
Ernest Stevens Trusts Management Committee – 18th July, 2021

Report of the Interim Director of Public Realm

Wollescote Hall Bowls Club

Purpose

1. To inform the Management Committee of the proposed plans and aspirations of the Wollescote Hall Bowls Club (WHBC) to develop the bowls green and their pavilion within the walled area of Wollescote Park.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:-
 - The Ernest Stevens Trusts Management Committee note the content of the report.

Background

3. The game of outdoor bowls can be played on crown green and flat green bowls greens, with the techniques for each being completely different.
4. Within Dudley, there are 28 crown green and one flat green bowls greens, eight of which are situated in Council parks, including Wollescote and Mary Stevens Park
5. Flat green bowls, governed by Bowls England, has been played at Wollescote Park since the early 1990's when two former tennis courts were converted to a flat bowling green. Since this date the green has been used by a number of clubs, however, the predominant users have been the Black Country Bowls Club and Crystal Bowls Club.

6. Over the last 30 years, the Black Country Bowls Club and Crystal Bowls Club have worked together to enhance the facility, including the installation of an irrigation system, and in 2003 the two clubs installed a timber pavilion on the site. This pavilion has provided the clubs with basic facilities including an area to change, a small kitchen and an area to eat refreshments and more recently a storage area. The pavilion does not have its own toilets and bowlers utilise the facilities within the park.
7. Throughout their life both clubs have maintained a reasonably healthy membership and financial viability. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic both clubs were successful in recruiting new members, but it became obvious that the continued future and development of bowling in the area would be best served by merging the two clubs together to create WHBC. This was formally achieved and recognised by Worcestershire Bowling Association in December 2021. Building on members enthusiasm generated from the merger of the two clubs and interest expressed in the game the club has set out a development plan, which is attached as Appendix 1.
8. Seven key objectives are set out within the development plan, as below:
 - Attract new members
 - Support the national trend of attracting younger people into the sport.
 - Attract players from the working population.
 - Make greater use of the site outside of the summer season.
 - Respond positively to requests from Schools & Special Needs Children's Groups.
 - Participate in more league games.
 - Increase Participation in the Community
9. As set out in their plan, WHBC have aspirations to improve the quality of the green, which has presented challenges due to its previous use as a tennis court. Despite the effort and expense applied over the years, the club struggles to have sufficient rinks that pass county inspections to allow competitive play and as such the club propose to dig up the green and relay the surface.
10. WHBC also aspire to build a larger pavilion, which would include toilets, a kitchen facility, plus space to entertain visiting clubs and hold meetings. It will also accommodate equipment storage and have heating so it can be used during the winter months. It is also proposed to provide provision for short mat bowls.

Finance

11. The responsibility for delivery and funding of the WHBC development plan would fall to the club, and they are currently looking at detailed costs in preparation, but it is expected to cost in the region of £350,000. The club is not in a financial position to fund this themselves and they are currently working to identify areas of grant funding, whether this is via Sport England or the National Governing Bodies for bowls. However, it has become evident that granting bodies would require the club to be in possession of a long-term lease, or licence to occupy the site, which will need to be negotiated with the Council.

Law

12. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides Councils with the general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to Sections 2 to 4, and Section 105, 117-123 of the Charities Act 2011 gives power to authorise dealings with charity property (as amended by the Charities Act 2022).

Risk Management

13. There are no material risks presented by this project.

Equality Impact

14. The proposals contained in this report are consistent with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

15. None applicable to this report.

Commercial/Procurement

16. Any procurement of goods or services made by the Council will comply with the Councils Contract Standing Orders and governance arrangements in place which could include submission of options to Procurement Management Group (PMG).

Council Priorities and Projects

17. This decision will improve the quality of the green spaces.

Developing Green Space: Providing a framework of good quality and accessible community space, parks & nature reserves with interconnecting green networks.

18. This proposal is not anticipated to have any implications for current activity.



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Appendices

None.

List of Background Documents

None.