



Report to: Cabinet, 22nd March 2016

Report of: Councillor Mike Johnson, Cabinet Member for Sport, Leisure and Retail

Subject: REFURBISHMENT OF PLAYING PITCHES AT PERDISWELL – KEY DECISION

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That Cabinet award a contract to Contractor D to carry out works to reinstate 6 grass pitches at Perdiswell;**
- 1.2 That Cabinet approves a total project budget of £336,000 for this work, to include the contract works, project supervision and contingency; and**
- 1.3 That Cabinet notes the availability of Section 106 funding to finance the contract works and agrees to allocate funding from the 2016/17 New Homes Bonus grant, to finance the remaining project costs.**

2. Background

- 2.1 The City Council received a grant from the Football Foundation in 2008 to provide changing facilities, refurbish the artificial pitch, and carry out drainage works to the grass pitches at Perdiswell Park.
- 2.2 The total grant sum was c£575k, being approximately two thirds of the total project cost. This provided for a new changing facility adjoining the existing leisure centre, to serve four senior and three junior football pitches. A sum of £132k plus £19k professional fees was allocated to the renovation of the outdoor pitches.
- 2.3 The site, previously used as an airfield, had suffered from waterlogging over a number of years. A ring drain system was installed around the perimeter of the pitches, but no drainage was installed to the pitches themselves. The intention was that on-going maintenance would improve the drainage sufficiently without incurring the cost of a more comprehensive drainage system.
- 2.4 Over the past four years the drainage problems have worsened, and due to issues of compaction and stone content it has not been possible to carry out adequate maintenance spiking or hollow tining which is recognised as best practice in improving drainage and relieving soil compaction.
- 2.5 In 2012 the Council commissioned specialist consultants to report on the condition of the pitches. The report identified that there was a high stone content, and areas of severe compaction that could not be addressed through standard maintenance. The report recommended that major reconstruction and renovation work was required. At this time it became apparent that the pitches needed to be taken out of use as sports pitches as they were largely unplayable and the stone content afforded a risk of injury to participants.

- 2.6 Discussions have been on-going with the Football Foundation since the closure of the pitches, with regard to the potential for the Council to carry out works to bring the pitches back into use. The Football Foundation grant agreement requires the pitches to be to their 'Performance Quality Standard' specification. In 2015 Officers commissioned a full specification for the required repair and reconstruction works to meet this standard, this included a new playing surface and new and comprehensive drainage and irrigation.
- 2.7 Following market testing, a tendering process has resulted in the receipt of 7 bids from Football Association approved contractors. Details of the evaluation are at **Appendix 1.**
- 2.8 It is intended to start the works in April 2016, with an approximate 12 month period thereafter before the pitches are ready to be played on. This means that the pitches will be available in Spring 2017, a timescale which broadly aligns with the completion of the new build and refurbishment works at the adjacent Perdiswell Leisure Centre.
- 2.9 The Council have an agreement with the Worcester Whippet Racing Club to allow whippet racing at Perdiswell. Discussions to agree an alternative location are proceeding with the Club, and it is anticipated that a satisfactory solution will be reached.
- 2.10 Ongoing maintenance of the pitches will be carried out within existing resource by the Council's sports pitch maintenance team. The new pitches will relieve pressure on other pitches across the City, and a pitch rotation system will be implemented to even out wear and tear and give each pitch adequate recovery time.
- 2.11 These proposals fit with the South Worcestershire Playing Pitches Strategy, which was the subject of a report to Cabinet in December 2015. The strategy highlights the potential to improve pitch quality by consolidating provision across the City and focussing on well equipped "hub" sites.

3. Preferred Option

- 3.1 The preferred option is to appoint the successful contractor to carry out works to reinstate 6 grass pitches at Perdiswell commencing in April 2016. These works will include new drainage and irrigation, to satisfy the requirements of the Football Foundation's Performance Quality Standard. Works will take approximately 10 weeks to complete, following which there will be a period of at least 12 months for the grass to become established.
- 3.2 This will also require the appointment of a specialist technical consultant to oversee the execution of the works.
- 3.3 The costs of the specialist consultant and a contingency for the works will be funded from the 2016/17 New Homes Bonus grant which has been set aside to support Corporate Plan priorities.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Not returning the pitches to a playable condition is not considered a viable option, given the investment made in the site by the City Council and the Football Foundation, and the demand from the local football community.

- 4.2 Not carrying out the works at this time would lead to increased costs as the current tender will expire. Construction prices are rising, and the tender prices received varied considerably on price. Therefore there is a significant risk that the cost of the works would rise substantially, if this contract is not awarded. This would require the Council to identify significant additional funding.
- 4.3 Delaying commencement of the works would also mean that the pitches would not be playable until at least the end of 2017. This is dependent on favourable weather conditions.

5. Implications

Financial and Budgetary Implications

- 5.1 The majority of required funding is available from s106 agreements in the sum of £304,355. The balance of £31,645 will be financed from the 2016/17 New Homes Bonus grant for Corporate Plan priorities.
- 5.2 The project costs include a contingency of c£20k which will be monitored during the project implementation, any unspent contingency will be returned to the New Homes Bonus allocation.

Legal and Governance Implications

- 5.3 The Council will enter into a standard form of contract for works with the successful contractor.
- 5.4 The relevant terms of the Football Foundation grant agreement will be satisfied by the proposed works.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 The financial risk of a requirement to repay grant funding to the Football Foundation is mitigated by carrying out the works.
- 5.6 Funding of £45k from one of the Section 106 agreements is not yet due to the Council as the development has not commenced. It is expected that the development will commence within the next few months at which point the funding will be received.

Corporate/Policy Implications

- 5.7 The proposals are consistent with the South Worcestershire Playing Pitch Strategy, and in line with the support for Sport as outlined in the Corporate Plan.

Equality Implications

- 5.8 There are no equality implications arising from the content of this report

Human Resources Implications

- 5.9 There are no Human Resource implications arising from the content of this report.

Health and Safety Implications

5.10 The safety of the public during the works period will be safeguarded by fencing off the works area.

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Background Papers: None