

 Executive – 12th December 2012		Agenda Item No. 9
Title	Relocation of Bowls England HQ and the Men's Championships to Royal Leamington Spa	
For further information about this report please contact	Rose Winship/Chris Elliott	
Wards of the District directly affected	Leamington wards	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Executive – August 2012	
Background Papers	November 2011 – Bowls Working Party report to O&S Committee; Impact Assessments – STRI; Neil Allen Associates; WDC 2009 Tourism Economic Impact Assessment WDC Proposal to Bowls England (August 2012)	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes: Ref 456
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	25.11.12	Chris Elliott/Bill Hunt/Andrew Jones
Head of Service	25.11.12	Rose Winship
CMT	25.11.12	Chris Elliott, Bill Hunt, Andrew Jones
Section 151 Officer	25.11.12	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	25.11.12	Andrew Jones
Finance	25.11.12	Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)	25.11.12	Cllr Stephen Cross
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI); Local residents, Royal Leamington Spa Bowls Club and other local bowls clubs – Neil Allen Associates; Bowls England Working Party; Internal consultation – Neighbourhood Services, Development Services		
Final Decision?	Yes	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

The purpose of the report is to inform the Executive of Bowls England decision to bring the Men's National Bowls Championships to Victoria Park from 2014 and to relocate the Bowls England headquarters to the town during 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Executive welcome the decision taken at the Bowls England Company meeting on 24th November 2012 to move the Men's Nationals Championships and Bowls England headquarters to Leamington Spa.
- 2.2 The Executive support and fund the improvements to the greens and ancillary facilities detailed in Section 3 of this report amounting to a maximum of £200,000. The Executive approve that this be included in the Council's Capital Programme for 2013-14 with the precise funding agreed as part of the February Budget Report and that the scheme be added to the list of corporate projects in the Fit for the Future programme
- 2.3 The Executive approve that the additional running costs of £26,000 per annum from 2014/15 onwards are included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.4 The Executive note that Bowls England officers will start their phased office move from Worthing to Level 2 of Riverside House in 2013.
- 2.5 The Executive supports the steps being taken to resolve the siting issues for caravans visiting in connection with the Championships as explained in paragraph 3.9.
- 2.6 The Executive delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Head of Cultural Services, to seek any permissions or consents necessary to undertake the works relating to this project.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 At their August meeting the Executive endorsed a document which contained a series of proposals from this Council to Bowls England (Appendix 1). These proposals were considered by the Bowls England Working Party alongside proposals from Worthing Borough Council. Both Councils had been in discussion with the Bowls England Working Party during the summer with the intention of securing the venue for the Men's National Championships from 2014. The Working Party presented their recommendations to the Board of Bowls England on 26th September 2012, selecting Leamington as the preferred venue for both the Men's and Women's Championships and the new location for the headquarters of Bowls England.
- 3.2 At the Company meeting of Bowls England on 24th November 2012, the Board presented its recommendation of the move to Leamington Spa which was supported.
- 3.3 In the proposals presented to Bowls England by Warwick District Council (Appendix 1) reference was made to improvements which would need to be made to the greens and the ancillary facilities at Victoria Park in order to host the Men's and Women's Championships each year, continue the improvements to the playing surface of the greens, and provide other users of the greens,

including Royal Leamington Spa Bowls Club who are the resident club, with appropriate facilities throughout the season.

- 3.4 The Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) technical assessment and subsequent report identifies a need for an enhanced or replaced irrigation system for the 5 greens. The current system comprises of some items which are approx 30 yrs old and the latest elements which are approx 20 yrs old. The typical life expectancy for such an installation is 10 – 15yrs. The irrigation has for some time been suffering from an aging hydraulic system and is subject to regular breakdowns. Officers are currently working with the STRI to produce a specification for a new irrigation system and associated water storage provisions and will then go out to tender for the purchase and installation. The latest working estimate for this element of the improvements is £130,000 - £150,000 to include associated Design Fees
- 3.5 The STRI report also identifies a new item of green keeping equipment (Hydroject) that would allow undisruptive aeration and stress management of the greens throughout the extended schedule for tournament play. The estimated cost of this item is £20,000. This equipment and the new irrigation system would ensure that we remain able to maintain the greens at the high standards required by national and international play.
- 3.6 The current PA system which serves the Pavilion and greens is approx 18yrs old and has a limited life expectancy. The antennae were updated in summer 2012 but the main system will need replacing before the 2014 season. The estimated cost of this is £10,000.
- 3.7 Discussions with RLSBC and other bowls clubs has identified the relatively limited amount of changing and toilet accommodation at the facility which is under further pressure when large events including the Nationals and inter County matches and the like take place. An increase in provision would significantly improve the venue and reduce the impact on local users of the greens at times of large events. The estimated cost is £20,000 based on outline plans. Final costs will be confirmed once detailed plans have been drawn up and the necessary consents received.
- 3.8 An officer project team has been established. Its work plan will include working up the detail of the items list above. This group will oversee the development of specifications and then manage the procurement process to deliver the improvements in advance of the 2014 season. The group will also establish mechanisms to monitor the economic impact of the championships, the marketing and publicity for the event, identifying sponsorship opportunities and ways of engaging local businesses who could benefit from the increase in visitor footfall. This is an important corporate scheme and so it is recommended that it be added to the list of projects within the Fit for the Future programme.
- 3.9 Related to the relocation of the Championships to Leamington Spa, officers have been considering options for the location of a temporary caravan site for the 4 weeks of the championships. In the past, a site has been provided at Champion School on the basis of the school receiving income from the caravaners for the use of the site, and shower facilities. With the changes to the relationship between the Council and the school, we relocated the caravan site to Edmondscote fields for the 2012 Women's Championships. Unfortunately there was significant anti social behaviour and thefts from the caravans in the first few days of the event in 2012 which lead to us relocating

the caravans to Victoria Park for the remaining 10 days. This decision was very popular with the visitors, and attracted very few complaints from other park users. Officers would like to consider the opportunity to use Victoria Park as a temporary caravan site during the 4 weeks of the championships from 2013 onwards. Appropriate discussions will take place with colleagues in the Development Management team, Community Protection and in Neighbourhood Services to assess the impact of such a proposal and an application made as appropriate. Officers are also considering alternative options which include discussions with Leamington Rugby Club who have previously expressed an interest in making some of their land available for use during the championships, and other local landowners who may be interested in a similar provision.

- 3.10 Bowls England officers have expressed a wish to start the move to Leamington in early 2013. Office space on Level 2 of Riverside House has been identified for their temporary use and officers will work with Bowls England staff to make this move as smooth as possible. The Riverside House accommodation has been offered to Bowls England on a rent free basis from 2013 and for a period up until the Council vacate the premises or for a period to be agreed by both parties whichever is the shorter. Officers will continue to work with Bowls England to consider all options in order to secure a long term location for Bowls England headquarters.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 The proposals in Appendix 1 the Warwick District Sustainable Community Strategy. In particular it will continue to make direct contributions to the following:

- **Jobs, Skill and Economy** – encouraging visitors to the district who make a significant contribution to the local economy through overnight stays, hospitality, visitor attractions and retail.
- **Health and Well Being** – contribute to encouraging active lifestyles for all sectors of the local community and visitors to the district..
- **Involving Communities** - provide support for local clubs and other community groups.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The decision to relocate the Men's Championships to Royal Leamington Spa will mean that the Council will need to make a capital investment of approximately £150,000. This currently does not feature in the Council's Capital Programme nor, the Fit for the Future Programme. The New Homes Bonus Scheme monies due for 2013-14 is currently estimated to be £1 million. Of this, £25,000 has already been committed to the Joint Venture Scheme and the Executive have approved that £215,000 of these monies for next year be allocated towards the Chase Meadow Community Centre project. Accordingly, the works outlined in 3.4 to 3.7 above to a maximum of £200,000 could be funded from 2013/14 New Homes Bonus . Members are asked to approve that subject to confirmation that the Men's Championships being relocated to Leamington, that the Capital Programme be updated accordingly, but that the precise funding is agreed as part of the February Budget report.
- 5.2 The Council's Procurement Manager has been consulted. The works outlined in paragraph 3.4 (Irrigation System) will be subject to tender.

- 5.3 The relocation will also result in an additional net ongoing revenue cost to the Council of £26,000 from 2014/15 onwards which has already been factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The latest financial projections will be presented to members in December as part of the 2013-14 Budget setting process.
- 5.4 There will be legal fees incurred in order to develop appropriate leases/agreements. The cost of this work can be accommodated within the existing Culture Legal budget.

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

- 6.1 Given that the Council has already taken the decision previously to seek to attract the Men's Championships to the District and that the proposal now to be implemented was endorsed at that time, there is no real alternative of any merit to this course of action.