



CABINET – 25TH JANUARY 2023

SUBJECT: THE FUTURE OF ISLWYN INDOOR BOWLS CLUB

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the latest position in relation to Islwyn Indoor Bowls Club (IIBC).
- 1.2 To outline the opportunities and constraints for the Council at present as there is not currently a lease in place with Islwyn Indoor Bowls Club.
- 1.3 To seek approval for progressing a procurement process to secure a commercial operator for the management of the facility and enter into an appropriate agreement .

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Since the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 Islwyn Indoor Bowls club (IIBC) has not been able to deliver full provision, i.e. Bowls and Hospitality. All activities were closed during periods of lockdown and the Club lost all of their paid staff. When Welsh Government Covid restrictions were lifted indoor activities were one of the last activities to start back and by this time the IIBC committee made up of club volunteers were running the operational duties of opening and closing the club and keeping the bowls section going.
- 2.2 This report seeks Cabinet approval for Officers to procure a commercial operator and implement an appropriate commercial agreement on behalf of the Council, so it can act as the catalyst for investment at IIBC to fulfil the potential of the facility within the community and reduce the risk to the Council.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet:
 - (i) Authorise Officers to progress a procurement process to secure a commercial offer for the management of the facility, with a new agreement to be entered into with the successful provider for a period of 10 years (with options to extend) commencing at the start of the 2023 indoor bowls season (September 2023).

- (ii) Approve that the commercial agreement ensures that the Bowls section is to remain as the primary focus of the facility and this element continues to be organised by the Islwyn Indoor Bowls Committee.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To support the continuation of the Islwyn Indoor Bowls Club and ensure a sustainable future for the facility going forward.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Officers from the Council's Sport and Leisure Service provided support and assistance to Islwyn Indoor Bowls Club after all paid staff left the organisation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Officers and the Sport's Governing Body, Bowls Wales, worked with the Club to advise on Welsh Government guidance and prepare them for the return to indoor sport.
- 5.2 Over the course of several meetings between officers and local ward members with the Club's committee it was clear that running the club was becoming more challenging for the volunteers due to the volume of work, small number of volunteers involved and lack of commercial funding (from the hospitality offer at the facility). Without support there was a risk that the Club would not be able to continue, the facility would be lost to the community, and the building for which there is no lease in place would be handed back to the Council.
- 5.3 Terms for a new 10 year Management Agreement were discussed and agreed with the Club in 2016, when the previous 21 year Management Agreement was due to expire. Unfortunately, the Club were not able to provide a new Club Constitution as they did not have the full complement of Trustees required. The Management Agreement could not therefore be completed. The Club has since continued to operate by holding over from the previous Agreement.
- 5.4 Under the terms of the newly drafted 2016 proposed management agreement, the Club would have been responsible for the full repair and maintenance of the indoor bowls centre as well as all costs associated with running the facility at a peppercorn rent. The income from a commercial operator managing the facility should allow obligations to be met in terms of repairs, maintenance and running costs of the facility.
- 5.5 Whilst the Council is not in a position to take on the direct responsibility for running the facility an interim measure has been put in place whereby the Council has recruited a member of staff to be a facility coordinator. The post is funded by the Club and employed by the Council for an initial period of 6 months commencing on Wednesday 4th January 2023. The aim is to allow the IIBC volunteers to focus on the bowls aspect of the club and to allow for other longer term options for the future of the Club to be explored.
- 5.6 Officers have held a number of meetings with the IIBC committee including a visit to the facility by the Leader, Corporate Director and Local Members. During these meetings the volunteers have stated that they are not able to run the facility on a commercial basis and have suggested a commercial operator option as long as the bowls activities are protected.
- 5.7 Following further discussions with the IIBC committee and local Members it is now

proposed that a procurement process is undertaken with a view to securing a commercial offer for the running of the Club. It is also proposed that a new agreement is entered into with the successful provider for a period of 10 years. It is also intended that the agreement is constructed in a way that will allow the successful provider to take advantage of the commercial offer represented by hospitality (bar, function suite and catering facilities) but that the IIBC Committee continue to organise the Bowls section / function of the Club.

- 5.8 There has been ongoing work to promote the Club in the community and on Sunday 11th December IIBC held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) with 19 attendees. This represents good progress for the Club and during the AGM a new bowls committee was established with a Chair and Vice Chair, Treasurer and an Assistant Secretary, the post of Secretary is yet to be filled.
- 5.9 The successful implementation of a commercial agreement will ensure continuation of the Islwyn Indoor Bowls Club and a sustainable future for the facility going forward.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Integrated Impact assessment (IIA) suggests that a commercial agreement for the operation of the commercial aspects of Islwyn Indoor Bowls Club (IIBC) for the current and potential users would have a positive impact.
- 7.2 By developing the option of an appropriate franchise partner, IIBC will not only be able to operate on a more robust and sustainable footing but will be able to provide an increased and improved offer to those that attend the facility, along with creating increased opportunities through programme developments to support community cohesion and prospects for future employment.
- 7.3 Ensuring that IIBC is operating in a sustainable manner also improves the opportunities for residents to engage in activity that support improvements to physical and mental health and wellbeing. The IIA can be accessed from the following link:

[Link To IIA Islwyn Bowls Club](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council is required to add VAT where another organisation is invoiced for a member of staff. The IIBC are VAT registered and therefore are able to recover the VAT.
- 8.2 It is proposed that once a commercial operator has been procured and an appropriate agreement is signed that the peppercorn rent paid by the IIBC is discontinued and the Authority will have a direct financial relationship with the new provider,
- 8.3 In the event that the commercial offer is unsuccessful then it is likely that the building would revert to the Council.

- 8.4 It is likely that the Authority will need to engage specific procurement/ marketing / legal advice to secure a franchisee and ensure that any agreement is clear, unambiguous and enforceable. These costs will be met from existing revenue budgets.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As outlined above, the Authority is currently supporting the IIBC with a temporary member of staff (to the end of the current indoor bowls season); It is not proposed that they would transfer employment to the new franchise arrangement.
- 9.2 Any new agreement will be between the Authority and successful commercial provider and it is expected that the Authority will monitor the success of the agreement and ensure that effective relationships are maintained between the operator and IIBC. This role will form part of the Sport and Leisure remit.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

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Consultees:

Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of Council
Cllr Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Councillor D.T Davies Chair Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
Councillor A Hussey Vice Chair Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Colin Gordon, Ward member, Pontllanfraith ward
Cllr Mike Adams, Ward member, Pontllanfraith ward
Cllr Patricia Cook, Ward member, Pontllanfraith ward
Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property
Ian Evans, Procurement and Information Manager
Liz Lucas, Head of Customer and Digital Services