

Devizes Town Council

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RECREATION AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

You are summonsed to attend a meeting of the Recreation & Properties Committee at the following, place and date.

Date: Tuesday 5th July 2022

Time: Immediately following the Community & Civic Resources Committee

Place: Assembly Room, The Town Hall, St John's Street

Enquiries: 01380 723333

The Town Mayor: Councillor Corbett

Chairman: Councillor Giraud-Saunders

Councillors: Britten Brown East
 Gay Greenwood Ormerod
 Pennington Stevens Wallis
 Wooldridge

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2022 and which have been circulated alongside the agenda.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosure(s) of interest by a Councillor or an officer in matters to be considered at this meeting, in accordance with provisions of Sections 94 or 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At the Chairman's discretion, members of the public attending the meeting will be allowed to ask questions, make a statement or address the Council upon a matter of concern to that person which is relevant to the Council. A time limit of 5 minutes per person will be permitted, but this may be extended at the Chairman's discretion and a maximum period of 20 minutes has been allocated by the Council for this item of business.

5. REPORT FOR DECISION REPORT FOR DECISION – BOULES COURT IN HILLWORTH PARK

That the committee considers an appeal against an officers' decision not to progress the construction of a boules court in Hillworth Park.

Purpose of the Report

To review an officers' decision not to provide a formal boules court in Hillworth Park.

Background

At a meeting of this committee on the 21st June, it was asked that a decision be made to support or reject an officer decision not to build a boules/petanque court in Hillworth Park. After a brief discussion, it was agreed by the committee that officers would compile a comprehensive report on the matter setting out the implications for a boules court in Hillworth Park, which included size and specification of the court, possible location, evidence of anti-social behaviour, outline costs and possible usage. It was further agreed that the matter would be considered further at a special meeting of the Recreation & Properties Committee on 5th July 2022.

At the meeting of the 21st June officers set out in the report that they had received a request from a local resident to place a boules/petanque court in Hillworth Park to enhance the facilities for visitors. The request was for the Council to construct a permanent gravel boules court in the area of the sweet chestnut tree between the park centre and the aviary, which can be used by visitors and nearby residents.

It was further explained that officers considered the request but had rejected it on the grounds of the impact it would have on the park, maintenance issues and potential misuse. The report set out that whilst it was estimated that the cost would not be overly significant, currently no provision has been made in the budget; and whilst for serious players a court may have advantages, it is not essential for casual players; and there is a reasonable alternative where a grass surface can be used without the need to construct a court or even marking.

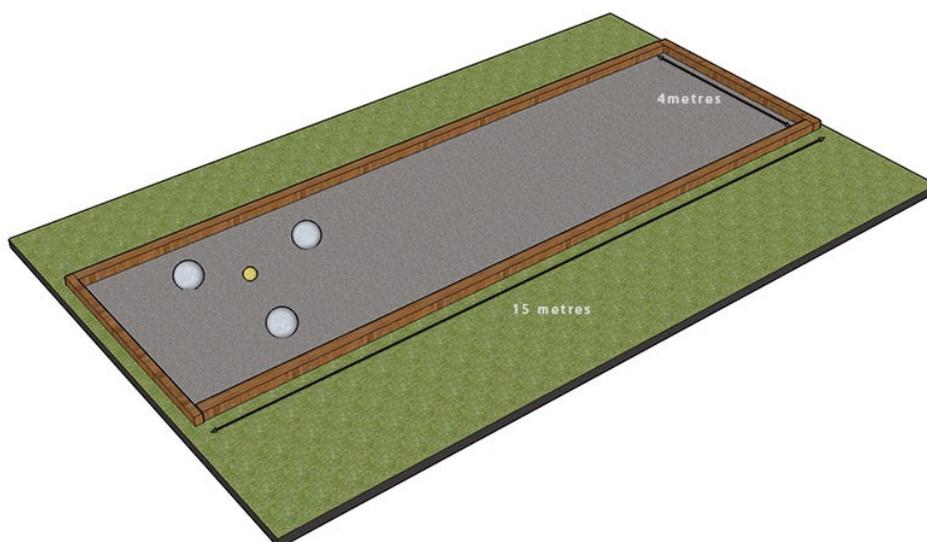
As with all officer decisions, those impacted by such a decision have the option to appeal to elected members through a direct report to the appropriate committee, and such an appeal has been made against the officer decision not to progress this request.

To help members review this decision, officers have provided further information about such a project, which it is hoped will be useful to members.

Size and construction of a Boules Court

In considering if it will be appropriate to construct a boules court in Hillworth Park, it is important to understand their size and construction.

The standard measurements for a boules court or a boules court state that it should be at least 12 to 15 metres long with a width of 3 to 4 metres. Having a pitch which is the standard size allows players of all ages and abilities to join in with this classic French game. A diagram showing the pitch layout is below for reference.



Following further research, the proper construction of a boules court is multi-layered as detailed:

Materials used in Boules court construction

Boundary materials.

Various materials can be used to construct the boules court boundary: railway sleepers, poles, tanalised timber etc. or the court can be simply sunk below the surface so the materials are held in naturally. To stop the boules rolling off and disappearing in the borders, a timber surround just above the court surface is a good idea.

Sub-base

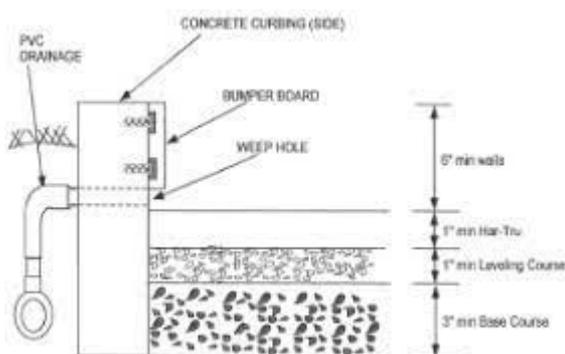
A coarse sub-base of either, gravel, road metal, small stones or shingle/clay mix (AP20 or AP30) is spread to give a compacted depth of 50mm within finished court depth 100mm.

Bed

Sand to a compacted depth of 10mm is laid over the sub-base course. The remaining 30mm to 40mm is filled with granule sized crushed lime, crusher dust or dolomite and lightly compacted. The surface should be raked to create a loose surface.

Topping

A topping of crushed shell, river or pea gravel (6mm to 7mm diameter) are suitable alternatives for producing a loose surface. It will also reduce the glare from the court.



Whilst keen boules players consider gravel courts to be the best playing surface, it can also be played on sand or grass, with grass being the predominant surface in Hillworth Park.

Location

The requested location for the boules court is on the area of grass between the park centre and the aviary which measures approximately 190²m, large enough to accommodate one court which should be about 60²m.

Whilst a practical location for use, the proximity to trees will have an additional maintenance obligation in the autumn due to its proximity to the large tree, and the significant leaf fall that will cover it will need to be cleared daily before the leaves break down and create leaf mulch within the gravel which in turn will support weed growth.

The Park is a designed landscape and as the Council has a number of sites around the town; if the Council is minded to agree the project, more work should be undertaken to look at other sites as there may be more suitable settings.



Plan shows requested location in Hillworth Park to approximate scale.

Cost

When officers originally looked at this project, they took a light touch approach, hence the estimated cost was based on materials only and the fact that there was no budget provision was the deciding factor.

Looking at the project again, should the Council decide it does wish to pursue the project, officers now feel the court would need to be designed properly to deal with drainage issues and be contractor-built, which will need to be costed. Officers now feel that they cannot give any advice on costing at this point.

Usage

With the exception of this recent request, the playing of boules on Council property is not something that we have been asked about. Officers recognise that this can only be seen as an indicator of the low sport take-up locally, but at this stage it should not be ignored that there is no evidence to the contrary.

The most up-to-date statistics officers can find date back to 2020, which indicates that at that time about 12k people played boules at club level in England (data source Statista) which had increased from 8k in 2016. Compare this with something like table tennis at 222.8k in the same period. It has to be recognised that there is very little growth in the sport and some of the growth may be attributable to the pandemic when many outdoor activities saw growth rates which are now starting to fall back.

Visiting the Petanque England website, which is the governing body, it identifies 177 clubs nationally, and in Wiltshire it refers to either Box or Royal Wootton Bassett being the closest to Devizes and therefore at this time there is no local club.

Anti- Social behaviour

The Council will be aware of current issues around anti-social behaviour in the town and the park is not immune, with considerable recent activity which was evidenced by a question raised at a meeting of this committee on the 21st June.

Any feature that is installed in the park has to have within its design a level of resistance to mis-use and as such, in coming to a decision, the committee needs to consider if having 6.5 tonnes of loose gravel in the Park would increase the risk of damage to health and property and constitute an acceptable risk of being used as material to throw.

Options Considered

Having considered the factors set out in this report, the committee needs to decide if it supports the officers' decision to reject at this time the request for a boules/petanque court in Hillworth Park, or overturn it.

If overturning the decision, the committee is asked to confirm how the court is to be funded and agree their preferred location.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Officers are unable to provide accurate costs at this time.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

The Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 any crime and disorder that may arise from the project and officers have set out possible concerns which the committee need to assess and provide a judgement on.

6. QUESTION TIME

A short time is allowed at the discretion of the Chairman for councillors to ask questions on matters which are not on the current agenda but which are related to matters which have been previously discussed on an agenda relevant to the committee.

At least 24 hours' notice must be given to officers of the intended question. All other matters should be raised on an agenda and the request should be submitted through the Town Clerk

7. REPORT FOR DECISION Devizes Fulltone Festival 2022

Recommendation

That the committee ratify the Council decision to allow the 2022 Fulltone Concert to be held on the Green .

Purpose of the Report

To ratify the Council decision to allow the 2022 Fulltone Concert to be held on the Green.

Background

At a meeting of this committee in September 2021, the committee were asked to decide if they are willing to allow the organisers of the Fulltone Festival to use the Green as the 2022 venue and if so what if any additional conditions of hire they may wish to insist on.

At that time, it was agreed that the Committee was content for the Fulltone Festival to use the Green as the 2022 event venue, subject to seeing the audited accounts to verify its status as a not-for-profit event; and provided that Wiltshire Council is satisfied that the path is closed and pedestrians escorted across as required.

In June officer received the following information.

- The Event Safety guide .
- Public Diversion plan
- P & L 2021 (Exempt)

Officers have reviewed the safety plans and feel that the event has taken on the comments made by this council after the 2021 event.

In addition, the finances show they made a small surplus of 3% on turnover , but in monetary terms this was very small and will be used to prime the 2022 event. There is no evidence that the organisers took out personal income from the event.

Options Considered

The committee are asked to ratify its decision to allow the 2022 Fulltone Concert to be held on the Green.

Implications and Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

Officers are unaware of any financial or resource implication for the Council associated with this decision

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence

Environmental Implications

Officers are unaware of any environmental implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Risk Assessment

Officers are unaware of any risk implication for the Council associated with this decision.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.


TOWN CLERK