

**REPORT FROM: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

**TO: COLNE AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

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## **KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To Inform Members of the current condition of the King George V playing fields and provide detail of the opportunities to improve the facility for future generations,

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That Members note the report contents
- (2) That the proposal of a transfer of the site be discussed with Colne Town Council
- (3) Pendle Borough Council Officers are to support the Town Council in producing bids for funding and delivering future improvements to the playing fields to retain it for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) To make members aware of the current site condition and potential uses for the community
- (2) In line with the Pendle Council corporate plan regarding asset transfer to Town and Parish Council
- (3) To improve the site access and resources for local residents

### **ISSUE**

- (1) King George V playing fields are a public open space of 3.7ha located on Skipton Road / Varley Street, Colne. The site is dedicated to the memory of King George V and is one of 471 playing fields of the name created between 1936 and 1965.
- (2) The site is owned by Pendle Council, with the exception of the Playground and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) which were transferred to Colne Town council in 2016.

- (3) King George V playing fields are legally protected by 'Fields in Trust', with covenants and conditions to ensure that the public can continue to benefit from open access for perpetuity.
- (4) Historically King George V playing fields were used as a land fill site, which has been regraded and capped off. Following the closure, and over the following decades, the gradient was landscaped into 3 distinct levels with steep Banking's on the southwestern side and a gradual slope on the southeastern side.
- (5) The Lower level adjacent to Skipton Road, previously known as King George V Gardens, was home to many formal planted rose beds. These were removed in the early 2000's as part of council austerity measures.
- (6) Periphery areas of the site have been planted with trees over recent years. An area adjacent to Varley Street / Casserly Road was successfully introduced in 2020/21, with additional areas planted on the embankments and edge of the top level in 2022/23, these were less popular and were heavily vandalised.
- (7) The site is well used by local residents for dog walking, plus general recreational use.
- (8) Historically, King George Playing fields have been associated with issues of Anti social behaviour and littering issues. Levels of both seem to fluctuate over the years
- (9) Current maintenance schedules for the site have an annual internal recharge cost of £10,417 covering grass cutting every 3 weeks April – October, Shrub Pruning and twice weekly bin emptying.

## **Discussion**

1. King George V Playing fields have potential to be utilised by the local community for fitness and recreational activities more than current levels. Dependent on interventions installed, there could be a factor of reducing ASB.
2. The upper level is a reasonably flat surface and may be suitable for hosting events such as fairgrounds, or family fun days in dry periods.
3. The upper level would benefit from the installation of a set of fixed football goals to allow for and encourage informal sports usage. This would be a cost of Circa £1500
4. Access from the lower level to the top level is currently lacking a formal access route. Two personal injury claims have been received since 2017 due to slips and trips. To install 2 sets of stairs on the steep banking would have an estimated cost of between £4000 and £20,000 dependent on the construction types.
5. The entire site would benefit from a formal, marked exercise trail with markers for distance, potentially with rigid fixed gym along route. Cost of this would range from £3000 - £30,000 dependent on the level of installation
6. The site is potentially suitable for planting of a community orchard (funding available in Autumn 2024) on the lower levels or adjacent to Skipton Road, there is a risk of vandalism attached to this proposal though based on our previous experience of tree planting on the site.

7. Members to discuss recommending the transfer of the site to Colne Town Council as funding for improvements to the site may be more easily sought by the Town Council over Borough Council
8. Funding may be available from sources such as the Lancashire Environmental Fund ( LEF). The playing fields have potential to fit with key LEF strategies of ‘sustainable development and local community action, have environmental benefit, allow public access and offer good value for money’. The next application deadline is the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024.
9. Pendle Council Corporate plan 2024-25 places emphasis on the transfer of land to Town and Parish councils

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Policy: Corporate Plan 2024 - 2027 Priority 2**

- Engage and support our communities and work with town and Parish councils
- Protect our parks and local environment by taking pride in our green spaces and surroundings

**Financial:** External funding will be required to progress development of the site

**Legal:** None arising

**Risk Management:** Potential improvements on site access would reduce risk of injury on site

**Health and Safety:** Potential improvements on site access would reduce risk of injury on site

**Sustainability:** None arising

**Community Safety:** None arising

**Equality and Diversity:** None arising

## **APPENDICES**

- Photos of current site conditions

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**