



Partnership Committee

Date: 5 June 2014

Title: Sports Development Plan

Purpose of the Report: To seek Committee agreement to commence the creation of a Sports Development Plan.

Contact Officer: Vivien Cannon

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To agree the creation of a Leighton–Linslade Town Council Sport Development Plan.
- 1.2 To agree that the original Big Plan budget of £10k identified as match funding for the green gym grant bid remains dedicated to grant match funding purposes less £3k to be used to fund the creation of a Sport Development Plan.
- 1.3 To agree that up to £3k is allocated to procure the services of an external consultant to create the plan on behalf of the Council.

2. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the Council's application for Sport England's Inspired Facilities grant fund in December '13 for green gym equipment in Pages Park, officers learnt in March '14 that we have been unsuccessful in securing a grant.
- 2.2 In this funding round, Sport England received 926 applications all asking for a part of the £47.8m grant budget. Competition was fierce.
- 2.3 Feedback from Sport England on why the application failed included:

Need - More evidence "that there is unmet demand for the project."

Impact: - Need more information on "sporting impact, [e.g.] a more robust Sports Development Plan with key milestones and outcomes and details of how they will be delivered and achieved, and how you can ensure a good level of throughput."

Community Involvement – "demonstrate more involvement of [the] community, [e.g.] evidence of local clubs wishing to use your facility and or organising usage,"

Sustainability – information on how we would market the facility to ensure “it continues to be a viable facility for sport.” This would have strengthened this aspect of the project.

- 2.4 Correctly, the bid for a green gym was undertaken in response to public consultation feedback on what facilities respondents wanted in Pages Park. Sport England’s feedback demonstrates that our rationale for applying for grant funds was not robust enough to warrant us receiving a grant. The level of community consultation was also not robust enough to counter-act this message. We have received a salient message that we do not have a Sport Development Plan in place to provide the overarching aims and objectives that would justify why we would place equipment in Pages Park or explain the long-term benefits for doing so.
- 2.5 Although it can be argued that the need for a Sport Development Plan stems from the Sport England perspective to satisfy their funding criteria, the fact remains that we are likely to come across a similar response to any grant fund if we are unable to demonstrate a more strategic thought process when up against high volumes of competitive applications.
- 2.6 Should we decide to apply again, having been invited to do so as their standard response, we would need to address the above issues before we can be confident with a second application. With this particular project, it is unlikely that we would achieve the ambitions of Sport England without a more strategic explanation and sporting facility management approach, i.e. having a Sport Development Plan in place.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 What now? We have a number of ongoing Big Plan projects, work streams and aspirations. The ring fenced £10k could be redeployed to any one of these projects. Likewise we may choose to keep the budget ring fenced in order to support a second grant application; not necessarily to the same amount; same grant fund or for the same project. It would be prudent for the Council to maintain a sum of ‘leverage’ funding as most grant giving organisations require match funding at some level.
- 3.2 Whilst having limited funds the Council maintains aspirations to achieve improvement projects. A conclusion reached in the Big Plan II document was the need to continue applying for grants. Identified above is a current weakness that has the potential to undermine any future grant bid. We have an opportunity now to address this and put a Sport Development Plan in place. Use of existing allocated funding, up to £3k, would be a productive alternative use of the ring fenced budget.
- 3.3 There is more than one benefit in creating such a plan. Firstly we consolidate the recent improvement works carried out in our parks. Secondly the timing is right to build on Central Bedfordshire’s Leisure

Strategy and offer a local translation and response for addressing gaps and improvements in provision. Thirdly, we are entering a period of consultation for future housing developments and will need to have a strong understanding of what sport and leisure infrastructure is needed locally and what we would prioritise when negotiating planning gain funds.

- 3.4 Officer's work capacity is stretched at present which means there is no one available to lead the creation of a plan. Delaying the work is counterproductive as ultimately it will serve to prioritise the work of officers. Securing the services of an external consultant to create the plan would provide the necessary expertise and capacity as well as maintain a work pace beneficial to the Council's needs.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 There are important strategic documents that the Council needs in place to create robust foundations for its decision-making processes and to guide work activity. A Sport Development Plan is one such document. We have been alerted to this fact through the recent failed green gym grant application.
- 4.2 Whilst we need to maintain a level of available leverage funding for future grant applications in keeping with Big Plan II aspirations, we could utilise some of the original £10k to pay for the creation of a Sport Development Plan. It is anticipated that up to £3k would be sufficient to hire the service of an external consultant to create the plan. In doing so we continue the principle of supporting future grant applications whilst providing a greater benefit to the Council in terms of securing strategic influence and guidance.
- 4.3 This recommendation is also to be taken to the Leisure and Community Committee on 2 June 2014 for consideration.

Report Author:

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