

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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meeting date: 28 MAY 2024  
title: RIBBLE VALLEY 3G PITCH UPDATE REPORT  
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### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Committee with an update on the winter season usage for the Ribble Valley 3G pitch and provide the opportunity for members to ask questions.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
- Community Objectives – Creating flourishing, healthy and happy communities.
  - Corporate Objectives - Providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The RV3G first opened in late 2019, prior to the interruptions caused by the Covid Pandemic in 2020 and 2021.
- 2.2 Following that period of disruption, the site has gone from strength to strength, with many local clubs and casual users using the facility on a regular basis throughout the winter period which has just finished.
- 2.3 A lot of use is block booked using two time periods. One is for 8 months from September to April and the other is for the four summer months. In summer there is a marked reduction in team sport use. This booking regime means that users have times assigned each week for their certainty and the council has confirmed and consistent usage.
- 2.4 Each year all existing and new users are asked to submit their requirements for the following season so requests can be fairly considered. It is common for existing teams to request changes in times and use each year.
- 2.5 The facility is maintained by a part time staff of two overseen by the Sport Development Officer, with input from pool staff as needed.

### 3 USAGE FOR 23/24 SEASON

- 3.1 The following clubs have had bookings and used the facility; 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, Mellor Juniors FC, Sabden FC, AFC Longridge, Readstone JFC,
- 3.2 There have been 14 groups who have had casual block bookings. These consist generally of groups of friends who wish to play football weekly at the same time.
- 3.3 Walking football is a popular activity for men and there are 2 groups who have regular bookings for their sessions.

- 3.4 There are several Football Leagues which use the facility for their league fixtures, this is something which has become especially important in the winter periods when most of the grass pitches become unplayable locally due to the wet winters which the County now has. These leagues include East Lancashire Junior Football League (Sunday), Accrington and District Junior Football League (Saturday), RV District Football. These allow all age ranges from junior to seniors to play their games.
- 3.5 The facility is a very popular location for coaching courses and activity camps. This is primarily due to the high quality education room that was built as part of the development. The following groups and organisations have held sessions at the RV3G; Ribble Valley Football Academy, Tag Sports Northwest, Grassroots Training Supplement.
- 3.6 Unsurprisingly the site has proved popular for local schools to book for their matches: St Augustine's School, Ribblesdale High School, Grammar School have all held games there where they have played teams from outside the Borough. Plus, the School Sports Partnership, which provides activities for all school age children has held over 20+ events this year at the site. This has often seen hundreds of children plus parents visiting the facility for an event.
- 3.7 The Council's own Healthy Lifestyles Team have used the community room for a range of classes for local people, including – Escape Pain, Heartwatch and Weight Management. The site is particularly good for the range of clients who attend due to the accessible nature of the building.
- 3.8 Many local businesses and organisations have made one off bookings for their staff or customers to play football and use the facility, these tend to be during the day and helps ensure the site is used during times when there is traditionally less demand.
- 3.9 Last year it was hoped to secure a training provider who could deliver Btec qualifications from the site. Unfortunately this did not materialise due to student numbers being too low. Despite best efforts we have not yet secured an alternative provider.

## 4 USAGE

- 4.1 Unsurprisingly weekday evenings are the busiest periods for bookings, with over 93% of available slots Monday – Friday being booked out, Friday is our quietest evening with 66% slots being filled, this is because teams and groups who would normally demand slots during the week are often playing on the weekend. Nonetheless, RV3G averages over 400 participants per day, plus associated spectators which make it a hive of activity.

## 5 MAINTENANCE

- 5.1 The pitch surface requires significant ongoing care to ensure it both meets the high expectations of our users and visitors, as well as to make sure it achieves the necessary standards for re-certification every three years. Therefore over 200 hours of regular maintenance work is carried out annually by staff plus additional more specialised work by contractors brought in for such things as line marking and any repairs needed. This has resulted in very positive comments from players who regularly state that it is one of the best surfaces they play on in the region. Unsurprisingly, this is a source of great pride for the staff involved in presenting the facility in such good condition.

## 6 INCOME

6.1 The facility has overachieved in terms of income against predictions in the last 2 full years of operation, which is an indication of both demand and the way that the space is utilised and managed. There will be a ceiling for income, however we continually seek to attract additional uses such as use of the education room for children's parties.

6.2 The prices charged for use are set annually and these tend to be in line with competing facilities and the guidance provided by the Policy and Finance committee for Council fees and charges. Care has to be exercised when setting fees, because the site operates in an elastic market, where teams could move to other competitors if the fee charged outstrips their ability to afford.

## 7 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The Council took a calculated risk in building the facility at the time it did, however over the past two full years of use, that investment has proved invaluable to the thousands of people who have benefited from using it. This helped many to play where previously they would have been prevented from doing so or have had to travel outside the Borough.

7.2 Undoubtedly there is sufficient demand for similar facilities in the Borough and even at the site itself not all demand can be met. Discussions continue with the sporting bodies such as the Football Foundation to secure similar facilities across the borough. The Playing Pitch Strategy being presented to committee in August this year will be instrumental to any bid for external funding.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS – None

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