

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE**

**07 February 2024**

**Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services**

**Part 1- Public**

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

**1 CONSULTATION DRAFT- TONBRIDGE RACECOURSE SPORTSGROUND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**SUMMARY**

**This report presents a draft Management Plan for Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground and seeks Member comment prior to formal public consultation.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 The Council has an agreed approach to develop site specific Management Plans for its principal public open spaces. Five-year Management Plans have previously been developed for Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground, Leybourne Lakes Country Park (now managed by the Leisure Trust), and Haysden Country Park. The existing Management Plan for Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground expired in December 2023, and therefore needs to be reviewed and updated for the next five years.

**1.2 Introduction**

1.2.1 Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground 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 It opened formally to the public in 1923 and is well used by the local community for formal sports such as football, rugby, baseball, bowls, and for informal/casual uses including: children's play, tennis, mini 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 Development Framework and follows up on issues raised in the most recent onsite market survey.

1.3.2 The Plan has also been developed to take into account local policy/guidance, (listed in Table 1 of the draft Plan), and incorporates a number of the Borough Council's Priorities including:

- Reducing anti-social behaviour, and fear of crime;
- Climate change;
- Achieving a clean, smart, well maintained and sustainable borough; and
- Healthy Living opportunities and community wellbeing.

1.3.3 The Plan has also been developed in line with the criteria of the Green Flag Award - a national standard for parks and open spaces. Key elements of the Green Flag Award criteria include a well-maintained site, cleanliness, community involvement, health and safety, a welcoming site, marketing and climate change.

1.3.4 A section of the plan deals specifically with environmental management of the site as this is a key criterion for the Green Flag Award. The Plan considers aspects like waste minimisation, chemical use, native and invasive habitats and species present on the site, raising awareness via events and protecting nature and biodiversity.

### 1.4 Draft Management Plan

1.4.1 The draft Plan is intended to provide guidance and direction for the management of the Sportsground and be used 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 follows the format of the Council's previously adopted Management Plans. A copy of the draft Management Plan has been circulated with these papers for Members' consideration and a brief summary of the sections is provided below.

- **Where are we now?** The first section of the Plan describes the current situation, at the time the Plan was written. It is an introduction and tells us what we have at present and what we are trying to achieve.
- **Vision – where do we want to get to?** This section of the Plan describes our vision for the site and sets out our management aims and objectives.

- **How will we get there?** This section sets out how we are going to achieve our aims. A Five-Year Work Programme sets out long-term targets and annual Action Plans focusing on each year will flow from this.
- **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.

## 1.5 Consultation

1.5.1 Subject to Member comment at the meeting, it is proposed that formal public consultation takes place in the Spring of 2024, on the following basis:

- All key stakeholders will be directly notified when the draft Plan is available for comment;
- Copies of the draft Plan will be deposited at the Council Offices at Kings Hill and Tonbridge Gateway;
- A copy will be available to view on the Council's website;
- Posters will be displayed at the Sportsground advising visitors on the consultation process; and
- The Council's Media Communications team will publicise the Plan on Social media.

1.5.2 A list of comments received along with any recommended alterations to the Plan will be reported to a future meeting of this committee.

## 1.6 Legal Implications

1.6.1 Legal responsibilities and issues will need to be considered within the draft plan. As such Legal Services will also be a key consultee on the draft plan.

## 1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 The draft Management Plan reflects existing capital and revenue budgets associated with the site. Additional funding will need to be sought for many projects within the Plan.

## 1.8 Risk Assessment

1.8.1 The Council's Health and Safety Officer has been consulted on the draft Plan.

## 1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

1.9.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.9.2 The proposals aim to extend and provide additional/improved facilities with free public access for all.

**1.10 Policy Considerations**

1.10.1 Biodiversity & Sustainability; Climate Change; Equalities/Diversity; Health and Safety; Healthy Lifestyles; Young People. See additional information at 1.3 above.

**1.11 Recommendations**

1.11.1 The Committee are requested to comment on the draft Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan and proposed consultation process and make any recommendations to Cabinet.

The Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

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