

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	13 th November 2008
Subject:	Whitchurch Pavillion and Playing Fields
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director Community and Environment
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Chris Mote - Portfolio Holder Community and Cultural Services Tony Ferrari – Portfolio Holder for Major Contracts and Property
Exempt:	No – Part I
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the options available to the Council to secure the refurbishment / replacement of Whitchurch Pavilion the maintenance of Whitchurch Playing Fields and the enhanced provision of sports, leisure and community use through a Partner Development Project.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to

- 1) consider the report and recommend the Corporate Director - Community & Environment Services commence a tendering exercise seeking in the first instance expressions of interest for the leasing of the Pavilion and Playing fields to a community user conditional upon refurbishment / replacement of the pavilion and an SLA providing for local resident access to the enhanced sporting facilities.

- 2) authorise the Corporate Director – Community & Environment Services to consider the merits of all initial expressions of interest on the basis of notional proposals prior to seeking further detailed proposals and business model from a short listed group.
- 3) authorise the Corporate Director – Community & Environment Services upon receipt of detailed proposals to report back to Cabinet with all expressions of interest and the further detailed proposals from the second round of bidders with Officer recommendations.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To attract robust and sustainable business plans from local community users that would provide for the Pavilion being brought back into use or replaced at no cost to the Council and run in conjunction with the existing playing fields.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

The report proposes options to bring back into use a redundant and dilapidated former sports pavilion and the management and operation of the playing fields subject to an SLA, at no cost to the Council.

The Proposal will not impact on any National Indicators, BVPIs or KPIs but this action will contribute to improving the management of the Council's Assets; both Use of Resources and Comprehensive Area Assessment require the Council and its partners to demonstrate improvement and innovation in Asset Management. In terms of the Council's Corporate Priorities the contents of the report contribute to improving the way the Council works for its residents and the well being of adults and children.

Background

The property was originally an educational playing field. The site has no specific parks use and is used primarily as a sports field.

Whitchurch Pavilion whose primary use had been to provide changing facilities in connection with the adjacent playing fields has remained vacant and derelict for several years.

Numerous discussions have taken place with independent community uses in the past to take over and finance the repairs but these have floundered primarily due to a lack of funds.

Current Situation

Currently there are 5-6 football clubs who use the site including Belmont Football Club (on an interim basis until the Hindu School is completed) St Joseph's and a cricket team during the summer. Schools also have occasional use throughout the year.

There are basic temporary changing facilities provided.

As a rough estimate income from football and cricket pitches generates £12,500 per annum for the Council. Parks maintenance estimate expenditure on the site to be approximately £45,000/£50,000. The estimate expenditure therefore exceeds income by some £35,000 per annum.

Why a Change is necessary

- 1) Current usage of the playing fields is restricted by the lack of a pavilion and limited changing facilities.
- 2) Current costs exceed income
- 3) There is the prospect of letting the Pavilion and playing fields to a Community User under a Community Development Project who could finance the refurbishment / replacement of the existing Pavilion and the cost of grounds maintenance through grant funding opportunities available.
- 4) It is anticipated that if the Council were prepared to grant a long lease for a term of at least 30 years then there would be interest from community users in lieu of a concessionary rent to agree an SLA with the Council for the long term provision of mixed use sport and leisure facilities for both children and adults.

Options considered

1) Continue running the site as it currently stands

The pavilion would not be safe to use for any activity and the potential to build on the site could be lost. Estimated demolition costs of the pavilion are in the region of £80K. Currently the pavilion is costing the Council money in terms of keeping the site safe and free from vandalism and ground maintenance.

2) Sell off the site as a potential development site

The property could be sold off to interested parties with conditions attached ensuring the current playing fields and pavilion are maintained for sport and physical activity. There is little likelihood of a purchaser for the site with a restricted playing use, and consideration would be minimal and in disposing of the Freehold reduces the control; the Council could exercise in it's wish for continued sport and leisure use.

Planning have indicated that the site is unsuitable for any commercial or residential form of development.

3) Offer the site to Whitchurch School

The School currently has very limited playing field provision but would be reluctant to take on the site in view of on going costs.

4) Lease option with service level agreement

The Council could market the property on a leasehold basis to a community use organisation conditional upon refurbishing the pavilion and a sports related SLA for the local community.

Implications of the Recommendation

Officers recommend option 4 as being the best alternative. By entering into a partnership with a community user on a long leasehold basis the Council are able to control refurbishment / redevelopment the site for a combination of sport and leisure related opportunities at no financial cost to the Council.

Equalities impact

By consulting with all interested community groups and by the preparation of informative tender documentation highlighting the requirements of an effective bid will ensure that all groups are treated fairly.

Legal comments

Under Section 123 Local Government Act 1972, the Council shall not dispose of land other than by way of short tenancy not exceeding 7 years for less than the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained, unless the consent of the Secretary of State is obtained.

The General Disposal Consent 2003 allows disposal for less than best consideration where (i) the difference between the unrestricted value of the land to be disposed of and the consideration for the disposal does not exceed £2,000,000, and (ii) the Council considers that the purpose for the disposal is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of economic, social or environmental well-being of all or any persons resident or present in the whole or any part of its area.

Community safety

The pavilion is a large derelict building which whilst perimeter fenced can never be entirely secure and continues to attract the attention of youths.

Financial Implications

The Council currently does not recover its costs in full and the net cost to the Council at approx. £ 35,000 per annum. The Lease option with service level agreement could bring better use of the premises as long as there were no additional costs to the council.

Performance Issues

Key Question	Points to Cover
Which performance indicators will be impacted by the proposal?	<p>1. Which performance indicators will be impacted?</p> <p>No National Indicators, BVPIs, or KPIs will be impacted</p> <p>2. Which key lines of enquiry under Use of Resources or Corporate Assessment would be impacted?</p> <p>This action will contribute to improving the management of our Assets; both UoR and CAA require the Council and partners to demonstrate improvement and innovation in Asset Management.</p>

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? ~~Yes~~/No (Delete as appropriate)

Separate risk register in place? ~~Yes~~/No (Delete as appropriate)

No risks have been identified on the implementation of this report.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

<p>Name: Sheela Thackrar</p> <p>Date: 24th October 2008</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer</p>
<p>Name: Rachel Jones</p> <p>Date: 23rd October 2008</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> on behalf of the Monitoring Officer</p>

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Anu Singh



on behalf of the*
Divisional Director
(Strategy and
Improvement)

Date: 21st October 2008

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Andrew Connell Portfolio Surveyor Strategic Property
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Background Papers: The files are held in Property and Valuation Services