

		AGENDA ITEM 5
		GTP/04/12
Committee:	Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board	
Date:	18 July 2012	
Great Notley Country Park – Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area		
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INTRODUCTION

This report provides Members with an update on the progress and performance with the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park from 1 September 2011 to 30 June 2012 under the management and operation of Braintree District Council (BDC). Prior to this period, the facility was directly managed and operated by Essex County Council on behalf of BDC.

When BDC took back the management and operation of the facility, it engaged NACRO (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), under a Service Level Agreement, to help deliver the objectives of the Football Development Plan. In addition, NACRO undertook to provide a sports development service by engaging members of the community to participate in sports activities at the AGP & MUGA. NACRO has lots of experience and established links with local clubs and other organisations through their work with the Braintree Community Sports Project and so are well placed to work with us on this area of work.

PROGRESS REPORT

The SLA with NACRO expired on 31 March 2012 and was subsequently extended for a further 12 months, funded by BDC at a cost of £15k.

NACRO has developed and delivered a number of events over the past 10 months in support of the objectives within the Football Development Plan which has clearly demonstrated to the Football Foundation and the Football Association that we are delivering the key components of the Plan. Examples include:-

- A programme of football tailored to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
- Two sessions of cricket and football per week engaging young people into positive rewarding activities that help to reduce anti-social behaviour, youth crime, etc.
- Five-a-Side football tournament involving local businesses such as Sainsbury's, Tesco, CSS Recruitment, Horse & Groom, etc. Nine teams entered, with a total of 59 people participating including those who live locally and those who live out of the District.

NACRO will continue to develop initiatives throughout the year to encourage more people into sports activities at the Park, particularly focusing on the off-peak sessions which are currently under-subscribed.

NACRO's input has been invaluable to date and positively received by the Football Association and Football Foundation at the Quarterly Review Meetings.

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

To complement the programme being delivered by NACRO, the Council has raised the profile and public awareness of the facility, with particular attention being paid to marketing and promoting the facility. A small group of officers from ECC/BDC/NACRO was established to take the lead on this area of work. Achievements to date include:-

- Creation of a new brand – *Pitches 4Play* – which is well advertised both on site and via the BDC website, with links to ECC and NACRO. NACRO have also set up a Facebook page in an effort to engage the younger generation.
- Development of a new web page on the Council's website specifically to promote and publicise the facility and to post information about events which are taking place.
- Publicity on the Council's Page in the local papers and also flyers distributed at local sports centres, schools, etc.

To complement the work undertaken by the team, we are currently applying to the Football Foundation for a small grant of £1,500 to support other marketing/promotional activities throughout the year.

BUDGET UPDATE

Income received during the second half of the 2011/12 financial year (7 months) was £25k compared to £16.5k for the same period the previous year (an increase of over 50%).

In the first quarter of 2012/13, income was just over £8k compared to £4.5k for the same period the previous year (an increase of 78%). Profiling the income based on the football season, it is expected that by the year end, income will have risen to £40k, with full year operating costs (including NACRO's fee) of around £50k. This will leave a shortfall of £10k which will be absorbed by BDC.

Whilst this is a much improved financial situation than was achieved during the first 18 months of the facility opening, our continuing aim to operate it on a profitable basis.

CONSIDERATIONS

Income levels are very much dependent on usage of the facility, which based on past experience will fluctuate from year to year.

Great Notley Football Club's participation in the Partnership has continued to diminish, although they continue to be the largest single user of the facility. The ongoing success of the facility and delivery of the objectives in the FDP requires a highly participative and inter-active Club. Further discussions are taking place with Great Notley Football Club in an effort to resolve this issue and secure greater buy-in from them; if that fails, we will look for another partner who can fulfil this role.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, good progress has been made in developing the facility, as reflected by the increased usage and income received. In order to sustain this trend, it is important that all partners continue to commit ongoing resources and sufficient time and effort to delivering the objectives set out in the Football Development Plan and to developing future plans and proposals.

With the Council's new contract with Fusion (BDC's new leisure operator), we will consider whether there is any merit in our having a joined up approach e.g. share learning, knowledge and experience, to ensure the continued growth and development of the facility at Great Notley Country Park.

Nick Day
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Braintree District Council