

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE DELIVERY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 8 JUNE 2022

PRESENT: Councillor I Herdman (Chair)

Councillors G Bentley, M Bowen, C Brady, S Ellis, B Emery, E Fallows, A Hart, N Hawkins, T Holmes, K Hoptroff, B A Hughes, L Page, H Plimley, D Price, Z Routledge, P Routledge and J Salt.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors J Aberley, P Roberts, S Scalise, R Ward and N Yates.

APOLOGIES: Councillor J Redfern.

1 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY.**

There were none.

2 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS.**

DECIDED: That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 16 and 23 March 2022, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY. (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN).**

No urgent items had been received.

4 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:-**

No declarations of interests were made by members.

5 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.**

Question received from Councillor Hoptroff

Q1. *“Due to the recent wanton vandalism of the Leek Bus Station toilets and the unfortunate forced closure, we need to set up some form of security before we even contemplate carrying out expensive repair work and reopening to the public again. What progress has been made in providing some form of CCTV coverage around the area that was discussed at this panel’s meeting on the 3rd November 2021?”*

Response from Councillor Ward - Portfolio Holder for Communities:

Background

Unfortunately, the Smithfield WCs have been the focus of vandalism for some time now. In Spring 2020, a major capital refurbishment project was undertaken to improve accessibility and also included steel reinforcements to the doors as well as

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high-spec fittings to try and stem the impact of revenue costs of continuing to fix the toilets following bouts of vandalism. This was completed at a cost of almost £100k. Despite this there were repeated minor acts of vandalism through autumn and winter 2020.

In March 2021 an explosive device was set off in the ladies WCs in 2021 causing significant structural and fire damage. The WC had to be closed for an extended period whilst they were fixed at further cost of £20,000. The police were informed and a juvenile was arrested on another matter but admitted to setting fire to the WCs, but the matter did not proceed to court.

Since then there has been intermittent issues of vandalism. Most recently over past 6 weeks we have both ladies and gents being targeted more often. (Graffiti, fire damage, ripping off toilet roll holders, ripping of toilet doors, food being ground into walls and floors, littering, purposefully blocking toilets). The perpetrators have been doing this during the day and also at night time once the WCs are locked. Following the major capital project, auto-locks were added to automatically lock at 6pm. However, the doors were being repeatedly kicked in so hard that the locks have “dropped” allowing access. Therefore manual locking by Norse has also been tried to act as an additional deterrent. This also made little difference and therefore the decision was taken to close them for the time being. The disabled WCs can still be accessed by those who have possession of a radar key.

CCTV

It should be noted that placing CCTV inside the WCs is NOT an option due to these of the facility as a toilet. Therefore CCTV can only cover the entrances to the WCs. Therefore, unless any criminal activity happened outside of the WCs the best we can hope for is that it will capture those entering and exiting the WCs at a specific time. Although this may not stand up as evidence in a prosecution, we can hope that it will act as a deterrent to prevent the anti-social behaviour.

OpenView – our CCTV Contractor – have been commissioned to install an additional camera at Leek Bus Station in response to the repeated vandalism. The camera is due to go-live by the end of the month when the CCTV network is switched over from analogue to digital.

Question received from Councillor Page: -

Q2. “The Play and Outdoor Sports Facilities Investment Plan Report in agenda item 8 mentions no investment to Brough Park Bowling Club. Members and players of this facility have been let down for many years with the poor condition of the lawns and inadequate maintenance. What plans do SMDC have to improve this essential physical recreational facility for the community?”

Response from Councillor Deaville - Deputy Leader of the Council:

Whilst the report being presented at tonight’s Panel focuses on Play and Outdoor Sports facilities investment, it doesn’t consider maintenance of our sports pitches which is when the bowling green would usually be considered.

We can confirm that officers have been having intermittent conversations with the chairman of Brough Park Bowls Club, supported by Cllr Lytton Page over a sustained period, mainly regarding the maintenance regime undertaken on the men’s bowling green, following an approach by them in 2019. These conversations spanned the various lockdowns enforced by the pandemic and included officers

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providing an itemised maintenance schedule of the work undertaken by Glendale on the green, which has an overall value of £15,000pa.

At the time, the club were considering whether they would be able to take on the maintenance either to undertake fully or partially themselves, which follows an approach the Alliance has taken before with bowling clubs in the High Peak. During April 2021, it was confirmed this was not deemed possible and the club wished to continue with the existing schedule of maintenance arrangements via Glendale. In March 2022, officers approved a programme of additional maintenance to the bowling green to help pre-season works, primarily involving selective weed killer and fertilization. This was well received by the club chairman and since this time, we have not received any further complaints regarding the condition of the green.

The condition of bowling greens, as with any fine turf pitches, can be greatly be affected by adverse weather conditions which are out of everyone's control. Periods of very wet weather can have a negative effect on the green, as can periods of very dry weather and it is periods of dry weather which the club have raised as a concern due to the greens not having any built in irrigation system. The possibility of installing a retrofit irrigation system which utilises rainwater collection technology have been discussed previously, however with the estimated cost for installing of c.£10,000 a coordinated approach to securing these funds would be required. It is viewed that this type of system could be beneficial, but the use of it would need to be managed carefully to ensure it complements the maintenance provided by Glendale, as over watering or watering at the wrong time could have a negative impact, rather than a benefit.

In summary, the Council spends approximately £15,000pa on the current maintenance regime for this bowling green which is considerably more than any other single sports pitch in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Consideration as to whether the Council should fund a further and sustained increase must therefore be carefully considered, as should using more creative ways to enhance maintenance, via use of external grant funding or with support from club members.

In response to a supplementary question in relation to the irrigation system at the Bowling Green, the Portfolio Holder gave assurance that since the water supply had been supplied from the Leisure Centre and the pressure had been increased, it was now possible to irrigate the lawns more effectively. Following conversations with Club members, improvement in the condition of the bowling greens had been noted.

Councillor Page queried the planned capital expenditure of £21,500 for the refurbishment of the Pavilion, to which Councillor Deaville agreed to investigate after the meeting. He also welcomed a meeting with Councillor Page, bowlers and members of the Committee to review the maintenance regime.

6 WORK PROGRAMME.

It was noted that there were a number of substantive items for the meeting scheduled in September. Therefore, where possible, some of the listed items would be rescheduled.

Following a query in relation to the mills in Biddulph being incorporated in the Leek Mills report, the Leader agreed that he would contact the Head of Regeneration after the meeting.

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Due to the number of member items being listed as TBC, a request was received for these to be allocated to a meeting or for a heads of terms/position paper for each item to be provided to the Panel.

DECIDED: That the Panel's Work Programme be agreed.

7 PLAY AND OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES INVESTMENT PLAN.

The Panel considered a report which detailed the development of an investment plan for delivery of refurbishment works or full replacement of Council owned play and outdoor sports facilities across the district.

Play and outdoor sports facilities were important assets in many of our parks and open spaces and it is important these facilities were provided, maintained and developed effectively. To ensure this happens, the proposed investment and delivery plan detailed in Appendix 1 of the report had been developed and proposed a programme of refurbishment and/or replacement of selected facilities over a 4 year rolling period.

To develop the plan, quality assessments of existing Council owned play and outdoor sports facilities had been undertaken which highlighted the facilities that required improvements, the approximate timeframe for when these improvements needed to be delivered by, and a budget estimate for how much the improvements were likely to cost.

The estimated cost to deliver the first 4 years of this plan was £320,000 and this amount would need to be added to the medium term financial plan (MTFP) as a growth item from the 2023/24 financial year. The impact of this resulted in the additional revenue borrowing costs as detailed in the report.

It may be possible to offset the amount of funding required to deliver the proposed programme of works using section 106 funds secured for these types of improvements from housing developers. Where this was possible, the funds secured would be factored into each project on a case-by-case basis, resulting in a reduced cost to the Council.

During the planning phase for each project, officers within the Council's Leisure and Recreation team would assess whether it was possible to secure external funding towards them. If this was possible, it would further reduce the cost to the Council for delivering each project. However, should it not be possible to secure external funding, the proposed budget request included in the report would still be sufficient to deliver all projects to the required level.

The District Council did not have the responsibility for refurbishment or replacement of play areas and some outdoor sports facilities in Cheadle but, recognising the importance of these facilities to local residents, officers were working with Cheadle Town Council to develop an improvement plan for Tean Road Recreation ground and Churchill Road Recreation ground. This plan was expected to be completed during 2022 and funding via a number of section 106 agreements had already been identified to contribute towards delivery of any plan, once trigger points were met within these agreements.

Councillor Deaville – Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Sports welcomed comments and encouraged members to contact him with any potential projects.

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Gareth Knapper – Service Development Officer and Rob Wilks – Principal Officer were in attendance to respond to any queries as detailed below:

Equality Impact Assessment – The assessment was positive for all users of the play facilities and members were pleased the plans were inclusive. The play areas incorporated as much fully accessible equipment as possible and additional equipment was installed when new innovative items were made available. Although Brough Park had benefited from improved play facilities, it was felt that more could be done for users with physical disabilities. An additional column on the spreadsheets for each of the play areas to record accordance with equalities and inclusivity was suggested by a member of the Panel

Decommissioned Paddock Play Area in Biddulph – As the area was prone to anti-social behaviour (ASB) and surface water flooding, a suggestion was made for the area to be re-naturalised. Councillor Deaville advised, that he was keen to develop facilities where ASB had taken place and a site visit would be arranged.

Church Road Play Area – It was confirmed that the cost for the recently replaced sleepers at this site would not be deducted from the allocated budget of £60,000.

It was highlighted that the Section 106 monies were still to be spent on the Churchill Road Recreation Area and the development of the railway track in Cheadle should be incorporated in the plans. The Portfolio Holder gave assurance that the railway track was of high importance to the Council and that complexities around lease arrangements needed to be overcome. At present, this area was a well-used public amenity.

Piece of Land at Hammersley Hayes Old Road (next to new development) – It was agreed that this unsightly section of land would be investigated by officers at the Council.

Councillor Ward – Portfolio Holder for Communities agreed to look into the suggestions around increased CCTV surveillance at play areas in Cheadle and Cruso Street in Leek. Other members had differing opinions around increased CCTV and felt that improved planning and design of developments provided passive surveillance to areas prone to ASB.

DECIDED: The Panel **RECOMMENDED** Cabinet **APPROVED** the report and supported the refurbishment or replacement of Council owned play areas and outdoor sports facilities across the district as detailed in the report.

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

“That pursuant to Section 100A (2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that exempt information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the paragraphs indicated.”

9 TO APPROVE THE EXEMPT MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

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DECIDED: That the exempt minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2022, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm

_____ Chairman _____ Date