

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

23 JANUARY 2020

PROPOSED REFURBISHMENT OF THE ATP HOCKEY PITCH AT MAGNUS ACADEMY - LOAN OFFER

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek Committee approval for the Council to loan the Magnus Academy £240,000 to replace the existing Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) in order to ensure that Newark Hockey Club can continue to play competitive matches and train in the town.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The current ATP was constructed and opened in 2001 as part of a larger Sport England grant funded project to improve both indoor and outdoor sports provision at the Magnus School. Newark Hockey Club were a partner in the original project and moved to the new facility on its opening and has been a primary user of the facility for the last 19 years.

2.2 The current pitch is a sand-filled ATP, which is one of the preferred surfaces for competitive hockey unlike the Third Generation (3G) pitches opened recently at the YMCA Community and Activity Village. These new pitches are the preferred surface for competitive football but not suitable for hockey. Like all artificial sports surfaces (carpets) they have a useable lifetime before they deteriorate to a point where they are no longer safe for competitive play. The typical lifespan of such a pitch is between 10 and 15 years although this is determined by the level of use and the maintenance undertaken.

2.3 Clearly the Magnus pitch has survived longer than most similar pitches but is now deemed to be in need of replacing if Newark Hockey Club is to continue to play hockey in the town given that the pitch is the only one of its type within an approximate 10 mile radius.

2.4 Newark Hockey Club was established in 1897 and has a thriving membership base of 300+ members ranging from 4 to 60+ years of age with approximately 200 junior members. The Club has numerous teams competing at high level in country and regional leagues, 20 juniors who are currently playing at either county or regional level and beyond. In addition Great Britain Women's Hockey 2016 Olympic Gold Medallist Shona McCallin MBE and the current Great Britain Men's GB Captain Adam Dixon were both junior players who started their hockey playing careers at the Club.

2.5 The urgent need to replace the pitch is the recommendation of an independent synthetic turf pitch consultant based on a condition survey carried out in 2017 and more recently, December 2029. The conclusion and recommendation from the report is that the pitch is at risk of failing its performance assessment, which would mean that competitive hockey would not be deemed safe to play due to deterioration of the surface generally, including the shock-pad base and the failure of the seams across the pitch and line repairs causing potential trip hazards.

2.6 In order to progress the proposals, a project team has been created with representatives from the Academy, Newark Hockey Club, England Hockey and the District Council with support from Sport England which it is hoped will support the project and provide a modest level of grant support in order to help the project stack up financially although this will be subject to an application to the Community Asset Fund, which is a very competitive programme.

2.7 The indicative cost for the project is estimated to be in the region of £300,000 and it is hoped that grant support of circa £60,000 can be achieved which currently leaves a funding gap of £240,000. Sport England have advised that the life of the pitch is likely to be 15 years.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that the Council help fund the gap by way of a loan over a 15 year period in line with the life of the pitch. Based on initial calculations, the loan repayments would be consistent with the hire charges currently paid to the Magnus Academy by the Hockey Club for use of the pitch for club fixtures, training and tournaments.

3.2 The refurbishment of the ATP would include an England Hockey Category 2 compliant sand-dressed pitch, which would improve the playing experience significantly. This would ensure that Newark Hockey Club can continue to play competitive matches and train in the town for the next 15 years thereby enabling the club to continue to develop its membership and increase the levels of physical activity.

3.3 The Magnus Academy project team will work collaboratively and uses its best endeavours to secure a reasonable level of grant funding towards the proposals in order to reduce the loan amount and corresponding repayments. Lower loan repayments will enable the Academy to maintain the new facilities to the required level and the Club will be able to deliver its Club Development Plan.

3.4 The loan will be with the Magnus Academy, as long-term leaseholder and site operator in order to satisfy the Council's financial regulations and to secure assurance that the loan will be repaid as per the agreement. The Academy would, at the same time, enter into an appropriate agreement with the Hockey Club to agree its relationship moving forwards and to outline the quantum of use required and associated hire costs.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 There are no equality implications in respect of the various protected characteristic groups in connection with this proposal. If approval is secured as proposed, the ATP facility provision, operated by the Magnus Academy will be enhanced for the benefit of the whole community, as its use is wider than hockey use.

5.0 Financial Implications (FIN19-20/4585)

5.1 A budget of £240,000 would need to be added to the Capital Programme in 2019/20 financed by borrowing.

5.2 Any interest incurred by the Council financing the loan would be covered by interest received from the loan agreement made with the Magnus Academy.

5.3 If grant funding is not secured by the Magnus Academy for the project, resulting in the funding gap being greater than £240,000 a report should be brought back to this Committee for further consideration.

6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

- 6.1 The proposal, if approved, will primarily contribute to the achievement of Objective 9 'Improve the health and wellbeing of local residents, with a particular focus on developing the best use of community recreation and leisure facilities in order to narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy and other health outcomes'.
- 6.2 Investment in the leisure offer will drive participation in physical activity and sport and improve health and wellbeing including as identified in the Physical Activity and Sport Plan 2018-2021.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- a) **delegated authority be given to the Director - Resources to negotiate a loan with the Magnus Academy of up to £240,000 to enable the refurbishment of the existing ATP;**
- b) **the loan agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the repayment schedule is negotiated with the Magnus Academy to ensure that financial regulations and probity are ensured;**
- c) **the creation of a capital budget, within the 2019/20 capital programme, for the £240,000 to be financed by borrowing be approved; and**
- d) **the Magnus Academy project team works collaboratively and uses its best endeavours to secure a reasonable level of grant funding towards the proposals in order to reduce the loan amount and corresponding repayments.**

Reason for Recommendations

To ensure that Newark Hockey Club can continue to play competitive matches and train in the town in addition to providing an ongoing community facility.

Background Papers

Nil.

For further information please contact Andy Hardy on Ext 5708.

Matthew Finch
Director – Communities and Environment