

Community and Wellbeing Committee
20 June 2019

RAINBOW LEISURE CENTRE- CHANGE OF USE OF BOWLS HALL

Head of Service/Contact: Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community

Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No

If yes, reason urgent decision required:

Annexes/Appendices (attached): **Annex 1:** GLL's Change Control Notice
Annex 2: Bowls Hall vs Play Park Consultation at Rainbow Leisure Centre
Annex 3: Letter from Hunter's Bowling Club
Annex 4: Letter from local bowler

Other available papers (not attached):

Report summary

A contractual Change Control Notice has been submitted to the Council by its contractor Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) in relation to a proposal to change the existing use of the underutilised bowls hall into a soft play area for families with young children.

Recommendation (s)

- (1) To note the results of the consultation exercise undertaken by GLL with users of the Rainbow Leisure Centre.
- (2) To approve the Change Control Notice submitted by GLL at Annex 1, and agree to change the use of the Bowls Hall at Rainbow Leisure Centre into an Indoor Children's Soft Play area.
- (3) Subject to 2), agree to relocate the provision of bowls into the Sports Hall of the Rainbow Leisure Centre, as a programmed sport.
- (4) Subject to 2), recommend that consideration is given to bringing a report to Environment and Safe Communities Committee regarding opening Hook Road Car Park on a Sunday.

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1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 The Rainbow Leisure Centre contributes directly to the Council's Key Priority '*Supporting our Community*' and is an important contributor to the Council's developing approach to Health and Wellbeing.

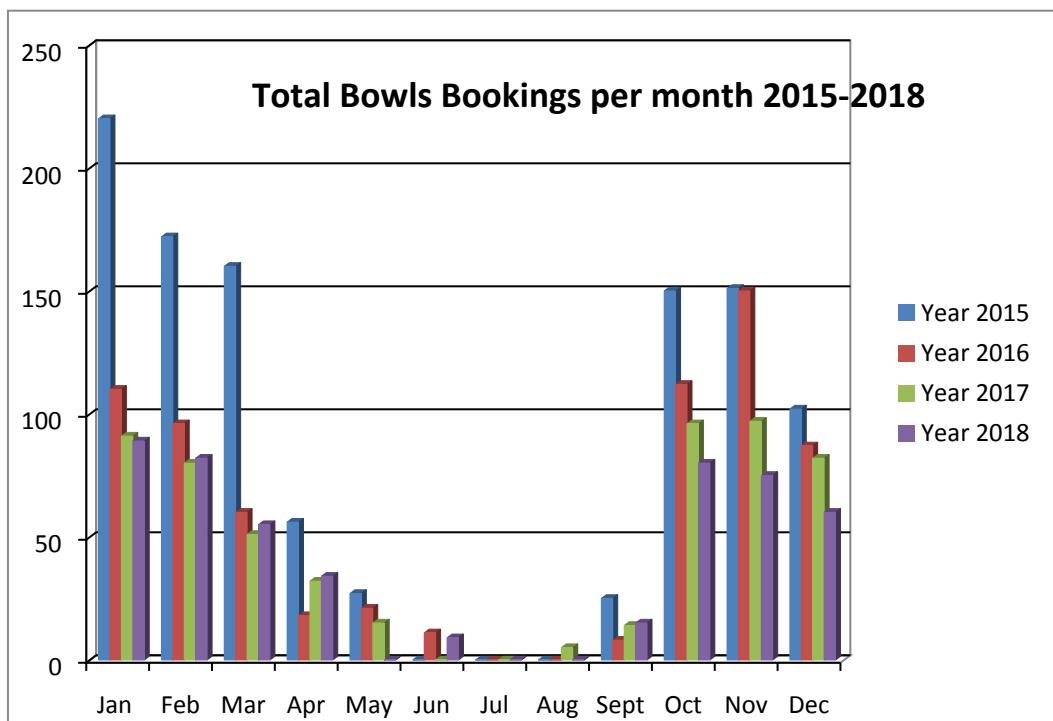
2 Background

- 2.1 The Rainbow Leisure Centre is a multi-use, multi-purpose community centre that was rebuilt in 2003. The currently named Bowls Hall at the Rainbow Leisure Centre is a dedicated facility for indoor bowls, which as a result restricts other activities from taking place in the same location.
- 2.2 Over the last 5 years the Rainbow Leisure Centre has seen a steady but significant decrease in the number of clubs/groups playing indoor bowls. To date the number has dropped from 25 to 13 active clubs/groups. The total number of people playing indoor bowls at the Rainbow Leisure Centre as part of a club or group is currently 148 of which just 71 are residents of Epsom & Ewell.
- 2.3 The decline in people playing indoor bowls is expected to continue at a similar rate. Across Surrey, there are 11 large indoor affiliated bowls clubs, but overall these have seen steady decline in participation of 1-2% per year.
- 2.4 The Bowls Development Alliance has confirmed that since the new Rainbow Leisure Centre was opened in 2003 there have been no clubs from the Centre affiliated to the BDA or Bowls England. This means that no competitive bowls matches have been played there suggesting that those that currently play, do so for more recreational benefits. Since none of the clubs are affiliated, they do not receive support from the BDA or Bowls England
- 2.5 Indoor bowls is seasonal which means that between May and September the number of bookings in the purpose built hall drop significantly and in some months are non-existent. This effectively means that for 5-6 months of the year the current bowls facility remains un-used and stands empty as demonstrated in Graph 1 below:

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Graph 1: Bowls Bookings taken over 4 years at Rainbow Leisure Centre



3 Proposal

- 3.1 The CCN submitted by GLL details a proposal to change the use of the existing indoor bowls hall into a Children's Indoor Play Park and to relocate the bowls provision as a programmable sport within the existing sports hall.
- 3.2 The introduction of a new children's indoor play park would enable greater access to the Leisure Centre by families with young children, boosting related activity rates, and addressing a current short-fall in provision for young children.
- 3.3 To ensure accessibility for all, GLL plan to offer a pay and play option for anyone on income support or with a disability. Therefore, they would pay £20.10 per year for a P&P membership and get a discount of 20% off the entry price each time they visited. This would mean that they could pay back their membership in savings if they visited once per month and would benefit thereafter.
- 3.4 The current utilisation of the centre by age group is as follows:

0.-4 years	1.8%
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5-10 years	3.8%
11-15 years	5.9%
16-44 years	42.3%
45-59 years	18.0%
60+ years	28.2%

- 3.5 GLL have introduced a similar concept in Sutton at their Sports Village, 5 miles away from Rainbow Leisure Centre. This facility includes a specific area for under 3's with a sensory zone and play aimed at this younger age group. There are also more challenging play structures for over 3's with slides and climbing frames which allow children to explore their physical capabilities within a safe and secure environment.
- 3.6 The play park at Sutton Sports Village is currently attracting 3,200 visits every month, this boosts the 0-8 year old usage and if replicated will help to increase the Rainbow Leisure Centre monthly usage by 8-10%.
- 3.7 There are currently limited options within the borough for indoor children's play areas. These are;
 - 3.7.1 Giggles soft play at the Harrier Centre in Ewell.
 - 3.7.2 Jupiter Jo's in West Ewell.
 - 3.7.3 Once Upon A Time Soft Play in Epsom.
- 3.8 The proposal also seeks to relocate the provision of bowls to the main sports hall as a programmed sport similar to all the other sports offered at the Leisure Centre. A provisional sports hall programme has been drawn up to ensure that all existing clubs can be accommodated within this area.
- 3.9 If the proposal for a new indoor soft play park is approved, GLL will purchase 1 or 2 full length bowls mats at a quoted price of £3,613 each mat. In addition, Fenders will be installed at a cost of £400, 2 metres from the end of each mat to stop the bowls from leaving the end of the mat. Comfortable padded seating (up to 20 chairs) will also be provided for the bowlers in the sports hall. This investment will allow for bowls to be a bookable sport as with all other sports offered at the Rainbow leisure centre.
- 3.10 The indoor play park which will be fully funded by GLL, would be built on top of the existing bowls rink so it could be brought back into use at any future point if required.

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- 3.11 Details of the proposed Children's Indoor Play Park are attached as appendix 1 in **Annex 1**.

4 Timeframe

- 4.1 If the Community & Wellbeing Committee approve the proposal then GLL will seek to commence the necessary works immediately.
- 4.2 The Bowls clubs/groups will be formally contacted to confirm the situation and to offer an alternative provision in the sports hall.
- 4.3 Work on installing the new Indoor Children's Soft Play Park would commence at the beginning of August and would be expected to be completed by the beginning of October.
- 4.4 GLL will ensure Health & Safety inspections are carried out ahead of the new facility being officially opened.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 As part of their proposal, GLL has undertaken a consultation process with their Leisure Centre users. This consultation process was open for 4 weeks from 09/04/19 – 12/05/19 and was open to all users of the Rainbow Leisure Centre.
- 5.2 The consultation was split into 3 separate methods which included a face-to-face meeting with the bowlers, an on-line survey and a hard-copy questionnaire.
- 5.3 Details of the consultation process and the results obtained are detailed at **Annexe 2**.
- 5.4 All current bowls clubs/groups playing at the centre were represented at the face-to-face meeting. Understandably the bowlers were not happy about potentially losing their purpose built bowls hall and having to play on a long mat in the sports hall. However, 23% of bowlers who also completed a questionnaire did support the proposal to change the use of the bowls hall to an indoor soft play park.
- 5.5 The on-line survey saw 1555 emails sent out to those members who had opted in to GDPR regulations. Only 6% responded but the majority of those were interested in a Play Park at the Rainbow Leisure Centre.
- 5.6 The hard-copy questionnaire received the biggest response with 355 questionnaires being completed which included those bowlers who completed a questionnaire after their face-to face meeting. When asked '*would you welcome the idea of a new play park at the Rainbow?*' there were 294 yes responses and 61 no responses.

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- 5.7 Following the consultation period, the Council has received two letters detailed at annex 3 and annex 4, from Hunters Bowling Club and a local bowler stating their disappointment in the proposal by GLL. The Hunters Bowling Club have requested an extended consultation period of one year to give them time to promote their sport indoors and out.

6 Implications of the Proposal

- 6.1 GLL are seeking to offer a more enhanced provision for the under 8's age group. The introduction of an Indoor Children's Soft Play Park at the Rainbow Leisure Centre will help to increase participation rates for this age group.
- 6.2 The Indoor Children's Soft Play Park will attract more visits to the centre which in turn is likely to result in a rise in memberships. As children play, older family members will visit the café or use other facilities within the centre which is likely to increase revenue for the centre.
- 6.3 Parking is already very limited on site but GLL have already introduced more effective signage to direct customers to and from Hook Road Car Park. This car park is managed by EEBC and so any rise in the number of customers using Hook Road Car Park will result directly in an increase in income for the car park.
- 6.4 GLL have asked if the Council would consider opening Hook Road Car Park on a Sunday to accommodate the rise in visits to the Rainbow Leisure Centre at the weekends as a result of the new soft play park. The Head of Operational Services has confirmed that this will be given further consideration and will require a full viability report and then if appropriate a report will be brought to Environment and Safe Communities Committee for the necessary changes.
- 6.5 If the soft play park proposal was approved and the bowls was re-provided in the sports hall it is likely that some bowls clubs/groups would fold or leave to go elsewhere.
- 6.6 If an extended consultation period was considered to allow the bowlers time to promote their sport, it would delay GLL's proposal and therefore have an impact on their ability to generate additional income sooner.

7 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 7.1 Under the existing contract GLL pay an annual management fee to the Council. GLL are not proposing to change the contracted payment.
- 7.2 GLL will be fully funding the proposal so there is no financial risk to the Council. The total cost of the play park and therefore GLL's value of investment is expected to be £281,905 gross.

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- 7.3 Changing the use of the bowls hall to a new Children's Play Park will allow GLL to generate increased revenue and memberships. This improved financial position will ensure a more competitive position when the existing contract is re-tendered in 2025.
- 7.4 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report, although any decision to change car parking opening times should be subject to a review of additional costs and potential additional income.

8 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 8.1 A Change Control Notice (CCN), is the contractual mechanism for any change in operation under a contract to be instigated.
- 8.2 The Council is the freehold owner of the Rainbow Leisure Centre and in accordance with the requirements of the Rainbow Redevelopment Service Agreement with GLL they have submitted to the Council, a Change Control Notice (CCN). The CCN is attached at **Annex 1**.
- 8.3 The requirements are set out in Schedule 21 of the Agreement and clause 1.2, states '*the Council shall not unreasonably withhold their agreement to any change*'. It is therefore expected that the Council will give their agreement to a CCN unless there is a good and sufficient reason for withholding this.
- 8.4 The contract states that upon receipt of a CCN the Council should evaluate this and then as appropriate either:
 - 8.4.1 Request further information, or
 - 8.4.2 Approve the CCN, or
 - 8.4.3 Notify the Operator of the rejection of the CCN
- 8.5 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

9 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 9.1 There are no implications for the purpose of this report.

10 Partnerships

- 10.1 There are no implications for the purpose of this report.

11 Risk Assessment

- 11.1 If the Council does not evaluate the CNN then it may be found to be in breach of contract.

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- 11.2 If the Council does not approve the CNN there could be a negative impact on the financial value of the contract which could have an adverse implication for the re-tendering of the contract in 2025.

12 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 12.1 GLL have submitted a Change Control Notice detailing a proposal to change the use of the bowls hall into an Indoor Children's Soft Play Park.
- 12.2 The bowls hall effectively stands empty for 6 months of the year due to the seasonal nature of the sport. There has also been a significant decline in the number of clubs/groups using the bowls hall which is expected to continue.
- 12.3 GLL have introduced a very successful indoor soft play park at Sutton Sports Village which has seen a significant increase in the number of visits to the centre.
- 12.4 GLL are seeking to provide an improved offer for younger children in the borough to attract younger visitors and to meet the demand for indoor soft play facilities within a limited market.
- 12.5 The majority of the existing bowlers at the Rainbow Leisure Centre are opposed to any such proposal and would like the opportunity to see if they can increase their playing numbers and therefore improve on the financial viability of the bowls hall. However, as none of the bowls clubs/groups who play at the centre are affiliated to Bowls England or the BDA it is unlikely that playing numbers will increase to such an extent that it changes the financial viability of keeping the bowls hall in use.
- 12.6 Indoor bowling is not being stopped at the Rainbow Leisure Centre but relocated into the sports hall as a programmable sport similar to all other sports available at the centre.
- 12.7 The quality of the bowling facility will not be as high as the purpose indoor bowls hall but as no competitive bowls takes place at the centre, the opportunity for recreational bowls will not be lost.
- 12.8 Within the existing contract Schedule 21: 1.2, states '*the Council shall not unreasonably withhold their agreement to any change.*'
- 12.9 The contract states that the Council shall evaluate the CCN as attached at Annex 1 and as appropriate either:
 - Request further information, or
 - Approve the CCN, or
 - Notify the Operator of the rejection of the CCN

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- 12.10 The recommendation is that the Community & Wellbeing Committee approve the CCN and allow GLL to change the use of the Indoor Bowls Hall to an Indoor Children's Soft Play Park. In doing so indoor bowls will be relocated to the sports hall.

Ward(s) Affected: (All Wards);