

Subject: Wellesley Recreation Ground – Feasibility Study proposals  
Report to: Corporate Projects - Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018  
Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee - Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018  
Report by: Kate Watts, Strategic Director

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Wellesley site is clearly one that presents a number of issues for the Council but also a number of opportunities. In bringing this project forwards as a corporate project and in considering this report the following next steps are recommended to Committee for approval;

- 1) Funding of up to £25,000 is allocated from the Council's special projects reserve to fund a feasibility study for this project
- 2) A Members working group consisting of 5 elected Members, politically balanced, is established to support this project

## **1. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Wellesley Recreation Ground was opened in 1888 in order to provide formal facilities for sports in Great Yarmouth. By 1890, local architect, JW Cockrill, had erected a tennis pavilion, ticket office and grandstand on the site. All three buildings are now listed with Grade II status. The grandstand is now considered to be the oldest football stand in Britain and possibly the world and is still in use. The other two buildings are not in use and are currently boarded up. The Recreation Ground is also protected by a 'Fields in Trust' covenant.
- 1.2 Today, the ground is utilised by Great Yarmouth Town Football Club and Great Yarmouth Athletics Club, with community use on the co-located Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and Tennis court.
- 1.3 In 2015 Great Yarmouth Borough Council undertook a Sport, Play and Leisure Strategy to provide an evidence-led approach to the future provision of leisure and sport facilities for the borough's population. The need for further

artificial grass pitches (3G/4G) in the borough was identified to serve the borough's needs moving forward. The recreation ground was also identified in the sport, play and leisure strategy as a key site that would benefit from a trust model of management, recognising the opportunities for dedicated site management and external funding.

- 1.4 In June 2017 Members of the Council's Housing and Neighbourhood Committee considered a report regarding this site and in doing so considered its content and approved the development of a full business case for the site, to include options around site management arrangements to be considered at a future committee.
- 1.5 Work has subsequently been undertaken to develop proposals for a 9 v 9 3G pitch on this site. The Football Association are keen to support a bid in relation to this pitch provision along with additional changing facilities and have encouraged an application for funding at a 50:50 match. A 3G pitch on this site has been estimated at a cost of £600,000 - £650,000.
- 1.6 As part of the newly established corporate projects group this project has been identified as a corporate project. Subsequently a review of the work so far has been undertaken which has included a site visit and officer meetings. This paper presents the findings of this review and outlines recommendations to be considered with the aim of further strengthening this project.

## **2. CURRENT ISSUES**

- 2.1 As part of this review a number of issues with this site have been identified and are summarised as follows;
  - Increased antisocial behaviour on the site
  - Lack of planned maintenance investment of the site with the grandstand being in poor decorative condition
  - The Grade II listed Tennis pavilion ticket office is redundant and continues to be at risk of loss.
  - The Bowls Ticket office also of Grade II listing, and a Cockerill building, is currently boarded up and would collapse if the internal supporting scaffold holding up the roof was removed.

- The West Stand also has suffered from a lack of redecoration thus leading to rot. Lights have been vandalised beyond repair and building needs re-roofing.
- From a leisure management perspective the Wellesley Recreation Ground remains a significant cost to the council. The costs to GYBS far outweigh income received on the site at present, particularly as the pitch needs to be maintained to FA standards to accommodate GYTFC.
- In addition to this there is a significant debt held with the onsite football club who struggle to engage effectively with the Council

### **3. OPPORTUNITIES**

3.1 There are a number of opportunities which could be explored for the site, including funding for a 3G pitch, additional opportunities include;

- Further funding opportunities from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England, and Costal Communities could be considered
- Commercial investment opportunities could be explored with the aim of bringing in additional investment into the site
- Site management review, in particular to explore opportunities to address the current financial issues that exist in relation to this site
- The heritage aspect of the site could be further developed, alongside bringing the two buildings not currently in use, back into use
- The grounds care of the site could be reviewed (a social enterprise model could be considered within this area)
- The use of the site could be reviewed, could it be used for outdoor music events for example as well as outdoor leisure activities?
- Consideration should also be given to other outdoor leisure needs for the borough, outside of football, to see if additional sport facilities could be developed on the site
- The site is situated next to the Beaconsfield site, this site could be considered as well as part of this project

3.2 Although the progression of a 3G pitch currently forms the focal point for this project it is clear that there are a wider set of opportunities which could be explored once the outcomes for this work have been defined.

#### **4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

4.1 Whilst the paper that was considered by Members approved the production of a business case for this project, there was a need to bring this project into the newly developed corporate project management framework which included the development of a project brief and project initiation document prior to any business case being compiled. See Appendix 1 for a copy of a project brief that has since been developed for this project. This brief outlines a number of project objectives, which are;

- To use the Wellesley site to provide facilities which help meet outcomes in the Council's Sports, Play and Leisure Strategy
- To assess the viability of co-investing in the site with external partners
- To provide outdoor sporting facilities on the site which complement the investment in and offer provided by the nearby Marina Centre development
- To make a significant reduction in the Council subsidy for the site, including management and repairs and maintenance liabilities and the servicing of any loan required to invest in the site
- To safeguard the future of the Listed Buildings on the site through repair and new, imaginative, sustainable uses.
- To assess the options for management of the site
- To maximise the presence of heritage buildings on the site, particularly the oldest football stand in the world, as part of the town's heritage tourism trail
- To encourage greater use of the site in order to discourage anti-social behaviour

4.2 In reviewing this project brief it is clear that to achieve the project objectives in full, progression with the 3G pitch project should be paused so that a wider piece of work can be completed. This work would consist of a feasibility study for the whole site which would subsequently provide Members with a suite of options and outline costs which Members are then able to fully consider prior to moving this project forwards.

4.3 In liaison with Sport England about this project, they are in support of us undertaking a feasibility study for the project and have provided details of a number of companies that could progress this work at an estimated cost of £20,000 - £25,000. Unfortunately they currently have no funding available to support this work due to a recent restructure of this organisation.

- 4.4 It is therefore recommended that Members approve funding of up to £25,000 to procure a feasibility study for this site, with funding coming from the Council's special projects reserve.

## **5. PROJECT GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

- 5.1 The Wellesley project has been identified as a Corporate Project so will now be managed through the Council's project management office bringing in additional support and structure to this project.
- 5.2 In addition to this ward Members have been engaged directly with this project so far, but if Members are minded to further develop this project via way of a feasibility study there will be a clear need to strengthen governance arrangements for this project. It is therefore suggested that a small Members working group is established to support this project, consisting of 5 elected Members, with a political balance of 3, 1 and 1.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The Wellesley site is clearly one that presents a number of issues for the Council but also a number of opportunities. In bringing this project forwards it is recommended that;
- Funding of up to £25,000 is allocated from the Council's special projects reserve to fund a feasibility study for this project
  - A Members working group consisting of 5 elected Members, politically balanced, is established to support this project

## PROJECT BRIEF

**PP office use only**

Date initiated: 1/12/17

Project ref: TBC

<b>Project name</b>	Wellesley Recreation Ground
<b>Author</b>	Anthony Moore
<b>Project Sponsor</b>	Kate Watts
<b>Project Director</b>	Robert Read
<b>Project Manager</b>	Anthony Moore

<b>Documentation</b>	TBC
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<b>Revision</b>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
	6/11/17	1st draft to be presented at Corporate projects meeting on 6/11/17
	24/1/18	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft to be presented to Corporate projects meeting on 29/1/18

<b>Project Finances</b>	None allocated at this time – request for funding in relation to feasibility study		
<b>Capital</b>	£0.00	<b>Total Project Costs</b>	£Unknown yet
<b>Revenue</b>	£0.00		

<b>Project Start Date</b>	On-going		
<b>Project End Date</b>	TBC		

<b>Project Aim</b>	A develop a clear future direction for the Wellesley Road Recreation Ground, including current and future usage, potential 3G facilities, onsite buildings and future management of the site.
<b>Project Description</b>	A review of income, expenditure, management, maintenance, issues, risks and opportunities on the site to present a calculated, coherent and comprehensive plan for the site which addresses all areas, either as one study or as linked studies.
<b>Project Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To use the Wellesley site to provide facilities which help meet outcomes in the Council's Sports, Play and Leisure Strategy</li> <li>2. To assess the viability of co-investing in the site with external partners</li> <li>3. To provide outdoor sporting facilities on the site which complement the investment in and offer provided by the nearby Marina Centre development</li> <li>4. To make a significant reduction in the Council subsidy for the site, including management and repairs and maintenance liabilities and the servicing of any loan required to invest in the site</li> <li>5. To safeguard the future of the Listed Buildings on the site through repair and new, imaginative, sustainable uses.</li> <li>6. To assess the options for management of the site.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To maximise the presence of heritage buildings on the site, particularly the oldest football stand in the world, as part of the town's heritage tourism trail</li> <li>To encourage greater use of the site in order to discourage anti-social behaviour</li> <li>To use the development of the site to provide a valuable community asset, which helps to meet the Council's strategy for driving, increased participation in physical activity</li> </ol>
<b>Need and Benefit</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site runs at a significant annual loss currently (£25,000) and this needs to be reduced where possible as part of the Council's financial management strategy. There may also be income opportunities from this site dependant of future development decisions</li> <li>There is an opportunity to promote the football stand, which is little known, rundown and a potentially internationally important heritage asset</li> <li>There is a need for rescue and maintenance plans in relation to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lack of planned maintenance investment of the site with the grandstand being in poor decorative condition. The West Stand also has suffered from a lack of redecoration thus leading to rot. Lights have been vandalised beyond repair and building needs re-roofing.</li> <li>The Grade II listed Tennis pavilion ticket office is redundant and continues to be at risk of loss.</li> <li>The Bowls Ticket office also of Grade II listing, and a Cockerill building, is currently boarded up and would collapse if the internal supporting scaffold holding up the roof was removed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>There is a need to reduce site associated ASB</li> <li>Great Yarmouth has areas with some of the worst health indices in the country. There is a need to drive greater sports participation within the community</li> </ol>
<b>Headline Outcomes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Savings / Income Generation through refined management, increased users, different users, increased offer</li> <li>Meeting recommendations of the Sports, Play and Leisure Strategy</li> <li>Rescue of at risk listed buildings.</li> <li>Increased visitor numbers to football stand</li> <li>Reduced ASB on site</li> <li>Provide a valuable community asset, which helps to meet the Council's strategy for increasing participation in physical activity</li> </ol>
<b>Options Analysis</b>	<p><i>Please list the options that have been considered to achieve the project objectives. Projects will need to have considered several alternatives, including a "do nothing" option. These should be discussed with reasons for rejection. For major investments a comprehensive range of options should be considered.</i></p> <p><b>Option 1</b></p> <p>Do Nothing – GYBC continues to subsidise the activities by £25,000 p.a and the buildings fall into further disrepair.</p> <p><b>Option 2 (currently approved option)</b></p> <p>Don't review whole site but press on with match funding bid for the 3G facility – The remainder of the site continues to require some subsidy and the stand remains under appreciated with no long-term strategy. Borough meets its 3G needs through significant investment (c. £650k) and creates additional gross income of c.£10k p.a.. One heritage building is rescued (changing rooms for 3G).</p> <p><b>Option 3</b></p> <p>Procure a feasibility study for whole site (c.£20k). The whole site is reviewed with the objective of enhancing the use of the main stand and reviewing the management structure, possibly vesting with a trust to reduce Council exposure. Postpone decision on 3G option with risk of losing out on match funding (c.£300,000).</p>
<b>Key Risks / Threats</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing conflict with GYTFC</li> <li>Fields in Trust covenant</li> <li>Listed buildings falling further into disrepair</li> <li>GYBS maintenance contract</li> <li>Business plan under delivers</li> <li>3G match-funding disappears</li> <li>Minor title risk</li> <li>Relationship with users</li> <li>Wellesley has a unique sporting offer and replacing those unique aspects with other priorities runs the risk of strengthening in one area by weakening another</li> </ol>
<b>Key milestones / activities</b>	Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee 1/2/18 to consider funding allocation to progress the recommended option, which is option 3.

<b>Scope of programme</b>	To review, strategically, the future direction of the site by determining a favoured option, updating members and formalising governance arrangements
<b>Links / dependencies</b>	<p>GYBC is proposing to invest significantly in its Sports and Leisure Strategy through the Marina Centre project and any scheme relating to this strategy should be complementary.</p> <p>Any works on the football stand and other listed buildings should reference the Culture and Heritage strategies.</p>
<b>Key Stakeholders (initial view)</b>	<p>Internal : Neighbourhoods team, Property Services</p> <p>Connected: GYBS, Sentinel (in Sports Development capacity)</p> <p>External: GYTFC, GY Athletics Club, Local Schools, Local Residents, Other users.</p>



