

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
REPORT NO:	HEP/02/19
DATE:	8 January 2019
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor David A Bithell (Place - Environment and Transport)
CONTACT OFFICER:	Martin Howorth (Tel: 729630)
SUBJECT:	Football in Wrexham County Borough
WARD:	All

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update Members on the development of a football strategy for Wrexham working in partnership with the Football Association of Wales (Trust) and the next steps for introduction of a series of pilot projects.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 There is a strong argument that Wrexham is the spiritual home of football in Wales. Wrexham CBC along with key partners including Wrexham AFC, Glyndwr University, The Football Association of Wales (FAW) and Welsh Government, have aspirational plans to significantly develop the profile of football in Wrexham, regionally, nationally and internationally. These include and are not limited to: the improvement of the Mold Road gateway leading into town and including the train station and the Racecourse Football Ground, a new football development centre at Colliers Park; the development of a National Football Museum in Wrexham; a permanent location for a training ground for Wrexham AFC, and the creation of football hubs as outlined in detail in this report. These projects combined, provide a real opportunity to develop this aspirational vision as the home of Welsh football into reality.
- 2.2 Members approved a strategic review of the management of football pitches and changing room facilities in Wrexham in partnership with the Football Association of Wales (Trust) (FAW) in March 2017 (HEP/11/17). This was followed by Members' support for the development of a partnership project led by FAW for the development of a series of new operating models for the management and development of football in the County Borough (HEP/27/18). Members of the partnership steering group include Lead Members, Strategic Director, Parks &

Countryside Lead Officer, FAW and North East Wales Football Association. The group has met and continued to develop a transformation plan.

- 2.3 It is proposed to set up a pilot project consisting of two football hubs as an introduction to the phased delivery of further hubs in Wrexham. A key area for the development of the pilot hubs will be to work with schools and their governing bodies within the pilot areas. It's important to create the links between the school children and out of hours development of young people's football teams, using school facilities.
- 2.4 Funding of £50,000 has been obtained from Welsh Government to undertake the development support work on the hubs. Further financial support from the FAW and the North East Wales Football Association will help support this work. An application to Sport Wales will be also submitted. The Partnership continues to seek every opportunity to supplement funding to help support and develop the work. FAW have undertaken to deliver the developmental work on the hubs utilising the grant monies secured to date.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **That Members authorise the Head of Environment and Planning, in consultation with the Lead Member for Place - Environment and Transport and Lead Member for People, Youth Services and Anti-Poverty, to develop the pilot football hubs in partnership with Football Association of Wales (Trust) and North East Wales Football Association.**

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) A strategic approach in partnership with footballing organisations, utilising their expertise and knowledge, should result in better football outcomes, stronger, more successful clubs, better facilities and more women and girls participating in the sport.
- (ii) Developing better football facilities in schools, in partnership with clubs, the Education Department and governing bodies, should encourage more young people to participate in the sport.
- (iii) A robust strategy for the management of football facilities will ensure a more resilient future for the game in Wrexham and the wider North Wales region.

4 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 Members approved a strategic review of the management of football pitches and changing room facilities in Wrexham in partnership with the Football Association of Wales (Trust) (FAW) in March 2017 (HEP/11/17).
- 4.2 This was followed by Members' support for the development of a partnership project led by FAW for the development of a series of new operating models for the management and future development of football in the County Borough (HEP/27/18). This partnership has met and continued to develop the transformation plan for football.

- 4.3 A meeting was held in October 2018 with Wrexham Football Clubs and the partners of the project (FAW, North East Wales Football Association and the Council). The proposed vision for local football (**Appendix 1**) was shared with the clubs and their feedback obtained. This was generally supportive, but there was an acknowledgement that it would require time, partnership support and a lot of hard work.
- 4.4 Following on from this meeting, it is proposed to set up a pilot project consisting of two football hubs as an introduction to the phased delivery of a series of such hubs in Wrexham. The pilot areas (detailed at **Appendix 2**) are based upon:
- Scale of catchment population with access to secondary schools (1k+ local population)
 - Area with greater need for facility improvements
 - Potential to grow and strengthen clubs
 - Availability, commitment and ability of key personnel
 - Robust existing organisations – successful/effective/number of volunteers, members and teams
 - Locations where existing Council run facilities can be best transferred to new operating models with the desired benefits
- 4.5 The pilots will run for a year and their success will be monitored before undertaking further development of the new football models. As well as developing stronger clubs and better facilities, a key area for the development of the hubs will be to work with schools and their governing bodies within the pilot areas to create the links between the school children and out of hours development of young people's football teams and girls' football using school facilities.
- 4.6 Funding of £50,000 has been successfully obtained from Welsh Government (WG) to undertake the development support work on the hubs. FAW have undertaken to deliver the developmental work on the hubs utilising the grant monies from the WG. Further financial support from FAW and North East Wales Football Association will also help support this work. An application to Sport Wales will also be submitted.
- 4.7 The partnership's vision for football in Wrexham is:
- Stronger, bigger, self-sufficient clubs
 - Better, more sustainable, community facilities
 - More activity - better health and wellbeing of young people and adults

Next Steps

- 4.8 The programme will include working with clubs and partners to develop and support solutions based on the following work streams:
- New club pitch and pavilion management models
 - Maximising school site models - securing better quality pitches for sports development, particularly for young people and women/girls
 - More fit for purpose 3G pitches (longer term aspiration)
 - Application of asset management approach to outdoor spaces
 - Evaluation of the new approach
- 4.9 Whilst the pilot work develops, the Council will continue to liaise with all football clubs, maintaining and booking pitches in the usual manner. These innovative collaborations with Welsh Football represent a significant, football-led regeneration

opportunity for Wrexham, already widely recognised as the spiritual home of the national game.

Not only has the Wrexham grassroots football vision for future community club models recently been selected as an exemplar approach worthy of one of the largest national grants through the Asset Collaboration Programme Wales, the grass roots plan is developing at the same time as a significant investment of nearly £5m by the FA Wales in the transformation of Colliers Park, creating a new National Development Centre, to be opened in 2019. These exciting developments can also be viewed alongside the recent Sports Museum for Wales feasibility study recommendations that Welsh Government consider investing in the current museum at Wrexham, to enable it to become a National Football Museum for Wales.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 **Policy Framework** – The report supports the Council Plan corporate priority outcomes:

- PL2 - An environmentally responsible place
- PL3 - Communities with sustainable, attractive settlements, neighbourhoods, buildings and spaces
- E1- People want to live, work, visit and invest here
- E3 people can prosper as individuals and within their communities

5.2 **Budget** – At this stage there are no budgetary implications for this work. A grant of £50,000 has been secured from the Welsh Government. Further financial support from the Football Association of Wales (Trust) and North East Wales Football Association will also help support this work. An application to Sport Wales will be submitted. The FAW (Trust) will now utilise the funding to develop the pilot project with the Partnership maintain oversight and governance control whilst also continuing to seek all opportunities for supplementary funding to help further support and develop the work.

5.3 **Legal** – There may be legal implications in terms of procurement and development of a trust or non-profit making model for the management of Council football facilities and pitches. These will have to be considered as future models are developed.

5.4 **Staffing** – There are no staffing implications in the report.

5.5 **Equality/Human Rights** – Members are advised of their duty to consider the full Equality Impact Assessment which is available at <http://vmwinsqld/equalityisalive/Menu.aspx> report number EP/EIA00006/2016. Members of the public can request a copy of the full Equality Impact Assessment from the Contact Officer named in the header box of this report. A summary of the Equality Impact Assessment is attached as **Appendix 3**.

5.6 **Risks** –

- i The risk for the Authority in continuing to manage the Council-owned football pitches and pavilions is that they will not receive the investment they need and facilities will deteriorate and potentially close.

- ii There is a risk if the Council agrees to transfer the facilities to a new model that the new organisation is not able to manage the football pitches and pavilions effectively and obtain sufficient investment and they deteriorate and close.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Consultation was undertaken in 2016 with the Community Councils and football clubs about the future management of the Council-owned football pitches and pavilions. Football Association of Wales (Trust) has consulted a range of stakeholders as part of its work in developing the review of football facilities with clubs and interested parties. A consultation event was held with Wrexham football clubs at the Catrin Finch Centre on 22 October 2018.

7 EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

- 7.1 Option 1 - The Council continues to manage football facilities and Council owned football pitches. Without a sustainable management strategy and investment plan the facilities will continue to deteriorate and potentially face closure.
- 7.2 Option 2 - New models are developed by the partnership with the Football Association of Wales (Trust) to manage football facilities and Council owned pitches.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO