

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Mark Robinson – Executive Member for Community, Leisure & Culture
Robert Walker – Shared Executive Director Place

To: Cabinet 14 October, 2019

Author: Ben Cooper-Welch – Contract Monitoring Officer

Subject: Norfolk FA Artificial Grass Pitch Project at Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld, Thetford.

Purpose: To present findings of the recent feasibility study to Cabinet for the consideration of making funds available to contribute towards the installation of a third-generation (3G) Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld, Thetford on the provision of a successful funding application through the Football Foundation.

Recommendation(s):

1. That Cabinet agree releasing funds of up to the amount of £96k from the community reserve for the redevelopment of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) site at Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld, Thetford with a third-generation (3G) Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) being installed as its replacement
2. That Cabinet recommend to full council to accept all grant funding including the contribution from Parkwood and set up necessary budgets to spend the grant.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 It was agreed at Cabinet on 4th September, 2018 that finances would be released to fund a feasibility study which would explore the replacement of the existing Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) with an all-weather 3G AGP.
- 1.2 Prior to this, the Norfolk County Football Association had approached Breckland Council regarding the feasibility of delivering this project in line with the Football Foundations (FF) Local Football Facilities Plan (LFFP).
- 1.3 It has been identified that geographically Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld is a key strategic site and the infrastructure and facilities to support this project already exist at the centre, which is managed well by Parkwood Leisure.
- 1.4 There are strong existing links with Thetford Town Football Club who are currently based at the centre, and there are a large number of clubs and community users in Thetford and the wider area that would benefit from the installation of a 3G AGP which can be used year round.
- 1.5 The FF gives priority to projects that are located within areas of high deprivation (as defined by the Governments Indices of Deprivation). The area surrounding Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld is amongst the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country (Index of Multiple Deprivation – Indices of Deprivation 2015 explorer).

1.6 Site meetings have taken place at Breckland Leisure Centre and Waterworld between the Football Foundation, Norfolk County FA, Breckland Council, and Parkwood Leisure. The FF has advised that based on the existing facilities, and taking into account all other project criteria, that this would be a credible project.

1.7 TRI-Sports were chosen via a tender process to undertake the non-technical feasibility study, and Robinson Low Francis (RLF) chosen to undertake the technical feasibility study with LaboSport used as a sub consultancy through RLF.

2.0 **OPTIONS**

2.1 Approve the release of funds to part contribute to the installation of a 3G AGP in replacement of the existing Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld, Thetford. (recommended)

2.2 Do Nothing

3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 The non-technical feasibility report delivered from TRI-Sports showed a potential significant increase in participation that could see an increase from 45% to 80% hire rate at the facility.

3.2 The FA training model estimates that there is need for four full sized 3G AGPs within the Breckland District area. Current supply shows there is only one full sized 3G FTP which is based at Dereham Neatherd High School (installed 2014), with a second which is a small sided pitch based at Dereham Northgate High School (installed 2016).

3.3 The existing MUGA was laid in 2006 with no evidence of ever being resurfaced. The Neil Allen Associates report from 2017 identified that the average age for a pitch carpet is 6 – 10 years dependent on the level of use. This means that the existing MUGA is at the end of its expected lifecycle.

3.4 The overall cost for this project would cost £440k without the LFFP initiative from FF. This initiative essentially allows this project to be completed and a high spec new facility to be built for £96k.

4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 As stated in paragraph 3.1 it is expected that there would be a significant increase in participation with the redevelopment of the site and a 3G AGP being installed.

4.2 The recent feasibility study showed that Breckland levels of activity are lower than regional averages (Breckland 60.4% compared with regionally 62%). Whilst levels of inactivity were found to be higher in Breckland than the regional average (Breckland 27.7% against 25.7% regionally). This project could see an increase in activity for Breckland residents.

4.3 It has been suggested by TRI-Sports that the new facility could generate circa 87k-98k per year in revenue with expenditure expected to be circa 64k-74k per year leaving a potential surplus of circa 23k-24k.

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

- 5.1.1 Should new lighting be fitted as a part of the project this would reduce light pollution for local residents from the facility as LED lighting can be installed at a lower height (12m instead of the existing 15m) and LED lighting will produce less light spillage.

5.2 **Corporate Priorities**

- 5.2.1 PLACE - Investment in a new 3G AGP could provide a new Football Hub and would see the delivery of an innovative project which would benefit the local community, including local clubs, and, through correct scheduled programming, would support local residents.
- 5.2.2 PLACE - Developing this project would ensure that the local residents have access to a high quality leisure offering. There are currently 184 affiliated teams in Breckland. Within the proximity of the site there are 11 affiliated clubs with a total of 68 teams that could potentially benefit the new facility.
- 5.2.3 HEALTH & WELLBEING – This project would enhance the provision for leisure and actively encourage our leisure provider to deliver a broad range of options targeted at increasing physical activity in the district.
- 5.2.4 HEALTH & WELLBEING – Once the project is completed, correct scheduled programming can be utilised to address social isolation creating a community hub for local residents with regular events such as walking football for older residents.

5.3 **Crime and Disorder**

- 5.3.1 Further scheduled programming can be introduced at the Football Hub which can be used to help reduce anti-social behavioural issues.
- 5.3.2 A 'Street League' project was initially introduced at Orford Jubilee in 2014. Following successful results in reduced anti-social behaviour the project was adopted by Birchwood in 2015 and Warrington in 2016. The Street Leagues are usually scheduled Fridays 19:00-21:00 which is traditionally peak time for ASB call outs.
<https://livewirewarrington.co.uk/news/969-friday-night-football-project>

5.4 **Equality and Diversity / Human Rights**

- 5.4.1 Correct programming for the facility could include such events as; Walking Football, Disability Football, and / or Girls and Women's Football to help to increase inclusivity for minority groups as well, as stated in paragraph 5.3.2 a 'Street League'.

5.5 Financial

- 5.5.1 The total project cost is estimated to be £440k. This would be to replace the current surface with a 102m x 64m (current footprint) 3G AGP. This is inclusive of; drainage works, perimeter fencing, maintenance equipment, and legal costs, as well as a 5% contingency budget.
- 5.5.2 As an extension of paragraph 1.6 the LLFP explains that areas which are identified as being within the country's top 10% of deprivation could be eligible for up to 80% of total project costs being funded. The exact percentage of funding would be confirmed at the funding application stage.
- 5.5.3 In principle, Parkwood Leisure has agreed to contribute £80k to the project on the condition that various aspects are covered in the project which would allow them to draw funds from lifecycle. ie. If the fence is completely replaced
- 5.5.4 This project will be undertaken in line with the football foundation framework and therefore usually requires a £25k / year sinking fund to ensure stability and longevity of the site. However, The FF would be comfortable with a letter from Breckland Council confirming this cannot be committed to.
- 5.5.5 The cost to resurface would be somewhere between £180,000 and £220,000 (ex Vat) depending on the quality of the existing base. (Current funded pitches are engineered to a point where minimal base work is typically required).
- 5.5.6 If a pitch is well maintained the life expectancy of the surface is between 10 and 12 years.
- 5.5.7 As per paragraph 4.3 TRI-Sports suggest that it is reasonable that this facility could generate between £87k-£98k per year when run with correct programming and events.
- 5.5.8 See Proforma B

5.6 Health & Wellbeing

- 5.6.1 The TRI-Sports report identified that it is reasonable to expect that this project would see a significant increase in participation improving Breckland districts activity levels which, as stated in paragraph 4.2, are currently below regional averages.
- 5.6.2 As well as improving activity levels within the district, new programming will be utilised to capture new participants such as walking football. This will not only improve physical fitness but also promote social inclusion and mental wellbeing for local residents.

5.7 Reputation

- 5.7.1 By choosing to invest in this project it is likely that the council, and Parkwood Leisure, will receive positive recognition throughout the football community, and local community in general, which will improve the reputation of the council.
- 5.7.2 The project would see the site be promoted as a 'Football Hub' in the community which would attract positive interest from the media largely from a social inclusion perspective and the potential for improved involvement in physical activities by minority groups.
- 5.7.3 It is reasonable to suggest that the development of this project would see the potential interest from Norwich City Football Club and Cambridge Football Club, who may choose to book the facility, as they have done previously.

5.7.4 There may be some comments made by the hockey team as they would like to resurface the current MUGA. The current initiative requires the 3G AGP to be laid with a 60mm pile carpet which is not suitable for hockey to be played on. It has been noted that a 40mm pile carpet is available and which can accommodate hockey, albeit only at a low level but this is not deliverable via the current FF grant funding initiative. It has been confirmed by the Norfolk FA that there is no 3G dual football / hockey option via the FFs Artificial Pitch Framework.

5.8 Risk Management

5.8.1 As per paragraph 1.3 Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld has been identified as a key strategic area for a 3G AGP. It should be considered that if the project did not go ahead the FA & FF may look to install a 3G AGP elsewhere in, or around the Thetford area because of its geographical location.

5.8.2 Should the above paragraph 5.8.1 happen it could significantly impact on the footfall for Breckland Leisure Centre & Waterworld as well as being considered a missed opportunity for Breckland District Council on a potentially high profile project.

5.9 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.9.1 Stakeholders would include local football clubs and the Thetford Hockey Club

5.9.2 Consultation would take place with key stakeholders

5.9.3 The Norfolk FA has advised the application for funding would need to be submitted for October 2019. Assuming there are no conditions to consider the decision would be made between 10 – 15 weeks after this date (likely to be January) with earliest build start date to be sometime in May 2020.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 Thetford Boudica
Thetford Burrell
Thetford Castle
Thetford Priory

7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 3G – Third-Generation
AGP – Artificial Grass Pitch
ASB – Anti-Social Behaviour
FA – Football Association
FF – Football Foundation
FTP – Football Turf Pitch
LFFP – Local Football Facilities Plan
MUGA – Multi Use Games Area
RLF – Robinson Low Francis

Background papers:- None

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Key Decision: Yes

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Pro Forma B