

Statement: PS09.02

Cabinet – 6 October 2020

Re: Agenda item 9 – Sports Facilities in parks and green spaces

Statement submitted by: Laurence Rae

I am the elected Secretary of Eastville Park Bowling Club (EPBC), the new name for the former Whitehall Bowling Club which had an agreement with BCC to play bowls on the green for a period up to the end of the 2019 season.

Bowls has been continually played at Eastville Park since 1910. There were two first class bowling greens but only one is now being used. Agreement from the Council was received early in September 2020 to recommence bowling. Since then there have been regular bowls sessions on the green. Eastville Park Bowling club is a community bowling club and over the last three weeks 36 people, including the East Bristol Elderly Sikhs have enjoyed taster bowls sessions on the green. If the weather had been better I believe we could have doubled this number. This confirms there is significant interest in bowling at Eastville Park and this facility should be maintained for the community.

In respect of the green a proposal has been submitted in writing to the Council setting out essential maintenance works and offering to either fund it or to employ a contractor to carry out the work this autumn and to set up the green for bowls use from April 2021.

Plans are in hand for 2021. We have a group of paid up members and in December 2020 we will pay the clubs registration fee to Gloucestershire Bowls Association and City and County of Bristol Bowls Association. We plan to open in April 2021 with a series of taster sessions and community bowls events. We have a list of provisional fixtures against other bowls clubs within Bristol and South Gloucestershire. In 2020 we had 34 fixtures arranged. All were cancelled due to Covid19. Overall the club is extremely active preparing for bowling at Eastville Park in 2021.

In January 2020 representatives of the bowling club and Friends of Eastville Park (FOEP) had a very positive meeting with Richard Fletcher. He confirmed that the council want bowling to continue at Eastville Park. He also confirmed that he would recommend the green and the two buildings are taken out of the Council Review. It was agreed that Friends of Eastville Park would put forward a detailed business proposal for the bowling green and its two buildings. He agreed to involve the Council's solicitors regarding an agreement, an initial five year term was intimated. He also stated he needed to look in detail at the condition of the two buildings.

The business plan has been submitted by FOEP but I understand the Council has not yet responded. We are also awaiting discussions with the Council about maintaining the green for bowling in 2021. An option discussed is that the bowling club and FOEP take on the preparation of the green for bowling.

Overall, we have been very active and it is disappointing that none of these discussions and draft agreements are included within your Council report to the Cabinet on Tuesday. I would like the following considered in detail.

1. There is significant demand for bowling within the community for Eastville Park
2. Detailed proposals for bowling to continue at Eastville Park in 2021 and beyond have been submitted to the Council
3. The Council have not responded to these proposals

It is recommended that the recommendation for the main bowling green and its two buildings is included within Group C and

- a. The Council to confirm that Friends of Eastville Park and Eastville Park Bowling Club can continue to use the bowling green and its two buildings for 2021 whilst discussions continue to secure the long-term future of bowling in Eastville Park
- b. The Council to progress an agreement with EPBC and FOEP including some investment. The Council to work in partnership with EPBC and FOEP to realize further financial support and expertise from sports governing bodies and others
- c. The disused old bowling green to be retained in Group A and incorporated into the Bristol Future Parks programme without a condition to be used only for sport.