

CABINET: 23/09/21

TELFORD HOCKEY CLUB – SUPPORTING INVESTMENT IN PITCH FACILITIES

REPORT OF DIRECTOR: PROSPERITY & INVESTMENT

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR EILEEN CALLEAR – CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE, CULTURE AND VISITOR ECONOMY

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Council has a commitment to meeting the sporting needs of the community in Telford across a range of sports. This report seeks approval to assist Telford Hockey club to replace their aging all weather surface on their dedicated hockey pitch at St Georges Recreational Ground.
- 1.2 This pitch is the 'premier' community use hockey pitch in the Borough and the poor condition of the pitch means it needed replacing if it was to continue to be used safely for Hockey. Evidence gathered for the emerging Playing Pitch Strategy highlighted the need for urgent attention and replacement of this pitch. Whilst there is evidence currently of sufficient capacity to cater for existing demand for Hockey in Telford & Wrekin, it is reliant upon the continued use of this pitch which without replacement would not be able to continue.
- 1.3 The cost of the replacement Hockey pitch is £222,811. Telford Hockey Club had secured £68,811 of their own funding (include fundraising), and gained a National Hockey Foundation grant of £50,000 (which was time limited), in addition to identified S106 contributions, however there remained a shortfall. The Hockey Club have therefore sought financial assistance from the Council by way of a loan agreement for up to £50,000, to be repaid over a 25 year period in order to address the matter, providing a safe pitch that meets the identified Boroughs needs.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves a financial loan agreement to provide Telford Hockey Club up to £50,000 to be repaid over a maximum of 25 years to meet the shortfall in funding, to enable the resurfacing of the hockey pitch: and
- 2.2 Delegates authority to the Director: Finance and HR to agree the terms of the loan agreement in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Governance.
- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Associate Director: Policy & Governance to execute all legal and other documentation and undertake all procedural steps necessary to enable completion of the loan and its repayment.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<p>This initiative contributes to a number of the Council's priorities, including the council's vision to protect, care and invest to create a better borough. It meets a number of the council's priorities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. every child, young person and adult lives well in their community – through increased local opportunities provided to take part in healthy sporting activity 2. all neighbourhoods are a great place to live – through creating local accessible opportunities to take part in healthy sporting activity 3. a community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services – through working in partnership with and facilitating the community to improve facilities they use.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<p>The opportunities arising from the use of the improved hockey facilities will provide increased potential for the development of the sport for children and young people, and adults. The newly improved facility will assist in improving people's health through opportunities to take part in sport by increasing the capacity at the facility. The hockey facilities are available to all, but people living in nearby wards/areas of the improved facility are more likely to benefit from its local accessibility. The surrender of the Hockey Club's leasehold interest in the Town Park rugby pitches will enable opportunities for Telford Hornets Rugby club to become leaseholders of the whole facility under a single agreement from the Council, whereby they may be eligible to seek grants to invest in the quality of provision and increase opportunity for taking part in their sport and improving people's health by becoming active.</p>
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	The replacement hockey pitch was completed in July 2021 in readiness for the new sporting season 2021/2022.	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<p>There are a range of benefits as set out in this report against the loan amount. The approved Investment Strategy requires that loans granted to other organisations are considered on a case by case basis and report presented to Cabinet for approval. £50,000 capital allocation can be funded from within the approved Capital Programme for 2021/22 to 2025/26.</p>

		<p>There is no financial guarantee for this loan, therefore any bad debt arising will be unsecured and could therefore be a potential loss to the Council.</p> <p>DR 19/08/21</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>Telford Hockey Club are an amateur sports organisation and as such are not a constituted legal entity. Therefore should they default on any repayments recovery of any outstanding sums is at risk. A loan agreement will be developed and agreed prior to any payment being made.</p> <p>EH 19.8.21</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	<p>The area is being invested in as a leisure destination for the improvement of the quality of sport in the Borough. Local community activities using the revitalised facilities are being proposed by the community club.</p> <p>The surrender of the Hockey Club's interest in the Town Park facility, increases the chances of a similar investment in Rugby at this site by the Telford Hornets Rugby Club.</p> <p>The reputation of the council will be enhanced for working innovatively with the local community to develop quality facilities to meet community needs.</p> <p>The key risk is default on repayment of the loan however the benefits of the new pitch already delivered and the surrender of their legal interest in the pitches at the Town park are considered significant.</p>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	<p>The site is located in the St Georges ward and is likely to have a proportionate increase in local participants from this ward into the sport provided. The community sports club is a large organisation with members from across the Borough and it is anticipated the facility will be used by people across the Borough.</p>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

- 4.1 In 2016 the Council formally adopted its current Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) which includes current and future supply and demand analysis for grass and artificial pitches for five key sports: football, rugby union, rugby league, cricket and hockey. Sport England, as both champions of sport but also as statutory planning consultees in respect of sports facilities and playing fields, recommend that all local authorities should have an up to date and robust Playing Pitch Strategy to ensure there is a sufficient supply of quality playing pitches and playing fields to meet the sporting needs of local communities.
- 4.2 Since 2016, there have been a number of changes both in respect of the supply of sports pitches and a reported increase in demand. Sport England has also introduced a new playing pitch calculator to help assess future demand based upon projected population levels. Therefore the Council are in the final stages of updating the Playing Pitch Strategy. A key objective of any strategy is to ensure that not just the quantum of pitches is appropriate but also their quality. In preparing the updated PPS an evidence base is being gathered on the quality of the existing sports facilities which highlights the immediate need to resurface the artificial pitch at St Georges
- 4.3 This pitch is the 'Premier' community use hockey pitch in the Borough. However the poor condition of the pitch means it needed replacing if it was to continue to be used safely for Hockey. Whilst there is evidence currently of sufficient capacity to cater for existing demand for Hockey in Telford & Wrekin, this is compromised by the quality of and the urgent need to replace the pitch surface at St Georges. The loss of this facility would have meant a reduction in facilities below the required levels.
- 4.4 The cost of the replacement Hockey pitch is £222,811. Telford Hockey Club had secured £68,811 of their own funding (include fundraising), and gained a National Hockey Foundation grant of £50,000. However this external funding scheme was offered for a time limited period only and the Council were therefore approached to assist in achieving the shortfall required to complete the project, before these grants were rescinded and lost to the Borough. Due to the time limited period of this funding, the commitment to complete the project needed to be made by June 2021. The project has now been completed.
- 4.5 The Council has investigated funding opportunities and contributed £54,000 of S106 capital monies secured from nearby residential development to add to the clubs contribution in order to facilitate the project. However a final £50,000 shortfall in funding remained and the Hockey club requested a loan from the Council to be repaid over a 25 year period (the life cycle of the new pitch).
- 4.6 In considering the benefits of this loan, the Hockey Club have agreed to provide 100 hours free hire and 100 hours of subsidised coaching for youth sport at the

new hockey pitch. In addition as part of this agreement it has been negotiated that other land that is leased to the Hockey Club which is no longer required is surrendered back to the Council. The Hockey Club currently leases land at the Town Park under a historic Telford Development Corporation lease agreement. The facility is however not suitable for the provision of hockey and as such the Hockey Club's interest has in recent years been sub-let to Telford Hornets Rugby Club. The Rugby Club are unable to invest in this facility because most external sporting grants are unavailable to sublet tenants. As part of the arrangement for the Council loan to the Hockey club, The Hockey Club have confirmed they would surrender their leasehold interest at the Town Park which would enable the Rugby Club to become full leaseholders of the whole property and be eligible for grants to improve the facilities.

- 4.7 The surrender of the lease at the Town Park and the loan agreement are conditional on each other and the legal documentation will reflect this

5. **IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

NA

6. **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Nil.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil.

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