

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Culture, Lifestyle, Sport &amp; Tourism</b>
2.	<b>Date:</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February 2011</b>
3.	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Bowling Green Budget Savings</b>
4.	<b>Programme Area:</b>	<b>Environment and Development Services</b>

### 5. Summary

This report seeks approval to consult bowling green users, Parish Councils and Coalfields etc (CISWO) regarding ceasing maintenance of eight bowling greens in 2011 and a further eight bowling greens in 2012 in order to make savings needed to help meet available budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

### 6. Recommendations

**6.1 That Cabinet Member approves consultation regarding the cessation of maintenance of the following RMBC managed greens from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011:**

- Two greens at Rawmarsh Leisure (Barbers Avenue)
- One green at Barkers Park
- One green at Boston Park
- One green at Wath Park
- One Green at Greasbrough Park
- One Green at Bradgate Park

**6.2 That Cabinet Member approves consultation regarding the cessation of maintenance of the bowling green at Wickersley Christian Institute from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011.**

**6.3 That Cabinet Member approves that consultation takes place with the Parish Councils below regarding the cessation of maintenance of their bowling greens at the Borough Council's expense from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012**

- Wales PC
- Treeton PC
- North Anston PC
- Catcliffe PC

**6.4 That Cabinet Member approves that consultation takes place with CISWO regarding the cessation of maintenance of their bowling greens below, at the Borough Council's expense from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012.**

- **Cortonwood Miners Welfare**
- **Swallownest Miners Welfare**
- **Silverwood Miners Welfare**
- **Maltby Miners Welfare**

**6.5 That Cabinet Member approves the issue of invitations to bowling clubs or other suitable and interested parties at affected greens operated by the Council, to express interest in taking over responsibility for maintenance of greens at their own expense.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

Budget savings proposed for EDS include a reduction in the number of crown green bowling greens that RMBC maintain across the Borough, from thirty-four to eighteen. This is necessary to achieve budget savings of £80,000 over the next 2 years. A strategic review of bowling green provision was undertaken in December 2010 with all greens in the borough being mapped to help identify where maintenance could be ceased whilst maintaining a good geographical spread of greens. This review also took thirteen privately maintained greens into account when looking at geographical spread of accessible greens.

In the north of the Borough the majority of greens are maintained and operated directly by the Council whereas in the south the majority are maintained by RMBC but operated by Parish Councils or the Coalfields Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO). To achieve a reasonably even spread of reduced maintenance it would be necessary to cease maintenance at some Parish Council and CISWO sites as well as at RMBC sites.

The existing agreements with CISWO allow for a termination of the maintenance agreements with a minimum of 6 months notice by either party expiring on 31<sup>st</sup> December of any year. The exception to this is at Maltby Miners Welfare which requires a 3 month notice at any time.

It is understood that no formal agreement exists with Parish Councils to maintain their greens. The current arrangement has existed since the local government reorganisation in 1974. However, so that affected Parish Councils have time to assess their options regarding sites they manage it is proposed that they should be consulted with and given the same minimum 6 months notice as CISWO. To this end, it is proposed that the 2011/12 savings should come from ceasing maintenance at the identified RMBC operated greens and the privately operated green at Wickersley Christian Institute followed by the identified Parish and CISWO greens in 2012.

The maintenance of the green at Wickersley Christian Institute is an anomaly and no records can be found to indicate why this green is maintained at the Council's expense. It appears this green is being maintained due to custom and practice only.

The selection of greens proposed for cessation of maintenance has principally taken into account the availability of other greens within the same geographical area. However, the usage levels at RMBC sites, the number of greens at each site and the quality of ancillary facilities (such as pavilions) that are available were taken into account when identifying where reductions could be made.

If these proposals are approved, then the decision would be communicated with all clubs using RMBC operated greens, CISWO and affected Parish Councils as quickly as possible. It is also proposed that each club be invited to submit expressions of interest should they believe themselves to be in a position to take on responsibility for the maintenance of greens at their own expense.

To date no consultation has been undertaken with either users, ward members, CISWO or Parish Councils.

## **8. Finance**

The projected savings from the above proposals is estimated at £80,000 across the next 2 financial years. These contribute to overall savings that need to be made by the Council in the light of reduced funding from central government.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

There is likely to be a public concern at losing bowling greens as many greens historically have teams associated with them and for a small number of residents they form a social hub.

Leisure and Green Spaces are currently working with Bowls England to develop a bowling programme aimed at increasing participation in bowls as part of the Rotherham Active Strategy. Closures will limit access to this scheme. However, efforts will be made to maximise usage at other sites.

There is likely to be a transfer of players to the greens that remain open which may put pressure on some greens and the current users.

Affected parishes may feel aggrieved where neighbouring parishes continue to receive support from RMBC for maintenance of their greens and a perceived unfairness that may be created.

Other budget savings may require changes to service operations that could impact further on the sustainability of bowling green provision.

In the event that any other body wishes to take on responsibility for the maintenance of any greens, then the Council would not be in a position to pay for green preparation and continued maintenance after June 2011.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The proposed consultation period is in line with the Council's corporate policy. The reduction in bowling green maintenance is proposed to help meet the significant budget challenges faced by the Council.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

Officers in Financial Services and Legal Services have been consulted.

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