

TITLE OF REPORT: Surplus Declaration and Community Asset Transfer of Felling Park Bowling Green and Pavilion

REPORT OF: Colin Huntington, Strategic Director, Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities and Peter Udall, Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to (i) the property known as Felling Park Bowls Pavilion and bowling green being declared surplus to the Council's requirements and (ii) the future proposal for the property after being declared surplus.

Background

2. At its meeting on 19 September 2017 (minute no. C62), Cabinet approved the rationalisation of the Council maintained stock from 27 to 14 bowling greens as recommended within the Playing Pitch Strategy. It was also agreed, however, to undertake a feasibility study to consider the potential asset transfer of 3 sites at Pelaw, Marley Hill and Felling Park.
3. Feasibility studies were completed for the clubs at Pelaw and Marley Hill and Cabinet subsequently approved the surplus declaration and community asset transfer of the two clubs at its meeting on 24 April 2019 (minute no. C178).
4. The bowls club in Felling Park is part of the Friends of Felling Park and Town Centre and, at that time, it was considered that further work was required on the feasibility study for the transfer of the green and pavilion. The Friends of Felling Park and Town Centre have worked on their business plan to ensure that a bowls offer can continue to be provided from the park and are now in a position to proceed with a community asset transfer of the green and pavilion.

Proposal

5. It is proposed that the property be declared surplus to the Council's requirements and a 35-year lease at a nil rent be granted to the Friends of Felling Park and Town Centre pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) declares the property surplus to the Council's requirements; and

- (ii) authorises the Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth to grant a 35-year lease at a nil rent pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy to the Friends of Felling Park and Town Centre.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To manage resources and rationalise the Council's assets in line with the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan.
- (ii) To realise savings identified through rationalisation of the bowling green portfolio as agreed by Cabinet (Minute No. C62 – 2017/18).

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APPENDIX 1 - Felling Park Bowls Pavilion and Bowling Green, Holly Hill, Felling, Gateshead

Policy Context

1. The proposed surplus declaration supports the overall vision for Making Gateshead a Place where People Thrive. In particular, supporting communities to support themselves and each other.
2. The proposed declaration will also accord with the provisions of the update of the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2015 – 2020. In particular, the rationalisation of the estate through the disposal of an uneconomic asset.

Background

3. Following the decision by Cabinet to rationalise the bowling green stock at its meeting on 19 September 2017 (Minute No. C62) work was carried out with the clubs operating from the three greens at Marley Hill, Pelaw and Felling to determine the sustainability of a community asset transfer.
4. Cabinet subsequently approved the surplus declaration and grant of a lease pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy at its meeting on 24 April 2019 (Minute No. C178) for Pelaw and Marley Hill, but at that time Felling was not in a position to proceed.
5. Felling bowlers are part of the Friends of Felling Park and Town Centre and together they have worked on developing a sustainable business plan. The group is now in a position to proceed with a community asset transfer of the green and pavilion. Terms have been provisionally agreed for a 35-year lease at a nil rent pursuant to the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy.
6. The property known as Felling Park Pavilion and Bowling Green, which is shown edged black on the attached plan, is held by the Council for the benefit improvement and development of the borough pursuant to section 120(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. The Council has the authority to dispose of land at an undervalue of no more than £2,000,000 and that it is likely to contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of persons residing in the borough. The purpose of the disposal will clearly contribute to the social and environmental wellbeing of the borough.

Consultation

7. In preparing this report consultations have taken place with the Leader, Deputy Leader and ward councillors for Felling.

Alternative Options

8. The option of retaining the property has been discounted as the maintenance of the green and pavilion had been identified as an efficiency saving. There are currently no alternative viable options for the use of the site.

Implications of Recommended Option

9. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms the future disposal of this property is expected to generate revenue savings for the Council.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** - There are no direct staffing implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
 - c) **Property Implications** - The future disposal of this property will result in a reduction in the Council's overall property portfolio thus reducing operational costs.
10. **Risk Management Implication** - The future disposal of this property will remove opportunities for vandalism to a vulnerable property.
11. **Equality and Diversity** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.
12. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - The future disposal of this property will remove opportunities for crime and disorder, especially vandalism and theft.
13. **Health Implications** - Health implications will arise as result of this report, as the club will continue to operate and develop activities providing both physical and mental health benefits for the members of the club and other residents who participate in activities delivered.
14. **Sustainability Implications** - The future disposal of this property will reduce the level of the Council's operational costs, including gas and electricity use, which will subsequently result in a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.
15. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.
16. **Ward Implications** – Felling.
17. **Background Information** – minute nos. C62 (2017) and C178 (2019)