



Form 2 – Key Decision – Sheffield Parks Tennis Procurement – Appendix C

1.0 Strategic Context

1.1. Better Parks

The Better Parks Initiative was given Cabinet Approval by Sheffield City Council in 2018. The purpose of the initiative was to set out an investment proposal for Sheffield's green spaces for the next five years that seeks to sustain and improve them, especially in the city's areas of greatest health inequality where the health benefits of parks are the greatest.

We know that high quality green spaces make a major contribution to people's health and wellbeing, provide places that bring people together, act as the focus for community activity and improve the look and feel of an area, making it a more attractive place to live, work, invest and study. Sheffield City Council is committed to improving the facilities and services in parks and green spaces, to enhance the quality of life of people living and working within the city.

This requires substantial financial investment in an economic environment where the Council's budget is under unprecedented pressure. In response to this, the Better Parks Initiative provides a framework to maximise investment and optimise income, while also preserving what makes our green spaces so special.

Better Parks is all about working with creative, civic-minded businesses, organisations and community groups, in strategically identified areas, to explore new and exciting opportunities for both financial and social investment within parks, woodlands, sports facilities, ponds, picnic areas and more.

Since the inception of Better Parks in 2018, progress for this and many projects has been affected due to the pandemic. Now faced with the unprecedented financial challenges the Council is facing in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, projects such as this are more important than ever.

We must do things differently and work in ways that may feel at odds with the way we have done things in the past. If we fail to draw in investment and generate income, appropriately and sensitively, we will need to cut services and the impacts of that will be seen on our Parks and Green Spaces.

This is where projects such as the Parks Tennis Hub and Spoke model come in. We have the opportunity to invite partners to work with us to develop proposals, whilst bringing much needed external investment to this. We have been working with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), Sport England and our existing Parks Tennis Operator, Courtside, to consider potential options for the site and all are supportive of bringing external investment to this development.

1.2 Sheffield's Leisure, Physical Activity and Sport Strategy

Sheffield is currently refining and resetting its strategic approach to leisure, physical activity, sport and wellbeing linked to strategic priorities. This is particularly important following the impact of the global pandemic and its impact on the leisure industry and behaviour in relation to sport and physical activity.

In 2019 Sheffield City Council commissioned SLC (Sport Leisure Consultancy) to undertake a Leisure Review. This examined the ways in which the City's Leisure and Sport assets and services could be redeveloped to become as close to self-funding as possible through investment and service transformation and how the facilities could be managed in the future. This was driven partly by financial challenges, but largely by an ambition to improve the quality and accessibility of leisure facilities, the customer experience and to help achieve the vision and mission of the city's Move More Plan.

1.3 Sheffield's Move More Physical Activity Plan (www.movemoreshffield.com)

Move More is Sheffield's physical activity strategy which states a vision to; Create a healthier, happier and more connected Sheffield

The strategy has recently undergone a refresh following the initial 5-year strategy 2015-2020. Active Environments was a key outcome area within the first strategy, of which the improvement and appreciation of 'active spaces' was a focus. This area of work was led through an 'Active Environment's Sub-group which the P&C service have had significant involvement with.

Environments is one of 6 priority areas for action within the refreshed Move More Strategy and an Action Plan has been developed of which the progression of a number of pilot Active Parks including Hillsborough Park, is a priority.

1.4 What is an Active Park?

Getting a good balance between increasing the site's appeal and from this, visitor footfall requires an increase in the capacity of facilities to service their needs and ensure a quality experience is maintained.

We are proposing that the focus of the capital investment within the Activity Hub will be in the provision of recreational facilities that encourage people and groups to do repeat visits – in order to increase their physical activity levels and improve their health and wellbeing.

Quality welfare facilities are required to enable duration of visits to be extended and investment in park infrastructure is needed to accommodate an increase in user numbers. Investment examples include:

- Sports facilities
- Running, walking and cycling routes
- Informal recreational facilities such as wheels courts, balls courts
- Callisthenic and other gym equipment
- Park Café and toilets – which can be a destination in its own right
- Horticultural and ecological habitat – provide seasonal change interest for aesthetic value, contemplative and quiet space, or as part of community engagement and 'hands on' involvement (wildlife conservation volunteering opportunities)

- Accessible facilities (including car parking)
- Park infrastructure – paths, signs, seating etc.

The goal is for a park or green space to become an outdoor community health hub (or outdoor leisure centre). To achieve this a site would need to be well designed and managed with a 'brew, loo and view, with things to do for everyone' (*Outdoor City Strategy, 2016*)

Outside the education sector, sport and physical activity have traditionally been provided by commercial leisure operators (private member chains, leisure centres, budget gyms) or by community sports clubs (typically in a single sport and run by volunteers). While important, they aren't reaching or appealing to everyone and we have seen during the pandemic how people have engaged more with their parks and green spaces. We have also seen that people's attitudes and behaviours around exercise have changed with people trying exercise in the outdoors more than ever, therefore we feel there is a real opportunity to develop something that is a largely outdoors and more informal way of being physically active.

1.5 Sheffield's Green and Open Spaces Strategy 2010-2030

Sheffield Great Outdoors; states a vision 'for Sheffield to become the greenest city in Britain, proud of its rich variety of open spaces. Our Strategy will ensure that every area of the city has green and open spaces of exceptional quality for all current and future generations to use and enjoy'

Within the Strategy, there are number of key outcomes of which this proposal aligns. Most notably Promoting Health and Activity as well as Realising Economic Value

This page is intentionally left blank