

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: TRANSFER OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

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SPORTS PITCHES SERVICE

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To receive further information on the service and to consider future provision.

RECOMMENDATION

That the matter be considered further in the light of the responses from town and parish councils following the meeting on 20th June.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

To ensure a viable service for clubs in the Borough.

1. At the last meeting on 7th April the Committee asked for more information on the operation and costs of the sports pitches service.
2. The Committee's attention is also drawn to the report elsewhere on the agenda on the Playing Pitch Strategy. This contains important background on the overall provision and availability of pitches in the Borough and their development and improvement over the next 10 years.
3. The Council provides pitches for football, rugby and cricket. September to April is the busiest time as this is the football and rugby seasons. May to August is quieter as this is just cricket.
4. The pitches are located at Bullholme, Earby Recreation Ground, Edge End, Hodge House, Holt House, John Bradley Playing Fields, Ringstone Crescent, Springfield Earby, Swinden, Trawden Recreation Ground and Victory Park.
5. Neighbourhood Services are responsible for the service with support from Environmental Services. The Green Spaces Manager oversees the service, including its development.

6. A member of staff in Neighbourhood Services has amongst his responsibilities ensuring pavilions are maintained properly.
7. Administrative staff in Environmental Services have amongst their responsibilities dealing with bookings and the Landscape Maintenance Team prepare the pitches.
8. Tasks involved are:
 - Prior to the start of a new Football and Rugby season, pitch allocation sheets and other associated paperwork have to be sent out and completed for all teams/clubs using pitches. Insurance documents and signed conditions of hire paperwork have to be completed before teams/clubs are allowed to use the facilities.
 - Annual pre-season meeting with Pendle District Cricket League (the Green Spaces Manager attends this).
 - Liaising with individual teams, clubs and leagues on a weekly basis regarding upcoming fixtures/issues.
 - Booking fixtures on to a spreadsheet.
 - Printing out weekly inspection sheets for all Sports pitch sites during the winter months (Pitches are usually inspected on a Friday morning. Details of pitch inspections are sent out via social media).
 - Ensuring pavilions are ready for use - meter readings, legionella testing and general health & safety checks of the buildings, ensuring they are reasonably clean and provisions such as toilet rolls, paper towels are supplied.
 - Organising attendants to cover pavilions where games are taking place.
 - Once fixtures have been confirmed details are passed on to the Landscape Maintenance team for them to organise marking/prepare pitches.
 - All teams/clubs/leagues are invoiced monthly via Sundry Debtors.
 - Details regarding the end of the season shut down (taking goalposts down/midweek games) particularly for Football and Rugby are sent out to all teams/clubs/leagues in March.
9. The attached spreadsheet gives details of the number of fixtures and income generated in 2015/16.
10. The total cost of the time of the four members of staff involved in the service (other than the Landscape maintenance team) approximately equates to the income generated.
11. The Pendle-wide service can deal quickly with bookings and other issues which arise on a daily basis during the week. If town and parish councils were to take on responsibility for pitches in their area they would need to put in place similar arrangements.
12. Whilst teams like to play in their own local area and could develop a working arrangement with their town or parish council, they may find themselves having to deal with more than one local council regarding pitch requirements. This would be the case for the Pendle Charity Football League and Pendle District Cricket League. The Charity League use pitches across the borough and on average have 10 matches per weekend. The District Cricket League use 4 different sites for their matches.
13. Also larger clubs like Pendle Forest and Barrowford Celtic tend to use a number of pitches across different sites due to the number of teams they have particularly at the start and end of the football season as we close some sites down to provide for cricket games. So for example Barrowford Celtic teams may at times have teams playing at Ringstone, Bullholme

and John Bradley Playing fields thus having to deal with three different town and parish councils.

14. A further negative picture may emerge if a parish or town council restricts bookings to its own local teams and there are at times not enough pitches available elsewhere to meet demand.
15. If only some town and parish councils wish to take over responsibility with the remainder left with Pendle then a fragmented service emerges possibly with considerable differences in pitch quality and fees charged.
16. For the meeting held on 20th June town and parish councils were provided with information on sports pitches alongside information on parks. Unsurprisingly perhaps most of the discussion was about the parks which may indicate that at least for the present there is not a strong wish on their part to take them on. Indeed following earlier discussions last year only Trawden and Earby have expressed interest.
17. An update will be provided at the meeting on town and parish councils' responses following the meeting on 20th June but it may be that the Council will take the view that it needs to retain a core sports pitch service based on the facilities in the main towns.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Council's overall policy is to consider transferring facilities to town and parish councils where feasible.

Financial: The income generated from fees is shown in the appendix

Legal: None arising from the report

Risk Management: None arising from the report.

Health and Safety: None arising from the report.

Sustainability: None arising from the report.

Community Safety: None arising from the report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising from the report.

APPENDIX - Spreadsheet with details of fixtures and income.

