

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

15

Report of Corporate Director of
Department for Place

to
Cabinet

on

11th November 2014

Report prepared by: Kate Trueman, Leisure and Sports
Manager

Chalkwell Park and Priory Park Tennis Courts

Place Scrutiny Committee

Executive Councillor: Councillor: Councillor Graham Longley

A Part 1 / Part 2 Report

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of proposals to upgrade tennis courts in Chalkwell Park and Priory Park, following a £350,000 grant award from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), together with a proposition to seek additional external funding for tennis courts in parks across the borough.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **Members approve the tennis court improvement scheme at Chalkwell & Priory Parks funded by the Lawn Tennis Association.**
- 2.2 **Members agree that a funding application, through the Priory Park Trust is made to contribute towards the cost of tennis courts in Priory Park; if successful this will offset the funding received from the LTA for Priory Park and enable some of the LTA funding to be reallocated.**
- 2.3 **Members approve the Management arrangements and the reintroduction of tennis charges as set out in paragraph 3.8.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has a long term relationship with the LTA which began when the Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre was built in 1996. Since then financial support has been provided for both tennis development and capital investment. The most recent was a LTA contribution of £105,000 in 2012 to upgrade lighting and resurfacing of the indoor tennis courts at Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre. Recent research from Sport England has indicated that there is a significant latent demand for tennis in England with over one million people suggesting that they wished to get involved in tennis.

- 3.2 The LTA have identified Southend as a priority area for tennis and have been working with Officers to identify Parks that will deliver an increase in participation. The use of outdoor facilities and tennis clubs are important to grass root development of the sport. Southend has a number of established tennis clubs, but recreational opportunities to play tennis have decreased over a number of years due to the low quality courts within the Authorities' ownership.
- 3.3 The provision of outdoor tennis facilities in Parks is set out in Appendix A, with a number of facilities requiring investment.
- 3.4 Subsequently a review of Parks Tennis Courts was undertaken following which the LTA prioritised the upgrading of tennis courts in Chalkwell Park and Priory Park and they will provide the best opportunity to increase participation. The schemes for both Chalkwell Park and Priory Park were agreed to be developed by the Portfolio Holder under Standing Order 46 to enable the Project work to be progressed, funding bids made and planning applications to be submitted.
- 3.5 **Scheme Proposal**
The LTA have provided grant funding to enable the hard courts (location plan Appendix B) to be refurbished, flood lit and managed via fob system (like the Civic Centre access card) that will provide access to the courts.
- 3.6 The LTA have piloted the key fob schemes in Eaton Park in Norwich and Poole, working on the principle that the fob system provides people in the local community a quality recreational offer.
- 3.7 This scheme significantly enhances provision for tennis across the town and will improve community access and provide opportunities to take part in organised outreach activities and time for free community use.
- 3.8 The tennis courts in Parks have in the past been subject to pay and play charges, the Council in recent years withdrew these fees and currently provide these facilities for free in recognition of their general poor condition and the cost of collection. The suggestion is to introduce a charge for an access fob per house hold: £27.50 full price and £25.00 with an Advantage Card discount. In addition there will be a number of holiday activity session that will be available at Advantage Card rate; and limited periods when the courts can be open and free to use.
- 3.9 The grant condition from the LTA will require the Council to provide the ring fencing of income from the hire of the facility to enable the future resurfacing and maintenance of courts at the end of their lifespan.
- 3.10 It is proposed that the operational management of the tennis courts at Chalkwell Park and Priory Park is undertaken by the Leisure Centre Operator as they currently run the indoors facility and operate an extensive outreach programme in Schools and Parks in partnership with the LTA. The Leisure operator will be responsible for marketing courses, taking bookings by phone and on-line, supply the access fobs to the courts. In addition they will provide qualified DBS checked coaches for any public sessions, summer

holiday activities that will be scheduled onto the courts as part of the tennis development plan (Aims and Objectives and outcomes Appendix C). The Council will support the marketing of courts including the use of social media, Active Southend web page and the Community Sport Network for Southend. Southend has a number of established tennis clubs and the LTA have liaised with them in regards to the refurbishment of the tennis courts in the Parks; and the Clubs see this as an opportunity to enable more people to play tennis more regularly and provide the potential to increase club membership.

- 3.11 The improvement of Parks' Tennis Courts across Southend is a continuing objective and Officers will continue to work with the LTA and external funders to introduce similar court improvement schemes across the Town.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 The current provision will remain and continue to decline and it is unlikely that there will be any increase in tennis participation.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The grant of £350,000 from the LTA provides the opportunity to increase participation without incurring any direct cost to the Council.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

The capital work identified support the following Council Priorities and Cross Cutting Themes:

- Healthy – Support Southend to be active and alive with sport and culture.
- Excellent – deliver strong, relevant and targeted services that meet the needs of our community.

6.2 Financial Implications

The LTA funding of £350,000 will cover the full cost of refurbishing the tennis courts at Chalkwell Park & Priory Park- fencing; flood lighting and professional costs including project management by Property services.

A variation to the Leisure Management Contract will be made and the leisure operator will deliver the operational management and booking service at no additional cost to the council and will be required to pay the council the following maintenance fund allocation: £10,100 in the first year; and £17,400 every year thereafter for on-going repairs & maintenance of the tennis courts.

6.3 Legal Implications

There would be a legal agreement in place between the authority and the LTA; and a variation under the terms of the existing Leisure Management Contract between the leisure operator and the council.

6.4 People Implications

Service users would appreciate the opportunity to play on well-maintained tennis courts.

6.5 Property Implications

Parks are part of the overall Council Portfolio, any improvements in the parks result in improved property assets for Southend on Sea Borough Council.

6.6 Consultation

Park users do, and have commented on the poor quality of the tennis courts at all parks.

The LTA do not think the courts are maintained to a standard that will encourage participation.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

There is an Equalities Impact Assessment for the overall operation of the parks but not specifically for this project.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The following risks have been identified:

Park Users Complaints that they now have to pay to play tennis in parks	Whilst the refurbished courts will require a payment to enable play; the courts will be free to access for certain sessions – details TBC.
LTA require the funding to be spent by the end of the 2014/2015 financial year.	All parties work together to ensure that the project is delivered in by the end of 2014/2015.

6.9 Value for Money

All works will be let in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders

The scheme will generate sufficient income to maintain the tennis courts without any capital investment from the council.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

The courts will be secure and locked for most of the time thereby reducing vandalism to the tennis nets etc.

6.11 Environmental Impact

None.

7. Background Papers

None.

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Table of tennis courts in Parks, past and present

Appendix B – Chalkwell Park Tennis Court Location

Appendix C – Tennis Development Plan – aims, objectives and outcomes.