

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S  
REPORT TO**

**Cabinet**  
**01 December 2021**

**Report Title:** Improvements to Westlands Sports Centre and Wolstanton Park Tennis Courts

**Submitted by:** Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth & Executive Director Operational Services

**Portfolios:** Leisure, Culture and Heritage

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Purpose of the Report**

To inform Cabinet about the proposals to upgrade the tennis courts at the Westland's Sports Centre and Wolstanton Park tennis courts, following an in principle £133,700 grant award from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

**Recommendation's**

- 1. Authorise the Executive Director - Commercial Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with The Portfolio Holder, Leisure Culture and Heritage, to take such actions that are reasonably necessary to enter into a funding agreement with the Lawn Tennis Association.**
- 2. That the Cabinet delegate the authority for the Executive Director Commercial Development & Economic Growth to award a contract to refurbish the tennis courts (following a complaint procurement process) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure Culture and Heritage.**

**Reasons**

The grant award from the LTA provides the Council the ideal opportunity to a) enhance the quality of tennis provision in the Borough, b) to deliver exciting programmes for sport, exercise and play that supports health and wellbeing of residents, c) to work with partners to bring investment and income into our parks, d) to build relationships and work with volunteers, e) to give local communities the chance to come together.

**1. Background**

1.1 The Borough Council owns and operates a total of 18 tennis courts across the Borough at the following six sites:

- Westland's Sports Centre – 10 courts.
- Wolstanton Park – 4 courts
- Clough Hall Park – 2 Courts
- Silverdale Park -1 court
- Bardwell Lodge – 1 court

The 2021-26 Playing Pitch Strategy has highlighted that 4 of the above sites are in poor condition with Wolstanton park being in an average condition.

1.2 Parks/recreational tennis in the Borough has been in long term decline due to the poor condition of the tennis courts. Through ongoing dialogue with the LTA it has been determined that the Borough has now reached the point, that without investment in some of the Borough's tennis facilities the opportunity to offer a high quality affordable tennis programme to residents may be lost for good.

1.3 The LTA have identified the Borough as a priority area to increase tennis participation. This is an exciting opportunity for the Council, to develop a strong relationship with the LTA, develop innovative solutions for the development of recreational tennis, enhance the vibrancy of some of the Boroughs parks, and the support the sustainability of parks tennis in future years.

## 2. **Issues**

2.1 Due to the condition of the tennis courts in the Borough there has been a limited operating model in place. As a result over the past few years income levels have been low to non-existent, participation in tennis has been poor, and there have been limited opportunities to develop an innovative tennis programme to support the health and wellbeing of residents.

2.2 At present tennis is currently provided to the Borough's residents free of charge due to the poor quality surface of the courts. The Borough's residents have therefore been able to turn up and play tennis without booking, which has led to limited data being gathered by the Council to support strategic decision making in relation to the development of tennis opportunities in the Borough.

2.3 Over the past year officers of the Council have been working closely with the LTA to identify the best opportunities to a) support capital investment into the Borough's tennis facilities and b) to develop an innovative programme to support the to increase tennis participation in the borough. The LTA have therefore identified that the two priority sites to focus on should be the Westland's Sports Centre and Wolstanton Park which is supported by the Council's PPS.

2.4 In order to support increased participation in tennis, there is also an essential need to make a capital investment at both the Westland's Sports Centre and Wolstanton Park in the form of replacing the tennis courts surface and or the painting of the surface. This will enhance the quality of the tennis offer, address some current health and safety concerns as well as having a broader appeal to the tennis fraternity of Borough.

2.5 Once refurbished, both sites would benefit from the installation of a gate access system. This provides an opportunity for the Council to enable residents to find, book tennis court through the LTA's website/online booking platform and or mobile app. This would enable a clear customer journey for parks tennis initially at these two sites, take the headache out of managing bookings, breaks down barriers to access, as well as supporting income generation.

2.6 The using their expert industry knowledge coupled with a schedule of rates from their preferred list of contractors, the LTA have provided an indicative cost to install the gate access system and enhance the courts at both sites at a cost of £163,700. To fund this investment, in principle the LTA have in principle agreed a grant of £133,700 with £30,000 being met from the Council's capital programme.

2.7 Following the in principle agreement by the LTA to fund over eighty percent of the project costs, the steps will now need to be taken to get the project over the line: a) The LTA to commission a technical service's team to develop detailed scope of works/specification, b) for Officers of the Council to run a compliant procurement process inline the Public contract Regulations 2015 (PCR2015) and the Council's constitution for the works, C) that the LTA are notified of the Councils preferred tender so that a final decision can be made whether or not to make the grant ward d) to award the contract to the preferred supplier to complete the required works anticipated to be Spring 2022.

2.8 A key grant condition from the LTA is that the Council should provide adequate finance to resurface their courts at the end of their lifespan. Having considered this grant condition Officers are recommending that this provision should be made in the Council's capital programme in seven to ten years' time, as opposed to creating a sinking fund that would be funded from income generation.

2.9 In conjunction with the LTA, Officers have reviewed Sport England's Market Segmentation Tool. This has provided an analysis of the percentage of adults that would like to participate in tennis in the Borough but are not currently doing so. Through the use of this system it has been identified that there is a latent demand of 2,213 adults who live within the Borough. This suggests that there is a large body of players that would participate in tennis if barriers such as the quality of courts and booking systems being in place were addressed.

2.10 This latent demand for tennis in the borough, provides the perfect opportunity for Officers from the Councils Sport and Active Lifestyles Service to work with the LTA to develop a comprehensive inclusive/affordable tennis programme at both sites focusing on:

- A Youth programme
- An adult programme
- Local tennis leagues,
- Competition programmes
- A tennis coaching programme,
- Tennis for free initiatives.

### 3. **Proposal**

3.1 Authorise the Executive Director - Commercial Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with The Portfolio Holder, Leisure Culture and Heritage, to take such actions that are reasonably necessary to enter into a funding agreement with the Lawn Tennis Association.

3.2 That the Cabinet delegate the authority for the Executive Director Commercial Development & Economic Growth to award a contract to refurbish the tennis courts (following a compliant procurement process) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure Culture and Heritage.

### 4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 The grant award from the LTA provides the Council the ideal opportunity to a) enhance the quality of tennis provision in the Borough, b) to deliver exciting programmes for sport, exercise and play that supports health and wellbeing of residents, c) to work with partners to bring

investment and income into our parks, d) to build relationships and work with volunteers, e) to give local communities the chance to come together.

## 5. **Options Considered**

5.1 Without this investment in these two sites, the quality of tennis court provision in the Borough will continue to decline, with a limited opportunity to increase participation in tennis to support the health and wellbeing of residents.

## 6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The works to refurbish the tennis courts will follow a compliant procurement procedure in line with the Public contract Regulations 2015 (PCR2015) and the Council's constitution. There will be need to ensure appropriate and timely legal input into the completion of any contract/agreements.

## 7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 Officers of the council will work closely with the LTA to develop a diverse tennis programme attract a wider range of users include those with protected characteristics.

## 8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 Initial estimates provided by LTA have indicated the project can be delivered within the broad cost envelop of £163,700.

8.2 It is proposed that the project is financed through the acceptance of a grant from the LTA totalling £133,700 with the balance of £30,000 funding coming the Councils capital programme. Should the project costs exceed this figure, given the financial situation the LTA will be asked to bridge any funding gap in the first instance.

8.3 To support the delivery of the tennis programme there will be an additional revenue cost to the Council of circa £6,000 per annum to maintain the access controls for the gates to the tennis courts and a licence fee for the LTA's preferred online booking platform/mobile app.

8.4 The required maintenance regimes for the Westland's Sports Ground/wolstanton Park Tennis Courts for their refurbishment will be met from within existing resources.

8.5 A key grant condition from the LTA is that the Council provide adequate finances to resurface their courts at the end of their lifespan. Have considered this grant condition Officers are recommending that provision should therefore be made in the Council capital programme in seven to ten years' time, as opposed to creating a sinking fund that would be funded from potential revenue.

## 9. **Major Risks**

9.1 It is proposed that all risks will be proactively managed through a small working group of officers from Sport and Active Lifestyles, and Operational services to ensure that the delivery project meets the aspirations of the Council and the LTA.

9.2 There is a small risk that the capital costs may exceed the LTA's original cost estimates. If this is the case then the LTA will be asked to bridge any shortfall in the first instance. Should further monies from the Council be required, then a request will be made to the Councils CPRG in line with normal practice.

## 10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 The improvements to the tennis courts at the Westlands Sports Centre/wolstanton Park contribute to the UNSG and Climate Change objectives in a number of ways. Principally, through partnership working, improving health and wellbeing and supporting, infrastructure and skills, the following UNSGs are supported.



## 11. Key Decision Information

11.1 This is a key decision and appears on the Council's forward plan.

## 12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 None

## 13. List of Appendices

13.1 None

## 14. Background Papers

14.1 None