

 <b>Executive – 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012</b>		<b>Agenda Item No.</b> <b>10</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Joint working with Bowls England</b>	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Rose Winship <a href="mailto:Rose.winship@warwickdc.gov.uk">Rose.winship@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>  Chris Charman <a href="mailto:Chris.charman@warwickdc.gov.uk">Chris.charman@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	Leamington wards	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	N/A	
<b>Background Papers</b>	Nov 2011 – Bowls Working Party report to O&S Committee	

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	No
<b>Equality &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive		Chris Elliot, Andy Jones, Bill Hunt
Head of Service		Rose Winship
CMT		
Section 151 Officer		Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer		
Finance		Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)		Cllr Gallagher
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.		
Final Decision?		No
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The report outlines the recent approach made by Bowls England to Warwick District Council to consider the relocation of the headquarters of Bowls England and the venue for the Mens National championships and other national bowls events to Victoria Park bowling greens. Bowls England are about to conduct a feasibility study on the proposal to move the Mens championships to a location in "central England" and have had initial discussions with CMT and the Head of Cultural Services to consider the opportunities that this could offer to both parties.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Executive approves that officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, work with Bowls England to bring forward a feasibility study in respect of Bowls England relocating the Mens National Bowls Championship and the Bowls England headquarters to Leamington Spa.
- 2.2 Subject to approval of para 2.1, the Head of Finance approves a sum of up to £10,000 from the Contingency Fund to enable a local Impact Assessment to be undertaken in respect of this relocation.
- 2.3 That officers will continue to liaise with Royal Leamington Spa Bowling Club to achieve mutually agreeable terms for the new lease in respect of RLSBC and facilities at Victoria Park bowling greens.
- 2.4 The Executive will receive a further report detailing to outcome of the Bowls England feasibility study together with any decisions required by the Council.

## **3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 In looking to control their operating costs, maintain the service to their members and deliver high quality national and international bowls, the management board of Bowls England have been asked to undertake a feasibility study on the relocation of the Mens National Bowls Championship and their administrative headquarters, to a "central location" in England. Warwick District Council have an agreement with Bowls England which expires in 2012 which secures the Womens Nationals in Leamington Spa and the location of a satellite office for Bowls England in the pavilion at Victoria Park. Following the successful National Championships in 2011, Bowls England verbally confirmed their wish to enter into a new agreement with WDC for a further 5 years.
- 3.2 In considering the Council's response to the recent approach from Bowls England, officers would recommend that detailed consideration is given to the impact of extending the current arrangements with Bowls England. We understand that Bowls England would require office space to accommodate up to 12 staff plus a meeting room and storage space. The Mens Nationals would follow on from the Womens Championships in August each year. It is understood that the 2 events could run back to back over a period of 23 days (compared to the current 16 days for the women's championships). There would also be a "home international" event each year (the expectation being for a weekend on one green) and a number of training events, selection trials and matches against international touring teams. It is considered that over time the greens at Victoria Park could develop into the National Bowls Centre, bringing with it economic and reputational benefits to the district.

- 3.3 Whilst the benefits are clear, prior to any response to Bowls England, we must understand the full impact of these changes. This would include a detailed environmental impact assessment to include the impact on Royal Leamington Spa Bowling Club, local residents, in particular those living close to the greens, and a technical assessment of the greens and their ability to support the increased volume of play. An economic impact assessment would also be beneficial to understand the effect on the local economy of the extended use of the greens and the associated increased visitor numbers to the district. It would also be necessary to fully understand the level of resources that would be required from WDC; this could be in the form of capital investment in the facilities and the irrigation system for the greens, but also in terms of the officer time that would be required to support the extended partnership. Officers would also wish to consider the impact on Royal Leamington Spa Bowling Club and other long standing users of the greens, to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the facilities that they currently enjoy.
- 3.4 It is the intention of Bowls England to take a report to their Company meeting in November 2012 with recommendations for the future home of the Mens Nationals and the Bowls England headquarters. Bowls England Chief Executive. Tony Allcock has had initial discussions with both Warwick District Council as outlined in this report, and Worthing Borough Council who are at risk of losing this prestigious event. Should the Executive agree to WDC continuing to work with Bowls England on the feasibility study, officers would bring a further report to the Executive later in the year with the outcome of the local impact assessments, and the recommendations emerging from the Bowls England feasibility study and the financial implications of these recommendations on this Council.
- 3.5 Significant investment has been made in the Victoria Park greens over many years with the addition of a 5<sup>th</sup> green in 1996 as part of the World Bowls project. More recently the standard of the greens have been vastly improved through partnership with Glendale and the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI). A Bowls Working Party was established in 2011 to consider the future of Bowls provision in the district. The Working Party concluded their findings with a report to the Scrutiny Committees in November 2011, supporting the future provision of bowls in the district, and the ongoing provision of high quality bowling greens in Victoria Park. Within these recommendations was a wish to see continuation of the partnerships with Bowls England and Royal Leamington Spa Bowling Club, and the increased use of the greens including the return of national competitions to Leamington.
- 3.6 Royal Leamington Spa Bowling Club have a lease which entitles them to use of a section of the pavilion which houses their club house, bar, kitchen, and changing rooms, and use of 1.5 greens during the playing season. The lease expired in 2011 and officers have been working with the club to revise the lease in line with the recommendations of the Bowls Working Party. The draft lease is currently being finalised by solicitors acting for the Council and the club. The draft lease allows for the club to have use of one and a half greens during the bowling season, but with the agreement that the Council can require the club to make these one and a half greens available "for use at a national or international bowls competition or other major bowls event". A Memorandum of Understanding accompanies the Lease with a principle that the Council, club and Bowls England will work jointly to increase the use of the greens; this will include "efforts to attract additional competitions, matches, trials and

international events to the Victoria Park greens". Officers are now aware that amongst a number of queries being raised by the Clubs legal representatives, the Club are wishing to cap the number of days that the greens are used for events. Advice from the County Council Legal team is that officers should continue to work with the club to reach an agreement on a new lease as soon as possible, but being mindful that the terms of any new lease do not preclude any emerging partnership with Bowls England.

#### **4. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 **Policy and Fit for the Future Framework** – Consideration of extending the partnership with Bowls England is in line with Council's Fit for the Future Programme and Corporate Strategy priorities and policies.

#### **5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The residual balance on the 2011-12 Contingency Budget, which has slipped to 2012-13 currently stands at £285,000. It is recommended that a maximum of £10,000 of this be vired to fund this feasibility study. This would leave £275,000 in the Contingency Budget, which does not take into consideration any other requests on this agenda.
- 5.2 In the event of members approving further discussions with Bowls England, a detailed technical assessment would need to be made on improvements to the greens and the ancillary facilities. It is known that the irrigation system is nearing the end of its life and will require replacement in the next few years, irrespective of whether the Mens events are moved to Victoria Park. It is also anticipated that the maintenance specification on the greens would need to be refined, which could have an impact on the cost within the new Grounds Maintenance contract, and the fees paid to the STRI for their technical expertise. The total cost of this work is likely to be in the region of £10,000
- 5.3 In the event of the Bowls England HQ being moved to Leamington Spa, either alterations to the pavilion would be required, or an alternative venue found elsewhere in town. There would be costs to either of these options and further negotiations would be required with Bowls England on the level of their investment towards this work.

#### **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 To reject the approach from Bowls England and inform them that WDC are not interested in hosting the Mens National Championships or being the home Bowls England. In these circumstances it is understood is that Bowls England would continue to run the Womens nationals from Leamington Spa in the immediate future, whilst looking for an alternative location in central England to host the Mens event and base their HQ. Whilst there is no risk at this stage of losing the Womens event, it could be that in the future, if Bowls England were to be looking to establish a National Bowls Centre, Leamington Spa could risk losing the Womens event to an alternative central location which could accommodate both events.

#### **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 Bowls England are the governing body for the mens and womens game, and as such are responsible for delivery of both annual National Championships. The

Mens Nationals are held on greens owned and managed by Worthing Borough Council in Worthing; the site is also the location of the headquarters of Bowls England which are owned by themselves. The Womens Championships are held in Victoria Park, Leamington Spa on the greens owned and managed by Warwick District Council.

- 7.2 Warwick District Council have enjoyed a long and close working relationship with the sport of Bowls; initially the home of the English Womens Bowls Association, and then the womens section of the newly amalgamated Bowls England, the greens in Victoria Park have been the home to the womens national championships since 1975 and hosted the Womens World Bowls Championships in 1996 and 2004.