

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Culture & Tourism
2.	Date:	9th July, 2013
3.	Title:	Bowling Green Budget Savings - Post Consultation
4.	Directorate:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

This report outlines the results of consultation on proposals to withdraw maintenance from all RMBC operated bowling greens except four in Clifton Park and seeks approval to implement proposals that have been adjusted following analysis of the consultation.

6. Recommendations

6.1 That Cabinet Member approves the cessation of maintenance of two RMBC operated bowling greens at Bradgate Park from 16th July 2013.

6.2 That Cabinet Member approves the transfer of bowling greens to community groups in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy as follows:

- **Two greens at Barkers Park to Barkers Park Bowling Club.**
- **Two greens at Valley Park to Valley Park Combined Bowling Club Ltd.**
- **One Green at Greasbrough Park to Greasbrough Bowling Club.**
- **One Green at Coronation Park to Maltby Town Council.**

6.3 That maintenance of greens continues at those sites to be transferred until the transfer can be made or the end of September (whichever is earlier).

7. Proposals and Details

Agreed budget savings for EDS for financial period 2013/14 include a reduction in the number of crown green bowling greens that RMBC maintain and operate within urban parks. This is necessary to achieve budget savings target of £30,000 per year.

At the meeting on 6th February 2013, Cabinet member considered a report on the proposed cessation of maintenance to council owned bowling greens and resolved that invitations be issued to bowling clubs and/or other suitable and interested

parties to express an interest in taking over the responsibility for maintenance of affected greens at their own expense.

To date firm expressions of interest have been made by a number of clubs as highlighted in paragraph 6.2 above, but clubs may still make an expression of interest after confirmation of the greens where RMBC will no longer provide maintenance through the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

Consultation was carried out over a 13 week period starting 17th February 2013 in accordance with the Council's standard consultation framework. The consultation included:

- Letters to bowling club secretaries informing them of the proposals and inviting them to comment
- Letters and other contacts with South Yorkshire County Crown Green Bowling Association and league co-ordinators.
- Attendance at a number of meetings arranged by Clubs and others to discuss the proposals
- Discussions with people with personal knowledge of bowling greens and their use
- Discussions with Ward Members in affected wards
- Press coverage

A summary of comments received is presented in Appendix 1. This also includes Leisure and Green Spaces' response and recommendations.

Summary of main issues

- Respondents identified that cessation of maintenance leading to closure of greens would impact on users who would suffer a loss of service.
- If groups took responsibility for maintaining greens what who would be responsible for the associated pavilions?
- The timing of the proposals has not given enough time to interested clubs to organise themselves but handover at the end of the bowls season in September would be preferred.
- At five out of the six affected sites there are groups with the will to operate the greens themselves.

8. Finance

The savings target from the cessation of maintenance of selected bowling greens is £30,000 per annum starting in 2013/14. However, this figure is not achievable in 2013/14 from reduced greens maintenance costs as greens had to be prepared and operated during the consultation period and will in most cases continue to be maintained until handover. This will cause additional financial pressures within this financial year for the period of maintenance to the end of May which has cost £6,623, with further costs of £10,863 to maintain to the end of the bowls season should it take until then to arrange transfer to community groups. If the

recommendations in this report are agreed the budget pressure created will be £17,486 in 2013/14.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The consultation has confirmed the 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.

The cessation of operating bowling greens makes the employment of seasonal games attendants unsustainable as the majority of their costs was offset against bowls income and this will have a knock on effect with parks tennis courts as bowls attendants will no longer be available to manage these alongside the greens. New ways of working will need to be agreed for these facilities.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The consultation exercise has been undertaken in accordance 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 have been consulted.

Letter and Emails responses and Petition in response to consultation on proposals are available.

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Appendix 1 - Consultation Responses

No.	Remarks Received (abridged)	Method	Consultee	Response	Recommendation
1.	The cost of managing pavilions is likely to prevent self maintenance of greens.	Meetings	Various	No saving has been identified from reducing building stock in parks. It has been agreed that RMBC will continue to maintain buildings for at least another year.	RMBC continue to maintain and operate pavilions. This to be reviewed on an annual basis.
2.	Why keep four greens at Clifton Park at expense of others?	Emails, Letters & Telephone	Various	RMBC entered into an agreement with the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve maintenance at Clifton Park as part of its recent grant condition. The on site management of Clifton Park is also more efficient than at other sites making any saving less desirable.	That four greens remain available at Clifton Park operated by RMBC.
3	Anti social behaviour will increase in parks due to less people around during the day.	Letters	Rotherham Combined Crown Green Bowls Association (RCCGBA) and South Yorks County Crown Green Bowls Assoc. (SYCCGBA)	Whilst it is not possible to determine any future level of anti social behaviour, recent experience at Rosehill Park and Boston Park does not suggest a significant problem.	None

No.	Remarks Received (abridged)	Method	Consultee	Response	Recommendation
4	The timing of the proposals to cease maintenance is too short notice to allow clubs time to consider their position.	Letter	RCCGBA	Most clubs have been able to work to the timescale to agree a way forward. It is noted that further time may be required to complete transfer agreements.	Continue maintenance to September or date of transfer whichever is earlier.
5	Not enough council commitment to older people's leisure.	Letter	RCCGBA + one individual	It was pointed out to RCCGBA in a written response that the Council continues to provide a number of other opportunities for older peoples leisure activities.	None
6	Why are RMBC's greens maintenance costs greater than those quoted by independents?	Meetings	Various	RMBC grounds maintenance managers have not had sight of the detail in all alternative quotes. However it has been noted that when quotes have been compared they are not comparable in scope.	None
7	Barkers Park Bowls Club are prepared to maintain the greens at Barkers Park themselves.	Email	Secretary Barkers Park Bowls Club	This can be considered with reference to the Councils Community Asset Transfer Policy.	That Cabinet Member approves the transfer of bowling greens to community groups in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.
8	Barkers Park Bowls Club wish to re introduce a putting green on a lawn between the	Email	Secretary Barkers Park Bowls Club	This can be considered with reference to the Councils Community Asset Transfer	That Cabinet Member approves the transfer of bowling greens to

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	bowling greens.			Policy.	community groups in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.
9	Greasbrough Park Bowls Club are prepared to maintain the green at Greasbrough Park themselves.	Email	Secretary Greasbrough Park Bowls Club	This can be considered with reference to the Councils Community Asset Transfer Policy.	That Cabinet Member approves the transfer of bowling greens to community groups in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.
10	Maltby Town Council are prepared to maintain one green at Coronation Park themselves.	Emails	Maltby Town Council	This can be considered with reference to the Councils Community Asset Transfer Policy.	That Cabinet Member approves the transfer of bowling greens to community groups in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.
11	Can RMBC guarantee all leagues will have access to greens at Clifton Park should these be the only greens available?	Email	Secretary Stag Bowling Club	RMBC would continue to work with all interested parties wishing to make use of our facilities.	None
12	Unlikely to continue as membership has dwindled.	Email	Secretary Bradgate Bowls Club	Noted	None
13	Spartans BC (formerly Bradgate users) moved to a private green at Roundwood.	Telephone	Secretary Bradgate Bowls Club	Noted	None
14	Request to consider maintaining bowling until the	Letter	Sarah Champion MP	Noted	That maintenance of greens continues at those

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	end of the current season.				sites to be transferred until the transfer can be made or the end of September (whichever is earlier).
15	Request for a policy to give priority green use to Rotherham leagues.	Emails	League Co-ordinator	RMBC would continue to work with all interested parties wishing to make use of our facilities.	None
16	Exercise from bowling saves money for NHS, provides a community focus and social wellbeing.	Letter	SYCCGBA	Noted	None
17	Request for £2,000 to £3,000 per bowling club in sponsorship per year from RMBC.	Letter	SYCCGBA	Providing this funding would create a new budget pressure.	None
18	Requests RMBC apply for Lottery Parks for People funding to continue maintenance of bowling greens.	Emails	League Co-ordinator	This funding cannot be used for general park maintenance.	None
19	Valley Park Bowls Club are prepared to maintain the greens at Valley Park themselves.	Meeting	Secretary Valley Park Bowls Club	This can be considered with reference to the Councils Community Asset Transfer Policy.	That Cabinet Member approves the transfer of bowling greens to community groups in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.