

# CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM CABINET MEMBER MEETING

## Agenda Item 44

Brighton & Hove City  
Council

<b>Subject:</b>	The future use of Withdean Stadium		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 December 2010		
<b>Report of:</b>	Strategic Director of Communities		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Name: Toby Kingsbury	<b>Tel:</b>	29-2701
	E-mail: Toby.kingsbury@brighton-hove.gov.uk		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Withdean		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club (BHAFC) are due to relocate from Withdean Stadium to the new Community Stadium at Falmer on 30 June 2011. We have been approached by sports clubs interested in using the stadium and need to consider the different options available taking into account existing users.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To request approval from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism for Whitehawk Football Club (WFC) 1<sup>st</sup> team to use the Withdean Stadium as a temporary home ground for a period of two seasons starting on 1 July 2011 whilst they undertake a series of developments to their own ground in East Brighton Park. This would be on the condition that WFC gain the necessary planning permission to undertake these developments and that the council are satisfied that they have the appropriate funding in place.
- 2.2 To request approval from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism that BHAFC have subsidiary use of the stadium for their Reserves and Women's team matches. This subsidiary use would be on the condition that there is no over-use of the pitch and that due consideration is given to the use of the stadium by other users including the resident athletics clubs.
- 2.3 To request approval from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism for the council to submit a planning application to retain some of the facilities that have been installed by BHAFC since they took up occupation of the facility.

#### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

##### Use of Stadium

- 3.1 BHAFC are due to relocate from Withdean Stadium to the new Community Stadium at Falmer on 30 June 2011.
- 3.2 Last season WFC secured promotion to the Ryman League Division 1 South. In order to conform to the National Ground Grading, Category E (which is a requirement of the Ryman League) they need to undertake a series of improvements to their ground in East Brighton Park.
- 3.3 WFC have made a formal request to the council to use the stadium as a temporary home for a period of two seasons from July 2011 whilst they undertake these improvements.
- 3.4 BHAFC have also requested use of Withdean Stadium for their reserves, women's (who currently play at the stadium) and youth team matches.
- 3.5 Officers have assessed the likely number of fixtures for WFC 1<sup>st</sup> team and BHAFC reserves, women's and youth teams and have mapped these out over an indicative fixtures schedule. From this assessment it is clear that a combination of WFC 1<sup>st</sup> team and BHAFC reserves and women's team could be catered for at Withdean. However, BHAFC have recognised that due to the number of youth teams and volume of matches they will continue to play them at Sussex University for the time being.
- 3.6 The management contractor at Withdean Sports Complex (currently DC Leisure) is responsible for undertaking the pitch maintenance in accordance with a detailed specification provided by the council. The pitch has been brought up to an excellent standard whilst BHAFC have been using it and any future use will need to ensure that it is not over-used.
- 3.7 Consideration must also be given to the resident athletics clubs to ensure that any future use by football clubs does not impact too much on their continuing use of the stadium for training and competitions.
- 3.8 By allowing WFC use of the stadium the council would be providing valuable support to a developing club. This support is similar to that given to BHAFC whilst the Community Stadium is being developed.
- 3.9 The council has also been approached by Sussex Thunder American Football Club for use of the stadium for their home matches. Again there would be concern regarding the over-use of the pitch and the impact upon the athletics clubs, particularly as the matches would be played in the summer months.
- 3.10 The council are currently undergoing a tender process to appoint a contractor for a new ten year management contract for a number of facilities including Withdean Sports Complex starting on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. WFC and BHAFC would therefore need to agree terms of use with the new contractor.

## **Retention of facilities**

- 3.11 Officers have met with BHAFC regarding the handover of facilities when they leave in June 2011 and a planning application is to be submitted to retain the following facilities:
- The north-west car park. Before BHAFC moved to WS, this car park was a grassed area and it is conditioned to be returned to grass as part of the temporary planning consent. However, usage levels of Withdean Sports Complex have increased considerably in recent years and it would therefore have a major impact upon customers, particularly for big events like athletics meetings, if this car park was not retained. It may also lead to increased parking in the surrounding streets during busy periods. This would be an application to permanently retain it.
  - The changing room block. This is a semi-permanent building with good quality changing and storage facilities together with a fully functional hospitality/training/conference room. Retaining this building would ensure the continued provision of good quality changing facilities for the football and athletics clubs and add a training/conference facility to the site. Given the semi-permanent nature of the changing room block it is likely that only a temporary planning consent would be granted.
  - The West Stand. This will provide useful additional seating to the stadium, particularly for the viewing of athletics field events. This would be an application to permanently retain it.
- 3.12 Officers shall negotiate with BHAFC regarding any costs that might be incurred by the Council in retaining the West Stand.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Consultation has been undertaken with representatives from WFC and BHAFC to understand their requirements for use of the stadium.
- 4.2 The athletics club have been consulted regarding the future use of the stadium by WFC/BHAFC and regarding the retention of facilities.
- 4.3 Planning officers have provided pre-application advice regarding the retention of facilities.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### **5.1 Financial implications**

The income received by Withdean Stadium from Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club is factored into the current leisure contract with D.C. Leisure. This contract is currently being re-tendered, and the reduction in this

income, along with any anticipated income from clubs such as Whitehawk Football Club will be factored in to the new contract price.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw Date: 22/11/2010*

5.2 Legal Implications:

On balance, no unacceptable human rights implications arise from the report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Sonia Likhari/Alison Gatherer Date: 23/11/2010*

5.3 Equalities Implications:

There are no Equalities implications to consider.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

Securing a consistent level of use of the stadium for the next two years will provide regular income to the contractor operating the complex and so make their financial position more sustainable.

The retention of the items listed above will improve the sustainability of the stadium by providing improved facilities for its users. Any further sustainability implications regarding the retention of facilities will be assessed as part of the planning application process.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

There are no crime and disorder implications to consider.

5.6 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

Opportunity to work in partnership with the two biggest clubs in Brighton & Hove and forge a strong link between the two to help with the development of footballers across the city.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

There are no corporate / citywide implications to consider.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

The alternative option would be to make the stadium available for other football fixtures. This might mean different clubs using the stadium which may lead to inconsistent levels of use.

The alternative option to retaining the facilities would be to remove them. This would mean that future users would not be able to benefit from them.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

The stadium will become available following BHAFC's departure in June 2011 and the recommendation will provide support to the city's two most successful football clubs.

The retention of certain facilities will provide much needed changing facilities, spectator seating and appropriate car parking space for users of Withdean Sports Complex.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. None

### **Documents in Member's room**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. None

