
BLACKWELL MEADOWS COMMUNITY SPORTS HUB EXPANSION

**Responsible Cabinet Members -
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy and Regeneration Portfolio
Councillor Nick Wallis, Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek:
 - (a) Delegated powers to the Director of Economic Growth to negotiate heads of terms and enter into a lease with Darlington Rugby Football Club (DRFC) for the land that is required for an extension to the Community Sports Hub car park at Blackwell Meadows.
 - (b) Agreement to release Sport England funding, equating to a maximum of £70,000 should an application be successful (decision will be known in April 2015) to contribute towards the cost of the Community Sports Hub car park extension.
 - (c) Agreement to relax the existing restrictive covenant on the Rugby Club's land at Blackwell Meadows to allow DRFC to secure adequate borrowing to fund the necessary alterations to the ground, clubhouse and changing rooms to facilitate the relocation of Darlington Football Club (DFC).

Summary

2. DRFC has plans to expand the Community Sports Hub at Blackwell Meadows which will increase membership of the existing sports clubs on site as well as allowing expansion of the number and variety of clubs hosted at the site. These expansion plans include extending current changing room provision, an addition of 250 car parking spaces, pitch upgrading/external works and alterations to the entrance to the clubhouse. The location of these proposed works are highlighted in **Appendix 1**. These works will also ensure that the ground meets FA ground grading Category C and will cost about £0.900m.
3. The expansion plans at the Blackwell Meadows Community Sports Hub require approximately 3.6 acres of Council owned land adjacent to DRFC for a car park.

This land is currently used for agricultural grazing. Cabinet is requested to grant delegated power to the Director of Economic Growth to negotiate heads of terms and enter into a 25 year lease with DRFC for the land.

4. DRFC has approached the Council to fund the provision of an additional 250 car parking spaces that are required to service the users of the expanding Community Sports hub. There is £0.070m remaining from the Council's capital project to develop community sports pitches at Blackwell Meadows and it is proposed to utilise this money as a contribution to the cost of the additional car parking. A further £0.070m has been sought from external funding sources. There is no new budget ask for this that needs to be taken into account within Council budgets in the MTFP.
5. DRFC has also approached the Council to relax the restrictive covenant on its existing freehold land at Blackwell Meadows. The existing restrictive covenant was put in place to safeguard the Council's position and to restrict any development other than for sports related uses. This relaxation will enable DRFC to raise additional finance as part of its contribution to the project costs.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) The Director of Economic Growth be granted delegated powers to negotiate heads of terms and enter into a lease with DRFC for the land that is required for the car park.
 - (b) To release Sport England funding, equating to a maximum of £0.070m should an application be successful (decision will be known in April 2015) to contribute towards the cost of the Community Sports Hub car park extension.
 - (c) The restrictive covenant on the Rugby Clubs land at Blackwell Meadows be relaxed in line with paragraph 14 (c) of the report.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
 - (a) To enable the public of Darlington to continue to access the leisure facilities offered by DRFC through the Community Sports Hub.
 - (b) To assist in the facilitation of the expansion to a strategically important Community Sports Hub.
 - (c) To assist in the increase in sport participation numbers within the Borough.
 - (d) To assist in the relocation of Darlington Football Club to the town, and to maximise economic benefits of hosting home match days within the Borough.

- (e) To protect previous Council investment made in the provision of community sport pitches.

Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Kirsty McGready: Extension: 6314

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no crime and disorder issues with these proposals at the current time
Health and Well Being	Where relevant, the development of the facilities will be subject to a General safety certificate under Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	Park West
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	<p>The continuation of participation in rugby and other sporting and community related opportunities at Blackwell Meadows support the following outcomes of ODPP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people active and involved – through providing the infrastructure to improve involvement in sport and physical activity. This will encourage people to be physically active in support of their health and well-being. • More people healthy and independent – this project will improve the wider determinants of health, including sport and physical activity which is priority for improving the long-term inequalities in health. • Children and young people have the best start in life - the project will assist in the reduction of obesity in children through providing the facilities and opportunities for children and young people to participate in sport. For example through mini and junior football and rugby. • Economic growth – through increasing visitors into the town and through also keeping home matches within the town – this project will bring income into the local economy and support the creation of jobs.
Efficiency	The proposal should ensure the long term future of the club and in doing so reduce the ongoing officer time and involvement from the Council.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background

8. The Blackwell Meadows Community Sports Hub is extremely important sporting infrastructure in the borough as it is one of the hub sites identified in the recent Darlington Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy. Three key themes of this strategy are that sport facilities are fit for purpose, have a high level of user and resident satisfaction and that access to existing facilities is maximised. This project supports those three key themes.
9. DRFC has a strong membership base including Darlington Youth Football Club, Darlington Bulls Football Club, Darlington Rugby League Football Club and the Gentleman and Lady Archers of Darlington. DRFC has a robust business plan which seeks to significantly add to this membership through new partner clubs and teams who access on site facilities. To facilitate present and future users, the Club require additional car parking and changing room provision to overcome the existing high demand for the use of the pitch facilities, especially on a weekend.
10. A ground-sharing agreement between DRFC and DFC was signed in March 2014 which will see DFC entering a 25 year lease with DRFC. This will allow the Football Club to move from its current location in Bishop Auckland, back into Darlington where they will share grounds with DRFC. To accommodate the move, all works proposed at the Club are within the parameters of the FA's ground grading Category C whilst also ensuring that future promotions and ground grading requirements can be accommodated easily.
11. DRFC has now applied for planning permission which incorporates changing rooms, pitch upgrading/external works, additional 250 car parking spaces and alterations to the entrance to the clubhouse (case 14/01251/FUL).
12. The current cost of the expansion and ground sharing proposal is circa £0.900m which includes all necessary alterations to the ground, clubhouse, changing rooms and car park. Funding for this is coming from DFC, DRFC and the Council. A full breakdown of the funding package can be found in **Appendix 2 (this information is exempt from publication under Schedule 12A of the LGA 1972)**.
13. The Council has been asked to contribute to the project through:-
 - (a) Granting a lease on Council owned land adjacent to the ground which is currently used as agricultural land for grazing. This land will host the car park.
 - (b) Providing funding for a car park that will service both the needs of the community sports pitches and both clubs on match days.
 - (c) Relaxing the restrictive covenant on DRFC's land at Blackwell Meadows to give them the ability to secure borrowing for funding part of their share of project costs.

14. Each of the above requirements is covered below:-

(a) Lease

- (i) Approximately 3.6 acres of Council owned land adjacent to DRFC is required for the car park. The car park is to provide 500 car parking spaces (developed in two phases of 250 spaces).
- (ii) This land is currently used as agricultural grazing land and perimeter fencing will be constructed around the 500 spaces to stop grazing cattle damaging the car parking surface. Whilst undeveloped, phase 2 land offers the chance of overspill car parking should it be required.
- (iii) The proposal is to grant DRFC a lease for a term of 25 years. The rent is to be negotiated.
- (iv) Depending on the usage on non-match days in particular, the Council may look to take a stake in the income generated. Such triggers will be included within the heads of terms.
- (v) Cabinet is asked to grant delegated power to the Director of Economic Growth to negotiate heads of terms and enter into a lease with DRFC for the land that is required for an extension to the Community Sports Hub car park.

(b) Car Park

Current and Future Capacity Requirements

- (i) Current use - DRFC has approached the Council regarding the increased volume of traffic that the new 6 community pitches have brought to the site and the current inability to meet this demand with existing car parking provision. Currently on a weekend there is a minimum of 14 matches played on the site with an average of 300 players and 200 spectators and there are only 120 car parking spaces on site and this does not meet the demand.
- (ii) Future use – there are plans to increase both the number of members and the number of clubs. The plan is to build the car park in 2 phases to reflect the growth plans of the Community Sports Club Hub. The Council have been approached for Phase 1 parking only as anything over and above this would be deemed a requirement solely for DFC at this stage.
- (iii) This first phase as included in the planning permission is for 250 spaces which equates to a total of 370 spaces including the existing DRFC car park capacity of 120. This is in line with the Tees Valley Design Guidance. The second phase allows for a further expansion of 250 spaces.

Car Park Funding

- (iv) There is £0.070m remaining from the Council's playing pitches capital budget and it is proposed that this is used to contribute to the proposed car parking solution as it will also provide car parking to service the users of these playing pitches.
- (v) The Council has applied to Sport England for a further contribution of £0.070m towards the cost of the car park through the Inspired Facilities fund – which is a £110 million programme that funds the renovation and modernisation of local sports facilities.
- (vi) The decision for Inspired Facilities will be known in April 2015, and if successful the Council will be the lead applicant for the funding but will pass on any risks of clawback onto the club through a legal agreement.
- (vii) As the Council is utilising existing funding provision and external funding opportunities to ensure there is adequate parking for the users of the Community Sports Hub, there is no new budget requirements for the funding of the car park.

(c) Restrictive Covenant

- (i) DRFC has approached the Council to relax the restrictive covenant on their freehold land at Blackwell Meadows in order for them to be able to secure funding to meet part of their share of the cost of the expansion works. Due to the commercial sensitivity of the information relating to the restrictive covenant and the level of funding DRFC are looking to secure, this is contained in **Appendix 2**, a Part III report to be discussed later in the Agenda.

Timetable

15. The key milestones for the proposed work to the Community Sports Hub at Blackwell Meadows is as follows:

Milestone	Timescale
Planning decision	April 2015
Funding package in place	April 2015
Lease entered	May 2015
Works procured	May 2015
Commence work on site	May 2015
Practical completion	July 2015
Darlington Football Club move from current ground	August 2015

Financial Implications

16. Should Members agree to the relaxing of the restrictive covenant, it is recommended that to protect the Council's interest the relaxation of the covenant be capped at the amount as detailed in **Appendix 2 (this information is exempt from publication under Schedule 12A of the LGA 1972)**.

Corporate Landlord Advice

17. Facilitating the expansion of the Community Sports Hub at Blackwell Meadows and enabling Darlington Football Club to relocate will hopefully safeguard the future of both Clubs but also ensure the Council's investment to date in the additional playing pitches is protected.