

4 December 2018

Community, Health and Housing Committee

Football Feasibility – Brentwood Centre site

Report of: *Kim Anderson, Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager*

Wards Affected: *All Brentwood Borough Wards*

This report is: *Public report*

1. Executive Summary

Members will be aware of the recommendations of the Play Pitch Strategy, the Built Facilities Strategy and the Local Football Facilities Plan for Brentwood, which is a separate report to this Committee tonight. The recommendations in respect of football looked at the need for additional 3G pitches ideally as part of a football hub, and the Brentwood Centre site was identified as a priority. The site is also home to Brentwood Town Football Club and there is an urgent need for the club to upgrade its changing room facilities or they face relegation from the Bostick League. It is proposed that the Council work with the club, the Football Foundation and the Bostick League to look at a viable solution for the club. It is also proposed that a feasibility study is undertaken to explore the potential development of a football hub at the Brentwood Centre site which will support a number of clubs including Brentwood Town Football Club. This will identify preferred location, configuration, surveys required and external funding sources to reduce any budgetary considerations required by the Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members agree for the football feasibility study to be undertaken for the Brentwood Centre site including options for Brentwood Town Football Club and this report is referred to Policy, Projects and Resources Committee for their consideration and approval.**
- 2.3 Subject to the approval of Policy, Projects and Resources Committee, officers commence a compliant procurement process for a feasibility study to be undertaken and that a report is brought back to the relevant committee(s) for the preferred option for the site.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1.** The Council's Leisure Strategy was agreed by Members in September 2018. The Play Pitch Strategy, Built Facilities Strategy and the Local Football Facilities Plan reports provided an evidence base that informs the Leisure Strategy and the Council's Local Development Plan. These have been presented as a separate report to Members tonight.
- 3.2.** The Play Pitch Strategy and the Local Football Facilities Plan set out the recommendations that directly relate to football improvements cross the Borough.
- 3.3.** The Play Pitch Strategy for Brentwood set out six key recommendations for football:
- a. Protect the current level of football across the Borough, especially The Arena (Brentwood Town Football Club) at the Brentwood Centre site
 - b. Seek to increase the number of full sized 3G AGP's (third generation, artificial grass pitches) that are available for community use, through the development of new facilities or improving the access to existing facilities.
 - c. Explore potential options for the creation of football hub sites, in order to provide high quality multi-pitch facilities in strategic locations across the borough.
 - d. Continue to invest in the grass pitches across the borough, to improve the quality and reduce the amount of cancelled games during periods of poor weather. Prioritise sites that are key for future community use using site-specific actions and prioritization.
 - e. Address the football pitch capacity at periods of peak demand by moving mini and youth football to the proposed new 3G AGP provision while working with the leagues and clubs to establish a more flexible kick-off policy and allow teams to play throughout the day on Saturday's and Sunday's.
- 3.4** The Council has received a letter from Brentwood Town Football Club who occupy the Arena on the Brentwood Centre site. The letter sets out the issues that they are facing. There is a lack of security of tenure on the site as their lease is due to expire in December 2020 and therefore limits their ability to successfully apply for external funding. The funding is needed to upgrade their changing facilities as part of their ground grading or they will face relegation from the Bostick League next year if the improvements are not made.
- 3.5** It is proposed that the Council continues to work with Brentwood Town Football Club, the Football Foundation, Essex Football Association to provide a viable solution for the club, the Bostick League and the

Football Foundation in regard to the support from them for the funding improvements to the changing facilities at their site.

- 3.6** It is also proposed that a wider feasibility study is undertaken on the Brentwood Centre site to look at the longer-term objectives of the Play Pitch Strategy and the Local Football Facilities Plan for Brentwood in the development of football across the borough. The Brentwood Centre site was identified as a key site for the possible development of a football hub which would include 3G AGPs, grass pitches and changing facilities. The feasibility study would include the preferred location of the hub, the configuration and requirement of grass and 3G AGPs and changing facility requirements. Surveys would need to be undertaken to identify and mitigate the possible environmental, traffic and planning constraints and to identify the budgetary requirements needed to deliver the project.
- 3.6** As part of the feasibility study external funding sources will be identified to understand the budgetary requirement that the Council will need to contribute if they were to develop the football hub.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1.** Officers have had a number of meetings with the Essex Football Association about the possible development of a football hub at the Brentwood Centre site. This is supported through the Play Pitch Strategy recommendations as set out in 3.3 of this report.
- 4.2.** The feasibility study will identify the preferred location if the Council were to develop a football hub. The location of the hub is key and it is important that it will not impact on any future development on the site, such as future improvements to the Brentwood Centre. Planning restrictions and constraints would also need to be considered such as a requirement that any new 3G AGPs are floodlit.
- 4.3.** The requirements of Brentwood Town Football Club also need to be addressed as part of the feasibility study, such as their current location and their security of tenure. Their lease is due to end at the end of December 2020. Due to the short time left on their lease they are unlikely to be successful in attracting funding from the Football Foundation as the Foundation require a minimum lease of 10 years.
- 4.4.** The Football Association sets national ground grading requirements for the football leagues. Brentwood Town Football Club is currently ground

graded as category Grade C (Appropriate to NLS Sep 4). Without improvements to their changing facilities as a requirement of the Bostick League they will face relegation.

4.5. The Bostick League have stated that they would want to see a planning application submitted by March by the club to stave off relegation.

4.6. There is also an opportunity that the requirements for the club improvements and the wider community benefits for the development of the 3G AGPs on the site will provide facilities that support both the club and the wider community as part of a football hub on the site.

4.7. It is recommended that the Council will work with the club, the Football Foundation and the Essex Football Association to

5. Reasons for Recommendation

The Leisure Strategy is one of the key strategies of the Corporate Plan 2016-2019. The development of a football hub will not only support club development but the wider community development for football in the Borough and provide high-quality facilities to meet the current and future demand.

6. References to Council Priorities

The Leisure Strategy sits under two main strands of the Corporate Plan 2016-19: Environment and Housing Management to develop a Leisure Strategy to provide strong and sustainable leisure facilities for residents and businesses; and community and health – to work with community and voluntary organisations to develop the priorities for community development. There are also strong links for the priorities of the Council's Health and wellbeing Strategy 2014-2017, The Local Development Plan, Active Brentwood/Essex and the Council's Asset management Strategy 2014/15.

7. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Interim Chief Finance Officer
Tel & Email 01277 312829 jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

7.1 There is currently no budget provision in within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for the feasibility study in 2018/19. Expenditure will need to be funded from the Organisational transformation Earmarked Reserve. It is expected that the feasibility study would cost no more than £60,000. This Report should be referred to Policy, Projects and

Resources Committee for their consideration and approval as the lead financial Committee.

- 7.2 Any funding requirement from the Council for the football hub should be identified as part of the feasibility study and the Council would seek to maximise any external contributions which would reduce the Council's budget requirements and the potential need to borrow.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Paula Harvey, Corporate Governance Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Tel & Email: 01277 312 500 paula.harvey@brentwood.gov.uk

The recommendations set within this report are within the Council's powers and duties.

Legal advice should be procured to identify the most appropriate options for the football club's lease, to minimise legal risk and secure best value for the Council.

Any procurement exercise must be carried out in compliance with EU directives, UK procurement regulations and the Council's Constitution.

Risk Management implications – If the changing facilities are not improved as part of Brentwood Town Football Club Relegation of Brentwood Town Football Hub

Report Author Contact Details:

Name: Kim Anderson

Telephone: 01277 312634

E-mail: kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk