

Officer Response to Call In by Councillor Combley, Councillor Fodor, Councillor Denyer, Councillor Stevens and Councillor Bolton

Response of Dr Susan Milner, Interim Director City Wellbeing, Resilience and Strategic Partnerships (DPH)

Call In - Enhancement of six of the Ardagh Tennis Courts Cabinet Decision 5 June 2018 : Agenda Item 8

Call In: Paragraph 1

There has not been due consultation on this decision. The report presents as consultation discussion with ward councillors and trustees of the Ardagh Community Trust however discussion did not really take place. I was in a meeting where the opening gambit of the cabinet member present was that the six court decision had been made by the Mayor's office so that was the only proposal on the table, and was not up for discussion.

Officer Response:

The Cabinet report (Appendix B) states that:

External

Discussion have been held with the Ardagh Community Trust (ACT)

1. *The ACT's preference is to retain all 11 courts for inclusion in their community asset transfer, however on the basis the Council wants to retain six for inclusion in the wider parks tennis model the ACT are willing to compromise on their position.*

Whilst not explicitly referred to in the Cabinet report officers have met representatives from the ACT and ward councillors, including consultants from Sporting Assets appointed by ACT, on a number of occasions to discuss the Council's preference to retain the courts as part of a proposed wider parks tennis model. During various discussions with the ACT and ward Councillors, officers were advised that the ACT were only accepting of the Council retaining a maximum of four courts for tennis.

The date of those meetings is as follows:

City Hall: 31st July 2017, 8.30-9.15am

Attendees: Kevin Slocombe, Guy Fishbourne, Councillor Eleanor Combley, Councillor Tom Brook

City Hall: 18th October 2017, 1-2.00pm

Attendees: Kevin Slocombe, John Bos, Guy Fishbourne, Councillor Tom Brook, Councillor Eleanor Combley, Emma Reffold, Simon Cowley, Sam Thompson (ACT), Rob Savage (ACT), Julie Jones (Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)),

City Hall: 17th November 2017, 11.15 -12.15pm

Attendees: Nicky Roche (Sporting Assets), Guy Fishbourne

City Hall: 19th December 2017, 12-1.30pm – (At this meeting a potential compromise of 6 courts was first discussed)

Attendees: steve strong (ACT) Rob Savage (ACT) Julie Jones (Lawn Tennis Association) James Deem (Lawn Tennis Association) Guy Fishbourne, Councillor Asher Craig

Ardagh: 11th January 2018, 5.00pm

Attendees: Kevin Slocombe, Sam Thompson (ACT)

City Hall: 8th February 2018, 2-3.00pm

Attendees: Guy Fishbourne, Councillor Asher Craig, Richard Fletcher, Julie Jones (LTA), James Deem (LTA)

City Hall: 27th April 2018, 11-12 noon

Attendees: Guy Fishbourne, Councillor Eleanor Combley

City Hall: 2nd May 2018, 5-6.15pm

Attendees: Steve Strong (ACT), Sam Thomson (ACT), Rob Savage(ACT) Hilary Sudbury, Fiona Wright, Gemma Dando, Richard Fletcher, Guy Fishbourne, Asher Craig, John Bos

Call In Paragraph 2

The Consultation results on the citywide strategy have not been published which makes it difficult to gauge the extent to which that consultation supports this plan. There has been no consultation with local residents and users of Horfield Common and the Ardagh, and community consultation carried out by the trust indicates a high level of support for mixed use courts rather than exclusively tennis.

Officer Response:

Publication of the responses to the Sport & Active Recreation Facility Strategy (SARFS) coincided with this Call In. In total 139 pages of public consultation responses has now been published. In total there were 461 responses to the SARFS but only four specific responses related to outdoor tennis. Out of these four responses three respondents did not think there are enough outdoor tennis courts in the city. All four respondents perceive outdoor courts to be in poor condition, those who responded felt courts were in the wrong location and that availability was poor.

In relation to outdoor tennis the SARFS highlights that:

1. There is an opportunity to enhance existing courts in areas of the city with low participation rates. Project underway to encourage the use of existing publicly accessible stock and to increase informal play but with LTA fob access.
2. No additional facilities are required. Priority should be given to making better use of existing facilities to enhance tennis participation via a grass roots development programme and that a project is underway to encourage the use of existing publicly accessible stock and to increase informal play but with LTA fob access.

The consultation received 461 responses where the overarching response was that respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the contents of the strategy document. Public consultation has not resulted in any significant change to the direction of the draft strategy.

In September 2016 Council officers undertook consultation on the proposed wider parks tennis model in the form of a distributed questionnaire which explained the following:

Bristol City Council are looking to understand more about the use of Park tennis courts and to assess levels of interest in using them. To sustain a high quality tennis provision in the city a proposal has been put forwards to re-surface the courts within the parks, through joint funding from the Lawn Tennis Association and Bristol City Council. The resurfacing of the courts would see gate access technology installed, allowing the sale of fobs to access all courts in Bristol which would be sold on a household basis at an affordable cost. There would also be the facility for pay and play tennis and free play, alongside mass participation events. The proposal would ensure that sufficient funding was generated to maintain high quality, sustainable tennis courts for the future. There are a few short questions below that will help us gauge interest in tennis and ideas around the proposal, which should only take a few minutes to answer.

The above consultation was done on the proposed future fee paying model for tennis and targeted at the sites the model could be applied to which included users and residents near the Ardagh facility.

On September 30th 2016 the questionnaire was shared on the Friends of Horfield Common Facebook page.

Throughout September & October 2016 - Information and notice of the questionnaire was handed out at each of the neighbourhood partnership meetings where the courts are located. (Canford Park: Neighbourhood partnership meeting 26th September; The Ardagh: Neighbourhood partnership meeting 5th October; Eastville: Neighbourhood Partnership meeting 6th October; St George: neighbourhood partnership meeting 12th October; Redcatch: partnership meeting 21st September).

A presentation on the proposed parks model was also given to the Parks Forum.

The tennis court consultation had an overall response of 467 completed surveys. The survey was carried out in two main ways, through an online survey and through face to face surveys at the tennis court locations.

From the Ardagh 14 out of 75 responses were concerned about charging – 19% of all respondents

Call In Paragraph 3

It is not clear that there has been sufficient transparency about the basis for insisting that 6 courts are included in the city wide tennis offer.

Officer Response:

On numerous occasions, in meeting with the ACT and ward councillors the basis for retaining six has been explained.

As the National Governing Body (NGB) for tennis the LTA has a role to ensure that public tennis facilities are protected across the country and to find solutions to their long term retention and sustainability. There is recognition that councils who own such facilities are under significant financial pressure and the LTA endeavours to work with council's in all cases too:

- Reduce the liability that the council has to maintain courts by introducing sustainable operating models.
- Ensure tennis is a prominent choice for local people to take part in physical activity.

The LTA recognise that the site at the Ardagh is in a significant state of dis-repair. Nevertheless, it is committed to finding a solution to the site. The concept of having community building Café / facilities is something the LTA support and sees as successful in case studies in other places around the country.

The LTA and Council recognise it will be a challenge to retain and sustain all 11 courts and that there would also be some local demand for a multi-sport hard court space. In the ACT's preferred CAT terms all 11 courts are highlighted as being mixed use. In other options the ACT has stated they would be willing only to lease back 4 courts exclusively for tennis to the Council. This is not a position the LTA can support as this would mean a permanent loss of 7 at the site where tennis is concerned.

As such the LTA position was to retain 8 courts on the current site. Acknowledging the ACT's position was at best to agree only to a maximum of four courts being leased back to the Council, a compromise on six courts seemed reasonable. Six is a sufficient number to provide suitable programming opportunities, and the provision of leagues etc and provides sufficient robustness to the wider proposed tennis model to support an ongoing programme of sustainable parks tennis.

Signed:



Date: 18/06/2018

Interim Director City Wellbeing, Resilience and Strategic Partnerships (DPH)