

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
GOSLING SPORTS PARK REDEVELOPMENT
CABINET – 13 JULY 2021
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

GOSLING SPORTS PARK REDEVELOPMENT

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the redevelopment of Gosling Sports Park following the application to One Public Estate (OPE) and the proposed governance structure for the scheme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the establishment of a Cross Party Member Procurement Board, and that the proposed governance structure is adopted for the project.
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegate the approval of the memorandum of understanding, once drafted, to the Head of Resources in consultation with the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Executive Member for Environment, Planning, Estates and Development and Executive Member (Leisure and Community Safety).

3 Background

- 3.1 The Gosling site was originally used as a gravel pit for the construction of the town, a public appeal led to the development of the stadium, cycling, and running track, which opened in July 1952, with a clubhouse and small stand added in 1962.
- 3.2 The sports hall was opened in March 1976 and was then named after the late first chairman of the development corporation, Reg Gosling. Several major alterations and developments occurred on the site between the period 1987 and 2017. This development has resulted in the park becoming disjointed and suffering from aging facilities.
- 3.3 Proposals to redevelop the park to accommodate residential development were submitted as part of the Emerging Local Plan. Sport England's response to the 2015 Local Plan Consultation Document acknowledged the benefit of redevelopment subject to the production of a masterplan for the future of the Sports Park.
- 3.4 The park is bounded to the south by land leased to Stanborough School by HCC for the use of playing fields. Immediately adjacent again is land owned by Hertfordshire Constabulary, and currently not utilised. Both parcels of land are designated Urban Open Land (UOL). An indicative plan is provided in **Appendix 1**. All parties have expressed their interest in working collaboratively to review the site taking in an extended boundary.

- 3.5 In February 2020, it was agreed that a master planning exercise to be undertaken on the Gosling Sports Park site to consider how it could effectively accommodate the needs, priorities and recommendations for indoor and outdoor sports facilities as set out in the Sports Strategy.
- 3.6 A joint application was made to One Public Estate to undertake master planning and due diligence work to assess the opportunities and constraints associated with development on the site. The council was informed recently the bid was successful, and the scheme awarded £250,000.

4 Explanation/ Proposals

4.1 One Public Estate Funding

- 4.1.1 The scheme was awarded £250,000 in a recyclable loan. This is an agreement between Hertfordshire Council and the Government. There is currently no formal agreement between Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, which may form part of the MoU if required.
- 4.1.2 The terms of the funding agreement require the fund to be repaid by March 2024. It is anticipated that capital value achieved from the site will repay the loan. There is a risk that in the event the project is undeliverable there will be a financial exposure to the council. To mitigate this exposure, checkpoints can be integrated into the programme at defined stages to monitor the feasibility and deliverability of the scheme.
- 4.1.3 It is proposed that all parties benefiting from the fund contribute an equal share in the event it requires payment. This principle is being drafted into a Memorandum of Understanding, however, is still subject to agreement.

4.2 Governance Structure

- 4.2.1 The design team, which will be producing the work, will consist of professional services consultants, land surveyors and specialist sports and leisure consultants. It is proposed that a series of subgroups is established to assist in the delivery of the project. Themes such as Sports and Leisure as well as Transport and Infrastructure have been initially identified, however it is anticipated these will expand as the project progresses.
- 4.2.2 It is proposed that the design team and subgroups report to a Partnership Board. The remit of the board will be defined through Terms of Reference, and a Memorandum of Understanding will outline the requirements and expectations of each organisation **Appendix 2**. The partnership board will consist of the following organisations:
- a) Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
 - b) Greenwich Leisure Limited
 - c) Hertfordshire Constabulary
 - d) Hertfordshire County Council/Stanborough School
- 4.2.3 HCC will pass funding onto WHBC, so as WHBC will be the lead authority for managing the fund, there is a requirement to satisfy the council's procurement processes. It is recommended that the partnership board report to the council's Cabinet via a Member Procurement Board for the period during which procurement processes and the development is being carried out. Proposed

Terms of Reference of the Member Procurement Board is detailed in **Appendix 3**.

5 Next Steps

5.1 Establish Member Procurement Board

5.1.1 The first report to the procurement board will be to appoint the council's retained design team to produce a master plan and undertake site due diligence

5.1.2 A recommendation will also be to appoint specialist consultants required for the project, including an Independent Sports Consultancy.

5.2 Create Brief and Programme

5.2.1 Clearly defined briefs and scope of works will be produced to facilitate the appointment of consultants and advisors and ensure the desired outputs of the project are achieved. Realistic timetables for delivery of the masterplan and subsequent development works can also be produced.

5.3 Due Diligence

5.3.1 A series of desktop investigations, which seek to understand the legal and physical encumbrances of the site will be required to be conducted. These will be complimented by intrusive site investigations which will identify potential contamination on the site, and gain clarity on areas which are suitable for development.

5.4 Engagement

5.4.1 Engagement with key stakeholders will be conducted to understand the parameters of development. It is anticipated that representatives of some of these stakeholders will be members of the subgroups.

5.4.2 Public Engagement, which will commence early on, will assist in understanding the needs of the community. By continuing engagement throughout the project will assist in developing a scheme which can bring value to the local area and enhance and potential proposal.

5.5 Design Work

5.5.1 Following a more thorough detailed understanding of the land through undertaking further due diligence, and the engagement with communities and stakeholders, specifications for options to be explored can be developed and initial concepts produced.

Implications

6 Legal Implication(s)

6.1 The structure of the proposed arrangement between the various parties includes/will include:

6.1.1 A non-binding Memorandum of Understanding between: (a) the Local Government Association; (b) the Cabinet Office's Office of Government Property; (c) the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government; and (d) the Hertfordshire Property Partnership Board Partnership (Hertfordshire County Council is the 'lead authority' for the Partnership Board);

- 6.1.2 A Memorandum of Understanding between the parties identified in paragraph 4.2.2 of this report;
- 6.1.3 If required, agreement(s) between Hertfordshire County Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council; and
- 6.1.4 Contracts with a design team and with specialist consultants including an independent Sports Consultancy
- 6.2 In compliance with the requirements of section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in making decisions in relation to the development of the site, the council must have due regard to:
 - 6.2.1 The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - 6.2.2 The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - 6.2.3 The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
 - 6.2.4 The 'protected characteristics' are gender, race, disability, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership; religion and religious belief, and sexual orientation.
- 6.3 A full investigation of the site will need to be carried out.

7 Financial Implication(s)

- 7.1 The council will enter into agreement with Hertfordshire County Council for the recyclable loan which will require repayment by March 2024. It is anticipated that the repayment of the loan will be made through release of capital value from the site.
- 7.2 There is a risk that in the event the project is undeliverable there will be a financial exposure. To mitigate this exposure, checkpoints can be integrated into the programme at defined stages to monitor the feasibility and deliverability of the scheme.
- 7.3 A memorandum of understanding is being drafted to share this exposure with all partners with direct interests in this project, listed in 4.2.2.

8 Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 There is a risk that in the event the project is undeliverable there will be a financial exposure to the council. To mitigate this exposure, checkpoints can be integrated into the programme at defined stages to monitor the feasibility and deliverability of the scheme.
- 8.2 Public Engagement will be crucial to ensure the needs of the community are considered, and this will be one of the early activities for the project, without which there are reputational risks associated.

9 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

9.1 There are no direct security and terrorism implications associated with this report.

10 Procurement Implication(s)

10.1 There are no direct procurement implications associated with this report. The council has professional service frameworks in places. Where additional works are required outside of these frameworks, works will be procured in line with the Contract Procedure Rules.

11 Climate Change Implication(s)

11.1 There are no direct climate implications associated with this report.

12 Human Resources Implication(s)

12.1 There are no direct human resources associated with this report.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

13.1 The provision of sports facilities and open land have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. This will be carefully considered as part of the master planning of the site, and specialist advice will be sought through an independent sports consultancy specialist.

14 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

14.1 Public Engagement will be crucial to ensure the needs of the community are considered, and this will be one of the early activities for the project.

15 Link to Corporate Priorities

15.1 This report links directly to a number of the council's priorities including "Attractive and accessible spaces supporting the boroughs wellbeing", "Quality homes through managed growth" and "A sense of community where people feel safe".

16 Equality and Diversity

16.1 An EqlA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies. An EqlA will be completed at later stages of the project as the master planning is undertaken.

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Appendix 1 – Site Plan

Appendix 2 – Partnership Board Terms of Reference

Appendix 3 – Member Procurement Board Terms of Reference