental well-being of people in their areas and section 2 (4) (a) enables expenditure for this purpose. In addition section 12 Health and Social Care Act 2012 enables local authorities to take steps considered appropriate for improving public

health with section 12 (3) (b) enabling the provision of facilities for well-being.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

8. **Appendixes to this report**

None.

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