

Community Initiatives
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Report

Report subject: Victoria Park - Indoor Tennis Dome

Report to: City Area Committee (Community)

Date: Tuesday 16th December 2008

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1. Introduction:

- 1.1. The Committee will be aware that the management plan for the future of Victoria Park has been adopted for some time now.
- 1.2. Since then, a great deal of work has been undertaken to bring the outcomes in the action plan to fruition, funded via an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 1.3. Underpinning the application is the opportunity to undertake a range of improvements and enhancements aimed at setting the Park up for the next 40 years plus, all based around the public's (and key stakeholder's) aspirations and needs.

2. Background:

- 2.1. The issue of whether or not an indoor tennis dome should be provided at Victoria Park has been considered in the past
- 2.2. An outline planning application was approved, subject to a range of conditions, in 1997 and a Sports Lottery application submitted soon after. This was subsequently refused and the Committee resolved to not re-submit. The 5-year time limit on the outline consent has also long since passed.
- 2.3. With increased usage of the 6 existing outdoor courts, and possible investment by the LTA (Lawn Tennis Association) and / or Salisbury Tennis Tuition (the on site contractor managing the tennis facilities), the whole issue was re-considered again in 2004.
- 2.4. After various investigations, and with the project being fraught with risks, the Committee once again resolved to not consider pursuing the option of an indoor tennis facility at this site (minute 105, 5/10/04 refers).

3. The Current Position:

- 3.1. The issue of an indoor centre has arisen yet again as a result of the consultations undertaken as part of the long term management plan recently completed for Victoria Park.
- 3.2. The request for it to be re-considered has primarily come from Salisbury Tennis Tuition as there is undoubted scope with a project such as this to increase tennis participation locally all year round
- 3.3. As the Committee will be aware, a HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) application has recently been submitted to restore Victoria Park. Officers are awaiting the outcome of this bid, which is expected during January '09.
- 3.4. The criteria for applying for HLF grants is quite specific and any indoor provision for tennis does not comply - the provision of such a facility does not therefore form part of the current bid.



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4. General Comments:

- 4.1. The general issues and principles which informed the Committee's decision back in 2004 are basically the same today, namely:
 - 4.1.1 Planning consent is problematic in this location and far from certain. Any application is likely to be contentious.
 - 4.1.2 The scale and impact visually on the Park would be high
 - 4.1.3 The Charity Commission's approval would need to be confirmed for any scheme to proceed. In 2004 they had several reservations about the principle, in particular the issue around awarding long term (20 year plus) contracts to any investors
 - 4.1.4 Whilst part funding could in principle come from 3rd parties (primarily the LTA and / or Salisbury Tennis Tuition), the Committee would still probably have to find at least £100,000 toward the capital cost of the project
- 4.2. It is now known that Victoria Park will transfer to the new Salisbury City Council in April '09.

5. Resource Availability:

- 5.1. With the creation of the new City Council, financial stability will be crucial in the first year or two of the new body as it settles down and has a total awareness of its financial requirements. Accordingly, committing a new, large element of its reserves to a relatively risky project such as this at this time might be ill advised.
- 5.2. The Committee has already approved and committed funds from its reserves towards the lottery application for Victoria Park as well as for schemes at Q E Gardens, Hudson's Field and the allotments. Whilst these expenditures are spread over the next 4 years or so, and are budgeted for in projections, adding to this burden at this time is not recommended.
- 5.3. Equally, with the pressures on Officers working on both the Unitary situation and the creation of the new City Council, there are just not sufficient staff resources currently available to take this project forward.

6. Conclusions:

- 6.1. The provision of an indoor tennis centre at Victoria Park has arisen twice in the past and each time been halted for various reasons. It is not a straightforward project and carries a high degree of risk.
- 6.2. However, there is little doubt that such a facility would prove popular and create an all year round tennis provision in the City
- 6.3. At this point in time, with the advent of the new City Council and the issues around that, it is suggested that pursuing a project such as this would be premature and unwise
- 6.4. It is Officers views that notwithstanding the possible benefits that such a facility could bring, Victoria Park is simply not the right location for such a provision, is unlikely to get Planning Consent and may well not be supported by the Charity Commission.

7. Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to either:

- 7.1. Agree that Victoria Park is not a suitable location for an indoor tennis centre and therefore not pursue this project further, or
- 7.2. Agree to re-consider further such a provision but defer any further consideration to January 2010 when the new City Council will have settled down after its creation.

8. Implications

- 8.1. Financial: As outlined in the report
- 8.2. Legal: None at this stage
- 8.3. Personnel: As outlined in the report
- 8.4. Community Safety: None at this stage
- 8.5. Human Rights: None at this stage
- 8.6. Ward(s) Affected: Stratford and St Marks