

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 JULY 2019

SPONSORSHIP OF GILLINGHAM FOOTBALL CLUB

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Summary

This paper reports on the Medway Council sponsorship agreement for the 2018/19 season for Gillingham Football Club which has recently come to a close.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 This sponsorship project was well aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of Medway: A place to be proud of and Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential.

2. Background

2.1 In April 2018, an agreement was signed between Medway Council and Gillingham Football Club (GFC) for Medway Council to be the lead sponsor of the club for 2018/19 in a new partnership aimed at benefitting grassroots and professional sport in Medway.

2.2 Medway Council was marking 20 years since its formation in 1998 and GFC was celebrating 125 years and this represented an excellent opportunity to unite in this important year.

2.3 In addition to the fact that GFC is one of Medway's leading businesses, the Council and GFC have a shared commitment to a great place to live, work, learn and visit, already enjoyed a good working relationship to promote grassroots sports and provide opportunities for local communities. The sponsorship agreement enhanced that commitment.

2.4 Following consideration of a Member's Item on the agreement by this Committee in April 2018, Members asked for a report reviewing the sponsorship arrangements to be submitted to this meeting. The Committee also asked for a report to be submitted to the November 2018 meeting of the Committee detailing a draft corporate sponsorship protocol. Subsequently, the Committee considered a draft advertising and sponsorship policy and made some comments and suggested changes of wording which were, with some amendments, agreed by Cabinet in December 2018.

3. The agreement

- 3.1 The sponsorship was a non-financial agreement. The agreement consisted of a number of opportunities that would benefit both parties during the period of the sponsorship.
- 3.2 Medway Council made available to GFC three sports pitches in Medway that were largely unused but would enable a wide range of groups and teams linked to GFC to practice and play matches. The Council supports grassroots sports and offered the club the use of its greenspaces for the different teams to train.
- 3.3 The community sat at the heart of the agreement and as part of the partnership, the club provided 50 match day tickets for the 2018/19 season for the Council to donate to some of the residents and community groups we support. The aim was to provide opportunities and experiences for those in Medway's communities to attend matches they might otherwise never have the opportunity to enjoy.
- 3.4 Under the agreement, the Priestfield Stadium was renamed the Medway Priestfield Stadium and the Medway Council logo was promoted on the Gills' home shirt for the 2018/19 season.
- 3.5 The Council was also given other promotional opportunities including pitchside advertising hoardings and a page in match day programmes. Medway Council's logo was also to be carried on the post match TV interview backdrops and on the GFC website.

4. Outcomes

4.1 Ticket allocation

- 4.1.1 To ensure the smooth and equitable distribution of tickets, allocation took place via a ballot on a monthly basis. The ticket allocation was divided into three groups for each ballot: community organisations and charities, local schools and groups and individuals cared for by the Council's Children and Adults team. All local charities and community organisations in Medway were approached directly by the Council as well as via promotion on social media to invite them to apply via the ballot. Applicants completed an online Expression of Interest and were entered into the ballot each month.
- 4.1.2 The ballot allocated ten tickets each to two organisations, two schools and ten tickets via the Council's Children and Adults team. The successful applicants were invited to collect the tickets directly from the Medway Priestfields Stadium.
- 4.1.3 A total of 154 charities and local organisations and 76 schools all signed up for the ballot and during the course of the year. Tickets were allocated to 118 organisations for 24 matches. The full list of organisations allocated tickets can be found at Appendix 1 and the organisations represented who received VIP tickets can be found at Appendix 2.

- 4.1.4 After the matches, people were invited to submit comments and photos. These are some of the comments we received:

"The atmosphere was great and the fact that we were able to take a wheelchair in and there being somewhere to sit next to a wheelchair was a real plus.

We're a small organisation with a big outreach to those socially isolated in the ME5 area any support and encouragement from the local community is so well received by the people we support and we are really thankful for the opportunity to make a difference for people who otherwise would not get out." **Walderslade Together CIC.**

"The students really enjoyed the atmosphere of seeing a professional football game and would love to go again! We would just like to thank the staff for making it possible and for their efficiency in making sure the whole process ran smoothly." **Fort Pitt Grammar School**

"They loved the match, the kids said it was the best present ever. Money is very tight in this family so it helped them to celebrate Christmas and spend time as a family. They would certainly go again as a family as they are massive Gillingham fans." **King Fisher School**

"A big thank you to the Gills and Medway Council for setting up the trip for Rochester Blind Bowling Group to see the Southend match. We would have loved to bring the Gills some luck but it was a good day out." **Rochester Blind Bowling Group**

"The crowd spirit and atmosphere on the day was great. It was amazing to see so many people smiling even though the result was hard for other fans. It was one of the best days of my life and something I will never forget" **Young person from Young Lives Foundation**

"Thanks to Medway Council, YLF were able to send 10 very excited young people to the Gillingham vs Oxford United game on Saturday! One of the young people commented.... 'It was so awesome! The game was really good and I'm pleased that Gills won!'" 🤗

Once again a huge thank you. Opportunities like this really are once in a lifetime for the young people we support and will never be forgotten." **Young Lives Foundation**

"It was a first Gills experience for all of the children, and for most a first football match. The fact they could enjoy it in a safe secure environment was great. We appreciated the opportunity to go, it was fun". **Rainham 2nd Girl Guides**

"The girls loved the opportunity to go and support their local club and had a great day out with their team. It was such a good experience for girls". **Rainham School for Girls**

"It was the chance for the young carers to have some down time somewhere they would not usually go and they really enjoyed it." **Carer First**

“Our students thoroughly enjoyed the match and the atmosphere. We are really grateful for receiving these tickets and would love the opportunity again.” St Williams Pre School

4.2 Promotion and advertising

- 4.2.1 Full use was made of the promotional and advertising opportunities. The Medway Council logo was carried on the shirts at all home games and some away matches last year. The youth team, Ladies and Girls Academy all wore it too on occasions.
- 4.2.2 The Council placed advertisements in all the home match programmes for a range of our events and initiatives including public health campaigns and adult education. This had a value of £2,500 and the opportunity to promote our campaigns to a large number of residents.
- 4.2.3 GFC players also came and supported some of our events during the year, including the Medway Mile and the Sports Awards where they presented prizes. We also held our Youth Awards at the club. Our sports team continues to do some community work with them during this year and our youth service too. GFC also supported our Recycle Week campaign where we highlighted them as one of the organisations supporting a green and clean Medway.

4.3 Use of Medway Council pitches

- 4.3.1 GFC not only has the elite team that trains at Priestfield Stadium. The club is also made up of a number of teams giving children and adults, including girls, women and those with a disability, the opportunity of playing football surrounded by professional players and coaches. As part of the arrangement, we made three sports pitches at Beechings Cross available to the club. These green spaces were made available during weekdays and weekends when they were not otherwise in use. This was a great way to bring them back into use and give local people much needed sports space close to home rather than having to travel to alternative sites or outside Medway.
- 4.3.2 Mark Patterson, one of the coaching staff at Gillingham FC said: “The use of these pitches has been enormously beneficial to not just the first-team, but also our youth squads, ladies and girls academy setups.

“We thank the council for their assistance in supplying these extra facilities and we look forward to working together on more initiatives in the future.”

- 4.3.3 At the start of the contract there were a small number of pitch usage issues which were alleged to have had an impact on the weekend games for the leagues. However these concerns were quickly rectified with the GFC grounds staff repairing and undertaking further renovations after use.
- 4.3.4 At the end of the season the pitches were left in good condition with normal wear and tear with a pitch in use for the spring season.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 There are no specific risk implications for the Council arising directly from this report

6. Financial implications

6.1 This partnership was a non-financial agreement meaning that the Council made no payment to GFC so there was no burden on local council tax payers.

6.2 The Council received a number of benefits which included:

- Medway Council branding carried on the GFC first team shirts during the year.
- Four pitch side advertising boards
- 50 complimentary match day tickets made available for community use
- Invites for up to 4 guests to the boardroom for home league games
- Renaming of stadium as The Medway Priestfield Stadium
- Medway Council logo was carried on all TV interview backdrops
- Displayed on website as main sponsor
- One full page advertisement on all match day programmes.
- Presence of players or manager at certain Medway Council events.

6.3 For their part, GFC were given access to three sports pitches at Beechings Cross. These green spaces were made available during weekdays and weekends when they were not otherwise in use. The Council did not lose any rental income from the loss of the spaces as the grounds were only made available to GFC at times when there was no demand from local leagues.

7. Legal implications

7.1 The decision to grant a licence to Gillingham FC to use the football pitches and facilities at the Southern Plateau site was made by the Chief Legal Officer under his delegated powers. There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

8. Conclusion

8.1 This was a highly successful and high profile partnership for the 2018/19 season in a year when both Medway Council and GFC were celebrating milestone anniversaries. As no financial transaction was involved, there was no burden placed on the Council's budget from this arrangement. The community has been the ultimate beneficiary of the sponsorship, enabling local people and communities to experience the enjoyment of a football match.

8.2 Club Chairman, Paul Scally has commented on the partnership: *"Medway Council have been fantastic supporters of the Football Club and I'm grateful for their continuous backing. They have been excellent sponsors and we are extremely grateful to be given use of some extra pitches which has been enormously beneficial to our Ladies, Youth and Girls Academy squads.*

"I'm sure we will continue to work together on a number of exciting projects in the future."

9. Recommendation

9.1 Members are asked to note the report.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Organisations allocated tickets in the Gillingham FC ballot
Appendix 2 – Organisations represented with VIP tickets

Background papers:

None

Appendix 1

Organisations allocated tickets in the Gillingham Football Club ballot

Name of Successful Charity/Organisation/School	MATCH AGAINST
The British Red Cross- Young Refugee Project	Burton Albion 3pm
Medway Hindu Parivar	
St Thomas of Canterbury School PTA	
The Bridge Specialist School Provision	
Shared Lives	
Friends of Broomhill	Sunderland AFC 7.45pm
St John Fisher Catholic Church (Rochester)	
Wainscott Primary School	
Oasis Academy Skinner Street	
Anchor Support Services LTD	
S E Region, CSSC Sports & Leisure - Chatham Area	Coventry City 3pm
Medway Plus	
The Pilgrim School	
Cedar Children's Academy	
Medway Adult Education	
Medway Parent and Carers Forum	
Guide dogs medway branch	AFC Wimbledon 3pm
2nd Lordswood Guides	
Strood Academy	
Robert Napier School	
The Mortimer Society – Frindsbury House	
St A's ADHD Support Group	Peterborough United 3pm
Hythe House Support Fostering Agency	
Thames View PTA	
Warren Wood Primary Academy Parents, Teachers and Friends Association	
Carers Relief Service	
Chatham Royal Marines Cadet Unit	Fleetwood Town Postponed due to pitch renewal Played - 3 November
Carers FIRST	
Fairview Community Primary School	

St Williams pre school	
Medway Adult Education	
Tough Mumma ladies bootcamp	
mhs homes	
St Katherines Primary School and Nursery	Southend United 3pm
New Horizons children's academy ptfa	
Rochester Blind Bowling Group	
Medway Engagement Group And Network CIC	
Kent Branch RLSS	
Park Wood Schools Federation	Bradford City 3pm
Abbey Court School	
Medway Parent and Carers Forum	
Chatham Royal Marines Cadet Unit	
Fairview Community Primary School	
2nd Rainham Girl Guides	Fleetwood Town 3pm
Westlands School	
Medway Adult Education	
Carers FIRST	
St Williams pre school	
Tornadoes Korfbal Club & Academy	Blackpool FC 7.45pm
Holcombe Grammar School	
All saints family hub	
Cambridge Research Systems Limited	
Luton Pact	
Prince Arthur Road Indoor Bowling Club	Luton Town 3pm
Strood Academy	
Napier primary school	
Old Vicarage Children's Residential Home	
Medway Roller Dance Club	
New Brompton Gills FC	
Fort Pitt Grammar School	Wycombe Wanderers 3pm
Walderslade Primary School	
WALT	
walderslade together cic	
Men of Kent And Kentish Men, Medway Branch	Portsmouth FC 3pm
St Helens CEP School	
Rainham Mark Grammar School	

Young Lives Foundation	
Black Lion Swimming Club	Doncaster Rovers 3pm
Carons childminding	
Kingfisher Primary School	
Swingate Primary School	
The Kent Autistic Trust	
Omega 92 fc	Was originally 5 January but Gillingham had a cup match Accrington Stanley 7.45pm
One big family helping the homeless	
The Academy of Woodlands	
Bradfields Academy school	
Kent Association for the Blind	
Bridging the Gap	Walsall FC 3pm
MY Trust	
Rainham School for Girls	
Wayfield Primary School	
Aut Even Short Breaks	
Hospital Radio Medway	Barnsley FC 3pm
Pathways to Independence Ltd	
Burham primary school	
The Howard School	
Club AUsome	
Medway Ostomy Group Support	Scunthorpe United 3pm
6th Rainham North Brownies	
Stoke Community School	
Riverside Primary School	
Sunlight Development Trust	
14th medway cubs and beavers	Oxford United 3pm
The Young Lives Foundation	
Luton Junior School	
Allhallows Primary Academy	
KASBAH	
1st Hoo Guides	Bristol Rovers 7.45pm
G.Beatz Nightclub	
Brompton Academy	
St James' Church of England Primary Academy	
Parkwood Youth Centre	

The Milly Moo Right Now Foundation	Rochdale AFC 3pm
Annie's Rosie's child care	
Friends of Hempstead Junior School	
FCS Cuxton School	
The Kent Autistic Trust	
What's On In Rochester	Shrewsbury Town 3pm
MAGIC (UK) Ltd	
Saxon-Way Primary School	
High Halstow Primary School	
Anchor Support Services LTD	
The Friends of Chatham Traction	Plymouth Argyle 3pm (FRIDAY)
Chatham Air Cadets	
Bligh Primary School	
Twydall Primary School	
Medway Adult Education	
Parkwood Youth Centre	Charlton Athletic 3pm
Medway Cares Charity	
The Hundred of Hoo academy	
All Faiths Children's Academy	
Fostering mentorships	

Organisations represented with VIP tickets

Dovetail Games
Copper Rivet Distillery
MHS Homes
KPMG
BAE Systems
SO-UK Music
Delphi
Tidi-Cable Ltd
Kemsley Farms
University of Kent
SECAM Paramedic
Leander Holdings
The Juice Executive
Sleeppeeze
Frameless Glass Company
Olympia Boxing
Holcombe Hockey Club
Hands Free Computing
Jumpers Rebound
Medway Messenger