

Grounds and Environmental Services Committee

Date: 6th September 2021

Title: Pages Park Pavilion Hire

Purpose of the Report:

To seek Member direction in respects of Pages Park Pavilion being used for the purposes of boxing club hire.

Contact Officer:

Mark Saccoccio, Town Clerk

Corporate Objective/s	Town Council 5 Year Plan Objective no.38 seeks to maintain and enhance sporting provision within the parish	
Implications:		
Financial	No	
Human Resources	No	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	To seek ways to mitigate/reduce potential accidental damage to a town council asset
Procedural/Legal	No	
Risk/Health and Safety	No	
Environmental Aims	No	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee be minded:-

- 1.1 To provide direction in respects of Pages Park Pavilion being used for the purposes of boxing club hire.
- 1.2 That the Town Council uses its reasonable endeavours to support the boxing club in finding a more suitable permanent venue that is more appropriate and capable of meeting its needs.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A request has been made by Rangers Boxing Club to continue its use of Pages Park Pavilion for the purposes of providing boxing coaching to young people. Subject to the venue being available to hirers, the boxing club wishes to hire the facility for 3 evenings per week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday).
- 2.2 Contextually, the Town Council has been accepting bookings from the boxing club for the use of Pages Park pavilion since 2015. In advance of the session taking place, the boxing club needs to erect and thereafter dismantle its boxing ring which is located within a shipping container located outside of the building. Training equipment to include punch bags are also brought out for the sessions.
- 2.3 As a principle, the use of a community building in providing community benefit is welcomed and the boxing club is no different in this respect. Members may recall that the Community Safety Sub-Committee recognises the added value that the discipline of boxing can bring to the local community. By way of its Operation Dodford Agreement, the Community Safety Sub-Committee resolved to support the boxing club through the purchase of boxing equipment to be used as part of the training sessions held at Pages Park.
- 2.4 Whilst the Town Council has demonstrated support, the collective issue remains the appropriateness or otherwise in the holding of boxing training sessions at Pages Park Pavilion. Whilst considered a community activity and therefore encouraged, the concern is the appropriateness or otherwise of Pages Park. This view is also shared by the boxing club who recognise that a facility they can call home is what they need. By this, a facility that will allow the boxing ring to remain in-situ and for punch bags to hang from purpose fixings designed for this one purpose.
- 2.5 Contextually, Pages Park pavilion has been the subject of a £420,679.89 refurbishment which began in July' 19 and was completed in November' 19. The Town Council invested this money because the facility was unrepresentative of the standard of facility the town council and modern day hirers would expect. The interior has been significantly remodelled with the changing rooms enlarged, the kitchen moved and upgraded and more storage space created. Herein lies the dilemma, a facility to meet the majority needs of the parish has been created to the potential detriment of certain uses whose needs are more specific given the equipment needed, fixings required and the space in which to store these.
- 2.6 Prior to the refurbishment, the town council was able to adopt a more flexible approach to robust uses knowing that the facility would be subject to a major refurbishment in future years. Accordingly, the town council accepted and agreed to the boxing club use of the facility for 3 nights per week knowing that the take up rate from other hirers was low because of the then condition of the building at the time.

The Future

2.7 There are 2 issues here.

- a) Helping find the boxing club a permanent facility more appropriate to the use that allows dedicated storage space and permanent fixings thereby saving the club time in readying the facility. In addition a facility that by virtue of its construction is more robust and more conducive to a physical, high intensity activity such as boxing. Suggested locations include gymnasiums, youth clubs or redundant business premises such as former garages or warehouses for example. To support the search, the boxing club has approached the MP who in turn has approached Central Bedfordshire Council. The unitary authority has an assets portfolio and may therefore be able to offer potential locations.

Following a meeting with the boxing club on 21st July 2021, the town council has offered up suggestions including the contacting of schools who have access to gyms, the Leighton-Linslade Sports Council as well as LB First.

- b) Reconciling the use of the facility by all hirers including the boxing club. Since the completion of its refurbishment, the number of hirers has increased meaning that based on current availability, only 2 nights per week would be available to the boxing club. Notwithstanding this however, the town council needs to be certain that despite reasonable endeavours, any potential damage to the building's fabric is minimised.
 - i) Here, the greatest risk is associated with the need to move the ring from store and its erection within the hall. The main concerns here are potential damage to door openings as well as the floor both when the ring is being moved and when in use.
 - ii) Given the high intensity of the activity, potential wear and tear on roof trusses and the fire retardant finishes is increased given that punch bags are hung from the roof structure.
 - iii) Finally, the expectation from all hirers is that the facility is clean and free from legacy furniture and equipment associated with a previous use. As a principle, all hirers would hope to find and leave the facility in a condition that wouldn't compromise preceding uses. This goes for all venue hirers.

3 TOWN COUNCIL EXPECTATIONS FROM HIRERS

- 3.1 Whilst the town council recognises that where possible, it will use reasonable endeavours to meet hirer expectation, it has an equal responsibility to safeguard town council assets. In this case, a recently refurbished building whose purpose is to serve the widest possible needs of the community. Should Members be minded to continue to support the boxing club, the following are considered reasonable expectations:

- a) To agree to regular meetings taking place with the hirer. This will provide an opportunity to air any concerns that may arise from either party in the way the building is being used. Should it be found that given the intensity of the activity it is causing unreasonable damage to the town council asset, that the town council reserves the right to cancel future booking hire. Whilst the position of very last resort, this action will only take place based on demonstrable evidence of damage being caused.
- b) Booking forms and payment. To secure venue hire, the expectation is that booking forms as well as payment is made in advance of the hire taking place. This will provide both the boxing club and town council with certainty that the necessary paperwork and payment have been made.
- c) Erection and dismantling of boxing ring. That a method statement be agreed in writing and thereafter is implemented each time the ring is used. This is to safeguard the hirer as well as the town council asset.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 As a discipline, the town council recognises the added value the sport of boxing brings to the community and in particular young people. This is a given and is not the reason why concerns are held. As custodian of community facilities, the town council has a responsibility to hirers and taxpayers alike having to try where possible, to reconcile some difficult challenges. By way of ongoing dialogue, it is hoped that any concerns the town council may have are not realised and accordingly, the boxing club can flourish at the pavilion in the short term at least. The expectation thereafter is that a more suitable venue to meet increasing demand can be secured.