

**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 7 December 2010  
**Subject:** Creasey Park Community Football Centre Management Arrangements  
**Report of:** Cllr David McVicar, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles  
**Summary:** To consider and agree the preferred operator for Creasey Park Community Football Development Centre, Dunstable

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**Advising Officer:** Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities  
**Contact Officer:** Jill Dickinson, Head of Leisure Services  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** Dunstable  
**Function of:** Executive  
**Key Decision** No

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The investment in new or improved leisure facilities supports priorities in the Sustainable Communities Strategy that will enable Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to build strong and sustainable communities.

### **Financial:**

CBC maintains landlord responsibility for the facility and will be required to budget for the associated landlord costs in the region of £50,000 in 2011/12 irrespective of the decision made which will be a budget pressure on existing resources in Leisure Services. £107,000 Section 106 funding is available to cover the longer term life cycle costs of the building.

### **Legal:**

Dunstable Town Council lease Peppercorn Park, a 6.7 acre piece of open space that is incorporated into the facility. Dunstable Town Council has agreed to relinquish the lease on this land, but those legal agreements have not yet been concluded.

### **Risk Management:**

The project is managed within Prince 2 methodology, and a risk analysis has been undertaken as set out in the Business Case.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

If the agreement between CBC and the operator was terminated, then the staff would become the responsibility of CBC.

### **Equalities/Human Rights:**

CBC via the operator is required to deliver the Football Development Plan which includes targets for driving up participation in a number of under represented groups, including 50+, girls and women, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

### **Community Safety:**

Through sport we can work with hard to reach groups and other areas of the community to develop understanding and promote cohesion through the provision of sport opportunities for different groups within the same geographical area. Provision of football will enhance community cohesion through the provision of sport and healthy lifestyle opportunities. We will enhance family development through engagement of the full family in sports programmes and social activities. The development plan seeks to raise standards of behaviour through the Football Association, (FA) Charter Standard and Respect campaign, and increase the levels of and opportunities for the involvement of new volunteers. The football development manager will seek to ensure the local community safety agenda be supported by this facility.

### **Sustainability:**

CBC is seeking to appoint a preferred operator to manage the facility and ensure its success and sustainability by delivering a profitable business plan and delivering the Football Development plan.

### **Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:**

- The project has not been subject to consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**To consider and agree the preferred operator for Creasey Park Community Football Development Centre, Dunstable.**

<i>Reason for Recommendation(s):</i>	<i>So that CBC can ensure the delivery of the vision and objectives of the facility in accordance with the Football Development Plan and associated Football Foundation grant conditions.</i>
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### **Background**

1. In June 2010, Executive authorised expenditure of £3.041 million to build a new Community Football Development Centre at Creasey Park, Dunstable.
2. At the same meeting, Executive also agreed to delegate to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Healthier Lifestyles to agree management arrangements for the facility in accordance with the Community Engagement Strategy.

3. Central Bedfordshire Council's Community Engagement Strategy sets out the principles for enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils. The Council will work closely with Town and Parish Councils to devolve budgets for 'quality of life' services to those who want them and where the service will be enhanced by doing so. Each application to deliver a devolved service must be supported by a robust business case that demonstrates improved value for money.
4. The facility is currently under construction and is anticipated to be ready for hand over to a suitable operator in March 2011. The facility will continue to be the asset of Central Bedfordshire Council who will be required to meet annual land lord costs including a modest maintenance budget for day to day repairs and lifecycle costs, building insurance, and rates. These financial costs in 2011/12 are in the region of £50,000 depending on which management option is agreed and will be a pressure on the Leisure Services budget. £107,000 Section 106 funding is available be put into a reserve fund to cover the longer term life cycle costs of the facility.
5. The project attracted £700k from the Football Foundation, which includes a revenue contribution of £80k towards a Football Development Officer post which will be recruited and managed by the preferred operator.

### **Management Options**

6. The overall vision for Creasey Park Community Football Development Centre is set out in the Football Foundation bid;  
  
'To provide a quality facility that will have a bias towards junior participation but will be open and accessible to all and will have a strong development plan to increase participation in youth, adult, girls and disability football.'
7. In order to deliver that vision, the centre has the following project objectives agreed with the Football Foundation;
  - Increase participation in Sport and active recreation (with 1,500 more people participating in football, running and BMX cycling)
  - Widen access by targeting priority groups (children and young people, 50+, women and girls, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities)
  - Improve levels of performance (club accreditation, coach education, and via competition and leagues)
  - Improve health and wellbeing (by increasing opportunities to play, coach or officiate, holding festivals and tournaments and providing health information)
  - Create safer and stronger communities (via family and social activities, and provision of diversionary activities)
8. In addition, the Council and the stakeholders always had intended for the facility to be available for wider community use, so that it becomes a hub for the benefit of the local community.

- 9 The operator will be responsible for the day to day operation of the facility, recruitment and management of facility staff, grass pitches, artificial pitch and BMX maintenance, building maintenance up to a cost of £1,000, and the delivery of the Football Development plan as agreed by the Football Foundation.
- 10 The operator will be responsible for setting up and managing a stakeholder group made from representatives of users of the facility. This group will provide information to the operator on user issues and ongoing development of the facility.
11. The facility will remain the asset of CBC with landlord responsibilities. If the operator was to hand the facility back, CBC would also pick up staffing costs of all employees at the facility who would have legal protection to be transferred to the new operator.
12. Currently there are two potential operators of the facility, Dunstable Town Council and Bedfordshire Football Association which could deliver these objectives. Both have presented 5 year business plans based on worst case income and worst case expenditure.
13. The relative strengths and weaknesses of these two operators are set out below;
- 13.1 Dunstable Town Council (DTC).

Relative strengths;

- A local government body with close links to the local community
- DTC authorised that it was prepared to be the operator of the facility in December 2009. (DTC meeting of Full Council 7 December 2009, Management of Creasey Park Football Club)
- A key partner and stakeholder in the development of the Football Development bid and Football Development Plan.
- Reached agreement with South Bedfordshire District Council on Section 106 contributions and land disposal to enable the project to develop.
- Qualified and experienced senior management team
- Considerable experience in grounds maintenance functions, leisure and community facility management (e.g. Priory House, the Mayfield Centre, The Place, and Downside Community Centre), marketing, finance, human resources management and wider strategic business development
- Delivers a 5 year operating contract with a 3 year review. Termination is agreed with 6 months notice either side.
- Predicts an operating surplus of £25k over the lifetime of the 5 year business plan and has agreed any operating surplus would be ploughed back into the facility
- A financial contribution from DTC of £10k per annum is included in the business plan.
- Will create and manage a stakeholder group to ensure the Football Development Plan is delivered.

### 13.2 Relative weaknesses

- Salary costs include 25% on costs for all the staff.
- Less experience of operating a Football centre
- The Business Plan does not include costs towards premises rates of approximately £45,000 - £50,000 paid by CBC.

### 13.3 Bedfordshire Football Association (Beds FA)

#### Relative Strengths

- The County Football Association is based in Dunstable
- A key partner and stakeholder in the development of the Football Development bid the Football Development Plan.
- Qualified and experienced senior management team
- Directly manages the Peter Newton Pavilion, the Beds FA head quarters and a football and community facility.
- Has experience in football facility development and club development across Bedfordshire
- Offers economies of scale by operating the Peter Newton Pavilion
- Delivers a 5 year operating contract.
- The business plan includes a contribution of £7,500 per annum to CBC premises rates. If Beds FA qualify for non domestic rate relief at 70% (of £45,000), then the bill to CBC will be £6,000.
- The business plan includes additional financial incentives for the football clubs of £10,000 over 5 years.
- Will create and manage a stakeholder group to ensure the Football Development Plan is delivered.
- Salary costs include 15% on costs for all the staff

### 13.4 Relative weaknesses

- Predicts an operating surplus of £11,531 over the lifetime of the 5 year business plan to be ploughed back into the facility.
- Is less experienced in wider community facility management.
- The potential premises rates bill is in the region £37,500 - £42,500 if Beds FA does not qualify for non domestic rate relief.

## **Risks on the success of the project**

- 14 CBC requires an operator that can deliver the overall vision and objectives of the project and fulfil the Football Foundation grant conditions which, in the main, is the delivery of the Football Development Plan.
- 15 The delivery of the Football Development plan relies on engagement with the local football and sports clubs which are identified in the bid as the key agents of club development. If the Football Development Plan is not delivered, the Football Foundation is entitled to request their funding be returned.
- 16 Key to this success is an effective managing operator that can manage the building and multi faceted grounds to meet the needs of the partner clubs and wider community, in order to maximise the opportunities available to reach and surpass income targets.

- 17 The Town Council has formally considered its position and has given authority to the Town Clerk to enter into arrangements to manage the facility. The Town Council has an understanding that it will be the managing operator.
- 18 Beds FA is a key stakeholder in the project irrespective of whether it manages the day to day operation of the facility, as its primary function is to develop football in Bedfordshire. It is named in the bid as a key enabler of club and player development, competitions and leagues, workforce development and minority groups.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

- 19 A decision on the preferred operator is required in order to enable the successful operation of the new facility in Dunstable. Delegated authority enables the Director to make a decision as indicated in paragraph 2 of this report. When Executive agreed this in June 2010, only one operator was identified. However, since then a proposal from a second operator has come forward.
- 20 Legal advice has confirmed that it is appropriate for both proposals to be considered. Officers have also sought advice from the Football Foundation. The Football Foundation does not prohibit CBC from considering an alternative operator so long as that operator can deliver the Football Development Plan in accordance with the bid and grant conditions. As the alternative operator is Bedfordshire FA, then the Foundation will only require for CBC to confirm to them which operator has been selected.
- 21 A timely decision is now significant. The successful operator will be undertaking considerable work in preparation for the anticipated start date of April 2011, including advertisement and recruitment of the new Football Development officer, the booking of pitches, liaising with clubs and establishing the stakeholder group.

### **Background Papers:**

Executive Report June 2010 on Creasey Park.  
Football Foundation application and supporting evidence July 2009

**Location of papers:** (CBC Priory House)

**Appendices:** None