

INFORMATION

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

meeting date: 23 AUGUST 2022
title: RV3G FACILITY UPDATE
submitted by: JOHN HEAP – DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: MARK BEVERIDGE – HEAD OF CULTURAL AND LEISURE SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide an update on the RV3G facility at Edisford for the 2021/22 season

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Corporate Objectives – To be a well-managed council providing efficient services. To help make people's lives safer and healthier based on identified customer needs.
- Community Objectives - To improve the health and wellbeing of people living and working in our area.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council opened the 3G pitch facility at Edisford in September 2019, however since that date the use has been impacted significantly by the pandemic which has seen intermittent closures and reduced use, in line with the relevant health guidance applying at the time.

2.2 The facility has proved to be very popular with a wide range of clubs, groups, and casual users. It has predominantly been used for football, though following the first lockdown, tennis proved very popular, when the indoor facility was unavailable.

2.3 During the 2021/22 season, the following clubs used the facility regularly – Langho FC, Chatburn FC, Clitheroe Wolves FC, Rimington FC, Whalley Juniors FC, Wilpshire Wanderers FC, Readstone United FC, Clitheroe FC, Waddington FC, Ribchester Rovers FC.

2.4 There were 16 regular casual group bookings and two walking football groups. Two regular football leagues staged their matches at the pitches: East Lancashire Junior Football League (Sunday), Accrington and District Junior Football League (Saturday)

2.5 Several coaching course and activity camps were held, plus ten events from the Schools Sport Partnership as well as ad hoc booking for matches by local senior schools.

2.6 The education room has been used by the Councils' Healthy Lifestyles Team for Escape Pain sessions, Heartwatch and Weight Management classes.

2.7 In terms of numbers the facility averages 400 participants per day this equates to 73% of the Monday to Friday slots, Friday being the quietest evening with only 33% slots being filled. This is not unusual because the clubs which are the primary users are involved in league matches on weekends.

2.8 RV3G facility is often praised by players from both resident and visiting teams for the quality of the playing surface and the facility overall. In part this is due to the original

design and the investment the Council made, allied to the maintenance which is necessary to keep the surface and the overall facility in the best condition. During the 21/22 season the pitch received 140 hours of maintenance, mainly consisting of drag brushing the surface in accordance with manufacturers guidance. Plus, the Council appointed a specialist contractor to carry out a further 20 hours of maintenance, this involved decompaction of the infill and specialist cleaning. This year 13 tonnes of infill rubber crumb was added to the pitches to ensure it meets the safety criteria and playability outlined by the manufacturer. The pitch lines were also repainted this year.

- 2.9 Due to the popularity of the facility, it exceeded the income target for the year achieving over £133k, around £25k higher than the revised budget expected. This in part is due to the creative programming which has been employed to maximise pitch use

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 As can be seen the pitch is a very popular facility, which leads to demand outstripping supply during the busiest periods. All clubs and regular casual users are asked each year to provide their requirements well in advance of the season commencing. Some clubs are very good and provide the information even ahead of the deadline the Council sets, others must be chased and are late with their requirements.
- 3.2 It has been reported to Committee previously that the Council seeks to book the youngest age players into the early bookable slots (5-7pm), which given that many clubs have players under 10 years old, ensures they are not being asked to play later into the evening. Of course, this means that other bookings are often pushed back further into the evening, which can result in some dissatisfaction, however there are only so many available bookable slots per hour and to accommodate as much of the demand as possible the Council must negotiate with the clubs and casual users to arrive at a mutually convenient arrangement.
- 3.3 One way the clubs can maximise their allocated slot on the main pitch is to utilise the main pitch so that they run multiple coaching sessions at one time. Some clubs are more effective than others at this, as the pitch can be divided to allow up to 6 sessions per hour, depending upon the age of the players being coached.
- 3.4 It is important to understand that price cannot be used as a way of controlling demand. The facility still must compete with other similar facilities and therefore from a user perspective they will compare our charges with other sites. Also, as the pitch ages, even with maintenance, seeking to recover ever higher fees will be resisted by users. Because of the intense use the pitch surfaces are subject to, especially in the football season, close monitoring of the surfaces will be maintained to see if this will reduce the lifespan before replacement surfaces are required.
- 3.5 At peak time the car park reaches capacity, with users from the pool, tennis and the sports centre all competing with the pitch users for space. This leads to people parking outside of the designated bays which in turn creates difficulty for other drivers trying to park.
- 3.6 The planned day time educational use is not happening this year, though the company seeking to run the BTec course is still optimistic for it commencing in September 2023.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 RV3G has proved to be an excellent investment for the Borough, and the demand for space shows that the interest from users is not diminishing.

MARK BEVERIDGE
HEAD OF CULTURAL & LEISURE SERVICES

JOHN HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES