

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

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MAIDSTONE ROAD SPORTS GROUND

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director Regeneration, Community and Culture

Author: Richard Hicks, Assistant Director Customer First, Leisure, Culture, Democracy and Governance

Summary

A petition was presented to Council on 16 April 2009, asking the Council to continue to maintain this facility and the existing services it provides, but also to invest in improvements to the site for the future benefit of the community. Following a response to the petitioner, this Committee discussed the issues on 7 July 2009. This report provides Members with an update and sets out a proposed way forward.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The proposed actions can be met from within the existing Greenspaces budget. Any other options would need to be considered through the budget setting process.

2. Background

2.1 This Committee discussed the petition on 7 July and:

(a) noted the petition responses and appropriate officer action in paragraph 3 of the report

(b) noted the action taken by officers in paragraph 5 of the report and requested that officers:

(i) investigate reinstating toilet provision on the site;

(ii) continue community engagement with Ward Members and residents;

- (iii) provide a briefing note on the cost of attendants at other green space sites in Medway;
- (iv) investigate the possibility of a concessionary business to oversee activities and management at the Maidstone Road Sports Ground;
- (v) investigate claims that the ground was not being visited on a daily basis by contractors and report the results to the Ward Members;
- (vi) the grass court area should be cost-assessed for a hard surface area to allow for all year multi-purpose use with free tennis available.

2.2 Since that meeting there have been a number of discussions, meetings, site visits, e-mails, letters and a collection passed to the Council, primarily through Tracy Coutts, the lead petitioner, and the following sections give an overview of the progress made to date:

2.3 General appearance of the Park:

There has been a marked improvement in the cleanliness of the park and it is now being maintained to high standards. The grass is regularly cut, the trees are well cared for and the Council's contractor, Quadron, litter picks the park every day. This has resulted in the site being very well cared for.

2.4 **Community Safety and anti-social behaviour**

Although there was a recent problem with flytipping in the area adjacent to the Bowls Club, there has not been any significant anti-social behaviour at the site. An Urban Ranger visits the park 3 times a week, and one of these visits is always undertaken at the weekend. The Council's Community Safety Team visits the site twice a day, every day, 7 days a week, to lock and unlock the gates. This has meant there has been very little anti-social behaviour on site.

2.5 **Toilets / The Pavilion**

The pavilion has been closed for some time now, and is in a poor state of repair. Options are:

- The costs of removing the pavilion, capping the services and re-grassing would cost £5,635 + VAT
- Renovating the pavilion would cost approximately £22-24K + VAT
- The cost of converting the former attendant's hut into a WC would be approximately £8,500 + revenue costs of £3,585.40 + VAT pa for daily cleaning
- The provision of a DDA compliant single portaloo would be £2,600 + VAT pa plus revenue costs of £3,595.40 plus VAT for daily cleaning.

A comfort scheme with the adjacent Bowls Club and Chatham Town Football Club was explored, but was not successful due to issues around access and infrastructure.

On this basis officers intend to remove the pavilion and reinstate the grass and take no further action in relation to the provision of toilets. Toilets are not generally provided on our greenspace sites and the costs of providing a toilet on this site preclude this option.

2.6 Park Attendant

As stated at the previous Committee meeting, there used to be an attendant on site whose primary activity was to collect income from the use of the tennis courts. Given the problems with the state of the pavilion and that residents have free use of the tennis courts, there is no longer an attendant on site. The only sites where full-time Park Attendants are provided are those where there is money to collect – these are at Darnley Road and Jacksons Field. Those two sites are the only sites in Medway where there are permanent Park Attendants, and officers do not propose to reinstate the Park Attendant at Maidstone Road Sports Ground.

2.7 Other Improvements to the Park

Six new benches have been installed.

Ward Councillors have agreed to fund a new notice board in the park from Ward Improvement Funds.

New entrance signs have been installed.

The shrubs in the car park have been cut back.

A consultation exercise has been completed for the proposed conversion of the grass tennis courts to a five a side football area and no objections have been received. Officers are now seeking cost estimates to convert this area for informal five-a-side football.

Officers will shortly be assessing whether any companies would be interested in setting up a small catering concession in the park, either free standing or potentially in the smaller building next to the pavilion. Should there be any interest, this would of course add to the numbers of people overseeing the park.

3. Advice and analysis

- 3.1 A number of very positive steps have been taken at Maidstone Road Sports Ground which have resulted in a marked improvement to the standards of maintenance and appearance of the park.

4. Risk Management

4.1

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Enhancements to Maidstone Road Sports Ground are proposed without the funding to support them.	Any proposals to reinstate the pavilion or install public toilets would require significant additional funding.	Alternative proposals have been put forward that will meet the requirements for a park of this size.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 There has been extensive communication with the lead petitioner, and site meetings have been held, together with local Ward Councillors and a newsletter has been circulated to those who signed the original petition.

6. Financial and legal implications

- 6.1 The financial implications are set out within the report. There are no legal implications.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are asked to endorse the officer actions in relation to Maidstone Road Sports Ground as set out in the report.

Lead officer contact

Richard Hicks, Assistant Director, Customer First, Leisure, Culture, Democracy and Governance tel: 01634 338121 e-mail: richard.hicks@medway.gov.uk

Background papers

Overview and Scrutiny Report – 7 July 2009.