



AGENDA ITEM: 5(o)

CABINET: 10th November 2015

**Report of: Assistant Director Community Services
Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration**

**Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (People and Places)
Managing Director (Transformation)**

**Relevant Portfolio Holders: Councillor Y. Gagen
Councillor I. Moran**

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SUBJECT: CHEQUER LANE PLAYING FIELD

Wards affected: UpHolland and all Skelmersdale wards.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider requests from local football teams for agreements to secure the use of land at Chequer Lane Playing Field, UpHolland as football pitches.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the proposal to enter into a licence agreement with Skelmersdale United Youth Academy to use the land at Chequer Lane, Up Holland , shown at appendix 1, as football pitches be approved.

2.2 That the entering into a lease arrangement with Skelmersdale United Youth Academy for a new changing pavilion on the site , on the location of the old changing rooms, be approved in principle subject to planning consent being obtained.

2.3 That the above agreements should include community use agreements to give Skem Men-Aces the use of a pitch and the changing pavilion.

- 2.4 That the Assistant Director Community Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to establish the agreements with Skelmersdale United Youth Academy, subject to all necessary consents and approvals being obtained.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Chequer Lane Playing Fields ceased to be used as formal football pitches over 10 years ago when demand reduced and the changing facilities were demolished. Since that time, the main area of the fields to the south of the public footpath (see appendix 1 –Location Plan: Area B), has been used as public open space.
- 3.2 The smaller area to the north of the footpath (see appendix 1 – Location Plan: Area A), has had some occasional use as football pitches but demand from individual teams reduced and has not been used for the last 3 years.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Council has been approached by two separate clubs with requests to lease the area marked 'A' to be used as formal football pitches with an option to build changing rooms/community facilities at the site. The land requested is approximately 5.41 hectares and can accommodate 3 full size pitches and 4 junior pitches, plus an area for parking and proposed changing facilities.
- 4.2 Skelmersdale United Youth Academy (the “Academy”) is a charter standard development club for juniors, affiliated to Skelmersdale United and Liverpool F.A., which currently runs 22 junior teams of varying ages, and has a membership of approximately 300 players. For the last 11 years they have used the Tower Hill Playing Fields in Up Holland for training their teams, but are keen to secure a site which they could use as their home ground, and build their own changing/community building, to help develop their club. They feel that the Chequer Lane site would be the best site for them to fulfil these aims.
- 4.3 Skem Men-Aces (the “Men-Aces”) is a charter standard club established specifically for adult males with disabilities and currently has a squad of 50 players. They have been operating in the Skelmersdale area for 6 years but to date, have had to hire facilities on which they can play. They too are looking for a home site on which to play and also build a changing/community facility.
- 4.4 Both clubs are keen to secure the Chequer Lane site, and both feel they have the ability to attract the resources required to build the facilities they need. The pitches would need some initial maintenance works but could be available almost straight away. The construction of changing/community facilities would need more negotiation and planning but could utilise the site of the previous changing rooms.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Both of the clubs that have made these requests are worthy causes and Members may feel that they merit support from the Council by way of entering into formal agreements for them to use Council owned land to develop their clubs with the resultant benefit for the local community. Discussions have been held

with both clubs regarding their requests and they have agreed on a potential way forward.

- 5.2 It is proposed therefore, that the Council enter into a licence agreement with the Academy, as the much larger organisation, to use the land shown as area A in Appendix 1 as football pitches. This agreement would entail the academy taking on all maintenance and management of the site. This site would remain as public open space.
- 5.3 It is also proposed that the Council give a binding agreement to entering into a lease arrangement with the Academy for a new changing pavilion on the site of the former changing rooms.
- 5.4 The agreements to be entered into would include a community use agreement which would give the Men-Aces use of a pitch and the use of the Changing Pavilion when required. This use by the Men-Aces and any pooling of resources would be co-ordinated between the clubs.
- 5.5 The area of land to be covered by the licence would remain as public open space, allowing informal use when not required by the clubs.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 The project will support the Council's strategic aims in respect of improving access to quality facilities, providing facilities to improve the health and quality of life of the community.
- 6.2 The community use agreement for the site will allow wider involvement from the local community.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Academy have stated their intention to cover all the costs of the maintenance of the playing field and future development and operation of a changing/community facility. This would create a direct saving to the Council on grounds maintenance costs of around £3,200 per annum, plus a potential saving on the capital cost of building a changing pavilion of around £150,000, plus the on-going revenue costs of managing this building.
- 7.2 Any licence or future lease arrangements would incur the payment of a ground rent to the Council.
- 7.3 The movement of the Academy to the Chequer Lane site would leave the Tower Hill site in Up Holland, which they currently use, vacant and available for alternative use.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 In respect of future use of this site, it is important that the Academy have the ability and resources to bring the future aims to develop a changing/community

facility to fruition. A joint initiative with both clubs contributing would make better use of resources currently available, and would have a greater chance of attracting any external resources necessary.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Location Plan

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment