

## **Rother District Council**

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	18 September 2023
Report of the	-	Cabinet
Subject	-	References from Cabinet Meetings

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The Council is asked to consider recommendations arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 4 September 2023 as set out below.

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### **CABINET – 4 SEPTEMBER 2023**

#### **CB23/23. LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION TENNIS FOUNDATION GRANT**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services which sought approval to accept a Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) Tennis Foundation grant to resurface / refurbish the public tennis courts and access gates in Egerton Park, Bexhill.

In October 2021, the Government (supported by the LTA) launched a national £30m investment programme to rejuvenate derelict or poor-quality “open access” public only tennis courts and improve facilities, including access gates to support / increase popularity of the sport. Match funding was not required, however the Council would be expected to maintain the courts and provide public access to tennis facilities, as well as coaching.

The Council owned eight tarmacked courts at Egerton Park: two were leased to Bexhill Tennis Club (BTC), one was used for a general ‘kick-about’, the remaining five were available to the public. The ‘kick-about’ court was popular, therefore it was proposed that this be retained specifically for this usage. Detailed discussions with BTC had resulted in them wanting to renew their lease, which meant that the two courts they used would not qualify for funding. The Council would work with BTC to agree an appropriate length of lease that would support in BTC seeking alternative funding in the future.

Members raised concerns that the current three-year lease term with BTC was not a sufficient length for the club to realise a return on any investment made. Cabinet agreed that officers explored the possibility of a longer-term lease with BTC, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism and Joint Waste Contract.

A grant offer of £104,070.50, which had been increased to £104,954.50 since publication of the report, had been secured to complete works to the five remaining tennis courts, as well as install new access gates. In return, the Council was required to maintain a ‘sinking’ fund to meet the LTA criteria for surface refurbishment in 10 to 15 years, equivalent to £1,200 per annum per court, as well as enable tennis coaching and provide ‘tennis for free’ initiatives for all ages and abilities. To ensure

sustainability it was important that a mixture of tariffed and free sessions was delivered.

The report detailed the proposed works, and it was noted that the new gate system would link to the existing system, ensuring that an income stream was maintained, courts could be booked on-line in advance, which also helped to prevent anti-social behaviour and vandalism. It was confirmed that an alternative booking system to the on-line only booking service would be explored in due course, once a tennis coach had been appointed.

After deliberation, Cabinet was pleased to support the LTA grant being included within the Council's Capital Programme for 2023/24 and agreed that the funding be used to refurbish the five public tennis courts, as well as two controlled gates in Egerton Park, Bexhill. Cabinet also agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to enter into a call-off contract with the contractor appointed by the LTA to complete the refurbishment works.

**RECOMMENDED:** That funding of £104,954.50 be included in the Council's Capital Programme for 2023/2024.

Cabinet also **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the £104,954.50 grant from the Lawn Tennis Association Tennis Foundation be formally accepted to deliver five refurbished tennis court surfaces and two controlled access gates for public use in Egerton Park, Bexhill;
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to enter into a call-off contract with the contractor appointed by the Lawn Tennis Association to complete the refurbishment works; and
- 3) an extended lease with Bexhill Tennis Club be explored by officers in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism and Joint Waste Contract.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 7)

Councillor D.B. Oliver  
Leader of the Council