

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

DECISION

meeting date: TUESDAY, 18th AUGUST 2022
title: MARDALE PLAYING FIELDS
submitted by: JOHN HEAP – DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: ADRIAN HARPER – HEAD OF ENGINEERING SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Members with a briefing on the above

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley.
- Corporate Priorities – To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At Mardale Plying Fields there are four football pitches used primarily by Longridge Town FC and Longridge Juniors.

2.2 For many years the pitches have suffered from poor drainage rendering them unplayable at times through the winter period. Although the pitches themselves are very level and in dry weather provide an excellent playing surface.

2.3 Earlier in the year, the ditch which runs around the southern boundary of the field was cleared out, it had become over the years, silted up and overgrown. This contributed to make the limited drainage in the field work better. Though this did not prevent matches being cancelled over the winter.

2.4 A section 106 contribution of £80,400 was allocated from the Dilworth development for the improvement of the pitches.

2.4 The Council sought tenders for a drainage scheme on the pitches designed to be undertaken during the summer period.

2.5 A topographical survey was undertaken on the pitches as part of the preparation for the drainage design.

2.6 Council officers are collaborating with the Lancashire FA on a national project aimed at improving grass pitch quality. This has involved an inspection by an agronomist to all our pitches and a report and recommendations will follow.

3 ISSUES

3.1 The tenders came back considerably higher than the sum available, the lowest was over £100k above the budget sum.

3.2 The window for doing work on the pitches this year has now passed and plans need to be put in place to carry out work during Spring/Summer 2023, ready for the 2023/24 football season.

3.3 The teams which play on the site were disappointed that no improvement work could be carried out this year, because it means a winter of interrupted play. Therefore, it is important that a plan is made to ensure whatever decision the Council makes can be carried out next year and the budget invested.

4. OPTIONS

4.1 Committee could ask Policy and Resources to consider allocating an additional sum for the work to be completed next year, however given that the lowest tender was over £100k higher this year, it can be expected that figure will rise by at least another £10k. given the other priorities for service delivery the Council has over the next year, such a significant sum is unlikely to be achievable.

4.2 The pitches could be heavily spiked with our "Verti drain" machine followed by spreading of fine/medium sand mix, up to 80 tonnes of sand per pitch would be required. The sand would cost c£6,500 per pitch, plus the time to verti-drain and a contractor to spread the sand which would add up to a further £4,000 per pitch. This would potentially allow sand to be applied over two consecutive seasons, thereby improving pitch quality significantly within the budget we have available.

4.3 The Council could wait for the FA report and then price up the proposals in that report, which are based on hierarchy with improving soil quality at the top descending to physical drainage works at the bottom.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** –Any additional capital investment above the s106 money will need to be resourced via capital bids. The cost of any scheme arising from the FA requirements at this stage are still unknown.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None arising as a direct result of this report.
- Political – Work carried out on the pitches to enable them to be used throughout the winter period will be welcomed.
- Reputation – None arising as a direct result of this report
- Equality & Diversity – None arising as a direct result of this report.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Ask officers to prepare a drainage improvement scheme based on the verti draining and sand filling over a one or two year period.

5.2 Report to a future meeting of this committee with an update on the scheme and,

5.3 Prepare for the implementation of the scheme as soon as the 2022/23 football season is complete.

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