

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

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

5. Summary

This report outlines the results of consultation on the proposal to withdraw £60,000 of funding from Herringthorpe Athletics Stadium.

6. Recommendations

6.1 That Cabinet Member notes the outcomes of the consultation period

6.2 That Cabinet Member approves the continued operation of Herringthorpe Stadium by the Council at peak times only for a 12 month trial period and that a report is brought back to the Cabinet Member at the end of the trial period or sooner should the operation prove to be unmanageable within the agreed budget.

7. Proposals and Details

Agreed budget savings for EDS for financial period 2013/14 include a reduction in the funding allocated to Herringthorpe Stadium to achieve budget savings of £60,000 per year. It was proposed that this could be achieved by ceasing operation of the Stadium and seeking to enter into an agreement with interested parties to keep it open through a licence agreement.

Consultation and communication on this proposal was carried out over a 12 week period starting 27th February 2013 in accordance with the Council's standard consultation framework. This included:-

- Letters to all organisations who had placed a booking over the past year informing them of the proposals and inviting them to comment
- Meetings with Rotherham Harriers Athletics Club, Rotherham FA Grounds Committee, The Hare and Hounds FC
- Letter forwarded by email onto local Sunday football league contacts
- Letter forwarded by Rotherham South Area Assembly Team to Area Assembly mailing list
- Discussions with people who asked about the proposals and provision of information via the letters on display on the 3 notice boards at Herringthorpe Stadium
- Discussions with Ward Members and Rotherham South Area Assembly Staff
- Press coverage

The consultation feedback is presented in Appendix 1

The consultation invited individuals and organisations to comment on the proposals including any amendments that would allow the required savings to be made whilst reducing the impact on users. It was also stated that if any organisation should like to maintain their access to the stadium via a licence agreement then the Council would be pleased to meet and discuss this.

Summary of main issues raised by consultees:

- Respondents identified that cessation of staffing leading to closure of Herringthorpe Stadium would impact on users who would suffer a loss of service.
- If an outside body were to take responsibility for maintaining part of the facility alongside continued occupation by the Sports Development officers, how would the Stadium running costs be divided between the two parties?
- A number of organisations have expressed interest in continued access to the stadium playing pitch through a license agreement.
- The Rotherham Harriers Athletics Club would be interested in operating the Stadium for their own use under a licence agreement, although the Council's proposed timescale for closing the Stadium would not allow sufficient time for

the club to organise themselves to do this. Therefore a phased approach over a longer period would be preferred.

As well as consulting with external stakeholders, Leisure and Community Services staff were also consulted and a proposal has been put forward for continued operation of the stadium by the Council that could still deliver the required savings.

The proposal is to operate the stadium based on a significant reduction in opening hours to concentrate on peak times only, where running costs could be covered by predicted income, subject to a review of certain fees and charges. Operation would be restricted to Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 5pm to 9pm, and Saturday from 9am to 12pm. Additional bookings outside these hours would only be accepted if income covers expenditure. The stadium will be staffed through appointing band B attendants in line with existing Green Spaces practice on part-time contracts with a view to offering extra hours for additional bookings.

Other possibilities put forward by staff included a variation of the above proposal to include a license agreement with Rotherham Harriers and the possibility of a central mechanism for booking the playing pitch inside the running track, both of which could be explored as part of the initial proposal.

The proposal would allow use by a wider range of organisations and individuals but it does represent a higher risk to the Council as it is dependent on achieving the predicted income targets.

It is therefore proposed that the Council continues to operate the Herringthorpe Athletics Stadium at peak times only for a 12 month trial period and that a report is taken back to the Cabinet Member at the end of the trial period or sooner should the operation prove to be unmanageable within the agreed budget.

8. Finance

The option for the Council to continue to operate the stadium at peak times has been costed and the projected income and expenditure is identified as follows:-

<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>£47,360</u>
<u>Income</u>	<u>-£27,390</u>
<u>Net cost</u>	<u>£19,970</u>

The Net cost can be covered by remaining budgetary provision for the Stadium.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The viability of this proposal depends on income from customers. There is a risk that predicted income levels may not be achieved due to:

- Adverse weather conditions during winter months
- Reductions in demand

- Rotherham Harriers Athletics Club not agreeing to their fee contribution

Estimated costs of utility bills are based on current consumption and tariffs. These may be subject to change.

However income may be higher than projected as ad- hoc casual use and school events have not been factored into the forecast.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The consultation exercise has been undertaken in accordance with the Council's corporate policy. The reduction in budget at the Athletics stadium 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 to consultation on proposals are available.

Full budget breakdown on request

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Appendix 1 - Consultation Responses

No.	Remarks Received (abridged)	Method	Consultee	Response	Recommendation
1.	Rotherham Harriers Athletics Club would like to seek a licence for operation of the stadium for club and potential ad- hoc school use. This would be based on opening on their Monday and Wednesday club evenings as well as school use and special events. Identification of a possible link with a Football team.	Meetings/ emails	Steve Gaines, Kevin Thomas, Steve Cotter	Based on evidence supplied by the club and our existing knowledge of their organisation and capacity, we conclude that this is a realistic option. However, this would not be the preferred option in the event that RMBC continue to operate the Stadium, as the Harriers would then be able to continue using it on the current basis.	In the event that continued operation of the Stadium by RMBC is not possible, then negotiations with the Harriers should continue to enable a licence to be agreed.
2.	Rotherham Sunday Football League would like to explore the option of a licence for the stadium to continue to provide football activity to various clubs across the borough	Email	Pam Gabbitas	It is not known whether this would be a viable option as there is no evidence of this body's capacity to manage a facility like this.	Do not pursue this option. Should RMBC continue to offer the pitch for hire then clubs' need could be met.
3	AFP Sunday league football team have expressed an interest in holding a licence for the football pitch in order to play their home matches	Email	Malcolm Gabbitas	It is not known whether this would be a viable option as there is no evidence of this body's capacity to manage a facility like this.	Do not pursue this option. Should RMBC continue to offer the pitch for hire then clubs' need could be met
4	The Hare And Hounds Saturday football Team have expressed an interest to hold a licence for the football pitch in order to play their home matches	Email. meeting	Craig Holland	It is not known whether this would be a viable option as there is no evidence of this body's capacity to manage a facility like this.	Do not pursue this option. Should RMBC continue to offer the pitch for hire then clubs' need could be met
5	Steel City Girls FC have expressed an interest in obtaining a Licence for operation	Email, phone call	Ian Smith	It is not known whether this would be a viable option as there is no evidence of this	Do not pursue this option. Should RMBC continue to offer the pitch for hire then

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	of the facility on Sundays incorporating any other potential users on that day			body's capacity to manage a facility like this.	clubs' need could be met
6	Rotherham Titan's Rugby Club have expressed an interest to hire the facility for training on the main pitch Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday every week from 20 June 2013 to end April 2014. 2-4pm or 1-3pm depending on floodlights	Email	John Lewis	In the event that RMBC continues to operate the entire Stadium or just the pitch, then consideration would be given to this request alongside other customer's requirements	Consider request if RMBC continues to operate Stadium or pitch
7	Suggestion that the centre pitch could be hired out 5 days a week split into 4 pitches with flood lights @ £35.00 per pitch = £140.00 per hour this can be used by football teams training also mini leagues.	Email	Nigel Woodburn	This activity already takes place at the stadium on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. It is not possible to offer any further training due to wear and tear on the pitch. This option would not be viable as it would adversely affect income generation.	Do not pursue.
8	Concern about impact of closure on Year 1 and 2 children who previously had no knowledge or experience of sports other than football, cricket and boxing. With current concerns about obesity and lack of exercise amongst young children, closure would be a serious loss. The Stadium is an affordable, accessible and inspiring facility for pupils at the school.	Email	Diane Harris (Broom Valley School)	Noted.	None

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9	<p>Concern about future of Athletics in Rotherham without suitable training space.</p> <p>Proposed saving insignificant compared to total RMBC budget. The government have just committed £150million to schools sport and new coaches are going to be looking to move children through schools to club sport. Alternative athletics facilities would be inaccessible to many children and their parents.</p>	Email	Jonathan Allen (Sitwell School)	Noted	None
10	<p>Herringthorpe Stadium is a well presented facility and the staff are efficient and helpful. To lose this facility is not only detrimental to Rotherham athletes but to all South Yorkshire athletes.</p> <p>Proposal does not encompass the legacy of the 2012 Olympics and the need to provide facilities for people to take part in sport. Rotherham Harriers (a flourishing club), school children, Athletes competing in the South Yorkshire track and Field League and many more would all suffer.</p> <p>Many people think this proposal should not go ahead</p>	Email	Jeanette Tomlinson (SY Athletics Network)	Noted	None

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11	Dissatisfaction at the closure of the stadium, querying budget saving rationale and consultation process.	Letter	Mr. Whyke	Rationale for proposal has been explained in separate correspondence.	None.
12	Dissatisfaction at closure of the stadium and concerns over losing current stadium staff who are very good. Suggested finding savings elsewhere in Sports Development. Concern over volunteer led opening. Retain Pete Hazzard. Opportunities may arise from closure of Don valley Stadium.	Letter	Frank Plunkett	Noted. Members have considered alternatives and concluded that savings need to be found at Stadium.	None
13	Opposes the closure of the Stadium. The school uses the facility for annual sports day due to its high standard and lack of field at school. If this event cannot be held it will have a huge impact on the celebration of PE and sport particularly following Olympics. Supports retention of access to the Stadium in any form for the benefit of the local community and aspiring athletes. The Stadium will moth ball if closed. Offered assistance with any future proposals.	Email	Kieran Loftus (head of PE Clifton School)	Noted	None