

## TENNIS IN THE BOROUGH

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	None

### Summary

To present a non-repayable grant funding opportunity from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish and upgrade all tennis courts in the borough.

### Recommendation (s)

#### The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Grant permission for officers to apply for a non-repayable grant from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish and upgrade all tennis courts in the borough as set out in section four.**
- (2) Agree to a request to Strategy and Resources Committee to release of £10,330 from capital reserves for a 10% match funding contribution from S106 funds.**
- (3) Agree to the principle of charging for usage of tennis courts to fund the ongoing maintenance, as required by the Lawn Tennis Association.**
- (4) Note that a further report will be presented to the June 2022 meeting of the Committee to set out proposals for the future management of the tennis courts.**

### 1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 This is a time critical opportunity to bid for a non-repayable grant to refurbish and upgrade all twelve tennis courts in the borough.
- 1.2 The grant funding opportunity offers a sustainable way to maintain good quality tennis provision in the borough, mitigating budget pressures for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in the future.

# Community and Wellbeing Committee

## 17 March 2022

### 2 Background

- 2.1 Officers have been liaising with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and other tennis providers to explore opportunities for tennis and the fast-growing sport of Padel Tennis.
- 2.2 Whilst there is still a desire to explore opportunities for Padel Tennis in the borough, this report focuses on a time critical funding capital investment opportunity from the LTA. The main points of the funding are as follows:
- Part of a LTA £30 million capital investment project to refurbish 4500 public tennis courts in the UK to boost British Tennis.
  - Full support of an LTA consultant to inspect the sites, scope the work and prepare the bid.
  - 100% non-repayable funding option, although a contribution towards funding will be looked upon more favourably by the funding committee.
  - Assistance from the LTA to work with the local authority to determine the most sustainable and beneficial operating model which could be an in-house management solution or an arrangement with an LTA approved tennis provider who will manage and maintain the courts on the Council's behalf and contribute towards a sinking fund to ensure there is adequate provision to keep the courts and gate access technology well maintained in the future.
  - Provision of an online booking system and installation of secure code entry gates on all courts to manage access.
- 2.3 The LTA have advised that their funding committee meets on a fortnightly basis to review applications and as this opportunity is open to all Local Authorities, on a first come, first served basis, the LTA consultant is encouraging Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to put in an application before the fund is depleted.

### 3 Current Position

- 3.1 There are 12 tennis courts available across the borough for anyone to go to and play tennis for free. These are located at:
- Alexandra Recreation Ground, Alexandra Road (three courts)
  - Court Recreation Ground, off Pound Lane (three courts)
  - Poole Road Recreation Ground, Poole Road (two courts)
  - Gibraltar Recreation Ground, West Street (two courts)
  - Auriol Park, Salisbury Road (two courts)

# Community and Wellbeing Committee

## 17 March 2022

- 3.2 If customers wish to guarantee their playing time, they can choose to book and pay for courts by telephoning our Customer Services team.
- 3.3 As most people choose to just turn up and play, the tennis courts currently provide very little income. The council is reliant on its limited revenue budgets to maintain the courts on an annual basis and larger refurbishment projects can only be achieved by using the council's capital investment to maintain and sustain the playing facilities.

### 4 Proposal

- 4.1 This report seeks permission from the Community and Wellbeing Committee to pursue a non-repayable grant funding opportunity with the LTA to bid for funds to refurbish all twelve tennis courts and explore sustainable options for managing the courts in the future, if the application is successful.
- 4.2 Some initial work has been carried out by the LTA consultant to assess the condition of the 12 courts and an estimate of costs has been provided:

Estimated court/fencing renovations for five sites/12 tennis courts	£84,000
Estimated Gate Access system for five sites	£18,500
<b>Total estimated project cost</b>	<b>£103,300</b>

- 4.3 To increase the council's chances of being awarded a grant it is proposed to offer a 10% match funding contribution of £10,330, which can be funded from S106 funds from within Parks and Open Spaces subject to the approval of the Strategy and Resources Committee.
- 4.4 If the Community and Wellbeing Committee agree to support the grant application and a further request to Strategy and Resources Committee for the 10% match funding, officers will work with the LTA to submit the bid. If the bid is approved, there will be a further site visit by a technical specialist from the LTA who will ratify the estimated project costs.
- 4.5 If the bid is successful, officers with the assistance of the LTA, will then progress to a detailed analysis of potential operating models and present a further report to this committee in June 2022 to discuss and agree the preferred option.
- 4.6 Early exploration of operating models suggest that the income derived from either an in-house model or from partnering with an external tennis provider will be sufficient to ensure the facilities remain sustainable for at least 10 years post renovation.

# Community and Wellbeing Committee

17 March 2022

- 4.7 To achieve this level of sustainability, one of the main conditions of LTA Parks Fund is the requirement for an annual sinking fund to be set up which states that £16,500 pa from any income derived (based on the grant application of £103,300) from the hire of our twelve courts is set aside to provide for renovation works in the future and to pay for annual maintenance of the gate access system and use of the online booking system (ClubSpark).
- 4.8 The installation of gate access systems coupled with the LTA's online court booking system (ClubSpark) creates the opportunity to provide a highly customised, flexible, and wide-ranging tennis offering within the borough. This could include a tailored pricing structure based on area and/or timeslots, free play sessions where people can turn up and play for free, coaching sessions and competitive sessions.
- 4.9 As this stage of the grant application does not require us to specify which operating model the council will adopt, there is time to fully assess and risk rate management options as there are risks and benefits to both managing the facility in-house or partnering with an external Tennis Provider who is responsible for managing and maintaining the entire operation.
- 4.10 It is therefore proposed that a detailed analysis of both operating models is completed if the bid application is successful. This analysis will then be presented to the June meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee for a final decision to be made.

## 5 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

### 5.1 Impact Assessment

- 5.1.1 It is important to ensure that our tennis facilities cater for all members of the community, and this will be addressed when formulating our future operating model.

### 5.2 Crime & Disorder

- 5.2.1 Engaging people, especially young people, in physical activity and organised sports is an effective tool to help reduce boredom, improve mental health, and create a diversion from anti-social behaviour, violence, crime and drug use.
- 5.2.2 Well-maintained and well-used sporting facilities promotes a vibrancy in our parks and outdoor spaces which helps to reduce the fear of crime and disorder.

### 5.3 Safeguarding

- 5.3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

# Community and Wellbeing Committee

## 17 March 2022

### 5.4 Dependencies

5.4.1 Progress of this item is dependent on approval from Strategy and Resources Committee to release the 10% match funding required from Capital reserves and a successful application to the LTA Parks Investment Team.

### 5.5 Other

5.5.1 There is a risk that if we don't pursue this opportunity as soon as possible, the LTA Parks Renovation Fund will be depleted and we will miss the opportunity to refurbish our courts, install gate entry technology and generate income which can be used to sustain the courts in the future.

## 6 Financial Implications

6.1 A 10% (£10,330) match funding contribution is required to support this grant application. It is proposed to draw these funds from the S106 balance within Parks and Open Spaces.

6.2 Charging would need to be introduced for all courts to generate sufficient income to meet the sinking fund requirement detailed in paragraph 4.7. If the cost to improve the courts exceeds the estimated £103.3k, then the sum expected to be ringfenced may exceed the £16.5k currently assumed.

6.3 The income received for tennis court hire in the financial years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2029/20 was £341, £189 and £429 respectively, as to date, users only pay if they wish to guarantee the time of their court.

6.4 The current charges for 2022/23 for adults, as agreed by Community & Wellbeing Committee in January 2022, are £10.20 per hour for one court, or £15.50 if floodlights are required. The charge for 2022/23 for juniors is £5.30.

6.5 Other local tennis courts linked to the Lawn Tennis Association charge £8 per hour. Should we adopt this charge, and assuming all courts were used equally, each court would need to make in the region of £1.4k per annum to achieve the income required for the sinking fund. This would equate to 175 hours per court per year.

6.6 Should Members agree to submit a funding bid to the LTA, a further report in June would provide detail of expected usage and income levels. This will include free play session proposals, as mentioned in Paragraph 4.8.

6.7 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The current available balance of the S106 balances within Parks and Open Spaces is £15,987.

# Community and Wellbeing Committee

17 March 2022

6.8 Consideration will need to be given to the sinking fund requirement, as should income levels not exceed the annual sum expected, this could result in an unbudgeted revenue cost to the Council, which would need to be funded from elsewhere within the Committee budget.

6.9 The full revenue costs of the proposal will need to be understood before entering into any agreement. This includes the conditions surrounding the sinking fund and costs related to having the courts externally managed and maintained.

## 7 Legal Implications

7.1 At this stage of the funding application process there are no legal implications to consider as the Council is not committed to accepting any funds awarded.

7.2 If the application is successful, legal assistance will be required to assess the terms and conditions of the funding agreement and provide the advice necessary to proceed.

7.3 Legal advice will also be required at a later stage in the process if the Council chooses to enter into an agreement with an external Tennis provider to manage and maintain the renovated courts on our behalf.

7.4 **Legal Officer's comments:** none arising from the content of this report

## 8 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

8.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Safe and Well
- Opportunity and Prosperity
- Smart and Connected
- Effective Council

8.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

8.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** none for the purpose of this report

8.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** none for the purpose of this report

8.5 **Partnerships:** This proposal builds a partnership with the LTA to secure a long term vision for tennis in the borough.

# Community and Wellbeing Committee

## 17 March 2022

### 9 Background papers

9.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

**Previous reports:**

- None

**Other papers:**

- The LTA Park Renovation Fund presentation
- The LTA Park Renovation Stage 1 Application Form