

Reasons for the Call-In

Alignment to Council Plan

There is inadequate evidence that the agreed plan for changes to the 3 public tennis court facilities is aligned to the Council Plan, in particular Priority 4 on page 10 of the Plan “we will help encourage our residents to be fit, healthy and improve their wellbeing by increasing participation and use of local leisure facilities, parks and open spaces”. Also page 8 of Your Future Your Place, which sets out the vision of the Council, under Healthy and Green Lifestyles states: “Everyone will have access to parks and green spaces, and to affordable facilities so they can lead healthy and active lifestyles” and “People will enjoy good physical health and mental well-being from childhood right through to their senior years”.

In addition, the financial models presented do not give confidence that the Council will not have future unbudgeted maintenance demands.

Affordability and impact on low-income households

The consultation survey was not targeted at particular user groups or households that the Council wishes to encourage participation from, for example the younger tennis players who play for free to ascertain if they would still have access to the Tennis Courts should the charge be introduced. From the users who did respond to the survey, there is inadequate evidence that the agreed plan is affordable for residents considering:

- 39% of respondents thought there should be no charge
- 38% of respondents were prepared to pay £3-£5 per hour
- 9% of respondents were prepared to pay £5-£7 – the original recommendation to the Cabinet

There was inadequate evidence or information on how the decision will affect the ability of low-income households to access these facilities; the models presented suggested a very low take-up rate for free or reduced rate annual passes of 42 across the whole borough, or 0.1% of households. If this rate was higher, the Council may not achieve its required return to deliver a sinking fund for maintenance, resulting in long-term unbudgeted expenditure.

In delegating the decision on charging structure and operator selection to officers the impact on participation across all residents was not clearly prioritised or targeted, and scenarios with different levels of take-up and the impact on future Council expenditure were not considered.

Information on potential providers and alternative options

The Cabinet did not give a clear plan of recommendations for the provider and did not know what responsibilities the Council would have if a 3rd party provider was commissioned. This must be agreed to ensure the Council is not responsible for the management of the gates out of hours.

Rushmoor Council does not want to incur further costs, whilst profit is paid to a 3rd party provider. Details of the provider must be considered before a decision is made.

Transparency is vital to show clear decision making. The report to Cabinet did not show alternative options for funding the refurbishment of the tennis courts.

We want to ensure all refurbishment options have been considered before removing a much-used free service in this Borough and make recommendations to strengthen the offer proposed by the Cabinet.