

For publication

Future use of former Queen's Park Sports Centre site (TV000)

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	7 March 2017
Cabinet portfolios:	Town centre and visitor economy Health and wellbeing
Report by:	Michael Rich, Executive Director

For publication

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet following consultation in 2016 on potential uses of the former sports centre site and to seek agreement in principle to develop artificial sports pitches as the preferred future use, including development of a full business case.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the outcomes of the 2016 public consultation exercise and the motion passed by Council on 23 February 2017 following the petition for an ice rink to be built on the site.
- 2.2 That Cabinet note the intention to use allocated reserves for budget savings/income generation to recruit an internal secondee to manage the project.
- 2.3 That Cabinet consider the outline business case for artificial sports pitches and approve the development of a full business

case to be submitted to Cabinet and Council as part of any request for future capital expenditure at the site.

- 2.4 That Cabinet approve the preparation of a planning application for artificial sports pitches at the same time as developing the full business case.

3.0 **Background**

- 3.1 A public consultation was carried out during September and October 2016 regarding options for developing the site of the former Queen's Park Sports Centre. The consultation set out a single preferred option of artificial sports pitches as well as consideration of a range of other options. The outcomes of the consultation have been published and are included here at appendix 1.
- 3.2 Following granting of planning permission and a procurement process, demolition of the former sports centre is now underway and should be complete in March.
- 3.3 Reports and updates regarding the potential future use of the site have been provided on a regular basis to the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and a scrutiny project on this topic has also commenced as part of the agreed work programme.
- 3.4 Following the conclusion of the public consultation, an outline business case for the preferred option has been developed and is included here for consideration at appendix 2. The case is outline only at this stage and, as indicated in the document, requires significant additional work in a number of areas before a full case can be presented.
- 3.5 No outline case has been developed for any other options at this stage. The consultation invited alternative options and specifically requested that respondents indicate how they thought a case could be made for any alternative, taking account of the principles set out in the consultation document. Whilst there have been a large number of valuable comments and suggestions, it is not considered that the responses included sufficient material to warrant development of a case for any alternative uses for the

site. This view was supported in discussion at the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee meeting in December.

- 3.6 Since the conclusion of the consultation exercise, a petition was presented to Council on 23rd February calling for an ice rink to be built on the site. Further details relating to this are included in section 8 below.

4.0 **Considerations and proposed next steps**

- 4.1 In light of the response to the public consultation, which showed 69% agreeing with the preferred option, and the outline business case, it is considered that there is merit in developing proposals to a full business case stage. This would allow the further work necessary to test the assumptions within the outline case and gather more evidence to support each element of the case. The financial and commercial elements of the case are particularly important and both require significant further work before a robust case can be presented.
- 4.2 Further work to develop a full business case would include liaison with key stakeholders, in particular potential contractors and/or operators of similar facilities, local sports clubs and representative bodies and the Friends of Queen's Park group. It would also allow for continuing scrutiny committee input to the work.
- 4.3 Prior to the submission of a full case with more detailed and robust costs, a growth request for capital expenditure of £850k in 2017-18 has been made. This is in order to help plan and prepare the capital programme for future years and is a request made alongside others that are yet to be approved. The inclusion of this request as a potential future capital expenditure does not pre-empt approval of any expenditure and the amount requested is necessarily an initial estimate only, given the need for further work on the financial case.
- 4.4 The development of this case and the supporting work required will need additional project capacity. A draft job description for a project role has been prepared and submitted for evaluation. The intention is to offer this internally by way of a short term secondment opportunity in order to provide the dedicated capacity the project requires. The costs of this resource (both

potential short term salary uplift and, if appropriate, temporary backfill of the substantive role) can be met from within budget already allocated to reserves by Council to support the range of activity needed to make savings and raise income.

- 4.5 At the same time as developing a full business case, an application for planning permission will be prepared. It is recommended this is done in parallel to the full business case as this will reduce the overall time required to bring forward development on the site. Formal submission of an application will await consideration by Cabinet of the full business case.
- 4.6 If the full business case development indicates the continuing viability of the preferred option, work will also begin on preparing a specification for the work and a procurement plan. Again, this should reduce the overall time required to see development on the site if approval is given to the full business case.

5.0 **Human Resources/People Management Implications**

- 5.1 As set out above, there is a need to bring in temporary additional capacity to support this project and the process for this is under discussion with the HR manager. A draft job role has been submitted for evaluation and internal recruitment to the secondment opportunity is planned to commence shortly. Resources are available for any uplift in pay if the secondee comes from a lower graded post. There is also the ability to fund backfill for the vacated substantive post during the secondment period, though this would be subject to the normal vacancy control process.
- 5.2 Any staffing requirements associated with the preferred option for the site would need to be fully considered as part of the full business case and, if required, approvals sought through the normal processes for any growth in the establishment.

6.0 **Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The costs associated with developing the project through to full business case stage, including a temporary project manager as noted above, will be contained within the approved sums

allocated for budget savings / income generation in the Invest to Save and Service Improvement Reserves.

6.2 Financial analysis of the preferred option of sports pitches is set out in the attached outline business case. Whilst this shows the potential for significant revenue generation, it is important to stress again that at this stage the figures are estimates based on a range of assumptions. Therefore, as noted above, the numbers require significant additional testing before a final business case can be considered and associated financial approvals sought.

6.3 At this stage, a growth request for £850k has been made as part of the process of preparing and reviewing the future capital programme. However, no approval for capital expenditure is being sought at this point as a full business case will need to be prepared before that approval is sought.

7.0 **Legal and Data Protection Implications**

7.1 There is consideration to legal matters within the attached outline business case, including the basis on which income from the site can be retained. It is not thought that data protection or related matters are relevant to the recommendations in this report.

7.2 In developing options for the site, consideration has already been given to the covenants that apply to development. Internal advice on this matter indicates that the preferred option should fall within the covenanted use. It is also unclear as to whether there are still beneficiaries of the covenant in place to challenge any future use and insurance options exist for the council should it wish to pursue a future use that risks falling outside these covenants. This matter will be explored in more detail as part of the full business case and planning application process.

8.0 **Consultation**

8.1 As noted above, a public consultation regarding potential uses of the site was carried out last year from 12th September to 21st October. 583 responses were received and the outcomes were published in December, a copy of which is attached here at Appendix 1.

- 8.2 The consultation showed 94% support for the principles set out in the consultation (fit with council plan, fit with the wider site, evidence of demand, income generation). The most common additional principle suggested was accessibility and use by different groups. 69% of respondents agreed with the preferred option set out and 23% disagreed. A large number of valuable comments were made with regard to improving or amending the preferred option. A range of alternative uses were also suggested, the most popular of these being office/community/event space, ice-rink, water play and outdoor leisure provision.
- 8.3 There have been regular reports regarding plans for future use to the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and its chair and project group members. A project group is in place to continue to provide scrutiny input as the proposals develop in more detail.
- 8.4 Officers have attended meetings of the Friends of Queen's Park to provide regular updates and a short presentation was made at a Destination Chesterfield event at the beginning of the consultation period.
- 8.5 As noted above, since the close of the formal consultation, a petition calling for an ice rink to be built on the site was begun by a local resident. Having generated over 1,000 supporters, the petition was presented to the Council on 23rd February and a full debate took place. Cabinet members were present for the debate and will recall the motion passed by Council:
- That the Council receives and notes the petition to turn the former Queen's Park Sports Centre site into an ice rink.
 - That the petition and tonight's debate at Full Council be taken into account by Chesterfield Borough Council's Cabinet when making the decision on a suitable use for the former Queen's Park Sports Centre site.
 - That the Council, if approached by an ice rink operator, will assist with the identification of suitable sites and

provide advice on planning and funding opportunities, including the development of external funding bids, in order to enhance the Borough's sport and leisure offer.

9.0 **Risk Management**

9.1 Key risks and mitigations are set out in the attached outline business case.

10.0 **Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

10.1 An equalities impact assessment has not been conducted at this stage. A full assessment will be developed as part of the work on a full business case for the preferred option.

10.2 There has been some analysis conducted of the responses to the consultation, breaking the results down by sex and by age. This breakdown is included at appendix 3. The consultation comments also include some setting out concerns about the proposed use being one that would only appeal to, or be used by, particular groups to the exclusion of others.

10.3 Part of the further work required to support a full business case will be a consideration, in conjunction with sporting clubs and their representative bodies, of how demand might vary across different parts of the community and the potential for the preferred option to encourage greater participation among currently under-represented groups.

11.0 **Alternative options and reasons for rejection**

11.1 The consultation on the preferred option included consideration of a number of alternative options for the site and reasons why those had not been put forward. This matter was further explored as part of the consultation itself and an invitation made to submit alternatives that would fit with the principles set out in the consultation document.

11.2 No alternatives meeting all of the stated principles were proposed as part of the consultation.

11.3 In terms of alternatives to the recommendations set out in this report, Cabinet could chose the following:

- Not to go ahead with the preferred option for the site. This would leave the site without a preferred future use and for a site of this importance and potential this is not recommended.
- To develop a business case for another option, either instead of or alongside the preferred option. This could include for example a case for an ice rink on the site following the petition presented to Council. This would require evidence to support an alternative option that meets the stated principles. Given there is not strong evidence in place for an alternative use that meets the criteria, this is not recommended.
- To seek approval from Council for the preferred option and associated expenditure on the basis of the existing outline business case. As has been repeatedly set out above, there is a need for further work to test and hopefully strengthen key elements of the business case, in particular the financial and commercial cases. Final approval for the preferred option without that further work would represent significant financial and reputational risk to the council and is not recommended.
- To go ahead with development of a full business case but to delay preparing a planning application and procurement plan until the full case is approved. This would slow down the development timeline significantly, leaving the cleared site vacant for an extended period and is not recommended.

12.0 **Recommendations**

12.1 That Cabinet note the outcomes of the 2016 public consultation exercise and the motion passed by Council on 23rd February 2017 following the petition for an ice rink to be built on the site.

12.2 That Cabinet note the intention to use allocated reserves for budget savings/income generation to recruit an internal secondee to manage the project.

- 12.3 That Cabinet consider the outline business case for artificial sports pitches and approve the development of a full business case to be submitted to Cabinet and Council as part of any request for future capital expenditure at the site.
- 12.4 That Cabinet approve the preparation of a planning application for artificial sports pitches at the same time as developing the full business case.
- 13.0 **Reasons for recommendations**
- 13.1 The recommendations are made in order that a clear direction is set by Cabinet on its preferred use for the former sports centre site, whilst recognising that further work is required before taking a final decision and seeking approval from Council for any additional expenditure.

Decision information

Key decision number	671
Wards affected	St Leonards
Links to Council Plan priorities	Quality of life Value for money

Document information

Report author	Contact number/email
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Background documents These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
None	
Appendices to the report	

Appendix 1	Queen's Park Sports Centre Former Site Consultation Response
Appendix 2	Future use of old QPSC site – Outline Business Case
Appendix 3	Demographic breakdown of consultation results