



Report to: Portfolio Holders

Decision Date: 3 June 2024

Portfolio Holder: Paul Peacock, Leader of the Council and portfolio holder for Strategy, Performance and Finance, Susan Crosby, Portfolio Holder Health, Wellbeing and Leisure and Emma Oldham, Portfolio Holder Biodiversity and Environmental Services

Director Lead: Matthew Finch, Director Communities and Environment

Lead Officer: Andrew Kirk, Business Manager Environmental Services

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Non-key decision
Report Title	Sconce & Devon Park Football Pitches
Purpose of Report	To inform members of the current situation regarding a need to invest in football pitch renovations over and above a level that can be achieved in house.
Recommendations	That the relevant portfolio holders support the funding of the works and allow the appointment of contractors within a very short time window and agree to add £50,000 to the Capital Programme financed by £44,000 from the Change Management Reserve and £6,000 revenue contribution.
Alternative Options Considered	Members could choose not to invest in the pitches at which point the long-term future of having playable pitches on the site would be uncertain
Reason for Recommendation	To enable the pitches to be appropriately repaired to enable their ongoing use for football, with the health and well being benefits this brings for residents in Newark and Sherwood.
Decision Taken	As per recommendations.

1.0 Background

1.1 An area of Sconce & Devon Park is dedicated to football. Two 11 a side, a 5 a side, a seven a side and a 9 a side pitch are sited in the park. These are the only grass pitches owned by the council within the district. Currently the pitches and the Tom Mann Pavilion are

utilised by Newark Town Football Club. The club have over 35 teams of both sexes and all ages who play regularly throughout the year.

- 1.2 Over recent years the pitches have caused many issues for the Grounds Maintenance department when it comes to through-season and season-end maintenance and renovations. Prior to 2020, the approach was to undertake large scale sanding of areas in an attempt to rectify the damage done by heavy use and weather during the season. This was done mainly for short term cost and a response to a lack of resource, coupled with an extremely short turn round time. In some cases, a matter of weeks between the end of summer tournaments and the beginning of the new season.
- 1.3 Prolonged use of these tactics have resulted in an unstable sand/soil mix to a depth of 50mm. Despite much resource and expenditure over the last 4 years we have been unable to rectify the issues. This has resulted in many complaints by the football club and the local F.A referees.
- 1.4 We have now reached a position where we are unable to make any discernible difference to the pitches and we are likely to continue to receive complaints and even get to a position where games have to be cancelled on safety grounds.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 Having spoken to the market and carried out site visits and investigations with the market leader in sports surfaces, Fineturf (contractors for Premier league, the FA, Wimbledon etc), who coincidentally have a depot within our district, we are of the opinion that the only way forward is to enable an expert contractor to carry out extensive renovations, including digging up all goal areas to a depth of 50 mm, laser levelling and reconstruction of the soil and its sub base. In the time frame given an extensive amount of resource (way more operatives and higher technical equipment than the in-house department could ever have at its disposal) is required.
- 2.2 These works would ensure that the pitches would reach the highest level achievable given that the pitches would still be on a public park with all of the associated issues regularly experienced by public open spaces. Dogs, wild animals, birds, off road bikes, vandalism etc etc
- 2.3 Given all the information above it is not surprising that a task of this magnitude will cost £50k. It will require additional resource provide by the Street Scene team (no extra cost obviously) to ensure continued watering of the area to ensure that the works are a success. Currently the department only has £6k for pitch renovations which doesn't get close to what is required; however it will be used to lower the additional requirement to £44k.
- 2.4 If we are to achieve the level of repairs required in time for the new football season, we have a window of 10 weeks to carry out the works which have to start on the 10th June. To enable the department to hire contractors and schedule the work in for what is the busiest time of the year for companies carrying out football pitch renovations, a decision is required extremely quickly.

- 2.5 There is an option to leave the renovations and carry on as we have done for the past few years, but we have reached a point where all our efforts are wasted. Any money we spend now will be pretty much throwing good money after bad and we will continue to get the complaints from the club. With these pitches being our only grass offer, we are not in a position to ask the club to relocate elsewhere.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, I have considered the following implications:

Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate I have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment below where appropriate.

Financial Implications (FIN24-25/4392)

- 3.1 The works identified in the report above total £50,000 and will be capital in nature due to the enhancement of the facilities. Due to that it is necessary to add £50,000 into the Capital Programme.
- 3.2 As described at paragraph 2.3 above, the current revenue budget contains £6,000 of maintenance budget that could be utilised to contribute to the funding of the expenditure, hence leaving a requirement of £44,000 which would need to be contributed from the Change Management Reserve. There are sufficient funds within the reserve to meet this expenditure.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that any costs of maintaining the new pitches would be contained within existing budgets going forward.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.