



## **CABINET – 2ND MARCH 2016**

**SUBJECT: OUTDOOR BOWLS CLUBS**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise members of the progress made in relation to the potential self-management of bowling greens across the county borough.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Authority currently operates twenty-one bowling greens, which is a discretionary service and costs circa £500K per annum. This equates to 27% of the Parks budget (excluding HQ and staffing).
- 2.2 Members will be aware in July 2014, a report was considered by the Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) proposals for Community & Leisure Services. One recommendation was the closure of six out of the twenty-one bowling greens managed by the Authority to achieve £100K financial savings (£50K in 2015/16 and £50K in 2016/17).
- 2.3 Members resolved that all clubs should be consulted and given the option to take up self-management. Officers and the Cabinet Member met with all clubs on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014 to set out the various proposals. It was resolved that officers would meet clubs on an individual basis, thereafter to discuss self-management.
- 2.4 On the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015 Cabinet considered and approved a range of MTFP budget proposals including the rationalisation of bowling greens.
- 2.5 This report outlines an option (after learning from other Local authorities) which will achieve more ownership of the facilities by bowls clubs and equal and fair treatment of all clubs within the county borough.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 Budget decisions impact on all council strategies. This report relates to the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the resultant efficiency and effective use of the council's revenue budget moving forward.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 During the Winter period relevant officers met with specialist colleagues (HR, Internal Audit, Insurance/Risk Management etc) to discuss points raised at the meeting with the clubs. In

addition, discussions were held with other local Authorities across South Wales to gauge how they have achieved financial savings within their Authorities, with particular reference to the provision of bowling greens.

- 4.2 An options paper was formulated, which set out four options. This was discussed with the Cabinet Member, Head of Community & Leisure Services and Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer. It was agreed that officers would meet individual clubs to discuss option four of the paper, which would achieve a contribution to the Authority savings over the next two financial years. This option was felt to be more equitable and acceptable and would allow clubs to continue using facilities whilst taking on an element of self-management.
- 4.3 Other options outlined within the paper were: -
- (i) The closure of all bowling greens across the county borough, which would achieve a financial saving of £521K.
  - (ii) Continue to operate all bowling greens but at a lower maintenance specification. This would generate financial savings of £43K.
  - (iii) The closure of three bowling greens with the lowest membership numbers. This proposal would generate financial savings of £112K.
- 4.4 Individual meetings commenced in June 2015 and were completed in August 2015. In total 35 clubs attended meetings and the discussions centred around the following:-
- (i) Clubs would be expected to undertake non-specialist operations outlined in the current maintenance schedule (a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1). These tasks vary from daily brushing of the bowling green, setting up the hose and sprinkler during the summer, setting out rink markers etc. The Authority will continue to undertake specialist tasks such as cutting, top dressing, maintenance of surrounding hedges etc.
  - (ii) The Authority would pay an annual grant to the club to assist with these tasks. In the first year £2,500 per bowling green would be paid, however this would decrease by £500 per annum to achieve further financial savings in future years and eventually result in the bowls clubs being more self-sufficient in terms of green maintenance.
  - (iii) Clubs will be expected to collect and retain income from season ticket sales, rink fees and any casual or ad-hoc use.
  - (iv) Clubs would be required to operate the facility in accordance with the prescribed opening hours [22 weeks 1 p.m. – 8 p.m. Monday to Friday, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday]. Previously, the Authority would have engaged a Park Ranger to undertake this role.

The discussions with the clubs were very productive and the clubs understood and accepted the “direction of travel” in relation to bowling green management.

- 4.5 Out of 35 clubs who attended the meetings, only two clubs (Abertridwr Ladies and Tridwr Ladies, who both use the Abertridwr bowling green), confirmed they were not in a position to accept the proposal and would look to merge with other clubs in the vicinity (Penyrheol and Senghenydd). This will allow the Authority to landscape the bowling green area and return it to the wider park environment. The existing pavilion would still be utilised for fixtures for the two sports fields within the park.
- 4.6 From discussions with our neighbouring Authorities, it was noted that the successful and sustainable clubs operating this type of management arrangement had a membership level of 40 and over.

## 5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for this proposal (a copy of which is attached as Appendix 2) and there is some impact on the public and service users. This is to ensure that decisions that affect different individuals and groups are assessed at an appropriate and relevant level and at a correct stage in the process.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 It is suggested that the new self-management system is phased over 2 financial years as follows:-

	<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>2016/17 COST SAVING</b>
1.	Closure of Abertridwr Bowling Green and subsequent release of one FTE.	£26K
2.	Partial removal of Park Ranger service.	£83K
3.	Loss of income (including tennis income of £2K) - income is retained by bowls clubs.	£ -39K
	<b>TOTAL SAVING</b>	<b>£70K</b>

It is proposed that two peripatetic Park Rangers would be retained for the 2016/17 season to monitor the success of the self-management proposal across the county borough.

The Authority would continue to undertake all maintenance operations however; the clubs would be expected to manage the site (i.e. sell season tickets, open/close pavilions etc) for which they would retain all the income. Where there are tennis courts, which are in use by the public and are in close proximity to the bowling green, it is proposed that the club(s) will manage these facilities for which all income can be retained by the respective club(s).

- 6.2 During 2017/18, the second phase of the proposals are as follows:-

	<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>2017/18 COST SAVING</b>
1.	The removal of the residual Park Ranger personnel.	£13K
2.	The operation of 20 bowling greens at a reduced maintenance specification (and subsequent release of three members of staff) – clubs would pick up certain green maintenance (non-specialist) tasks.	£80K
3.	Payment of grants to clubs at 20 locations.	£ -50K
	<b>TOTAL SAVING</b>	<b>£43K</b>

- 6.3 It is estimated to cost circa £1,200 to reinstate the bowling green area into the wider/safer park environment. There will be a small revenue implication to undertake routine maintenance however this will be funded from existing parks budgets. Members should note that this proposal does not include any associated personnel costs such as staff redeployment.

- 6.4 Currently self-management grants are paid to Gilfach, Bargoed, Gelligaer and Machen bowling greens in the sum of £2,464 per annum (£616 per location). It is proposed to retain these established grants during 2016/17 and if self-management across the county borough is approved, this payment will cease in 2017/18 to ensure that there is equal and fair treatment of all clubs.
- 6.5 It has to be accepted by the clubs that the elements within their responsibility such as daily brushing of the playing surface are key to the future operation of the bowling green. If the playing surface is not brushed, this can encourage fungal attack, which will affect the playing surface and/or the use of the green. The final decision for play will rest with the Head of Community & Leisure Services or his appointed Parks representative(s).
- 6.6 The condition of all bowling greens will be monitored as per the current inspection regime. Any failures on behalf of the clubs will be brought to their attention in the first instance; repeated failures may result in financial deductions in their respective grants. This aspect will be outlined in a self-management agreement between the authority and the club if members are minded to approve this proposal.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The relevant personnel implications have been identified in the main body of the report. The removal of the Park Ranger service in these areas will have an impact on a small number of staff.
- 7.2 Staff within this service area and Trade Unions have been consulted in relation to these proposals and their comments have been included in this report, Human Resources have also been present for the consultation process. Further consultation will take place should Cabinet agree the recommendations within this report.
- 7.3 The Council will use all usual means to avoid compulsory redundancies (including Redeployment and the Workforce Flexibility policies, in full consultation with the staff affected and the Trade Unions).
- 7.4 The Park Ranger service operates for twenty-two weeks during the summer period (from April – September) 7 days per week between the hours of 1 p.m. and 8 p.m. (Monday – Friday) and 1 p.m. – 7 p.m. (Saturday and Sunday).

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The report reflects the views of the listed consultees.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Cabinet approves the implementation of self-management across the remaining 20 bowling greens within the county borough. (Bowling Green rationalisation was recommended and approved by Cabinet on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015).
- 9.2 Cabinet agrees the proposals outlined in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5, which will allow the Authority to achieve financial savings phased over the next 2 financial years. As set out in paragraph 4.5 users of the facility at Abertridwr Park have already indicated that they do not wish to be considered for self-management.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To achieve a level of fair and equitable treatment of the clubs across the county borough. An additional benefit of longer-term financial savings will also be realised.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

### **11.1 Local Government Acts.**

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**Appendices:**  
Appendix 1 Maintenance Schedule  
Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment