

**Decision Session - Executive Member for
Culture, Leisure and Tourism**

29 January 2016

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities, Culture and Public Realm)

Review of the Management of Rowntree Park Tennis Courts

Summary

1. This report provides options for the future management of Rowntree Park tennis courts.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to decide which of the options set out in paragraph 12 should be taken forward to manage the tennis courts in Rowntree Park.

Reason: To ensure that the tennis courts remain sustainable and continue to provide a quality sports facility for York residents.

Background

3. Rowntree Park is one of three council parks and gardens that have tennis courts – Hull Road Park (2 courts), Glen Gardens (2 courts) and Rowntree Park (6 courts). How the courts are managed has been under review for the last few years as a consequence of changes to parks staffing.
4. The Park has been the home of Rowntree Park Tennis Club since 1950's. The Club has priority use of two courts at evenings, and weekends and Bank Holidays. Additional courts are used for matches. The Club is open to anyone to join with core membership fees for 2015 of £60 for adults and £25 for children / full time students.
5. Running in parallel with the activities of the Club, the Park hosts a year round coaching programme provided by *Tennis For All*, initially set up by the Sport and Active Leisure team as part of a Sport England programme to increase participation in tennis.

6. In 2014, the Council transferred the management of Glen Gardens tennis courts to Heworth Tennis Club on a 25 year lease. The Club had used Glen Gardens for several decades to supplement their own facilities on East Parade. By taking on the lease it has helped the Club to develop and qualify for a grant from Sport England of £42,000 for the rebuilding of their East Parade pavilion.
7. Over the winter 2014/15 similar discussion took place with Rowntree Park Tennis Club. In May 2015 an agreement was reached with the Club, in partnership with *Tennis For All* to manage the courts on a trial basis for one year. This was generally successful although feedback from a number of users indicated that the new arrangement could have been publicised more widely. The Club would now like to extend this arrangement.
8. For tennis to both thrive and be sustainable the Club's view is that better facilities, organisation and management are required:
 - a) Better facilities start with better day to day care of the courts through to a new or rebuilt pavilion with small kitchen and changing facilities that can withstand flood events.
 - b) Better organisation would include the creation of an integrated coaching programme to bring juniors into the sport, develop talent and support recreational members.
 - c) Better management would involve developing a Club that is robust and has a vision for the future. It would also mean having security of access to the courts in order to lever in grant aid, to invest in the facilities, which in turn will attract more members.
9. Following this year's experiences the Club has now asked for a three year lease on the courts. Membership is up from 42 to 107 and, to cope with occasional or ad hoc players, the Club are introducing the Lawn Tennis Association's on-line booking system coupled with PayPal.
10. Longer term the Club would like to take on the management of the pavilion and would seek a new lease for that option when they are ready. Colleagues from Sport and Active Leisure continue to support the Club with its short and long term ambitions.

Consultation

11. The views of The Friends of Rowntree Park and local Ward Members have been sought. Both the Friends and local Members are in support of a three year lease providing that some form of pay and play booking arrangements are put in place. The Friends and Club have agreed to work together to publicise as widely as possible the court management arrangements.

Options

12. Three options are available.
 - a) To grant the club a three year lease.
 - b) Not to grant the club a lease and revert back to day to day management by the council.

Analysis

13. Option a) This would put the asset into community control and support the principle of volunteers assisting with the care of the city's sports spaces and facilities. It would bring the courts into line with other council sports assets that are managed by the community including fishing, football, rugby, cricket and bowls.
14. All future day to day management and maintenance would be transferred to the club which in turn would free up park staff to concentrate on horticultural work. In addition, there would be no call on the Council's capital resources for rebuilding of the courts in the future. A small rental would be negotiated with the Club for use of the courts.
15. Option b) This would revert the court management to the pre 2015 arrangements with park staff supervising the courts, taking the bookings, safely keeping and banking cash. This arrangement was previously problematic in terms of ensuring that all users pay and that they do not overstay preventing others from using the court. Park staff have to fit court management in within other duties and so are not always present in that vicinity of the courts. Courts cannot be pre booked and it is not possible to check if they are already in use.

Implications

16. **Financial Implications** If Option a) is chosen it would save the Council staff time, which is estimated at an hour a day for six months of the year, in cleaning and net replacement. It would also save the long-term capital costs of surfacing and rebuilding estimated at around £50k over the life of a 25 year lease.

There would be a loss to the Council of around £1k p.a. from casual fees and charges which would be off-set by a small rental in line with Heworth Tennis Club agreement.

17. **Property implications:** Option a) will provide the best solution in terms of long term asset management. If, at the end of the three year lease the club seeks a longer lease e.g. 25 years, a report would need to be taken to the Council's Capital and Asset Board.
18. **Equalities:** An initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) screening highlighted potential issues of access for those on limited income and this is being addressed by putting in the pay and play system. The park is also the home of the "tennis for all" disability tennis sessions, which are affiliated to Special Olympics City of York, during the summer months. This group are happy to stay at the park and work with Rowntree Park Tennis Club to ensure open and equitable access for disabled players.
19. The report has no additional implications relating to: Human Resources, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology.

Corporate Priorities

20. The proposals in this report are in line with the Council Plan priorities that ensure valued community facilities are protected and the council works with other organisations to deliver the best services for residents.

Risk Management

21. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified with the proposals contained in this report are that the Club withdraws from any future lease and hands the courts back to the council. This may damage the Council's reputation. level of risk is assessed as "Very Low". This means that periodic monitoring is required of the operation of the new arrangements.

Contact Details

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Report Approved



19 January 16

Wards Affected: Micklegate



For further information please contact the author of the report.

Background Papers: EIA screening held by Dave Meigh

Annexes - None