

**COUNCIL
25 NOVEMBER 2021**

EASTBOURNE SPORTS COMPLEX – RELEASE OF CAPITAL

Councillor Kevin Nicholson, Health and Housing Portfolio

Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To request that Council release £1.610M of Council funding for the refurbishment and development of outdoor facilities at Eastbourne Sports Complex.

Summary

2. Eastbourne Sports Complex opened in 1999 and has operated successfully for the past 22 years and continues to be the Council's key outdoor sports facilities that contributes to the Council's vision and outcomes as well as contributing to majority of the Council's Portfolios. The site provides a range of facilities and a number of athletic and football clubs use the site on a weekly basis, as well as a range of partners, schools and casual use, generating approximately 170,000 visits a year.
3. There are currently a number of issues and opportunities for Members to consider with regard to Eastbourne Sports Complex:
 - (a) The athletics track is now at the end of its life cycle and has had various repairs carried out over recent years, but it is becoming uneconomical to continue with temporary repairs and without refurbishment will have to close on safety grounds in the next few years.
 - (b) As part of officers ongoing engagement with the Football Foundation and success of the existing Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP), the Football Foundation have given an in principal offer of up to £700K towards the provision of an additional AGP at Eastbourne.
 - (c) Access and egress from the site is via Bourne Avenue, which when the site is operating at capacity does cause spill over of traffic into the surrounding estate.
4. Cabinet considered the options presented in this report to address the issues and take advantage of the opportunities, from doing nothing to refurbishing the athletics track, providing an additional AGP and improving parking capacity and traffic management on site at their meeting on 9 November 2021. They recommended option 4 should be progressed which is detailed in paragraph 35 (d) and 36 (d).

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Council approve and release £1.610M of Council funding for the scheme which will be financed through prudential borrowing and Capital receipts.

Reasons

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) To ensure that the Council continues to provide an appropriate competition standard athletics facility in the town.
 - (b) In line with the Playing Pitch and Facilities Strategy provide an additional AGP at Eastbourne working in partnership with the Football Foundation.
 - (c) Eastbourne Sports Complex contributes to the Council Vision and Portfolio priorities as the Council's main outdoor sporting hub. The investment modernises facilities and will support the transformation of services and improve the facilities available for residents of the Borough.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Background Papers

Development of Eastbourne Sports Complex report presented to Cabinet on 9 November 2021

Ian Thompson : Extension 6628
CD

S17 Crime and Disorder	The development at Eastbourne Sports Complex will have a positive impact on crime and disorder by providing a range of different activities for young people on a managed site.
Health and Wellbeing	The development at Eastbourne Sports Complex will have a positive impact on individuals health and wellbeing, both physical and mental.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There is the potential for an increase in carbon impact with increased visits and additional lighting for the AGP. However, the Council will seek to minimise this through the promotion of sustainable transport for the complex activity and design of the new lighting.
Diversity	The facilities at Eastbourne are available for all members of the community.
Wards Affected	Stephenson
Groups Affected	No group is affected differently to any other group. The facilities are available to all groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	Funding for the project sits outside of the Council Budget Frameworks and will therefore have to be reported to full Council for their approval.

Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	Eastbourne Sports Complex contributes to the Council Plan Vision and numerous Portfolio priorities as the Council's main outdoor sporting hub.
Efficiency	There is no impact on the Council's efficiency agenda.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background

7. Eastbourne Sports Complex is the Council's main outdoor sports facility located in Stephenson Ward. It was built in 1999 mainly from Lottery funding, providing a range of facilities as follows:
 - (a) 8 lane floodlit county standard athletics track (now in need of replacement)
 - (b) FIFA standard Artificial Grass Pitch (2017)
 - (c) 9 grass pitches of various sizes
 - (d) 4 changing rooms (3 male and 1 female)
 - (e) Multi-purpose room
 - (f) Outdoor climbing boulder
 - (g) Bowling green
 - (h) Outdoor children's play area
 - (i) Meeting room
 - (j) Eastbourne Nursery
 - (k) Reception and office accommodation

8. On site there are a range of clubs and partners.

Artificial Grass Pitch

9. Football and especially junior football are particularly well established at Eastbourne, which offers floodlit training and FA standard matches on the current Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP), which was refurbished in 2017 and junior and adult match play on the extensive grass pitches. The site hosts 40 community teams listed below:
 - (a) Middleton Rangers Football Club who have 15 teams from junior, adult, girls and a disability section, Darlington Youth FC who have 18 teams from junior, adult and girls. Both clubs are FA Charter Standard accredited. Darlington 1883 who play in the National League North also train on site every Tuesday and Thursday.

- (b) Darlington College have four teams who play from Eastbourne Sports Complex every Wednesday during the school terms and Darlington Town FC who play in the Wearside League on site every Saturday.
 - (c) Mowden FC and Darlington RA Adults use the grass pitches every Sunday in the Darlington and District Invitational League.
 - (d) The site also hosts matches for St Aidan's Academy and the local primary schools who use pitches after school, for school festivals, community club tournaments, casual bookings, adult leagues and various FA development projects on site, encouraging more participants to play football. Eastbourne Sports Complex manages 9 grass pitches and is the central hub site for St Aidan's grass pitch usage and Hundens Park, facilitating the bookings, access and changing provision.
10. The AGP and the outer lying grass pitches had 98,000 visits throughout the year to Eastbourne Sports Complex in 2019/2020.

Athletics Track

- 11. Darlington Harriers Athletics Club use the site every day and have 450 members from juniors to adults. The Harriers also host Back to Track events and club development sessions.
- 12. Darlington Quakers Running Club use the site every first Monday of the month and have 250 adult members.
- 13. Darlington Triathlon Club use the site every Wednesday evening and have 150 members.
- 14. The site is also utilised by Northallerton Running Club, Hartlepool Running Club, Richmond Harriers, school festivals, casual users, Gateway Wheelers Disability Cycling group and various England Athletics development projects on site, encouraging development of athletics.
- 15. The Athletics Track had 30,000 visits throughout the year at Eastbourne Sports Complex.

Darlington School Sports Partnership

- 16. Eastbourne Sports Complex is the hub and home of the Darlington School Games and facilitates numerous events, festivals and activities throughout the year for the seven Secondary Schools and the 28 Primary Schools across Darlington. Events range from Cross Country, Athletics, Football, Darlington Community Games, Cricket and Quadkids Athletics. The School Games is a programme designed to keep competitive sport at the heart of schools and provide more young people with the opportunity to compete and achieve their personal best and provide opportunities for children to experience sporting competition at all levels.
- 17. Other regular users:
 - (a) Eastbourne Pre School

- (b) Inclusion Archery
 - (c) Holiday Activity Camps and Projects
 - (d) Darlington Borough Council Training Room
 - (e) Darlington Stop Smoking Service
 - (f) Cardiac Rehab, Exercise After Stroke, YMCA, Youth Offending Service and Alternative Provision
 - (g) St Aidan's Academy
 - (h) Darlington College BTEC Provision
18. This additional usage attracted a further 40,000 visits throughout the year at Eastbourne Sports Complex from 2019/2020.

Current Issues and Opportunities

19. The athletics track is now at the end of its life cycle and has had various repairs carried out over recent years but is becoming uneconomical to continue with temporary repairs and without refurbishment will have to close on safety grounds in the next few years which will result in the loss of athletics facilities in Darlington. The closest competition standard athletics facilities are in Middlesbrough and Shildon.
20. The current AGP was refurbished in 2017 with a grant from the Football Foundation of £412K and contribution of £100K from the Council. As part of officers ongoing engagement with the Football Foundation and success of the existing AGP, the Football Foundation have given an in principal offer of up to £700K towards the provision of an additional AGP at Eastbourne. The direction of travel for the Football Foundation is to encourage the development of hub sites with a number of AGPs at one location as the infrastructure is already in place. Officers will work with the Football Foundation to develop a full application to be submitted for final assessment next year with the outcome likely to be in Quarter 2 of 2022.
21. The Playing Pitch and Facilities Strategy has just been approved by Cabinet and within that strategy there is strong evidence of the demand for an additional AGP in Darlington. Therefore, when looking at the options for Eastbourne, the opportunity of an additional AGP has been factored into the options.
22. In addition to the facility challenges, access and egress from the site is via Bourne Avenue, which when the site is operating at capacity does cause spill over of traffic into the surrounding estate. With the addition of an additional AGP and refurbished athletics facilities will only compound traffic and parking issues, therefore before any changes to the site this issue will need resolving.

Traffic and Parking Study

23. In order to review the traffic and parking concerns mentioned above and present solutions, Systra were commissioned to undertake a traffic and parking study to assess the current issues and the impact of an additional AGP.
24. The existing baseline conditions have been reviewed against the context of the local highway network and sustainable transport accessibility, including public transport, walking and cycling and the local highway infrastructure. The site is well located to maximise opportunities for sustainable travel.
25. A review of the most recent 5-year collision data for the roads leading to the site has been undertaken and identified one collision of slight severity. Any intensification of the site activities is not envisaged to have a detrimental effect of road safety.
26. To understand the additional vehicle trip generation a qualitative assessment has been undertaken using a 'first principles' approach to trip forecasting. This concludes that 59 people per hour may attend the AGP, which would lead to an accumulation of 114 additional people on site at one time, at peak times. Using expected modal split for the area, this would equate to 68 cars.
27. The study recommended a range of options including physical works, travel planning and car parking management plan to both improve capacity at the Complex and manage use and access to the site more effectively. This could improve the existing issues as well as any additional traffic generated from a new AGP.
28. Discussions have also taken place with St Aiden's Academy with regard to gaining access to their car park on an evening and weekend, which are the peak times for Eastbourne Sports Complex. These discussions have been positive, and St Aiden's have confirmed that their car park can be used.
29. In addition, the informal parking on the hard standing area within the site will be properly marked out creating a formal car park with further increased capacity.
30. In summary, there would be three primary parking locations with clubs and users being managed and directed to specific areas to help manage, disperse, and mitigate the traffic in the area.

Parking Location	Access Point	Spaces	Distribution
Existing Parking at Complex	Bourne Avenue	88	70% of traffic via these access points. Majority of grass roots football at St Aiden's
St Aidens Academy 101 spaces	Hundens Lane	101 Spaces	
Overflow Parking Area	The Fairway/Lapwing Drive and Bourne Avenue	Improvements to increase capacity from 80 to 136 spaces	30% of traffic via this access point

31. Parking spaces increase from 168 to 325 spaces, an additional 155 spaces and the provision of additional cycle parking facilities will be developed as part of the scheme.
32. The study suggests the typical parking requirement for an AGP pitch is between 23 and 60 spaces per pitch per session. Forecasting suggests an additional 68 cars. This increased capacity, alongside an on-site parking management plan which directs customers to the most appropriate parking location, depending on which facilities they are using, will improve the current issues of customers parking in the surrounding housing estates.
33. It is considered that a proposed new AGP at the site can be introduced without compromising road safety or satisfactory operations, both internal and external, to the site. This would require a planning approval.

Options

34. Eastbourne Sports Complex has operated successfully for the past 22 years and continues to be the Council's key outdoor sports facility that contributes to the Council's vision and outcomes, as well as contributing to most of the Portfolio strategic priorities.
35. There are a number of options for Members to consider as follows:
 - (a) **Option 1 Do Nothing** - lose funding opportunity for the AGP, not improve traffic and parking situation and see a continued decline and financial pressure on the athletics track, with closure of this facility in the next few years with the loss of athletics clubs to the area.
 - (b) **Options 2 Progress AGP with Parking Improvements** - committing to develop the scheme to secure £700K grant, not refurbishing the athletics track with closure of this facility in the next few years with the loss of athletics clubs to the area.
 - (c) **Option 3 Refurbish athletics facilities only**- refurbish the athletics facility with or without parking improvements and don't accept the grant offer from Football Foundation therefore not providing an additional AGP.
 - (d) **Option 4 Progress the full scheme** – provide additional AGP, refurbish athletics facilities and improve car parking facilities on and off site.

Financial Implications

36. The capital costs for each of the options are as follows:
 - (a) **Option 1** – There will be costs associated with decommissioning the athletics facility of £100,000.
 - (b) **Option 2** - Progress the AGP with Parking Improvements. The total estimated cost at this stage of project development is £809k. (This figure is net of the grant from the Football Foundation).

- (c) **Option 3** - Refurbish athletics facilities only. The total estimated cost at this stage of project development is £857k. (Note: If parking improvements on site were also included there would be an addition cost of £300,000.)
- (d) **Option 4** - Progress the AGP, Parking and Traffic Improvements and the refurbishment of the athletics facility. The total estimated cost at this stage of project development is £1.61m (net of the football foundation grant).
37. The budget cost estimates include an element of risk and design contingency and are based on commencing on site second quarter 2022. These will be subject to revision as the project progresses.
38. The additional AGP will generate a revenue surplus of approximately £30,000 a year once the additional operating costs for staffing, maintenance and a £15,000 sinking fund for future replacement are deducted from the income generated.
39. It is recommended that the scheme be funded initially via prudential borrowing (£500K which will be repaid from the additional revenue of £30,000 per annum), and the balance of £1.110M will be repaid from future capital receipts.
40. It is anticipated the Council will receive in the region of £10m in capital receipts from land transactions over the life of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the usage of these receipts will be discussed fully in the forthcoming capital programme to be approved by Council in February 2022. However, due to the need to commit to the scheme or risk losing the £700,000 football foundation grant, it is recommended that the capital receipts be earmarked against this scheme now.
41. There is a very small risk that the Council do not receive the £700K from the Football Foundation. If this risk did materialise, which is highly unlikely, then work would only be carried out on refurbishing the athletics facility and the additional AGP would not be installed.

VAT Implications

42. Following completion of the additional works it is expected that income levels subject to exempt VAT would have a significant impact on the council's annual partial exemption calculation for the year the works were carried out. To mitigate the risk of a breach of the council's 5% de-minimis limit and the subsequent repayment of substantial amounts of VAT which would make the project unviable it is proposed the charging model for the AGP pitches and athletic track will be updated to withdraw the block booking option. Long term bookings would still be offered but they would no longer be exempt for VAT purposes and become standard rated. Casual bookings are already standard rated and this change would not have an impact on these users.
43. The impact of charging bookings as standard rated would increase the price for the clubs and organisations using long term books to hire the sports facilities. For any clubs or organisations that are VAT registered this should not have a negative impact as they should be able to recover the VAT. However, any club or organisation that is not VAT registered may need to absorb this additional cost. Officers will work closely with those clubs and organisations affected to mitigate the impact of this decision as much as

possible. We would expect this change to have minimal impact on the business plan.

Proposal

44. The recommendation is that Option 4 is progressed to:
- (a) Secure the opportunity of significant external funding for the AGP.
 - (b) Better manage parking and access to try to address ongoing issues for local residents.
 - (c) Refurbish the athletics track to secure excellent facilities for existing and new clubs to be based in Darlington and avoid having to close the facility in the near future.
 - (d) Demonstrate investment and a commitment to modernising and transforming services for residents of the Borough.

Procurement Advice

45. All procurement activity will be carried out in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
46. The Contract Procedure Rules require all tenders over £100,000 should be presented to Cabinet to determine if they are strategic or non-strategic, based on previously agreed criteria the procurement of the goods/services and works is deemed to be non-strategic, attached at **Appendix 1**.

Consultation

47. As part of the development of the proposed scheme, consultation has taken place with the Athletics Clubs on site and other users. Engagement and consultation has also taken place with the Football Foundation and St Aiden's Church of England Academy. Elements of the scheme will be subject to planning application processes and consultation will take place as part of that process.

Outcome of Consultation

48. The outcome of the consultation is the proposed scheme being presented in this report.