

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Culture, Lifestyle, Sport & Tourism
2.	Date:	21st June 2011
3.	Title:	Bowling Green Budget Savings- Post Consultation
4.	Programme Area:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

This report outlines the results of consultation on proposals to withdraw maintenance from selected bowling greens 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 the following RMBC managed greens from 1st July 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 Rosehill Park
- One green at Bradgate Park
- One green at Coronation Park

6.2 That the further maintenance of the bowling green at Greasbrough Park be reviewed in 2012

6.3 That Cabinet Member approves that notice is served regarding the cessation of maintenance of the bowling green at Wickersley Christian Institute from 1st January 2012.

6.4 That it is noted that a report will be taken by Officers in Community Delivery to Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods which will present proposals regarding Parish Council and Coalfield Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) sites which provide bowling greens that are currently maintained by RMBC.

7. Proposals and Details

Agreed budget savings 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 assessing the likely impact of the proposals.

Since the report regarding consultation on bowling greens maintenance was presented to Cabinet member in February 2011, a decision has been taken to consider maintenance of bowling greens on land owned by Parish Councils and CISWO separately as part of a wider review of grounds maintenance at such sites. Consultation with Parish Councils and CISWO is continuing, led by colleagues in Community Delivery, and is broadened to include all of the sport and recreation facilities, the outcome of review will be reported separately. Feedback from the consultation has been passed to the officer leading the Parish Council/ CISWO review.

The agreement to maintain the green at Wickersley Christian Institute is unique and no other agreements exist for similar greens. The green is maintained by RMBC on behalf of the Christian Institute Trustees. To rationalise the situation, it was previously agreed by Cabinet Member that the Council should stop maintaining this green, subject to consultation. However, an agreement was subsequently found to exist between RMBC and the Trustees requiring a minimum 6 months notice to be given. Consequently, it is proposed that notice be given that maintenance will cease from 1st January 2012.

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 Council-managed greens, the number of greens at each site, the quality of ancillary facilities (such as pavilions) that are available and other factors affecting value for money were also taken into account when identifying where reductions could be made.

Clubs have been 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 firm expressions of interest have been made but clubs may still make an expression of interest after confirmation of the greens where RMBC will no longer provide maintenance.

Consultation was carried out over a 13 week period starting 28th February 2011 in accordance with the Council's standard consultation framework. The consultation included:-

- Letters to all Parish Councils and CISWO informing them of the proposals and inviting them to comment
- Attendance at a number of meetings arranged by Clubs, Parish Councils and others to discuss the proposals

- Discussions with people with personal knowledge of bowling greens and their use
- 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

- Parish Council's and CISWO site users responded to the consultation and their comments will be taken into account within a separate report regarding grounds maintenance of sites managed by these groups.
- It was identified by some respondents that some greens left out of the original proposal had very few users and these greens should be brought into the scope of the proposals.
- Respondents identified that cessation of maintenance leading to closure of greens would impact on users who would suffer a loss of service.
- A number of miscellaneous site-specific issues were identified by respondents.

The proposals in this report have changed following the consultation from the previous report which recommended ceasing maintenance as follows:

- **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**
- **One green at Wickersley CI**

to:

- **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 Bradgate Park**
- **One green at Rosehill Park**
- **One green at Coronation Park**
- **One green at Wickersley CI**

plus

- **Review the maintenance of the green at Greasbrough Park in 2012**

8. Finance

The original savings target from the cessation of maintenance of selected bowling greens was £80,000 over two years. The final figure will be subject to confirmation of actual costs for green maintenance, and future arrangements for Parish and CISWO bowling greens which will be considered as part of a separate report. 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

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.

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.

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 does not expect to be in a position to pay for green preparation and continued maintenance after July 2011.

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.	Consultee	Method	Remarks Received (abridged)	Response	Recommendation
1	Kings Bowling Club, Wath	Meeting	Why stop maintaining 1 green out of 2 when there is a cost saving of having multiple greens on one site?	We have tried where possible to balance geographical spread with the cost savings of multiple green sites.	Cease maintenance of 1 green at Wath Park
2	Kings Bowling Club, Wath	Meeting	Reduction in the number of greens will affect winter bowling which has previously proved to be successful.	Noted. However, it is inevitable that there will be some loss of service due to the savings.	-ditto-
3	Aston-cum-Aughton Parish Council	Letter	Perceived unfairness that only RMBC owned land will be maintained. This land is predominantly in the north of the borough. Budgets for maintaining sports facilities should be split equally across all geographical areas.	This comment touches on broader issues regarding Parish Council sites which will be addressed in a separate report.	Consider comments when reporting on future arrangements for Parish and CISWO sites
4	Wales Parish Council	Letter	Only one bowling green in Wales parish and large membership.	Future maintenance of Parish facilities will be addressed in a separate report.	-ditto-
5	Wales Parish Council	Letter	Parish residents will be paying for greens in other areas through council tax.	-ditto-	-ditto-
6	Wales Parish Council	Letter	Precepts already set for 2011/12. More notice should have been given.	-ditto-	-ditto-
7	Anston Parish Council	Letter	Greens at Anston are well used and the clubs could not share with Dinnington as they are in the same league.	-ditto-	-ditto-
8	Barbers Avenue, Rawmarsh (Fellowship) club.	Contact from club rep.	Bowlers are willing to move to private greens at Roundwood which are very close to the existing greens at Barbers Avenue.	It was originally anticipated that this club would move to Rosehill Park.	Cease maintenance of 2 greens at Barbers Ave. in 2011. Cease maintenance of 1 green at Rosehill Park in 2011.

No.	Consultee	Method	Remarks Received (abridged)	Response	Recommendation
9	Wickersley Parish Council	Email	Wickersley CI has 90 members. Closure of the green would have a detrimental visual amenity.	It is now understood that an agreement exists which allows for a 6 month notice period. It is also understood that the club will be able to finance their own maintenance due to the number of members.	Cease maintenance of Wickersley CI green from 2012.
10	Bradgate Bowling club	Meeting	Opposed to closure of any greens at Bradgate. But if one does have to close it should be green three.	Noted. However, choice of green to be closed will not affect the saving from the site.	Cease maintenance of 1 green at Bradgate Park
11	Bradgate Bowling club	Letter	Health and social benefits of bowling highlighted.	Noted	-ditto-
12	Bradgate Bowling club	Letter	Multiple greens on one site have cost advantages so why choose to not maintain one green but still maintain the other two at Bradgate.	We have tried where possible to balance geographical spread with the cost savings of multiple green sites.	-ditto-
13	Barkers Park	Letter	Increasing usage and active promotion of bowling ongoing. Two greens are required.	Noted. However, it is inevitable that there will be some loss of service due to the savings.	Cease maintenance of 1 green at Barkers Park
14	Wickersley Christian Institute Bowling Club	Letter	Negative impact on local health. Reduction in opportunities for sport. Negative impact on local environs. The current agreement allows any member of the public to use the green in return for RMBC maintenance.	It is now understood that an agreement exists which allows for a 6 month notice period. It is also understood that the club will be able to finance their own maintenance due to the number of members.	Cease maintenance of Wickersley CI green from 2012.
15	Cortonwood MW club	Meeting	Great loss to the local community. Already closed one green in a previous cost cutting exercise.	Discussions took place regarding self maintenance. Green owned by CISWO, and will be addressed in a separate report.	Consider comments when reporting on future arrangements for Parish and CISWO sites

No.	Consultee	Method	Remarks Received (abridged)	Response	Recommendation
16	Coalfields Industry Social Welfare Organisation	Letter	Information passed to CISWO Regional manager. No other response.	Noted	n/a
17	Rotherham Doubles League (RDL) plus reps from Boston, Wickersley and Greasbrough	Meeting	Coronation Park has only one team. Close a green at Coronation Park.	Noted	Cease maintenance of one green at Coronation park.
18	RDL (as above)	Meeting	Close a green at Clifton to keep another green open elsewhere.	Clifton is a key site of borough-wide significance and allows high quality facilities to be provided efficiently due to recent investment and dedicated on-site maintenance team.	Keep 4 greens at Clifton Park
19	RDL (as above)	Meeting	Agreement between RMBC and Wickersley CI dated 14-2-78 states minimum of 6 months notice needed to withdraw maintenance.	Noted	Cease maintenance of Wickersley CI green from 2012
20	RDL (as above)	Meeting	Greasbrough bowlers would prefer to close both greens at Barkers Park to leave Greasbrough open due to use of each site.	Noted, but see comment 26 below.	Review maintenance at Greasbrough Park in 2012.
21	Petition Received, organised by Rotherham Doubles League	Petition	Objection to ceasing maintenance at Boston, Wickersley CI and Greasbrough.	Noted.	Addressed in responses to other comments
22	Rotherham Doubles League	Email	Objection to ceasing maintenance at Boston, Wickersley CI and Greasbrough. Close one green at Rosehill Park, one	The case for ceasing maintenance at Boston is clear and is due to running costs and ongoing vandalism.	Cease maintenance of one green at Coronation Park and green at Rosehill Park, and at Boston Park. Review maintenance at Greasbrough

No.	Consultee	Method	Remarks Received (abridged)	Response	Recommendation
			green at Coronation Park and 2 greens at Clifton Park as no league matches are played on them.	Wickersley CI green does not belong to RMBC. The two greens at Clifton are used by non league bowlers.	Park in 2012. Cease maintenance of Wickersley CI green from 2012. Continue maintenance of 4 greens at Clifton Park
23	Boston Bowling Club	Meeting	Boston is the oldest green as it is in the oldest park. Boston club is a thriving club.	The case for ceasing maintenance is clear and is due to running costs and ongoing vandalism.	Cease maintenance of green at Boston Park
24	Catcliffe Parish Council (Cllr Reg Littleboy)	Emails and meeting	Closing greens in small communities is unfair. RMBC should cease maintenance at the busiest sites/larger communities as they are more able to look after themselves.	Parish Council site issues will be dealt with as a separate report.	n/a
25	Catcliffe Parish Council	Meeting	It is unfair that RMBC only maintain their own greens, as people in parished areas pay the same Council Tax. Savings should be spread across all communities evenly.	Parish Council site issues will be dealt with as a separate report.	n/a
26	Greasbrough Bowling Club	Contact from club	Greasbrough bowling club has only 6 members and will therefore cease to play in a league.	Noted	Review maintenance at Greasbrough Park in 2012.
27	RMBC Games Attendant Supervisor	Internal consultation	Only one green at Coronation park is used by bowlers.	Noted	Close one green at Coronation Park