

Area North Committee – 27 February 2013

9. **Huish Episcopi Leisure Centre – Revision of Shared Use Agreement and Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Feasibility Study (Executive Decision)**

Strategic Director: Vega Sturgess, Operations and Customer Focus
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Purpose of the Report

This report seeks approval for the revised Shared Use Agreement (SUA) relating to the management and development of sport and leisure facilities at the Huish Episcopi Academy. The report also notes the main conclusion of the recently completed feasibility study for the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) proposed to be located at the Academy site.

Public Interest

This report sets out a revised Shared Use Agreement in order to protect and improve community use of the sport and leisure facilities at Huish Episcopi Academy, following the contribution of £250,000 of District Council funding in 1991. A revised agreement was necessary due to the school's change to Academy status, and changes to the role of Somerset County Council at the site.

The report also refers to a recent feasibility study for the installation and management of an Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) proposed to be located at the Academy site.

Recommendations

That the Area North Committee:

- 1) Approves the revised Shared Use Agreement as attached in Appendix 1 and authorises the Council's Solicitor to sign and issue the final agreement on behalf of SSDC.
- 2) Notes the main findings of the feasibility study for the proposed AGP and endorses the proposal of the Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) to assist Huish Episcopi Academy to proceed to outline design, public consultation and submission of a planning application using part of the s106 contributions held for this strategic facility.
- 3) Requests a further report setting out timescales, costs and funding (including any request for allocation from the Area North capital programme).

Background

In 1991 the County Council, District Council and Huish Episcopi Association became parties to a 30 year agreement to make existing school facilities (outdoor pool, gym,

sports hall, and 5 tennis courts) available for community use, together with a range of new facilities (fitness room, exercise room, squash courts). The new facilities were developed by £250,000 of District Council funding and £30,000 from the South West Council for Sport and Recreation, and the facilities were managed by a Management Committee.

Subsequent to the agreement the County Council's responsibilities for the facilities were delegated to the governing body under the Local Management of Schools, however, the County Council retained responsibility for the non-education areas. The Huish Episcopi Association ceased to exist and the responsibilities for running the centre transferred to the County Council's in-house leisure service.

In response to the County Council's decision to transfer the in-house leisure service into a Trust, the school Governing Body decided to take up the management of the centre. This commenced on the 1st April 2010 and the school subsequently became an Academy on the 1st September 2010. Through this process the school assets have transferred to the Academy by a 125-year lease. The County Council no longer retains any control or involvement in the site. In respect to the agreement, the obligations and responsibilities of the County Council have now transferred to the Academy.

As a consequence of these changes the Area North Committee recognised the need for SSDC and the Academy to amend the 1991 agreement to reflect the new role of the Academy, and most importantly, the way in which community use will be managed and controlled in the future. It appointed Cllrs Derek Yeoman and Shane Pledger to a working group to oversee the update of the Agreement.

Cllrs Terry Mounter and Shane Pledger have been elected by the Area North Committee as directors to the Huish Leisure Board established in 2012.

Revised Shared Use Agreement (SUA)

Negotiations between SSDC and the Academy have now been completed and the proposed SUA is attached in Appendix 1 for endorsement and formal approval. Detailed aims and objectives for the agreement are set out on page 7 of the agreement (page 12 of this agenda).

The aims of the SUA – shown below – will act as the guiding principles for the future operation and management of the facility.

- To increase and improve the quality of sporting and physical activity opportunities for Students and other children and young people in curricular and extra-curricular sports activities;
- To provide opportunities for members of the community and sports organisations to participate in sport and physical activity and to develop their skills;
- To recognise the Academy's role as strategic partner of the District Council and the Facility as the focus for future development of leisure provision in the South Somerset area.

In reaching this point the SUA has been negotiated by the working group utilising the comments previously provided by members and has been considered and refined by each organisation's legal representatives.

The document retains all the key obligations relating to areas such as the range of facilities, hours of facility use by the community, duration of the agreement, and early

termination grant repayment. It also sets out clear governance arrangements and much improved arrangements for the future maintenance of the existing facilities.

Members should also note that the revised SUA brought back to Area North Committee for final consideration and approval has been approved by the Academy, subject to approval by SSDC.

It is recommended that Members approve the revised SUA.

Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Feasibility Study (Stage 1)

For schools and community use sports pitches, the benefits of synthetic grass surfaces are very clear. An AGP can be intensively used, even for a number of matches on the same day, without becoming waterlogged or unplayable. They remain in use in all but the most severe winter weather and require minimum routine maintenance.

Following the identification of the strategic gap in Artificial Grass Pitch provision to Area North residents, officers from SSDC and the Academy have completed their analysis into the proposed capital and revenue costs for the proposed AGP to be sited at the Huish Academy.

The key headline conclusions emerging from the study are:

- The business plan illustrates that the proposed AGP can operate without a revenue subsidy whilst meeting all planned preventative maintenance costs, and will generate sufficient surplus to finance future lifecycle costs (based on a detailed set of assumptions).
- The estimated capital cost for this project is £635,859. This estimate excludes additional project specific details, VAT, inflation beyond 3Q 2013 prices.
- The capital funding package for the AGP (less any Huish Academy contribution from its own resources or through borrowing) could include existing s106 contributions from development, specifically allocated to support the provision of AGP; a grant from the Football Foundation; SSDC capital programme; other grants and fundraising.
- Based on current estimates the funding gap for the AGP that would need to be addressed by the Huish Episcopi Academy (AGP project board) in delivering the AGP may in the best case require no capital financial contribution or in the worst case require in the order of £223,441. The difference is due to the level of contributions from existing s106 agreements, where the development has not yet taken place – and may not in the future.

As such, based on this analysis, the project to deliver a 3rd Generation AGP at the Huish Academy to address the strategic gap in provision to Area North residents is financially viable.

Artificial Grass Pitch – Project Development (Stage 2)

Having established the financial viability of the project, the next stage (Stage 2) for the project, assuming the Academy decides it wishes to proceed, is to develop design proposals and proceed with a planning application and public consultation.

The anticipated cost for Stage 2 of the project is estimated to be in the order of £25,635 , with costs split between SSDC and the Academy on an 80% (£20,508) / 20% (£5,127) basis. In order to minimise costs to both parties the SSDC Property Team will undertake the detailed design work in-house as an in kind contribution from SSDC.

The SSDC contribution amounting to £20,508 is proposed to be financed from the £133,074 of s106 receipts already received for this strategic facility.

Should planning consent be achieved, it will enable the Academy to submit a grant funding application to the Football Foundation. Applications from this type of project from this major grant funder are not considered without planning consent.

It is recommended that Members endorse the proposal to proceed to Stage 2 of the project to assist the Academy to proceed with the necessary design, public consultation and planning application for the AGP.

Financial Implications

No new implications. The project will be funded from the £133,074 of s106 receipts which have been accumulated for this strategic project. An allocation from the Area North Capital programme will need to be made separately.

Council Plan Implications

The continuation of the Shared use Agreement and the delivery of the proposed AGP will contribute to the well-being vision of the Council and specifically its focus Four 'Health and Communities', given its strategic nature and the Council's commitment to 'maintaining and improving the network of leisure and cultural facilities available in South Somerset'.

Equality and Diversity Implications

If approved, the detailed design process will comply with all equality design requirements. The project will address current access inequalities for Area North residents.

Background Papers: *Area North Committee report - Huish Episcopi Shared Use Agreement and AGP Feasibility – December 2011*