

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member and Advisers for Business Growth and Regeneration</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Herringthorpe Athletics Stadium</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Environment and Development Services</b>

## **5. Summary**

This report proposes that the necessary operational budget for Herringthorpe Athletics Stadium is reinstated from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and that the identified saving can be met by other areas of the Leisure & Green Space service. This will facilitate the continued operation of the Stadium under the current opening hours. It will also mean the facilities and opportunities afforded to the Rotherham Harriers Athletics club, schools and all the other user groups and individuals can be sustained and ideally developed.

## **6. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the operational budget for Herringthorpe Athletics Stadium is reinstated from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, funded by other savings within Leisure & Green Spaces.

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## 7. Proposals and Details

### Background

Due to the continued need for the Council to make savings, as a result of reduced funding from central government, the Herringthorpe Athletics Stadium has been subject to budget reductions of £60,000 in 2013/14 and £18,000 in 2014/15. Following the second budget reduction it was agreed that the Stadium would operate reduced opening hours for a trial period. This would allow time for alternative methods of management to be explored before final closure would be necessary at the end of March 2015.

### Current Situation

The Stadium is performing well in terms of meeting current user needs but it has not been possible to increase income sufficiently to fully cover the £18,000 that is needed to sustain the operation under the current reduced opening hours.

With regard to alternative management arrangements, there have been some expressions of interest from third parties, but these have not led to any sustainable option being identified therefore, under the existing decision by members, the Stadium is due to close at the end of March 2015 and the impact of this this would be:

- Rotherham Harriers Athletics Club, a key partner on site, along with the other groups, teams, schools and individuals identified in previous reports would no longer have access to the facilities. This would make continued participation in their chosen activities very difficult as there is no other athletics track in the borough.
- Teams using Herringthorpe Playing Fields may no longer have access to changing facilities and therefore alternative arrangements would need to be explored which will have associated costs.
- The site could become a target for vandalism which may incur further costs that cannot be calculated at this point.
- 3 part-time staff employed at the stadium would be at risk of redundancy
- The Active Rotherham (formerly Sports Development) Service would be relocated to Riverside House and there would be some loss of the wider sports development activity that takes place at the stadium (e.g. the 'Active Always' walking group and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease class).
- It would be necessary to demolish and / or remove all of the buildings within 3 months of closure in order to remove the cost of rates associated with the property (approximately £9,000 per year), otherwise this would be an ongoing budget pressure. This work would have an associated, one-off cost.

- Contact has been made with Sport England in order to establish their position in respect of funding provided by them for track refurbishment in 2004. They have stated that it is possible they would seek compensation for their investment.

### Proposed Way Forward

The Stadium itself has delivered a small increase in income and has the potential to do more with some investment. The Rotherham Harriers Athletics Club has agreed to increase their contribution through hire fees by 17%, which represents approximately £2,000 of additional income in 2015/16. In addition the Leisure & Green Spaces Team that manages the Stadium has also been working hard to develop all of the services it provides in order to meet customer expectations and deliver on the Council's priorities. As a result of this work, particularly in respect of generating increased and sustainable income, service managers believe that it is now possible to identify the remaining £16,000 savings target from a combination of re-alignment of expenditure budgets within areas of the service and additional income generation.

It is therefore proposed that the necessary budget is reinstated from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and the identified saving is met from the forecast additional income at the Stadium and from other areas of the Leisure & Green Space service. This will facilitate the continued operation of the Stadium under the current opening hours. It will also mean the facilities and opportunities afforded to the Rotherham Harriers Athletics club, schools and all the other user groups and individuals can be sustained and ideally developed.

Sport England and the Football Association have been supportive in discussions to fund improvements to the site that should, in time, bring in extra revenue.

## **8. Finance**

The cost implications of this proposal will be managed by a combination of re-alignment of expenditure budgets within areas of the service and additional income generation.

It is important to note that if the Stadium were to close possible related costs could include: rates and/or the demolition of buildings, access to changing facilities to support the adjacent playing fields, Sport England compensation for investment and vandalism of the site.

Further work would need to be undertaken to identify both one off and ongoing costs.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

The future sustainability of the Stadium will depend on levels of usage and income.

Should the facility close there is an overall risk of impact on the healthy lifestyles of stadium users and on the Council's corporate commitment to support improvements

in health and wellbeing. This is because the closure of the site will remove access to sport and physical activity opportunities for a number of groups and individuals (particularly the sport of Athletics). It is also possible that the lack of use of the site and the absence of a regular staff presence could lead to increased problems of anti-social behaviour and vandalism

Loss of this budget and current business at the site, along with the deterioration of the facilities may have an adverse effect on the Council's broader plans to develop the Herringthorpe Leisure Site at some point in the future.

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

The proposal has the potential to have a positive impact on Council's stated vision in respect of 'helping people to improve their health and wellbeing'.

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

Officers in Financial Services have seen the report and had the opportunity to comment.

Report to Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013, Athletics Stadium Budget Savings 2013/14

Report to Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013, Herringthorpe Stadium Budget Savings- Post Consultation

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