

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 2 September 2013

Portfolio:	Leisure and Community
Subject:	Portchester MUGA
Report of:	Director of Community
Strategy/Policy:	Leisure Strategy
Corporate Objective:	Leisure for Health and for Fun

Purpose:

To advise the Executive of the outcome of the consultation on the potential provision of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).

Executive summary:

A consultation exercise has been conducted to ascertain the views of local residents and neighbouring organisations on the proposal to install a MUGA on the site of the former Portchester Community Centre.

The results of the consultation on 14 June show strong opposition to the proposal based on the risk that it would directly lead to a return of the anti social behaviour previously experienced on the site of the former tennis courts.

The consultation also raised concerns with regards to the limited availability of tennis facilities in the Portchester area, particularly for those who wished to play on a casual basis.

Concerns were also raised with regards to the fencing between the former tennis courts and residential properties in Clive Grove, with some residents arguing that this should be replaced with a timber fence.

The Leisure and Community PDR Panel considered the outcome of the consultation at their meeting on 24 July and made the following recommendations to the Executive.

Recommendation:

- (a) That a Multi Use Games Area is not provided on the site of the former Portchester Community Centre.
- (b) That the Council does not replace the existing fencing between the former tennis courts and the residential properties in Clive Grove.
- (c) That the Director of Community be requested to investigate options for expanding community use of the tennis courts at the Portchester Community School and if this is not feasible, explore the options for providing a single tennis court elsewhere in Portchester.

Reason:

To advise on the outcome of the consultation exercise.

Cost of proposals:

Any costs can be contained within existing revenue budgets.

Appendix A: Summary of the comments made on the returned questionnaires.

Background papers: Report to the Leisure and Community Policy Development and Review Panel 24 July 2013 - Portchester MUGA Consultation.

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date: 2 September 2013

Subject: Portchester MUGA

Briefing by: Director of Community

Portfolio: Leisure and Community

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 the views of the local community on whether they were in a favour of a MUGA (the approximate size of a single tennis court) and if so which activities they would wish to see accommodated.

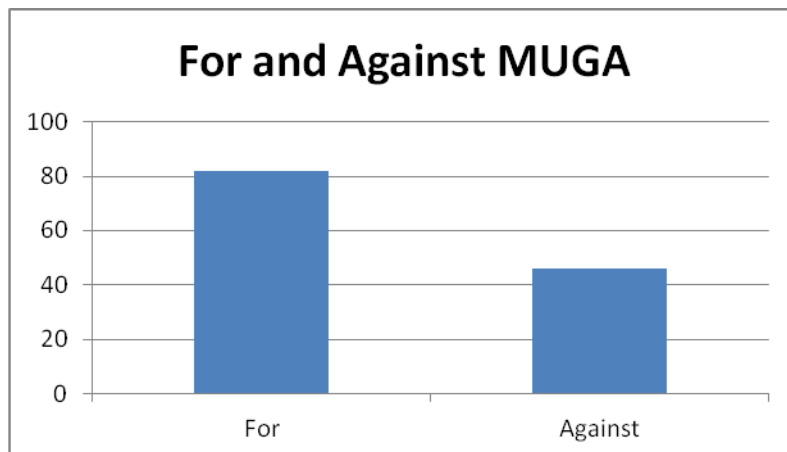
CONSULTATION

3. The consultation was carried out by means of:-
 - Questionnaires made available online and sent to local residents and interested parties 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.

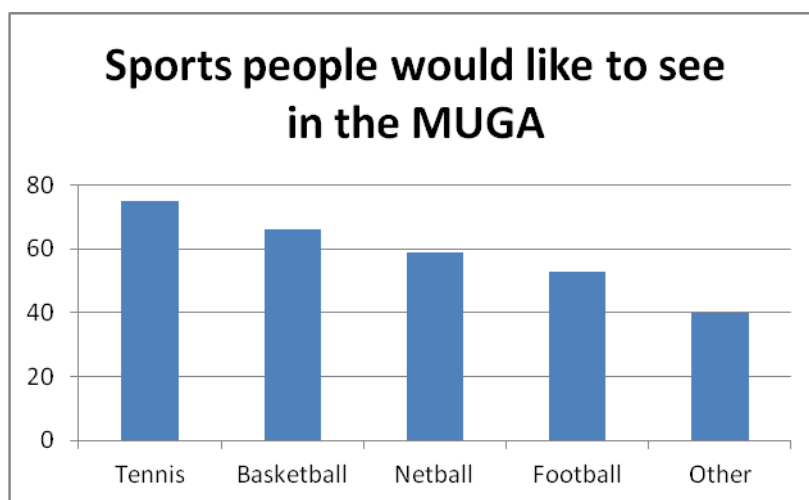
OUTCOME

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 motorcycle/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 expressed strong opposition 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 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 management committee 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 tennis courts which are available for community use (outside of school hours).

Security

13. The consultees expressed concern 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.
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 agreement and 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 the existing top soil and replace it 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. A risk has been identified that the provision of a MUGA at the site of the Portchester Community Centre could directly lead to an increase in anti social behaviour.

CONCLUSION

20. Although there were more questionnaire 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 the 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 that this form of provision could become a focal point for anti social behaviour.