

5. SYDENHAM PARK – RESULTS OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR USAGE OF FORMER TENNIS COURTS AREA

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The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with a summary of the proposals received for the future use of the tennis court area at Sydenham Park and to seek a decision as to the Board's preferred option(s) for further negotiation.

BACKGROUND

The South Christchurch Tennis Club surrendered its lease over approximately 2700 square metres of Sydenham Park, upon which it had its clubrooms, four tennis courts, lights and surrounds.

In June 2003 the Board approved the calling of Requests for Proposals ("RFP") for the use of this area under the following criteria:

1. That the Spreydon Heathcote Community Board seek proposals by the 'Registration For Proposals' process for the long term use of the land at the western end of Sydenham Park, which currently has four tennis courts and associated lights upon it which was previously leased to the South Christchurch Tennis Club.
2. That proposals be sought from groups which meet the Board's preference for use of the land, namely proposals that:
 - are directly related to and complement the current layout, usage, design and purpose of the park
 - enhance, complement or support existing sport and recreation uses
 - directly involve current regular users of the park
 - allow the land to be available to the general public to enjoy
 - fulfil a local identified community recreational need
 - are able to meet the needs of more than one interested party
 - maximise the usage of the area
 - minimise any exposure to Council for enhancement or on-going maintenance

All the current formal users of the park were contacted and invited to submit a proposal, as well as advertising the RFP in the Christchurch Press and Star. On the closing date of 13 August 2003, four proposals were received which are summarised below.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS RECEIVED

Submission 1

Name: Canterbury Tennis

Outline: Usage of area for four Tennis Courts.

Usage:

Summer:

Friday night Junior Tennis: 4:30pm – 7pm
Saturday Junior Interclub: 8:30am – 12:00 noon
Saturday Senior Tennis: 1:00pm – 4:00pm

Winter:

Monday – Friday: 4:30pm – 7:30pm

Upgrading/Maintenance/financial input:

No details on any commitment to upgrading or maintenance – expectation is for Council to upgrade/maintain as community courts with agreed use as above by Canterbury Tennis.

Advantages:

- Courts will remain available for community use for the majority of time
- Council retains control of the space
- Meets demand for junior competition tennis court space
- Could complement usage by Beckenham Tennis (see submission 3), although Canterbury Tennis would then have to restrict usage to two courts only on Saturdays during summer

Disadvantages:

- Will require financial input to bring courts up to reasonable standard
- Will require exclusive use at times of public courts by Canterbury Tennis
- Will require on-going expenditure by Council to maintain the courts, nets and surrounds

Submission 2

Name: Sydenham Bowling Club

Outline: Initially car parking for club and then conversion to an all-weather green in 5-10 years time.

Usage:

Not specified, but always available for the Bowling Club as well as being available for use by Cricket and Rugby Club.

Upgrading/Maintenance/Financial input:

Not specified who is expected to undertake any development, access or upgrading work to make into car parking. Club would fund development of all-weather bowling green.

Advantages:

- Alleviates parking congestion for Bowling Club and potentially other park users
- Potentially no financial input for development from Council
- Potentially no on-going maintenance input from Council

Disadvantages:

- Reduces the amount of the park being used for recreation
- Does not meet any identified direct recreation need
- Locks up part of the park in leased land

Submission 3

Name: Beckenham Tennis Club

Outline: Access to two courts for interclub tennis.

Usage:

Two courts from 8:30am – 1:30pm each Saturday from October – April annually.

Upgrading/Maintenance/Financial input:

No details on any commitment to upgrading or maintenance – expectation is for the Council to upgrade/maintain as community courts, making them available to the Beckenham Tennis Club during the hours specified above.

Advantages:

- Courts will remain available for community use for the majority of time
- Council retains control of the space
- Meets demand for competition tennis court space
- Complements usage by Canterbury Tennis (see submission 1)

Disadvantages:

- Will require financial input to bring courts up to reasonable standard
- Will require exclusive use of public courts at times by the Beckenham Tennis Club
- Will require on-going expenditure by Council to maintain the courts, nets and surrounds

Submission 4

Name: Sydenham Pavilion: (Sydenham Hockey Club and Sydenham Cricket Club)

Outline: A joint proposal from the two Clubs incorporating a synthetic hockey pitch spanning the majority of the length of the courts with a cricket practice facility at the north end. The cricket practice facility will consist of three lanes, one of which will be made available to the public outside club use times. The Cricket Club would then remove its current practice facility located immediately in front of its clubrooms.

Usage: Wish to utilise the whole court area on a long term lease. The Hockey Club will use the facility predominantly in the winter with some summer practice and the Cricket Club will use the facility predominantly in the summer.

Upgrading/Maintenance/Financial input

The estimated cost of \$35,538 is to be met by the two clubs. Significant fundraising has already been undertaken (\$20,000). A lease over the land would mean the clubs being liable for all maintenance and other outgoings of the leased area.

Advantages:

- No capital input needed from Council
- No on-going Council maintenance required
- At least one lane of the cricket practice facility will be available for public usage
- Removal of current practice facility would enhance park appearance and free up more space
- Meets a demand for practice space from current park users

Disadvantages:

- Locks up space under a lease agreement
- Will need re-routing of current pathway through the park to make safe
- Will require the placement of large nets to stop the balls (see plan)

OTHER POSSIBLE USE OF THE LAND

The Board may reject the above proposals received in favour of an alternative use for the land.

Open Space/Sports Field

Council may take the option of returning the land to open space for informal use by the public, or for further sports fields.

DISCUSSION

Sydenham Park is a very well-used sports park servicing a large area to the immediate south of the city. In recent years there has been a lot of pressure on the park through the competing needs of different sports codes for time on the park.

Each of the four proposals outlined above, plus the fifth option, has a certain level of need attached. Any decision on the use of the land will have consequences for the future and should be considered carefully.

Canterbury Tennis and Beckenham Tennis Club Proposals

The applications from Canterbury Tennis and the Beckenham Tennis Club can be addressed together in terms of the implications for the land at Sydenham Park, as the solution to both would be the retention by Council of at least two and possibly four tennis courts.

As both proposals involve the retention and upgrading of two to four courts by Council primarily for community use purposes, the proposals stand or fall on the need in the community for access to public tennis courts. The immediate surrounding area has a high proportion of industrial and commercial zoning and hence there is not a high demand for casual use of tennis courts. Those people who live in the residential zones to the south-west of Sydenham Park and wish to play tennis are able to join Beckenham or Barrington Tennis Clubs. The failing of the former South Christchurch Tennis Club can be interpreted as further evidence of this – the Club struggled to get new members to play.

Canterbury Tennis argue that through the expansion of their junior playing numbers they do not have sufficient space for their junior inter-club competition in this part of the city. Prior to the closing of the South Christchurch Tennis Club, Canterbury Tennis were regular users of the courts for just such a purpose. In the summer of 2002/03 Canterbury Tennis approached Christchurch City Council to negotiate the use of the public courts at Centennial Park/Pioneer Stadium and were granted temporary permission for use on Saturday mornings for junior inter-club play. There was no negative feedback received by Council from the community about this, which indicates that there was little impact on the community access to these courts and this agreement has been put in place again this summer. This has gone some way to addressing the needs of Canterbury Tennis and could also form the start of discussions with the Beckenham Tennis Club in order to address its needs as expressed by the Club's proposal.

Sydenham Bowling Club

The application from the Sydenham Bowling Club involves the use of the land initially as car parking and at a later date (5-10 years time) to be developed as an all-weather bowling green. It is claimed that this proposal is supported by the Sydenham Rugby Club, who use the park during the winter and also need additional car parking.

During the 2002/03 season the Bowling Club had 54 full playing members and is the third oldest in the Canterbury district (114 years old).

The Club claims that even before the widening of Brougham Street in 1976/77 (but especially since), car parking has been a problem for this Club and other users of the park. This complaint is backed up by anecdotal feedback from other park users.

There is no doubt that parking is a problem at Sydenham Park during peak times and the Club does have a need for additional parking. However, while car parking is needed, officers consider the need for further playing/practice space by resident clubs as a higher priority.

Sydenham Pavilion

Sydenham Pavilion is a joint proposal put forward by the Sydenham Cricket Club and the Sydenham Hockey Club involving a dual practice facility for hockey and cricket. The two Clubs currently share the clubrooms located on the park.

The advantages and disadvantages are outlined above and of the five options for the land this is the recommended option by officers.

With recent trends in hockey towards artificial turf and away from grass surfaces, there is increasing pressure on existing artificial facilities for practice time. A practice facility at Sydenham Park would relieve the pressure on these surfaces. The Club currently has four ladies' teams, five men's teams, two masters' teams and approximately 70 junior members. At present the Club hires halls in the area to practice, which has obvious drawbacks. The Club also hires Porritt Park for junior practices, but finds that there is a reluctance for parents to travel the distance for a one-hour practice and may eventually drop out of hockey. The proposed practice surface would therefore be well used during most week nights in the winter in order to accommodate all teams. The hockey club also has plans for some summer use as well.

The Sydenham Cricket Club was established in 1895 and has used the park since that date. It is made up of six men's teams and three women's teams, plus 500 juniors across 47 teams.

Obviously, with this many teams, practice nights are very busy. The Club has previously funded a two-lane practice facility plus a permanent pitch at Cashmere High School. It also has a similar facility being laid at Christchurch South Intermediate School at present.

The three-lane practice facility would be sited at the northern end of the tennis court area and would be used for the junior club for both practice and kiwi cricket on Saturday mornings. It is intended that the current practice facility in front of the clubrooms would be removed once the new facility was functional.

The Club has already raised \$20,000 for a practice facility and is actively seeking the balance (\$15,000-plus).

Both clubs would require the re-establishment of the lighting system.

Open Space/Sports Field

Now that the Tennis Club has relinquished its lease, Council may take the option of returning the land to open space for general public use or for an additional sports field.

Given the historical pressure on the park from current users and the continual need to balance the care and maintenance of the asset with meeting the needs of these users, it would seem a good solution to return the leased area to sports field space, thereby providing extra space for active recreation.

However, the orientation, size and location of the area in question, if returned to park, would not provide sufficient additional space to enable any useful realignment or repositioning of the existing sports fields.

The argument against this option is further strengthened by the recent decision of Sydenham Touch Rugby to relocate their summer operation from Sydenham Park to Centennial Park, thereby significantly reducing the pressure on the park during the summer season. Further, should option four above be built as suggested, this would allow the shifting of the hockey surface closer to the pavilion, thereby providing easier access to the rugby fields from the new changing sheds located in the old tennis club building.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Board thank the organisations for their proposals.
 2. That the Board support in principal the proposal received from the Sydenham Hockey and Cricket Clubs, the Sydenham Pavilion Proposal as outlined above.
 3. That officers work with the representatives of the Sydenham Pavilion proposal to develop the details and further progress the project, reporting a lease proposal back to the Board for their consideration.

Chairperson's

- Recommendation:** I support the staff recommendation.