

**REPORT FROM:** Neighbourhood Services Manager

**TO:** Colne & District Committee

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## **Transfer of Vivary Way MUGA to Alkincoats Park**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide Members with details of 3 options for the re-location of the MUGA from Vivary Way in to Alkincoats Park.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee approve Option 2.

### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

To ensure the MUGA is located in the best position and to enable the Vivary Way project to move forward.

### **ISSUE**

1. The Council has agreed to sell land at Vivary Way and Crown Way to Lloyds BMW and Boundary Mill for additional car parking purposes for a capital receipt. As part of the development proposal, a linear park will be created that will incorporate a newly diverted public footpath and a grassed area. This land has been retained by the Council in advance of any re-opening of the old railway line.
2. The land currently holds the now defunct Urban Altitude high ropes facility (which is within the larger fenced in Astroturf area) and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) – see Appendix 1. As such, both facilities have to be removed to allow the development to progress.
3. As the MUGA is a Vivary Bridge facility, the expectation is that it is moved elsewhere within the ward to ensure that the facility remains local. The preferred site is Alkincoats Park, not far from the current location.

4. As part of the overall scheme, £40,000 in the Capital programme has been set aside to pay for the transfer of the MUGA to its new location. This involves:
  - dismantling the existing MUGA
  - transporting to the Park
  - constructing a tarmac base to the required specification including linking footpath
  - re-assembling fencing
  - replacing bolts/fixings
  - installing relevant drainage
5. Officers had originally proposed that the MUGA be transferred to within the existing informal grassed football area between the tennis courts and the children's play area (Option 1) – see Appendix 2. This option would cost circa £36,500 and is therefore deliverable within the budget allocated and would provide a year round facility on a piece of land that is unusable for 6 months of the year due to poor drainage. The basketball hoop and surrounding concrete base would be taken out and the MUGA (which includes two basketball hoops at either end) would be installed. The MUGA can be used for multi-sports not just football and basketball. The facility would not be floodlit.
6. As such, the proposal was discussed at the July 2017 Friends of Alkincoats Park meeting where it was generally supported with the group voting for the MUGA being transferred to the Park although a precise location was not decided. Subsequently, at the next meeting in October 2017, it was again discussed with Option 1 the only option on the table at this time.
7. Since then the Friends' Group appears to have had second thoughts about Option 1 with concerns about the MUGA bringing about increased levels of anti-social behaviour in addition to the loss of the informal grassed football area.
8. Some of the Friends Group have been members of the group for a long time and remember when the Skate Park was in this location. The facility was eventually taken out due it being a noise and antisocial behaviour nuisance. The MUGA that is currently in situ at Vivary Way was originally mooted to be in the Park, again in this location, but was vehemently opposed by the Friends Group due to their memories of the Skate Park issues.
9. They are concerned that these issues could rear their head again and that the isolated location of the MUGA (within the natural hedge border providing an enclosed area) would exacerbate things. They are also worried about the close proximity to the children's play area above the site and young children being exposed to bad language used by older children and youths on the MUGA.
10. Consequently, they have registered their concerns with ward Councillors and other options within the Park have been explored. A meeting was held between the Chief Executive and the three ward Councillors in August 2018, the outcome being to go for Option 2.
11. This replaces the existing ball court doing away with the need for the external fencing around this part of the larger ball court/tennis court area – see Appendix 3. The fencing in this part of the court is in need of replacing and has had numerous repairs done to it in recent years. This scheme seems the most logical and could also be delivered within the allocated budget (at a cost of circa £25,000). It would also free up money (£15,000) to enable additional improvement works on the rest of the tennis court area.
12. In addition most of the existing surface of the tennis court area could be overlaid with a bitmac wearing course and new line marking carried out. We could also look at changing the rest of the traditional chain link fencing to the MUGA type mesh fencing which is more robust and practicable for a facility such as this thus providing longevity for the tennis courts.

13. The Friends Group were initially open to this option and felt it had advantages but have since come up with another proposal (Option 3 – see below) which is now their preferred option. They feel that Option 2 would take away a facility that is primarily used by younger children (usually with their parents/grandparents) and that as a consequence young children would not gain the benefit of the MUGA as older children would naturally take it over. They feel that both the ball court and the MUGA are needed within the Park.
14. We would point out that there is an opportunity within Option 2 to provide both the ball court and the MUGA. We could take one of the tennis courts and turn this in to a ball court by re-locating the small 5-a-side style steel goalposts. The tennis nets could be re-used elsewhere. The demand for tennis has diminished over the years with the courts only being used for casual informal play. Use by the tennis league has reduced dramatically compared to 15-20 years ago. If this was to happen, we would still have 3 tennis courts (2 traditional and 1 steel net) available to the public.
15. Option 3 (see Appendix 4) is for the MUGA to be re-located to an area of land between the end of the tennis courts and the boundary of the Park at the Haverholt Close side. As shown on the location plan of options in Appendix 5, this would be very close to the Park's boundary where a new housing development is due to be developed. The undulating land does not lend itself to the development and as such there would be a significant amount of groundworks required to get the necessary level needed to put the MUGA in along with an access path.
16. Consequently, this option is cost prohibitive as it comes in £23,500 over the allocated £40,000 budget at circa £63,500. For this to be a viable option, additional monies would need to be secured. The Council is not in a position to provide any extra money from its Parks revenue budgets for 2018/19.
17. There are also concerns about the potential removal of a mature Sycamore tree close to where the MUGA would be to facilitate the construction of an embankment (there is an expectation that the tree's roots would be damaged when the embankment is formed) as well as the fact that there are two well used informal pathways that run through the area of the proposed MUGA position. A further issue is that there are two sewers running through the proposed site and given the depth of the excavation required this could cause additional complications and potentially render this option unfeasible. This option would also need planning permission.
18. Appendix 5 is a plan detailing the locations of the 3 options in the Park.
19. The table below provides pros and cons for all 3 options;

Option	Cost	Pro's	Con's
1	£36,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver within budget</li> <li>• Keep existing ball court</li> <li>• Replace much vandalised standalone basketball hoop</li> <li>• Provide year round facility/improve drainage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning permission needed</li> <li>• Taking away green space</li> <li>• Isolated location, may encourage ASB</li> <li>• Close proximity to play area – bad language/impractical</li> <li>• Historical ASB associated with</li> </ul>

			location/Friends Group concerns
2	£25,000*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver within budget</li> <li>• No planning permission needed</li> <li>• Replace old fencing with MUGA fence</li> <li>• Additional improvements of tennis court area</li> <li>• Greater use of hard surfaced area (reduction in tennis use)</li> <li>• *Simultaneous facilities possible (ball court &amp; MUGA)</li> <li>• Improved multi-sports facility</li> <li>• Value for money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to Bowling Greens (Noise)</li> <li>• Taking away popular ball court (especially with younger children) although could be re-located as part of larger scheme</li> <li>• Older children would predominantly use MUGA</li> <li>• Potential reduction in tennis courts provision</li> </ul>
3	£63,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 x Facilities catering for all ages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not deliverable within budget</li> <li>• Undulated land meaning significant amount of groundworks</li> <li>• Access issues</li> <li>• Loss of green space</li> <li>• Planning permission needed</li> <li>• Tree removal and new planting work necessary (additional cost of circa £2,500)</li> <li>• Close to new housing development</li> <li>• Two informal footpaths run through proposed location</li> <li>• Surface and foul water sewer complications</li> </ul>

\* Also includes option to undertake additional improvement works on the rest of the tennis court area

## Conclusions

20. Council officers firmly consider that Option 2 is the most logical and preferred option as it would be less problematic (no planning permission needed and upgrading a similar existing facility) and would provide the best value for money.

21. Option 1 (the original proposal put forward) would be workable within the budget and makes better use of a piece of land that only really gets used 6 months of the year due to the poor ground conditions.

22. Although Option 3 is now the Friends Group preferred option, we do feel that this would be the most problematic due to the need for additional funding as a result of the significant groundworks to provide access paths and a level surface for the MUGA to sit on. There are also significant concerns over the close proximity to the proposed housing development on land just outside the Park's boundary and the complications that could arise from the surface water and foul water sewers that run below the site. Removal of the large Sycamore tree would be unfortunate though planting new trees along the park's boundary fence to provide a natural barrier between the MUGA and the houses could be a compensation.
23. There is growing urgency to get the MUGA moved from its current location to enable the larger Vivary Way scheme to move forward. It would be preferable to move it straight to its new location to keep costs down and it would be a great addition to the Park. In the absence of an early decision it would be necessary to keep it in storage.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:** None

**Financial:** Options 1 and 2 can be delivered within the allocated budget. Option 3 cannot and as such additional capital monies of £23,500 would need to be secured to enable this option to come to fruition. Option 2 provides the best value for money.

**Legal:** Options 1 and 3 would need planning permission.

**Risk Management:** None

**Health and Safety:** None

**Sustainability:** Option 2 would provide the facilities in the Park in addition to prolonging the life of the surface within the whole fenced off area.

**Community Safety:** The MUGA would provide a safe enclosed multi-sports facility for all sections of the community. MUGA's are robust and once in situ are fairly cheap to maintain. It would be inspected on a weekly basis as with other MUGA's. There are concerns about Antisocial behaviour and noise nuisance in the Park though Officers feel they are less likely to materialise with Option 2.

**Equality and Diversity:** None

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 – Current Vivary Way Land Plan
- Appendix 2 – Option 1
- Appendix 3 – Option 2
- Appendix 4 – Option 3
- Appendix 5 – Plan of locations

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None