



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Public Health, Prevention & Wellbeing
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Environment & Operations
DATE:	Thursday, 7 December 2023

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Public Health, Prevention & Wellbeing
WARD/S AFFECTED:	Mill Hill and Moorgate;
KEY DECISION:	Y

SUBJECT: Refurbishment of football pitches and ancillary facilities at Green Lane, Blackburn

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mill Hill Juniors Football Club in partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have submitted a grant application to the Football Foundation to refurbish the grassed football pitches and ancillary facilities at Green Lane, Blackburn. The project will improve the drainage of the pitches and the purchase of grass pitch maintenance machinery along with fencing and containers for storage. As part of the project, an existing defunct changing room building currently used as a maintenance store would also be refurbished to provide a building with a kitchen/servery, office space and toilets.

Mill Hill Juniors FC has a 25 year lease on the green lane football pitches with 20 years left to run and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council owns the freehold of the site, and would procure the works.

The grass pitches at the Green Lane site serve numerous teams within the Club but they suffer from acute drainage problems. Extensive maintenance and drainage work is required to the grass pitches, the pitch maintenance machinery and the storage are all needed if the Club is to continue developing the number of junior players and provide a pathway to adult football. Upgrading the grass pitches at Green Lane will help consolidate the number of football teams and allow for steady sustainable growth of an additional team each year over the next five years.

The Football Foundation has approved a capital grant offer of £249,121 which represents 78.4% of a total project cost of £317,900. The funding gap between the grant and the total project costs will be paid for using funds provided by Mill Hill Juniors Football Club.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Note the award of the Football Foundation capital grant offer of £249,121, towards the refurbishment of the grassed football pitches and ancillary facilities at Green Lane Blackburn.

- Note that the total cost of the project is £317,900 and that the gap in funding between the capital grant and the total project cost will be met by funds provided by Mill Hill Juniors Football Club.
- Agree that the Council will act as Accountable Body for the funding as set out in the report.
- Give delegated authority to the Deputy Director, Legal and Governance to prepare and enter into an agreement with Mill Hill Juniors FC to ensure compliance with the relevant conditions of the grant that apply to the operation of the pitches and facilities.
- Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Environment and Operations in consultation with the Executive Member for Public Health, Prevention and Wellbeing to procure the works necessary to refurbish the grassed football pitches and ancillary facilities at Green Lane, Blackburn.

3. BACKGROUND

Green Lane football pitches are owned by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, the pitches are located in the Mill Hill area of Blackburn. Mill Hill Juniors Football Club was given a 25 year lease on the site, there are 20 years remaining on the lease.

An application for a capital grant was made to the Football Foundation to undertake pitch improvement work and drainage works to the pitch at Green Lane along with the purchase of grass pitch maintenance machinery and fencing and containers for storage. The project also includes the re-purposing of an old sports changing pavilion, which is now simply used for storage, into a refurbished pavilion which will provide a kitchen and servery, a modest social area, and toilet facilities for spectators and sports participants as well as community organisations using the site.

Mill Hill Juniors FC is well known throughout the Borough and the wider district for being a provider of youth football. The Club currently has 36 junior football teams in age groups ranging from under 7s up to under 16s, after which, the players move on to the senior clubs. Mill Hill Juniors FC also runs the Little Lions Coaching clinic for children aged 3-9 with 250 youngsters on membership. The Little Lions provides junior players for Mill Hill Juniors FC and other junior football clubs in the Borough.

The grass pitches at the Green Lane site serve numerous teams within the Club but they suffer from acute drainage problems. Extensive maintenance and drainage work is required to the grass pitches, the pitch maintenance machinery and the storage are all needed if the Club is to continue developing the number of junior players and provide a pathway to adult football. Upgrading the grass pitches at Green Lane will help consolidate the number of football teams and allow for steady sustainable growth of an additional team each year over the next five years.

This project has also been recognised as a priority by the County Football Association and the delivery of the pitch improvement works will allow the Club to retain its current membership and grow further which has been difficult in recent years.

The Green Lane pitches are located in the ward of Mill Hill and Moorgate which has an IMD ranking of 760 meaning it is in the top 3% of deprived wards in the country. There are four other surrounding wards all within a few hundred metres of the site which are also in the top 10% most deprived wards of the country.

The new pavilion will provide the football club with income generated by the kitchen/servery and support Mill Hill Juniors FC with the resources necessary to continue offering opportunities for children and young people to take part in football and physical activity in an economically deprived area of the borough.

The Football Foundation has approved the grant application and agreed to provide grant funding of £249,121. The grant will be paid to the Council by the Football Foundation and the Council would be responsible for procuring the works as the land owner of the site.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- The Football Foundation has approved the grant application submitted by Mill Hill Juniors FC and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to refurbish the football pitches and ancillary facilities at Green Lane, Blackburn.
- The Football Foundation will provide a capital grant of £249,121 to be paid to the Council and the Council as land owner would be responsible for procuring the agreed works at the site.
- Mill Hill Juniors FC have sufficient funds to cover the financial gap between the £249,121 capital grant and total project cost of £317,900.
- The refurbished grass pitches and the new pavilion will provide first class facilities for children and young people in the Mill Hill and Moorgate ward and surrounding areas. The grant agreement includes various conditions relating to the future upkeep of the facilities for which it will be necessary for the Council to have an agreement with Mill Hill Juniors FC to ensure compliance.
- The Council will be the accountable body for the grant funding and will be required to provide a legal charge over the property.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This project will support the Council's corporate plan and two core missions to enable every child and young person to have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and to build healthier happier and safer communities.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Football Foundation has approved a capital grant offer of £249,121 to Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Mill Hill Juniors FC which represents 78.4% of a total project cost of £317,900.

The funding gap of 21.6% between the Football Foundation grant and the total project costs will be provided by Mill Hill Juniors Football Club. The Football club have obtained other grant funding to support this project and they will also utilise club funds which have been generated via fund raising activities.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council as land owner will receive the capital grant from the Football Foundation and funds from Mill Hill Juniors FC and will be responsible for procuring the works at the Green Lane pitches site. The Council will be the accountable body and will be required to comply with the terms and conditions of the Grant Offer Letter, which includes providing a legal charge over the property. There should also be a reciprocal agreement between the Council and the Mill Hill Juniors Football Club to comply

with some of the obligations contained in the Grant Offer Letter.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Officer time in procuring and managing contracts and overseeing the completion of the works at the site.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

Mill Hill Juniors FC has carried out extensive community engagement with partner organisations and community groups as part of the grant application process. Over 10 different groups were approached and consulted regarding plans and activities at the site. These organisations have provided letters of support for the grant application and have stated their intentions to use the new facilities which will be provided at the site.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION: 1

CONTACT OFFICER: Joanne Byrne/Martin Eden

DATE:	13 November 2023
BACKGROUND PAPER:	