

Subject: Leavengreave Pitch Proposal

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 17th November 2010

Report of: Communities Manager

Portfolio

Holder: Communities

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Rossendale Borough Council's support for plans proposed by Whitworth Sports Council to lease the land at Leavengreave playing pitch to improve facilities. In particular to seek agreement that Rossendale Borough Council as land owner will grant a lease to Whitworth Sports Council for use of this land for a period of 50 years, on condition that if no specified works are completed within the first 5 years then the lease would revert back to Rossendale Borough Council.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-

- Encouraging healthy and respectful communities
- Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe
- Promoting the Borough

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- Whitworth Sports Council plan to establish a management committee overseeing bookings, rents and maintenance for the facilities; this will be similar in structure to CLAW. They plan to fund this through income from rents for the use of the new facilities.
- Loss of rent, if the land is leased, which amounts to £196 per year from Whitworth Spartans.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 In February 2009, Whitworth Sports Council organised a meeting with Groundwork, Rossendale Borough Council officers and current users of the pitch at Leavengreave. Whitworth Spartans currently use the pitch when possible, but stressed that it is often unusable from around October because it is waterlogged. There was a discussion about the possible implementation of a 3rd Generation Pitch, which was supported by the local sports clubs. However concern was expressed about the management and security of the site.
- 4.2 Groundwork was subsequently asked to produce a feasibility study which Whitworth Town Council paid for at a cost of approximately £2000 (plus VAT). Funds have already been raised by Whitworth Sports Council for the second stage of the feasibility study which will cost £4485 (plus VAT). Funding has been raised through various activities and events including the Whitworth Sports Festival, which is organised solely by Whitworth Sports Council.
- 4.3 As a result, Groundwork provided two possible options for the sites at Leavengreave and at Back Millgate:
- 4.4 Option 1 which would include a 3rd generation sports pitch, perimeter path, changing facilities (for teams & officials), space for 21 parked cars. It would also include a BMX / trials area at the land at Back Millgate with a gym zone and a 20m x 40m grass pitch for informal use. There would also be a link path to Whitworth Cycleway. [Appendix 1](#).
- 4.5 Option 2 - a 'less expensive case', this would include new drains to the existing pitch, changing facilities (for teams & officials), space for 21 parked cars and perimeter path. The area at Back Millgate would also be improved but the BMX track would be less extensive and without a gym zone. A 20m x 40m grass pitch for informal community use was also included. [Appendix 2](#).
- 4.6 The following cost estimates were provided:
Option 1 – total cost £1,138,544.15. This includes landscape fees for project management but does not include VAT.
Option 2 – total cost £450,891.00. This includes landscape fees for project management but does not include VAT. Details of costs can be found in [Appendix 3](#). For both options it was agreed that the best way forward from a management position would be to form a Trust which could raise funds for the final option and provide day to day management of the new facilities.
- 4.7 The project supports Rossendale Borough Council's existing policies. Although there is nothing specifically relevant to the two sites in The Open Space Review, it does state "Our vision for Rossendale's sports pitches will provide high quality, multi-use sports pitches with at least three pitches per site, with playing surfaces that are capable of sustaining at least two games and one training session per week throughout the year and having appropriate drainage." In wet conditions, the pitch at Leavengreave is not able to sustain two games per week because of problems with drainage; in September 2010 and only three games into the season there have already been concerns about the state of the pitch. The Whitworth

Spartans are not able to train at the location either because of a lack of floodlights, meaning they are forced to go to Rochdale.

- 4.8 The (draft) Core Strategy states that 'Proposals supporting recreational pursuits will be encouraged' and that 'the area's...leisure offer...will be conserved and enhanced through sensitive additional developments supporting tourism and encouraging leisure pursuits'. In addition the vision for Whitworth states 'To promote Whitworth as a prime location of choice to live and work, capitalising on the area's assets and facilities, and ensuring that Whitworth's leisure and tourism potential is sensitively realised to support the tourism offer available in the east of Rossendale'.
- 4.9 Whitworth Sports Council is aware that there is no funding available for the project from Rossendale Borough Council and plan to find funding from outside sources.
- 4.10 In order for Whitworth Sports Council to be able to effectively fundraise for and progress the improvements at Leavengreave they are seeking support from Cabinet for the lease of the land for a minimum period of 50 years.
- 4.11 At this time, Members are only required to consider the lease of land at Leavengreave, while investigations continue into land ownership and access issues at the Back Millgate site.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 The area of land though noted on local maps as playing fields has no such restrictions for planning matters. The land area does sit within the urban boundary.
- 5.2 Other existing playing fields and facilities reside close by which may have consolidation opportunities. There are also other areas in the vicinity, though not in Council ownership, that have little or no development value due to land contamination issues but which would be suitable for sports facilities. This would give the opportunity for some joint development opportunities.
- 5.3 The Leavengreave area does have a potential gross development value of c. £600k before any joint deal costs. The area is not thought to have any flood risk issues.
- 5.4 With future development funding being a challenge, Members may wish to consider options for unlocking land values within the close proximity.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 Members should note that any grant from outside bodies paid to Whitworth Sports Council is likely to require a restriction to be placed on the land which will restrict its future use and redevelopment value. In terms of the lease I would advise offering a fully repairing lease with regular rent reviews.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

7.1 There are no specific human resource implications.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The proposed project is still in the very early stages. However, in order to progress Whitworth Sports Council needs a decision on whether the land will be available for use. There is still work to do around consultation with local residents as well as a decision on which proposed option the Sports Council will opt for.

8.2 There are still some outstanding issues with regard to this project. However, in order to progress, lease of the land is required so that the next stage can begin. Consultation and a review of the costings and the best option to improve facilities would then need to be carried out and funding sources would need to be found. Without the lease agreement in principle, Whitworth Sports Council is understandably unwilling to pay for Groundwork to carry out the next stage of the feasibility study.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 To approve in principle that Rossendale Borough Council lease the land at Leavengreave for a period of 50 years on condition that some improvement work is carried out within 5 years of the commencement of the lease. If no work is completed the lease will revert back to Rossendale Borough Council. The approval would be on the condition that any negotiations regarding the lease agreement go through the Director of Business and the Portfolio Holder.

9.2 That contained within the lease is a condition that the pitch and facilities are designated for community use for an agreed period of time each week – to be agreed during negotiations on the lease agreement.

9.3 That any further negotiations and minor amendments be delegated to the Director of Customers and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 At this stage, consultation with residents has not been carried out because Whitworth Sports Council, together with Groundwork is keen to avoid raising expectation before there is a decision from Rossendale Borough Council on whether the land can be used. Groundwork have offered to carry out consultation as the next part of the project, this would come at a further cost of approximately £4485, which is available through funding from Whitworth Sports Council.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Community Impact Assessment required Yes

Is a Community Impact Assessment attached No (see below)

A Community Impact Assessment is required. However, at this stage Whitworth Sports Council does not want to raise expectation within the area. The community impact assessment and consultation is planned as the next part of the feasibility study to be carried out by Groundwork.

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required Yes

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

The Biodiversity Impact Assessment has not been carried out at this stage because Whitworth Sports Council would like to ensure that they can lease the land from the Borough Council before investing any more funds into an impact assessment such as this.

Contact Officer	
Name	Nick Reddrop
Position	Area Officer
Service / Team	Communities Team
Telephone	01706 252540
Email address	nickreddrop@rossendalebc.gov.uk