

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**18 May 2010**

**Report of the Chief Leisure Officer and the  
Cabinet Members for Leisure, Youth and Arts and Finance**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Council Decision**

**1 TONBRIDGE RACECOURSE SPORTSGROUND – IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**Summary**

**This report brings forward planned improvements for Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground for Member consideration and approval. It is proposed that the improvements be progressed on a phased basis, subject to available funding.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground provides a wide range of outdoor facilities including formal sports pitches, tennis courts, a public bowls green and an extensive children's play area. The Sportsground has also recently benefited from the installation of a new ball court.

**1.2 Identification of Need**

1.2.1 The planned improvements have been identified based on needs expressed by users of the facility. The results of the Tonbridge Racecourse User Survey were reported to the last meeting of the Board. The report included the identification of potential site improvements including the enhancement of refreshment provision and updating/improving the play area. With regard to the play area specific areas for improvement were identified as follows: updating the play area; provision of play equipment in the sandpit; improvements to the quality and range of the equipment; provision of more shade in the play area; more provision for older children; and an update of the crazy golf course. In addition, improvements to the paths and play facilities have also been noted within the adopted Management Plan and through the on site Disability Discrimination Audit.

1.2.2 A meeting has also taken place with local Members and the Chairman of this Board to consider potential improvements to the Sportsground.

### 1.3 Proposed Improvements

1.3.1 Proposed improvements are detailed below and are presented on a priority basis (1 - High/9 - Low). The location of each proposal is shown on the Plan **[Annex 1]**. Priority has been afforded based on costs, feasibility and identified need.

- 1) Play Area – Approximately 50% of the existing play area is due for renewal under the Council's Capital Renewals programme for 2010/11. It is proposed that the replacement equipment is similar to that existing, in terms of scale, age range and play experience, although the equipment will be updated to reflect recent advancements in design and construction. The opportunity will also be taken to maintain and, where possible, enhance the zoning areas for toddler, junior and teenager equipment. In addition, it is also proposed that new equipment is provided in the sandpit and additional shaded areas in the play area are considered. £27,000 is currently allocated for replacement play equipment in the Capital Renewals programme for 2011/12, and following liaison with the Director of Finance, and taking into account the poor condition of the specified equipment, it is proposed that this funding be brought forward into the current financial year.
- 2) Crazy Golf Course – The facility is due for renewal within the Council's Capital Renewals programme for 2010/11. Currently this facility is subdivided by the main play area path and it is proposed that the opportunity is now taken to relocate the new facility to one side of the path only. This will allow the creation of a picnic area as detailed at 5) below.
- 3) Teenage Facilities – There has been a growing demand for additional facilities for older teenagers and it is, therefore, proposed that a zoned area be developed in the sportsground with equipment aimed at this age group. The area would be located adjacent to the new ball court and would include the installation of a shelter, a set of swings, skate facility and associated seating, paths and litter bins. In regard to the skate facility, this would be smaller in scale to that provided at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground, and there would be a focus on the provision of 'street' equipment such as steps, rails and boxes. It is hoped that a skate facility in the Sportsground would draw skaters from other areas in the town, including the Memorial Garden and Sainsbury's car park.
- 4) Centre Path – Many of the paths within the sportsground have been identified for improvement with the main path being renewed in 2009. Based on the degree of feedback from users, priority is now being given to resurfacing the "Centre Path" that dissects the site and leads to the central pavilion.
- 5) Picnic Area – Following the relocation of the crazy golf course it is proposed that a new picnic area is created adjacent to the games kiosk.

- 6) Play Area Paths – Following the upgrading of the Centre Path it is proposed to replace the paths within the play area.
- 7) Outdoor Gym – The growing trend for the installation of outdoor gym equipment has recently been noted and the opportunity to provide such facilities at the Racecourse has been recognised. It is proposed that initially a small scale facility is provided, located in an area that will allow the opportunity for extension should demand dictate.
- 8) Refreshments – The extension of the existing games kiosk to provide additional room for the sale of a broader range of refreshments and a storage room for the Tonbridge ranger.
- 9) Lighting – There is an opportunity to provide lighting to cover the existing tennis courts, ball court and skate facility. Such lighting would extend the hours of availability for these facilities during the winter months. This approach has already been adopted at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground with the lighting timed to turn off at 10:00 pm.

## **1.4 Implementation**

- 1.4.1 The implementation of the proposed improvements is dependent on funding and can be programmed into two phases to reflect the likely stream of available funding. Phase 1, which can be progressed in the current financial year, would include items 1-5 detailed in sub-section 1.3.1. Items 1 and 2 (play area and crazy golf) estimated to cost £137,000 are fully funded from provision within the Capital Renewals Fund. Items 3, 4 and 5 (teenager facilities, centre path and picnic area) estimated to cost £81,500, can be met in full from a financial contribution held by the Council for this purpose from the Cattle Market housing development. This element of the project will require the creation of a new capital scheme, and in liaison with the Director of Finance an evaluation matrix has been prepared and is attached at **[Annex 2]**.
- 1.4.2 Phase 2 would include items 6-9 (play area paths, outdoor gym, improved refreshments and lighting), and would be progressed when funding has been secured. A number of potential sources of funding from development schemes have been identified subject, of course, to planning permission being granted and appropriate agreements secured. The scheme is currently identified as a List C scheme for evaluation in the Council's Capital Plan.

## **1.5 Consultation**

- 1.5.1 Consultation on the proposed improvements has already been undertaken with Local Members who are in support of the proposals. It is, however, recognised that further consultation may be required on the detail of specific elements of the project, including the new skate facility. This consultation will be undertaken in liaison with relevant parties including young people and the local police.

1.5.2 It has been confirmed that planning permission will not be required to progress any of the Phase 1 works, although liaison will need to be undertaken with the Environment Agency due to the sites designation as a Flood Plain.

## **1.6 Legal Implications**

1.6.1 All works will be progressed in accordance with the Council's approved Contract Procedure Rules.

## **1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.7.1 As detailed in the report the cost of the works will be met from Capital Renewals provision and developer contributions. The latter represents the importance of clear joined up and partnership working and an efficient and targeted use of available resources.

## **1.8 Risk Assessment**

1.8.1 The supply and installation of play equipment will be in accordance with relevant British and European standards. The works to the path are required on health and safety grounds to protect the public from trips and falls and to meet the Council's legal requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act.

## **1.9 Policy Considerations**

1.9.1 Asset Management, Community, Equalities/Diversity, Healthy Lifestyles and Young People

## **1.10 Recommendations**

1.10.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

- 1) The proposed phased improvements at Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground, as detailed within the report, be approved.
- 2) Phase 1 of the improvements be progressed in the current financial year subject to further consultation with key stakeholders.
- 3) The Capital Plan Renewals programme be reprofiled as detailed at 1.3.1 of the report.
- 4) Cabinet confirms the action taken to bring forward a new Capital Plan scheme for the teen facilities, centre path and picnic area, and **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL** approval of a supplementary estimate for the reasons outlined in the report.
- 5) Phase 2 of the improvements be progressed when funding is secured.

Background papers:

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Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Market Survey  
2009

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management  
Plan 2009-2013

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