

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Report to Leisure and Community Policy Development and Review Panel**

**Date**                    **24 July 2013**

**Report of:**            **Director of Community**

**Subject:**              **PORTCHESTER MUGA - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION**

#### **SUMMARY**

A consultation exercise has been conducted to ascertain stakeholder's views on the possible provision of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on the site of the former Portchester Community Centre.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- a) The Panel is requested to consider the outcome of the consultation and whether they wish to recommend to the Executive that a MUGA be provided at this location; and
  
- b) The Panel is asked to consider the request of those residents of Clive Grove who back onto the tennis courts, for the existing fencing to be removed and replaced with a close boarded timber fence as part of a wide landscaping scheme.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Leisure and Community Policy Development and Review Panel at their meeting on 6 March 2013 requested that officers conduct a consultation on the possible provision of a multi use games area (MUGA) on the site of the former of the Portchester Community Centre.
2. The aim of the consultation being to ascertain stakeholders views on whether they were in a favour of a MUGA the approximate size of a single tennis court being installed and if so which activities they would wish to see accommodated.

## **CONSULTATION**

3. The consultation was carried out by means of:-
  - Questionnaires made available online and sent to local residents and key stakeholders such as the sporting clubs at this location, the police, the Westlands Medical Centre, the Portchester Community Association and Portchester East and West ward councillors.
  - An event at the Portchester Community Centre on the 14 June 2013 at which all interested parties were invited to attend and view images of what the proposed MUGA could look like. There were also images of similar facilities elsewhere in the Borough, key facts relating to the provision of a MUGA and location plan. There was also an opportunity for interested parties to discuss the proposal with Council officers present.
  - The tenants of the new Portchester Community Centre were consulted to obtain their views on the management of the proposed MUGA.

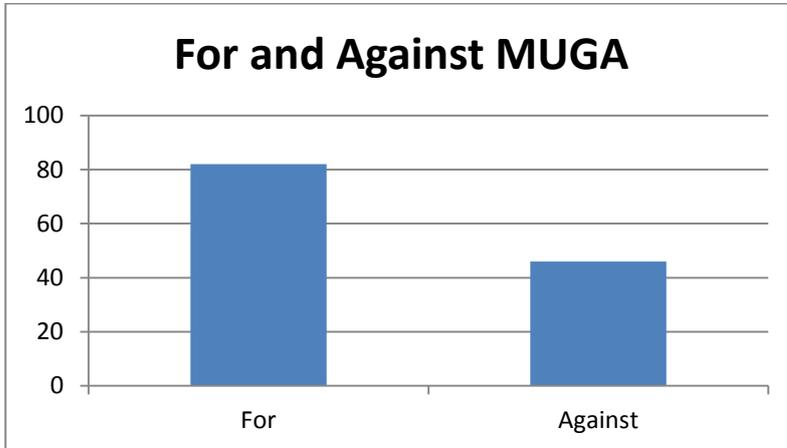
## **OUTCOME**

4. A total of 45 people attended the consultation event on 14 June 2013. The key issues raised on the day were:
  - (a) The Portchester Bowls Club advised that their committee had discussed the proposals and all 9 of them were opposed to the installation of a MUGA. The main reason being that they believed that there was a risk that it could become a focal point for anti social behaviour. In addition they perceived the behaviour of the younger people in the area as intimidating and did not wish to risk an increase in this.
  - (b) There were concerns that the hard surface of the tennis courts would be attractive to scooter riders and be used inappropriately.
  - (c) Numerous residents commented that since the removal of the former community centre and tennis courts, there had been a reduction in anti social behaviour and they were concerned that the MUGA proposal could reverse this.
  - (d) Five residents of Clive Grove who back onto the tennis courts voiced strong opposition to the proposal because they did not want to experience the noise from rebound sports and were concerned about the potential return of anti social behaviour.
  - (e) There was a general consensus that should a MUGA be installed and made

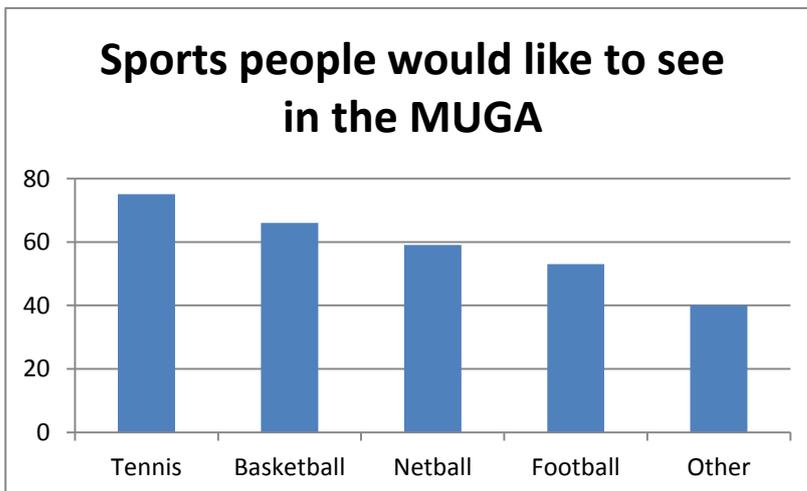
available for free casual access and therefore not managed, then this would be unacceptable due to threat of noise and disruption during unsocial hours.

- (f) The Chairman of the former Portchester Tennis Club commented that his preference was the reinstatement of two tennis courts rather than the provision of a MUGA.

5. A total of 131 questionnaires were returned



- 82 - Responded that they would like a new enclosed multi use games area (MUGA), located on the site of the old Community Centre. Of these 53 submitted comments.
- 46 - responded that they were not in favour of a Multi use games area (MUGA). Of these 37 submitted comments
- 3 - didn't answer this question



75 Tennis    66 Basketball    59 Netball    53 Football    40 Other

- 6. A summary of the comments made on the returned questionnaires is included as [Appendix A](#).
- 7. The local safer neighbourhoods policing team have expressed strong reservations

about the provision of a MUGA at this location and consider that it would directly lead to a recurrence of the anti social behaviour previously experienced on the former tennis courts and undo the work that has been undertaken to tackle the previous problems.

8. The management committee of the Portchester Community Centre Limited (PCCL) have expressed a strong reluctance to take on any management responsibility in relation to a MUGA. Whilst they are in principle supportive of additional facilities, they do not consider that they have the resources available to manage a MUGA as with only one member of staff on duty at a time, they would need to leave the community centre unoccupied to carry out any duties on the MUGA, e.g. opening, locking, provision of equipment etc.
9. The PCCL also have reservations about the need to secure the facility when there may be a number of younger people using the facility and possibly not being cooperative. In this regard, they consider that with only one member of staff they would be vulnerable in this situation.

## **ISSUES ARISING**

### **Tennis**

10. A key consideration in specifying a MUGA is which sports it should cater for. Whilst the response to the surveys suggest that whilst there is a demand for a tennis provision as part of a MUGA, without an organisation to manage the facility, tennis cannot be provided unless this is the sole activity catered for which would be contrary to the concept of a MUGA. It is therefore suggested that should a MUGA be provided then it not be appropriate to include tennis.
11. An alternative to a MUGA would be to install a single dedicated tennis court. Whilst this would address the perceived need for tennis provision and address the problems of switching between tennis and other sports on an unmanaged facility; it is contrary to the concept of a MUGA and would still remain a site for potential anti social behaviour.
12. In deciding to remove the former tennis courts at Portchester Community Centre, the Executive took into account, not only the condition of the courts and the problems being experienced with anti social behaviour, but also the fact that the Council has contributed matched funding of £50,000 to the Portchester Community School towards the improvement of their sports facilities, including two floodlit tennis courts which are available for community use.

### **Security**

13. The consultees have expressed concerns that a MUGA may become a venue for anti social behaviour and lead to a repeat of the problems and issues arising at the former tennis courts. Whilst the presence of the police room at the community centre may deter this along with the potential inclusion of CCTV, the risk remains that the problems previously encountered could return to the detriment of the local residents.

### **Former tennis courts**

14. At the time when consideration was being given to the removal of the former tennis courts, the original intent was to remove the perimeter fencing to the properties in

Clive Grove and replace this with a close boarded timber fence.

15. This work was not carried out when the tennis court surfacing was removed as there was concern that removal of the high perimeter fencing would reduce the protection it provided to the rear gardens of those properties and because of the complications that would arise in determining and agreeing a new fence line and finish to the agreement of all residents.
16. Those residents who attended the consultation event expressed an interest in the fencing works being completed as part of a wider landscaping scheme. Given the mix of Council and residential fencing intertwined along this stretch of land, recreating the original fence line would be problematic and the consent of all residents would be required to achieve this.
17. The contractor who removed the tennis courts imported top soil and reseeded the area. Unfortunately the standard of the imported top soil is very poor and the contractor has been requested to remove existing top soil to be replaced with better quality material and then reseed. It is planned to carry this out in conjunction with the works to extend the car park, but in the meantime the area will need to remain fenced.

### **Landscaping**

18. In addition to the works required to the former tennis courts and potential replacement of the fencing, a majority of residents expressed a desire to see the area returned to open space. The removal of the former community centre and tennis courts, when landscaped, will be in keeping with the existing parkland area at this location.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

19. There are no significant risks in relation to this report.

### **CONCLUSION**

20. Although there were more responses received in favour of the MUGA than against, the majority of comments from interested parties and residents in the immediate vicinity indicated that they do not wish to see a MUGA at the site of the former Portchester Community Centre. This is mainly due to the fear that this could lead to a return of the anti social behaviour experienced on the tennis courts that used to be at this location.
21. If MUGA was provided, it would need to be left open at all times as the tenants of the Portchester Community Centre do not consider they are in a position to manage the courts.
22. An alternate provision of a single tennis court has been suggested, however this would not remove the perceived threat this form of provision could become a focal point for anti social behaviour.

**Appendix A:** [Summary of the comments made on the returned questionnaires](#)

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Gareth Satherley, Leisure Development Manager (Ext 4476)