

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

17 March 2008

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

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 TONBRIDGE RACECOURSE SPORTSGROUND – DRAFT MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

Summary

**This report updates Members on the development of a Management Plan for
Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground (TRS) and brings forward a
consultation draft for consideration and approval.**

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Outdoor Leisure Performance Plan identified the need to bring all of the Council's principal public open spaces in line with the criteria of the Green Flag Award (GFA) - a national standard for parks and open spaces. Key elements of the GFA criteria include cleanliness, community involvement, health and safety, a welcoming park, marketing, and sustainability, all of which need to be incorporated into a site management plan, an essential requirement for all GFA applications.

1.1.2 Management Plans for Haysden Country Park (HCP) and Leybourne Lakes Country Park (LLCP) have already been prepared and approved by this Board and the need to develop a plan for TRS is identified in the Outdoor Leisure Performance Plan for 2008/09.

1.2 Introduction

1.2.1 TRS covers an area of approximately 28 hectares (52 acres) in the Medway Valley, to the west of Tonbridge town centre, and encompasses a range of outdoor sports pitches/ facilities and habitats including: rivers, grassland, hedgerows and woodland.

1.2.2 TRS, which opened formally to the public in 1923, is well used by the local community for formal sports such as football, rugby, cricket, baseball, bowls, and for informal/casual uses including: children's play; tennis; crazy golf; dog walking,

picnics, and family days out. The Tonbridge to Penshurst Cycle Route also runs along the back of the Sportsground.

1.3 Policy Context

1.3.1 The Management Plan has been developed to conform to policy guidance contained within the Local Plan, addresses themes and actions highlighted within the Borough Leisure & Arts Strategy and follows up on issues raised in the previous TRS User Survey.

1.3.2 The Plan assists in the achievement of five of the Council's eight Key Corporate Priorities:

- Give priority to involving and meeting the needs of young people;
- Enhance the vitality of Tonbridge Town Centre;
- Promote, encourage and provide opportunities for healthy living;
- Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better maintained street scene and open space environment and;
- Reduce: anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, offences against the person, substance misuse, environmental crime.

1.3.3 In addition, a Local Performance Indicator has been adopted by the Council – the number of our principal public open spaces that have a GFA, with a target of one each year. The development of a Management Plan is the first step to achieving the award.

1.4 Draft Management Plan

1.4.1 The draft Plan is intended to provide guidance and direction for the management of the Park and be used as a management tool to inform future maintenance and development of the site. The document may also assist in leveraging in external funding.

1.4.2 The draft Plan has been developed in accordance with guidance from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Space and draws on experience gained from the successful GFA applications at HCP and LLCP. **A copy of the draft Management Plan has been circulated with these papers for Members' consideration** (please note the exclusion of the appendices which will be prepared prior to the public consultation period) and a brief summary of the sections is provided below:

- **Where are we are now?** The first section of the Plan describes the current situation, at the time the Plan was written. It introduces the site and provides a base desk assessment.

- **Vision – where do we want to get to?** This section of the Plan describes our vision for the TRS and sets out our aims and objectives which are based on the GFA criteria.
- **How will we get there?** This section sets out how we are going to achieve our aims. The 5 Year Action Plan offers an overview of long-term objectives and Annual Action Plans will be drawn up throughout its duration.
- **Monitoring and review – how will we know when we have arrived?** The final section of the Plan looks at how we will track progress and how the plan might be updated.

1.4.3 The overriding aims for TRS which are linked the GFA are:

- A well managed sportsground
- A welcoming sportsground
- A healthy, safe and secure sportsground
- A clean and well maintained sportsground
- A sustainable sportsground
- A sportsground that addresses conservation and heritage
- A sportsground that encourages community involvement
- A well marketed and promoted sportsground

1.5 Consultation

1.5.1 Due to the significant involvement of Tonbridge Sports Association (TSA) in the management and development of the site, early consultation has been carried out with the TSA on the development of the draft Plan.

1.5.2 Subject to Member comment at the meeting, it is proposed that public consultation takes place in spring/summer 2008, on the following basis:

- The draft Plan is to be circulated directly to all key stakeholders, identified in the Plan.
- Copies of the Plan are to be deposited at the Council Offices at Kings Hill and Tonbridge for public viewing.
- A copy will be available to view on the Council's web site.
- Posters will be displayed at the Sportsground advising visitors on the consultation process.

- The draft Plan will also be sent to the members of the public that have already expressed an interest.

1.5.3 A list of comments received along with any recommended alterations to the Plan will be reported to the October 2008 meeting of this Board for final approval.

1.6 Legal Implications

1.6.1 A copy of the draft Plan will be circulated to the Chief Solicitor, to ensure that all legal requirements have been taken into consideration.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 It has been highlighted in the Management Plan that there is a need to retain at least the existing budget levels associated with the site.

1.8 Risk Assessment

1.8.1 The Council's Health and Safety Officer (HSO) will be consulted on the draft Plan and a number of site specific risk assessments will be developed for the Sportsground.

1.9 Policy Considerations

1.9.1 Biodiversity & Sustainability, Community, Healthy Lifestyles, Young People.

1.10 Recommendations

1.10.1 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that:

- 1) subject to Member comment at the meeting, the draft TRS Management Plan be circulated for public consultation as outlined in the report; and
- 2) the final Plan be brought forward to the October 2008 meeting of this Board for Member approval.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Chris Fox

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management

Plan 2008-2013

Market Survey Racecourse Sportsground 2003

CABE Space - A guide to producing park and greenspace management plans

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