

REPORT FROM: Assistant Director Operational Services

TO: Colne and District Committee

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KING GEORGE V OPEN SPACE OPTIONS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise members of options for reintroducing sports facilities on King George V fields.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That further discussions are held with interested Parties regarding future usage of the site for Junior football

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To encourage grass roots sports provision within Pendle and improve local community open space

Background

1 - A report was submitted to the Colne Area Committee for consideration on the 8th August 2024 regarding potential uses and existing issues on King George V playing fields.

The resolution was *That the Assistant Director, Operational Services be asked to explore the options of both a lined football pitch and the alternative of a lined hockey pitch for the upper level, obtain costings for each, and report back to a future meeting of this Committee.*

At the request of the committee, Operational Services Greenspace officers have explored options of allowing sports provision to be reinstated on this site.

Football Pitch Reinstatement

2 - King George V is currently deemed unsuitable for adult 11 x 11 games due to a lack of ancillary facilities, and for the same reason is potentially unsuitable for the upper age brackets of youth football.

3 - A Playing Pitch Strategy produced in 2024 highlighted that current pitch supply in the Colne Area was operating at capacity, and predicted population changes in the future did not highlight that additional teams would be formed that would require more pitches. The report states that there is a current overplay of Youth 11 x 11, 9 x 9, 7 x 7 and 5 x 5 pitches across the Borough as a whole, albeit by a slim margin.

4 - The upper bumper level is currently well used by dog walkers, bikers and for general informal recreation. It is not currently maintained at sports standard making it unsuitable for organised games and would require substantial renovations.

5 - To create a new 9 x 9 pitch including Verti draining, supply and grading of 40 tons of topsoil, installation of goal posts and initial markings. This would cost in the region of £3,534

6 - Management regime on the site currently is restricted to mowing on a 3-weekly cycle, the emptying of litter bins and pruning of shrub beds.

7 - If sports provision was to be reinstated, there would be increased ongoing maintenance costs to include increased mowing, lining, brush and roll and Verti draining. This would cost in the region of £1,361 per annum

8 - There are no current funding streams within PBC budget to cover the capital or revenue costs of this proposal and any such works would need to be funded by external sources

9 - Interest has been shown by a potential new startup football club in using King George V. Discussions are yet to take place regarding this proposal.

Hockey provision

10 - Operational Services have been asked to consider the possibility of using this site for hockey games. Within Pendle there is a successful Hockey team that currently use the facilities at Fisher Moore Academy, which is the only venue in the Borough. Increasing facility supply may promote the sport wider than it currently is.

11 - Discussions between a key member of Pendle Forest Hockey club and the Greenspaces Manager highlighted concerns around the future of the Fisher Moore facilities. The Playing Pitch Strategy also highlighted this risk and that there are no other suitable facilities within the borough for Hockey.

Pendle Forest Hockey Club have suggested King George V as a potential site to construct a new artificial pitch.

12 - Hockey standards now require an artificial surface to play on as opposed to natural grass, this is a different surface to many artificial football pitch facilities. Natural Grass surfaces are not deemed acceptable by the national governing body.

13 - The capital cost to build a pitch of this type is over £1,000,000, plus construction costs of ancillary changing rooms and ongoing maintenance / management costs.

14 - King George V playing fields were originally laid out on a disused landfill site, engineering a facility like this could prove problematic, costly and would require in depth engineering investigations.

This site is also subject to a field in trust agreement protecting the fields from development. This would require further discussions to assess viability.

Access Issues

15 - Members have previously raised concerns with access between the different ground levels on King George V.

16 - A site meeting has been held with PBC engineers to look at improving the access between the three existing levels that currently only have informal desire lines running between them. These informal desire lines have been created by members of the public regularly walking the same routes on steep gradients and consequently have not been regularised.

17 - The optimal solution would be to regrade existing landforms and cut and fill to allow access ramps between the top and middle levels as well as running from the middle to Varley Street, as opposed to steps. These new routes can then be covered with a compacted aggregate stone surface. Tarmacadam could be utilised if funds allowed for the most long-lasting finish, but likely unnecessary for this task as there are no connecting hard surfaces

18 - Basic drawings and cost estimates from the engineers are currently being produced and these will be presented to the committee in due course.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None arising from this report

Financial: Capital costs of initial works £3,534 and ongoing maintenance costs of £1,361 pa. Funds would need to be sought.

Legal: None arising from this report

Risk Management: Fields in Trust restriction on development other than football pitch works

Health and Safety: None arising from this report

Sustainability: Future ongoing maintenance of paths and pitches would need to be funded via the committee or external sources

Community Safety: None arising from this report

Equality and Diversity: None arising from this report

APPENDICES

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS