

## **Public Questions**

**Executive 7 January 2020**

### **1) Member of Public**

#### **Question 1**

1) I welcome the topic under item 11 of the agenda and am pleased that this is being looked at for action after 2021, however my first question is why is this being discussed effectively in secret away from the press and public scrutiny?

#### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

*The council normally discusses commercially sensitive matters, including those around legal agreements, rent and terms between the Council and occupants/tenants/organisations during the Confidential part of a meeting. In essence, the report sets out the background and the range of options available to the council and makes a recommendation about next steps, including discussions with the various clubs.*

#### **Question 2**

2) Bowling clubs play an important role within the community particularly for the over 60's of the community. They help with their health, their social contacts and generally their wellbeing. The clubs are not simply limited to the elderly but they also attract a younger element who can progress through club, and county to international.. Thus we have a mix of all generations. The clubs are conveniently distributed across the district which enables ease of access without too much resort to car use, an important consideration for helping the climate on which I know the council are keen. During previous years TDC have produced important documents which focus on the way ahead for the community. Documents entitled "Teignbridge Local Plan" and "Teignbridge Ten" both stress the importance of recreational facilities for all age groups and the serious consideration which has to be given when considering their removal or replacement. Thus can assurance be given that when discussing Bowling Greens they will be viewed as a community asset and considered as under item WE13 in the "Teignbridge Local Plan" and the "Out and about and active" part of the "Teignbridge Ten" and the decision makers understand the achievement of the clubs and they are not simply regarded as an item in the accounts?

#### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

*We do recognise the value of the bowling clubs and wish to continue working with them. Today's report is the first step in that process. Teignbridge Council does recognise the value of supporting the community to become more active including through use of its leisure centres and green spaces. Participation in Council run activities has increased by over 20% in the last couple of years and people over 60 are significant customers of our leisure centres: We average 25,000 participants a quarter, including taking up swimming, gym membership and classes. In addition, we have health walks, outdoor exercise classes and green space volunteer events.*

### **Question 3**

TDC have a pivotal role to play with respect to this topic. There are certainly many serious issues which have to be addressed in these difficult times and choices have to be made. This one of bowling clubs in the area can be addressed in one of two ways, TDC could simply accept that this is not for them and pass responsibility totally on to clubs which would certainly result in a reduction of greens with no obvious better use for the land, or they could take a route which said let us work with the clubs and the Town and Parish Councils and even Bowls Devon perhaps, to clearly understand the role which clubs play in the community, the issue concerning the maintenance of facilities and develop a forward plan which is practical and of benefit to all parties. Which of these options is closest to the objectives of TDC?

#### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

*This report is very much about the start of a process which will involve the clubs. I very much welcome the suggestion that Town and Parish Councils and perhaps other relevant organisations may also be engaged.*

### **2) Member of Public**

#### **Question 1**

I am the Treasurer and Greens Manager for the Marina Bowling Club, Sandy Lane, Dawlish. Having heard from reliable sources, I am somewhat concerned about the future of our club having tried to get some answers from the portfolio holder. If it forced upon us to take over the maintenance of the green once our lease expires, we do not have the finance or the age of membership to carry out that responsibility. Our membership is mostly over the age of 60. Any younger players are still working or at school. During last season 3452 persons played bowls at our club and this would be a great loss for all those concerned. Our green is open to passing visitor footfall during the season. That facility would be lost. We could be left with no bowling club in Dawlish.

**Q. WHAT CAN YOU OFFER THOSE PLAYERS, AS AN ALTERNATIVE SPORT SHOULD THE CLUB CLOSE?**

#### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

*We are not anticipating the closure of any of the bowling clubs and at this time. We are looking to open discussions with the various clubs mindful that many of the leases expire next year. We want to begin those discussions at the earliest opportunity and work positively with the clubs.*

## **Question 2**

Dealing with item 11 behind closed doors infers to me that you are concerned about future votes as you will be affecting a lot of the older voters who are wise and if you look at what happened at the last general election to both Labour and Lib Dems be careful. We do not forget and it is likely your term of office will be sort lived. One of Teignbridge's 10 is to encourage the Older demographic to play sport and be active. Taking away a facility that gets them out and amongst the community would be not go down well with those voters.

**Q. WHY HAVE YOU FOUND IT NECESSARY TO HOLD THIS DEBATE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS?**

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

*I do appreciate the concern behind the question. However, I give my reassurance that it is usual for organisations to discuss property and related matters which are commercially sensitive during the confidential part of a meeting.*

## **Question 3**

If you take the decision to hand back maintenance to these bowling clubs and they decide to hand them back, you will be left with assets that no longer bring in revenue to you but will still incur costs. They cannot be sold due to their location. Bowling clubs in TDC area host Touring sides throughout the playing season. Our club alone have EIGHT teams visiting this year. They stay in the area and when not playing bowls, spend money with local business.

**Q. WHAT PLANS DO YOU HAVE IN PLACE TO MAKE UP THE SHORTFALL IN THE BUDGET?**

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services**

*I am delighted to read from the questions about the number of people and visiting clubs using bowling clubs. We do not want to see bowling clubs close but with many of the leases expiring next year, we do need to begin discussions with clubs to work through the future options. It would be short sighted of us, knowing the leases are coming to a close, not to begin the process of talking with the clubs.*