

URGENCY ITEMS - MINUTE OF DECISION

Delegation arrangements for dealing with matters of urgency

Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution provides that Chief Officers may take urgent decisions if they are of the opinion that circumstances exist which make it necessary for action to be taken by the Council prior to the time when such action could be approved through normal Council Procedures. They shall, where practicable, first consult with the Leader and Chairman (or in their absence the Vice-Chairman) and the Opposition Spokesperson of the appropriate committee.

Subject: Football Stadium Improvement at the YMCA Newark to enable Step 5 Football in Newark

Appropriate Committee: Policy and Finance

Details of Item

This urgency item is required to secure delegated approval for the Council to contribute financially to the installation of additional infrastructure at the YMCA Community and Activity Village in order to facilitate a Step 5 facility (within the National Football Pyramid) for football and wider community use, enhancing further the facilities available at the YMCA Community & Activity Village.

The reason for the urgent decision is to allow works to be implemented quickly, allowing use for the forthcoming season 2022-2023 by Newark United FC, formally Newark FC, to return to the Town under a new name.

Newark FC is currently playing its fixtures at Basford United's ground in Nottingham, after the loss of the Club's home ground at Lowfields (Flowserve Sports and Social Club) Balderton following the closure of the site when it was sold to a new owner. Despite the Club's best endeavours a deal could not be secured with the new owner to retain the sports facilities for community use and as a consequence Newark FC had no option but to seek an alternative venue outside of Newark which had facilities capable of meeting the ground grading requirements of football at the level it currently competes.

The impact on the clubs move to Basford, whilst welcomed as a temporary solution, has had a dramatic impact on its supporter base leading to significant reductions in paying spectators which in turn has created major financial pressures on the club to cover its operating costs. Therefore a swift return to Newark would recover this position and enable the club to re-establish its very healthy attendance figures of approximately 300 spectators who regularly attended home matches at the Lowfields ground. The planned return to Newark will enable the Club to recover its spectator base and the income stream that would enable the club to continue to develop its potential to progress up the football pyramid and raise the profile of Newark's football credentials.

In order to compete at the Clubs current level there is a requirement to have a minimum infrastructure in place as defined by the Football Association and referred to as 'National

Ground Grading' and for Newark's current status at Step 5, Grade F facilities are required which includes covered spectator accommodation for a minimum of 200 of which at least 100 must be seated amongst a schedule of other facilities such as turnstiles. Whilst the stadium pitch at the YMCA was designed to accommodate semi-professional football and has much of the grading criteria in place currently it will be necessary to provide the additional spectator accommodation in order for the stadium pitch to be sanctioned as a suitable ground for Step 5 (and potential for promotion to Step 4) football and the costs associated with the additional provision is anticipated to be in the region of £90K.

The YMCA working in partnership with the District Council and the football clubs has offered to support proposal and associated costs to the sum of 50% therefore the District Council will commit to a capital contribution of up to £45K to ensure the delivery of the required infrastructure in time for the new football season which will start in late July 2022. The District Council will also work with the YMCA and Newark United to secure additional grant support to reduce its overall contribution by up to £10K if an application to Nottinghamshire County Council's Local Communities Fund is successful.

Although the proposals will enable Newark United to return to the Town to play competitively, it is important to recognise that the facilities will not be for Newark United's exclusive use outside of competitive games and training, when the facility will be of benefit for wider community uses. The stadium will continue to be the home ground for Newark Town FC, and RHP FC both of which use the facilities extensively but it will also host football cup finals for local senior and junior leagues which attract teams from across the district including Bleasby, Collingham, Edwinstowe, Farnsfield, Laxton, Southwell, Sutton on Trent and Walesby currently playing in the Newark Senior Football Alliance as well as schools football matches and representative fixtures. Furthermore there will be scope to introduce other participatory leisure and cultural type activities and events at the stadium pitch and these will benefit from the covered standing and seated accommodation thereby providing a legacy and opportunity for greater community engagement in the future.

Equalities Implications

There are no adverse equalities implications in connection with this proposal.

Financial Implications FIN22-23/687

The total amount of support required for the works are estimated at £90,000. The proposal is for this be funded 50/50 by NSDC and the YMCA.

The £45,000 contribution from NSDC is proposed to be funded from the Change Management reserve.

A separate bid will also be made to the Nottinghamshire County Councils Local Communities fund, which has a ceiling of £20,000 for bids. If successful the £20,000 will be split between NSDC and the YMCA reducing both parties contribution to £35,000 (£90,000 - £20,000 = £70,000 Divided by two).

Decision

That the Director – Planning and Growth be granted delegated approval to progress the proposal to contribute up to £45K towards the installation of spectator accommodation at the stadium pitch at the YMCA (minus any grant funding secured jointly by the District Council and the YMCA) to enable Newark United to play Step 5 football in Newark for the 2022-2023 season.

That up to £45k be added to the capital programme 22/23 to be funded from Change Management reserve.

Reason for Decision

To enable the required infrastructure improvements be installed by the required deadline of the Football Association and United Counties League for the start of the 2022/23 football season.

Members Consulted:

Cllr. David Lloyd – Leader of the Council and Chairman of Policy and Finance
Cllr. Keith Girling – Deputy Leader of the Council and Vice Chairman of Policy & Finance
Cllr. Paul Peacock – Leader of the Labour Group

All members consulted on 12th April 2022 via telephone call and email with urgency item attached.

Signed 

Date 20th April 2022

Director – Planning and Growth