

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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**HODGE HOUSE PLAYING FIELD – REQUEST FROM BRADLEY BIG LOCAL
COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To consider a proposal from Bradley Big Local Community Land Trust to provide artificial grass pitch(es) at Hodge House and for a community asset transfer to bring this about.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Trust be informed of the Council's support in principle for its proposal.
- (2) That the Corporate Director continue discussions with the Trust and submit a further report at the appropriate time.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To help bring about the provision of a new sports facility.

1. Hodge House playing field lies within the Hodge House housing estate. It is owned by the Council and the facilities on the site include Hodge House Community Centre which (was transferred to Together Housing as part of the housing stock transfer in 2006), a recently refurbished play area and adult outdoor exercise equipment.
2. The playing field has poor drainage which means it is uneven and often waterlogged. The Council does not currently have any plans to improve it and merely cuts the grass on a regular basis. In the past football, rugby and American football have been played on it but due to its condition these have been located elsewhere. Nowadays it is mainly used for dog walking and the Council receives regular complaints of fouling.
3. The Bradley Big Local Community Land Trust (the Trust) was incorporated in 2017. It has successfully delivered a housing development at Beech Street Nelson. It has also taken on the management of the Community Centre.
4. It is now proposing to develop one full size all weather pitch (3G). This could be sub divided into smaller areas when needed and it would have the potential to be used for other sports

in addition to football. It is also looking to provide changing facilities either in the Community Centre or a standalone building.

5. Artificial pitches In Pendle (all mainly used for football) are available at Pendle Vale College, St John Fisher and Thomas More High School and Nelson and Colne College. There also artificial pitches close by in Burnley at Prairie Sports village and Crow Wood. The Trust says these are not all full size, are expensive to hire and difficult to book as they are over subscribed.
6. The Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy and other assessments identify a shortage of up to 2 full sized 3G pitches in Pendle and recognise potential spare capacity at Hodge House.
7. The Trust says it has already met with representatives of Lancashire FA and is confident of its support and assistance in carrying out a full feasibility study and the production of a fully costed business plan.
8. The Trust estimates the total cost at £1.2 million. It says it has resources of its own in the region of £375,000. It would seek the remainder from the Football Foundation, Sports England and the Government's new Community Ownership Fund.
9. The benefits and opportunities of the proposal put forward by the Trust are:
 - It brings an underused facility back into community use
 - It will be owned and managed by the community for community benefit
 - The possibility of increased use of and additional facilities (eg café) in the Community Centre
 - Directors of the Trust are already involved in grassroots football and youth activities locally
 - Greater use of the field and the Community Centre will reduce vandalism, littering, fly tipping, dog fouling and general nuisance
 - Most importantly affordable and accessible facilities to improve health and wellbeing in one of the most deprived areas in the Borough.
10. At this stage the Trust is looking to the Council for support in principle to develop its proposal and an indication that it would make land available to it by way of community asset transfer. This would be by a long lease at a nominal rent the precise length to be agreed in the light of the requirements of the funders for the proposal. A further report will be brought to Committee at the appropriate time.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Council seeks the development of facilities which can bring about the benefits listed in paragraph 9. It looks favourably on requests for community asset transfers to suitable organisations to improve existing facilities.

Financial: The Trust is not looking to the Council to provide funding for the proposal. It would manage the facility and retain the income from bookings. The current annual budget for maintaining the playing fields apart from the play area is £7500. Negotiations on the lease would include future maintenance responsibilities for the full extent of the playing fields.

Legal: A community asset transfer by way of a long lease would be required to realise the proposal. The playing fields are current classed as open space.

Risk Management: None arising directly from this report.

Health and Safety: None arising directly from this report.

Sustainability: None arising directly from this report.

Community Safety: The proposal would help reduce antisocial behaviour.

Equality and Diversity: None arising directly from this report