

TITLE OF REPORT: Proposed Demolition of the former Bowls Pavilion, Birtley Welfare Park, Birtley

REPORT OF: Colin Huntington, Strategic Director Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to the demolition of the former Bowls Pavilion, Birtley Welfare Park, Birtley

Background

2. The property, which is shown edged black on the plan provided, is held by the Council as trustee. The property is no longer required by the Council for service delivery, for the reasons set out in the Appendix, and the Council has to act in the best interest of the Trust and its beneficiaries.
3. Over the last few months the building has been subject to significant vandalism and most recently an arson attack, which has led to the need for the property to be demolished as soon as possible.
4. As the building has been vacant since about 2018 and there has been a lack of interest from any groups wishing to take lease of the property, due in part to its location within the park, which makes it relatively difficult to access, rebuilding the facility is considered inappropriate and not in the interests of the Trust and its beneficiaries.
5. As the property is held in trust the consent of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) is also required, but given the poor condition of the building and the need to demolish it as soon as possible, is it intended to seek approval to the demolition from the CISWO while the work is being carried out.

Proposal

6. It is proposed that the property be demolished and the land incorporated within the surrounding open space within the park, as this is considered to be in the best interests of the Trust, and seek approval from CISWO while the work is being carried out.

Recommendations

7. Cabinet in its capacity as Trustee is asked to approve that the property be demolished and the land incorporated within the surrounding open space within the park.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To manage the Trust's assets in line with the objects of the Trust and in line with the Councils Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan.
- (ii) To mitigate any potential future costs incurred through further acts of vandalism and realise savings for the Trust.

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Policy Context

1. The proposal supports the overall objectives of the Trust and the Councils Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan. The proposal also helps to deliver the Council's Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy, in particular the policy objective to create and develop healthy and sustainable places.

Background

2. Following Cabinet's decision on 19th December 2016 to develop partnerships and asset transfer arrangements with sustainable, development minded clubs to manage their own sites and/ or facilities as part of the Gateshead Playing Pitch Strategy (Minute No. C141), the bowling club that used the pavilion and adjacent bowling greens was encouraged to take on a lease but eventually decided to move to alternative facilities nearby where clubs had decided to take on a lease of their property.
3. As a result, the building has been vacant since about 2018 and although some interest was shown in using the accommodation by the nearby Community Centre to develop their youth provision, no other interest has been received, which is considered to be partly due to the pavilion's location within the park, as it is situated centrally within the park at the top of steep steps, which makes it relatively difficult to access, even if being used in conjunction with the adjacent bowling greens which are at the bottom of the steps..
4. Over the last few months the building has been subject to significant vandalism and most recently an arson attack, which has led to the need for the property to be demolished.
5. In view of the above circumstances, rebuilding the facility is considered inappropriate. Therefore, the demolition specification has been adjusted to take account of the fact the building will not be reinstated – the steps will be removed, the adjacent palisade fence will be straightened across the site and the ground left so that levels and finish correspond to the surrounding land.
6. The building shown edged black on the plan provided and the surrounding land is all held by the Council as trustee and demolition and incorporation of the land within the surrounding open space of the park is considered the most appropriate course of action, and in the best interests of the Trust and its beneficiaries. The demolition is subject to the consent of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) as the building is held in trust and given the urgency of the work, approval to the demolition will be sought from the CISWO while the work is progressing.
7. The cost of demolition, including removal of the steps, realignment of the palisade fence and incorporation within the surrounding open space is estimated to be £40,357 and suitable provision exists within the Councils Insurance budget.

Consultation

8. In preparing this report consultations have taken place with the Leader and Deputy Leader, and the Portfolio holder for Culture, Sport and Leisure. The Ward Councillors for Birtley have also been consulted.

Alternative Options

9. The option of rebuilding the pavilion has been discounted as this is not considered to be in the Trust's best interest.

Implications of Recommended Option

10. **Resources:**

a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that the cost of demolition will be met from the Insurance budget.

b) **Human Resources Implications** - There are no direct staffing implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

c) **Property Implications** – The future demolition of the pavilion will result in a reduction in the Council's overall property portfolio thus reducing operational costs.

11. **Risk Management Implication** - The future demolition of the pavilion will remove opportunities for vandalism to vulnerable properties.

12. **Equality and Diversity** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

13. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - The future demolition of the pavilion will remove opportunities for crime and disorder, especially vandalism and theft.

14. **Health Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

15. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - The future demolition of the pavilion will reduce the level of the Trusts costs, such as repairs and maintenance, and will result in a reduction in the boroughs carbon footprint.

16. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no implications arising from this recommendation.

17. **Ward Implications** – Birtley.

18. **Background Information** – None