

Report of the Director of Environment & Housing

Report to Executive Board

Date: 9th October 2013

Subject: Review of Parks Outdoor Bowling Provision in Leeds

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|--|---|--|
| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary of main issues

1. The annual cost associated with providing and maintaining bowling facilities is £255k, resulting in a net subsidy of £245k each year. In determining a revision to service provision, a consultation document was prepared and widely circulated. The objective of the consultation document was to encourage discussion on a number of principles designed to encourage bowling clubs towards becoming more self sustaining. However, after completing the consultation process it was apparent that there was a need to develop an alternative approach.
2. A working group was established between officers from the Parks and Countryside Service and a collective of representatives from Leeds based crown green bowling associations, who had a mandate to represent bowling clubs. The group has met several times and the outcome has been the development of a joint revised proposal.
3. The revised proposal, will see a budget saving on the provision of crown green bowling facilities. This will be delivered through a combination of utility savings, limited removal of bowling greens at multiple green sites and income generation, with income being recovered on a per bowler basis. The proposal developed in consultation with Leeds Bowling Association will not result in the closure of any Leeds Bowls clubs or an Leeds City Council maintained bowling green sites.
4. There will be a projected income growth of £68k with a corresponding reduction in expenditure of £46k, resulting in a saving of £114k by 2017/18. There is estimated to be 2,500 bowling club members that are based in council facilities. To recover the

income target on a per bowler basis a season ticket cost per bowler would be £25 in 2014/15 rising to £31.50 by 2017/18, equating to 61p per week.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that Executive Board approve the following:

- The introduction of a charge which would mean an income recovery level of £62k in 2014/15 rising to £78k in 2017/18 as set out in paragraph 4.2. Based on current membership levels this would represent a season ticket cost of £25 in 2014/15, rising to £31.50 in 2017/18.
- The removal of 6 bowling greens from multiple green sites as set out in paragraph 4.6 saving £16k per annum.
- That bowling clubs meet the costs associated with their own direct use of gas and electricity saving £30k per annum.
- Executive Board are asked to note that:
 - § The season ticket cost will be implemented in March 2014 and will be applied from the 2014/15 season onwards as highlighted in 4.3.
 - § That those greens identified for closure will no longer be maintained for the purpose of bowling from March 2014.
 - § That where feasible, appropriate arrangements will be established in order for bowling clubs to meet the costs associated with their own direct use of gas and electricity by March 2014.
 - § That the Chief Officer for Parks and Countryside will be responsible for the delivery of these recommendations and associated actions.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings of consultation on proposals to review service provision for outdoor bowls facilities in Leeds, and makes recommendations on the future management of Council owned and maintained bowling facilities.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Council continues to face serious budget pressures and will need to identify £145 million savings prior to 2015/16 in addition to the £150 million already identified to 2012/13. This has also impacted on the Parks and Countryside service. In meeting these challenging budget targets there are a number of service areas under review, including the provision of outdoor bowls facilities.
- 2.2 Leeds City Council is the major provider of outdoor bowling facilities in Leeds, and the Parks and Countryside service currently manage 50 active crown green bowling sites that incorporate 71 greens with accompanying ancillary facilities. The Parks and Countryside service also conduct all the horticultural maintenance work on these facilities.
- 2.3 There are approximately 2,500 bowling club members in Leeds, which on average represents a ratio of 35 bowlers to every green. There are many positive health benefits associated with participation in crown green bowling some of which are summarised below:
- Improved coordination and skill development.
 - Increased confidence and self-esteem.
 - Enhanced mental wellbeing.
 - Low risk physical activity given that it is low impact.
 - Social contact.
 - Community connectedness and support.
- 2.4 Bowling associations which include, for example, the Leeds and District Crown Green Bowling Association and Wharfedale Clubs Bowls Trust, coordinate fixtures and collect fees from clubs on behalf of the council. The management arrangements for council maintained bowling greens have not been reviewed for many years, and are still operating under the terms of a lease from 1985. The Council receives around £10k income each year via bowls associations. There are, however, £255k revenue costs associated with bowling green maintenance, and consequently the provision of outdoor crown green bowls is subsidised by £245k each year. It should be noted that this does not include the capital costs associated with acquiring plant and machinery. The following table provides a summary of the income and revenue costs associated with outdoor bowling green facilities:

| Description | Amount per annum |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Direct cost of green maintenance | £224,644 |
| Pavilion utility costs | £30,000 |
| Total Cost | £254,644 |
| Income from Bowls Associations | -£9,937 |
| Net Subsidy | £244,707 |

3 Consultation and Engagement

3.1 A consultation document was prepared and circulated to all Leeds City Council maintained clubs, all ward members and crown green bowling associations. The document was also available for download and comment on 'Talking Point'. To supplement the consultation document a meeting was held with every council maintained bowling club and officers from the Parks and Countryside service to allow a more detailed discussion.

3.2 The objective of the consultation document was to encourage discussion on a number of principles, designed to encourage bowling clubs towards becoming more self sustaining with additional support being offered through a facility maintenance grant. The aspiration was that this would help support growth in volunteering within clubs, and that this would in turn lead to clubs taking a more proactive role in service delivery. The following bullet points summarise the principles of the consultation:

- Ensure resource usage is maximised by removing surplus greens at multi-green sites and to retain only the greens which are well used.
- Withdraw from horticultural maintenance on all other greens, and instead provide a grant to viable bowls clubs to enable them to manage their own facilities.
- Formalise this arrangement by entering into individual agreements between the council and each club.
- Work with the governing body, associations and clubs to promote the sport and attract new members, and to improve the organisation of the sport.
- If a club feels that they are not able to sustain their own green then encourage them to merge with other clubs and share facilities.
- Only consider closure of a site with active bowls members as a last resort.

3.3 The consultation process has provided a substantial amount of qualitative feedback, and the following bullet points summarises the general feeling of those consulted:

- There was a consensus view from consultation that the existing management arrangements were dated.
- Bowling clubs do not have the capacity within their membership to undertake bowling green maintenance.
- Equally when alternative maintenance options were explored, such as utilising a private contractor, clubs were reluctant to undertake a pro active role in this process.

- There was an acknowledgement that some green rationalisation was necessary but also, that due regard be given to the demand for winter bowling and the capacity for future growth in participation.
- That clubs should have a direct relationship with the council, but that there should be a continued role for the associations in the governance of the sport;
- Clubs were not supportive of the principle of a merger and cited access arrangements as a barrier to this proposal.
- The consultation process highlighted that there was broad support for a marginal increase in the cost of accessing bowling facilities.

3.4 It is therefore evident that there was a need to develop an alternative approach that responded to consultation feedback. During the course of the initial consultation period, bowling clubs identified officials from Leeds based bowling associations to represent them in discussions with Leeds City Council. Consequently, a working group was established between officers from the Parks and Countryside service and a collective of representatives from the bowling associations who had a mandate to represent clubs. The group has met on several occasions and the outcome has been the development of a joint proposal that is supported by the Leeds bowling associations.

4 Revised Proposal

4.1 In response to the consultation feedback, and as an outcome of discussion from this group, alternative proposals have been put forward as follows:

- No Leeds City Council maintained bowling club in the city will close.
- A budget saving on the provision of a service for crown green bowling will be delivered through a combination of;
 - § Utility cost savings- each club will pay for the gas and electricity they use.
 - § The removal of 6 bowling greens at multiple green sites where there is insufficient demand to justify the continued provision of multiple greens.
 - § The generation of additional income which will be recovered on a per bowler basis through a bowling season ticket.
- Leeds City Council will continue to maintain the remaining greens in line with current arrangements which will enable year round access to facilities in the city.
- To ease the transition for Leeds based bowlers, the council will support a phased approach to income generation with incremental increases in the income target over a 4 year period.
- Over the next 4 years, each agreed income projection will be apportioned on a city wide per bowler basis by dividing the income position by the total bowling membership on Leeds City Council sites in the previous year. This will effectively create a crown green bowling season ticket for Leeds.
- The fee paid by each bowler will represent a year long license to bowl on any Leeds City Council summer or winter green, running from April 1st to March 31st.
- To support the development of the game, a 50% concession on the season ticket fee will be offered to juniors bowling club members who are 18 and under at the start of the bowling season.

- Income will be collected by the council on a per club basis. The bill for each club will be derived by multiplying the number of bowling members at that site by the city wide season ticket value.
- A bowls governance group will be established. This group will meet annually and will set and recommend the season ticket cost for each forthcoming year.

4.2 The following table illustrates the financial impact of the above proposals in reducing expenditure and income growth from the position determined prior to consultation. Furthermore, the table demonstrates that the impact of adopting an incremental income growth over a 4 year period will be a £114k annual saving by 2017/18. This is achieved by an additional £68k income raised via bowling club members, and a reduction in expenditure of £46k made up of £30k utility cost and £16k revenue saving from reducing the number of bowling greens.

| Description | Baseline position | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Income | -£10k | -£62k | -£67k | -£72k | -£78k |
| Expenditure | £255k | £209k | £209k | £209k | £209k |
| Net Subsidy | £245k | £147k | £142k | £137k | £131k |

4.3 As highlighted in 4.1, the levied income agreed with bowling associations from 2014/15 to 2017/18 will be divided on a per bowler basis, which will in effect establish a per bowler season ticket. It is presently estimated that the number of bowlers across all clubs in Leeds is 2,500 with approximately 3% of bowlers aged 18 or under. To encourage a growth in participation in the sport by a younger demographic a 50% concession on the adult season ticket cost will be offered to people aged 18 and under. The table below indicates the adult season ticket cost, based on the current estimated total membership remaining static over the 4 year period.

| | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Season Ticket Cost per bowler | £25.00 | £27.00 | £29.00 | £31.50 |
| Cost per month | £2.08 | £2.25 | £2.42 | £2.63 |
| Cost per week | £0.48 | £0.52 | £0.56 | £0.61 |

4.4 In addition to an income growth it is also proposed that there will be a corresponding reduction in expenditure. This will be achieved in two ways, first by asking clubs to meet the cost of gas and electricity and second through the removal of 6 bowling greens from selected sites that currently have multiple greens.

4.5 It is presently estimated that spending on gas and electricity use in bowling pavilions accounts for £30k per annum. It has been agreed with the associations that it is appropriate that clubs cover this cost associated with their own direct use of these utilities. To achieve this it is proposed that where feasible separate utility meters are installed. It is acknowledged that circumstances at each club are likely to be different and in some case an alternative arrangement will need to be agreed with the club.

4.6 Additional expenditure savings will be achieved through a programme of green closures at multiple green sites. These green closures have been proposed by the representatives of the bowling associations based on whether there is a bowling club at the site or only limited members, and knowledge of the usage and number of fixtures at each green. The table below highlights where closures are proposed and as is evident, there are no circumstances where a facility will be left without a bowling green to support existing provision. Bowling greens recommended for closure will be appropriately landscaped for recreational use and integrated into the surrounding parkland.

| Club Name | Ward | Present Number | Greens to be removed | Remaining Greens |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Woodhouse Moor Park | Hyde Park & Woodhouse | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Potternewton Park | Chapel Allerton | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Harehills | Gipton and Harehills | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Cranmore | Middleton Park | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Western Flatts Park | Farnley and Wortley | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | | 13 | 6 | 7 |

4.7 A number of positive benefits can be attributed to the implementation of this new proposal and these are summarised as follows:

- This model provides a real incentive to grow bowling club membership numbers across the city, given the direct correlation between membership numbers and season ticket cost.
- This model is equitable given that payments are to be derived on a per bowler and not per club basis.
- It facilitates a continuation of existing maintenance arrangements in line with the preference stated by bowling clubs.
- It maintains capacity for growth in participation.
- It establishes a closer working relationship between Leeds bowling associations and Leeds City Council and in doing so allows both organisation to jointly work together to;
 - Increase participation in the sport.
 - Improve the quality of service provision.

5 Corporate Considerations

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

5.1.1 As is evident from section three of this report, there has been an extensive amount of consultation on how best to develop a strategic approach on the future provision of crown green bowling in Leeds. Officers have responded to that feedback and can demonstrate a “you told us....we did....” approach to consultation and communication on this issue.

5.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 5.2.1 The consultation process was subject to an equality and diversity, cohesion and integration (EDCI) screening which demonstrated that due consideration had been given in the approach taken and a full impact assessment was therefore not required at that stage.
- 5.2.2 Following the results of the consultation and subsequent proposals that have been developed, a further EDCI screening has been undertaken and is included in Appendix 1. The screening has confirmed that the establishment of a representative stakeholder group and the proposals that were developed jointly were sufficient to demonstrate that due regard to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration issues were considered.
- 5.2.3 A subsequent EDCI screening has been undertaken in response to the request received through consultation for the inclusion of a junior concession. This is included in appendix 2.

5.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 5.3.1 The Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 is to be the best city in the UK by 2030. It has specific aims that the economy will be prosperous and sustainable and that all Leeds' communities will be successful, where there are high quality buildings, places and green spaces, which are clean, looked after and respect the City's heritage.
- 5.3.2 The Best Council plan sets out a new leadership style of civic enterprise, where the council becomes more enterprising, businesses and partners become more civic.
- 5.3.4 The revised proposals put forward on the future of crown green bowling within this report support the Vision for Leeds and Best Council Plan by encouraging bowling clubs to become more self sufficient in addition to generating additional income for the Council.

5.4 Resources and value for money

- 5.4.1 The table in 2.4 demonstrates that the service is presently subsidising crown green bowling in Leeds by approximately £245k per annum. Conversely the table in 4.2 of this report demonstrates that the implementation of the proposals included in this report will provide a saving of £98k per annum in year 1 with further savings over the following 4 years culminating in a £114k annual saving by 2017/18.

5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 5.5.1 The existing legal document between Leeds City Council and Leeds and District bowls association is dated and is in effect already obsolete. The revisions proposed in this report will establish a new service delivery mechanism for bowling in Leeds. As such the existing legal agreement will be ended.

5.6 Risk Management

- 5.6.1 There are financial risks associated with meeting the budget should the proposals included in this report not be implemented.

6 Conclusions

- 6.6 The results of the consultation identified that the initial proposals put forward for consideration were not supported. In response to this, revised proposals have been developed in partnership with Leeds bowling associations who were acting on behalf of Leeds bowling clubs. The proposals developed in partnership that are outlined in this report safeguard the future of crown green bowling in Leeds and it is recommended that Executive Board support this revised approach.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that Executive Board approve the following:

- The introduction of a charge which would mean an income recovery level of £62k in 2014/15 rising to £78k in 2017/18 as set out in paragraph 4.2. Based on current membership levels this would represent a season ticket cost of £25 in 2014/15 rising to £31.50 in 2017/18.
- The removal of 6 bowling greens from multiple green sites as set out in paragraph 4.6 saving £16k per annum
- That bowling clubs meet the costs associated with their own direct use of gas and electricity saving £30k per annum.
- Executive Board are asked to note that;
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 - § That the Chief Officer for Parks and Countryside will be responsible for the delivery of these recommendations and associated actions.

8 Background documents¹

- 8.1 Consultation document containing original proposals and questions for discussion.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.