

Property Sub-Committee – 7th Sept 2022

**Recommendations by Cllr Mark Deaville- Cabinet Member for
Commercial Matters**

Item Title

Lease of Hagley Fields - Rugeley

Property PID 2960

Electoral Division

Brereton & Ravenhill

Local Member

Cllr Peter Kruskonjic

Recommendations

To enter a 15-year lease agreement with Hagley Community Sports Association for the operation and management of local community facilities and sports activities on Hagley Fields.

Transaction Summary

1. Current Arrangements

The fields are currently surplus to County Council requirements and not used for any formal or regular activities.

2. Proposals

The request is that Staffordshire County Council grants Hagley Community Sports Association HCSA a 15-year lease to maintain and manage the fields to a variety of local youth sports clubs, football teams, rugby and various community groups and organisations. Although predominantly for football and rugby, the HCSA has already engaged with the Town Council about further activities and social benefits such as fairs, outdoor movies & concerts to extend the range of social activity into the community.

The operational model is essentially use of hire agreements to generate suitable income to maintain, manage and improve the facility.

Rent is requested at a nominal £1.00, if demanded, and in return they will fully manage and maintain all aspects of the site and indemnify the County Council from their use of the fields. It is suggested that a suitable restriction on community related activities is incorporated in the lease along with 5-year break options for either party.

HCSA are requesting that the County Council consider supporting the proposal by procurement of the first 5 goals with the HCSA funding the additional 5 goals in year 2 of the agreement.

3. Undervalue Transaction

This is an undervalue transaction. However, the constraints of the site mean that it is highly unlikely that any commercial rent could ever be obtained from the site. Therefore, the theoretical amount of the undervalue is negligible.

The proposed use will deliver local community and sporting facilities which align with the County Councils priority outcomes. The land is blighted in terms of future development opportunities due to the flood alleviation scheme and its local designation is for sports pitches.

Supporting Details

4. Background Information

4.1 Hagley fields are a former Youth Centre facility which ceased operation by the County Council in 2015 (see Site Plan). Parts of the site are leased which include District Council skate park, a Bowling club and the former Youth Buildings were disposed to a local community group. The field remains within the County Council title and management.

The area was used historically as playing fields and subject to Sport England and local planning designation as sporting facilities/pitches.

In 2016 the County Council, in conjunction with a town centre scheme with Cannock Chase District Council and the Environment Agency (EA), contributed a majority of the field for a flood alleviation scheme. The designation and design as a flood scheme mean that there is very little value in the land or re-purpose potential for County Council requirements and its only real use is that of a field for recreation purposes.

The planning application by the EA required the former playing fields to be re-instated by the EA in 2019 after completion of the flood alleviation works, but due to poor ground conditions and Covid these works have been deferred and delayed.

Since 2019 officers have attempted to obtain a sustainable solution to manage the facility in the future. Negotiations have been ongoing with the Town Council, District Council, football and rugby clubs, and various local and community groups to secure a suitable anchor tenant with little or no interest. No single party was prepared to accept responsibility.

Currently the County Council have a grounds contract which is £2,083 per annum to keep the site cut and tidy only but have no resources currently to manage local lettings safely or monitor the facility as would be needed with regular formal use. The site is open to the public due to the public footpath and heritage trail and has been the subject of several anti-social incidents - continuing to be a difficult site to manage.

Following recent discussions with a Rugby Club representative and two local teams, the proposal has been submitted by Paul Sparkes on behalf of the parties who intend to form Hagley Community Sports Association (HCSA) on satisfactory confirmation that they are able to lease the land from the County Council (see Hagley Field Proposal in appendices).

The HCSA will be created as a registered charity with a board/committee responsible for the management of all aspects of the HCSA. This will include annual reports and submissions evidencing activities on site to the County Council to provide assurance that it is delivering local outcomes and not excluding groups.

A substantial amount of work has been carried out, as part of the HCSA submission, to evaluate the viability of the site both at a level likely with current support and that with future aspirational income. The HCSA are confident that they would be able to manage and maintain the facility with sufficient rental charges generated from Hire Agreements from interested parties – see 'Supporting Correspondence' in appendices. The parties are known locally and currently manage teams. All are familiar with managing similar arrangements and obtaining FA or government funding streams.

There is increased pressure from both the District Council, Town Council and local members to see these facilities operational once more.

5. Alternative Options

Discussed in 4 above.

6. Implications of transaction for County Council (Risks)

Reversion to the County Council at or before 5-year break should viability not be sustainable.

7. Community Impact *

Proposal is supported by the Town Council who have been actively involved in discussions with the HCSA about incorporating local community activities and events.

To be healthier and more independent.

8. Comment by Local Member

Cllr Peter Kruskonjic has been fully briefed and comments have been requested. Meeting scheduled 22nd August with both Cllr Kruskonjic and Cllr Sutherland – to be reported at meeting.

9. Proposal supported by Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets

Signed: 

Name: Ian Turner

Date: 16/8/22

10. Officer advising on this transaction

Signed:

Name: Lee Wells

Date: 16/08/2022

11. Background Documents

Site Plan
Hagley Field Proposal
Supporting Correspondence

No previous reports are relevant to this transaction/proposal

*3 priority Outcomes for the people of Staffordshire are:

- To be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth
- To be healthier and more independent
- To feel safer, happier and more supported in their community.

