



Meeting to review the results of the Sports Survey

Teams

Thursday 21 November 2024

Attendees: Cllrs Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, John Pitts and Bernadette Rappensberger, Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk), Ewan Gallagher (Sports Development Officer) (SDO) and Lauren Elliott (Senior Committee and Project Clerk)

Generally, across all sites, promoting wildlife and biodiversity had been popular suggestions. It was noted that the Town Council did not yet provide facilities for a running track, a pump track, netball and rollerskating.

192 responses had been received overall, though not everyone had commented on all sites. The purpose of the survey was to inform the SDO's work, and to be fed back to the relevant Committees to consider feasibility and appropriate locations.

The SDO considered that the current provision of outdoor fitness equipment in Normanston Park and Whitton Green was not well used. The equipment at Normanston Park was not high quality and the equipment at Whitton Green was considered to be in the wrong location, with potential users feeling too intimidated to use the equipment by gatherings of youths. Fitness equipment had been installed at Gorleston seafront, which seemed to be well used.

Clarkes Lane

The most popular suggestions were outdoor fitness equipment and wheelchair-accessible equipment. Outdoor fitness equipment had been a popular suggestion across all sites.

Denes Oval

Provision for running and athletics were popular suggestions. The SDO considered the site could potentially become a base for the Waveney Valley Athletics Club.

Padel tennis had been suggested. This could be an aspiration for the future but would need to be at a site with space available, such as Normanston Park or Rosedale Park, as this would require the development of new courts. The nearest facilities for Padel tennis were Diss and Norwich. External funding may be available if the Council wished to explore this. It was suggested East Suffolk Council may wish to consider provision for indoor Padel tennis and rollerskating as part of the Cultural Quarter.

Fen Park

Outdoor fitness equipment had been the most popular suggestion. Most of the comments about this site related to anti-social behaviour rather than sports. The survey demonstrated how popular the site was with dog walkers, and it was therefore considered that open space should remain for this purpose. The relocation of fitness equipment from one site to another was not feasible.

The SDO considered it may not be necessary to install as much equipment in Fen Park as Whitton Green and Normanston Park have, as single pieces could be used for multiple exercises. The SDO could then hold classes at this site, and more frequent use of the site could also help deter anti-social behaviour.

A pétanque had been made as a general suggestion. A club had approached the Town Council about installing one in Kensington Gardens, though space may be an issue.

The provision of specific netball courts had also been raised. Developing specific courts would be expensive and would require floodlighting. The current MUGAs would support the casual play of that type of sport, and it was queried whether there would be a demand for formal netball courts.

Gunton Community Park

The response rate to this site was relatively low and not many suggestions were forthcoming. More seating had been requested. This site has a MUGA and there had been discussions at a recent Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee meeting about having all of the MUGAs assessed and recommendations made for improvements. The SDO suggested making improvements to the football goals and running football related activities at this site.

Kensington Gardens

This site provides very little space for any new sport provision. The tennis courts were well used, but the boating lake was not. The lease was due for renewal the following year, which would give the opportunity for its future use to be considered. Pickleball for one of the courts was suggested, however the SDO did not think this would be possible without breaching the terms of the grant funding for the tennis court improvements.

Normanston Park

The most popular suggestions for this site were a running track, a pump track, Padel tennis courts and improvements to the toilets and changing rooms. A pump track provider had already visited the site, identified an appropriate location near the tennis courts, and provided a quotation of approximately £150,000. The Council had not yet decided when the pump track should be scheduled into the five-year plans, and it was requested this be considered at the next AID Committee meeting.

The Lowestoft Road Runners and Waveney Valley Athletics Club did not currently have a base. The SDO suggested the Denes Oval could be a suitable location, once the pavilion has been refurbished. The Denes Oval could also provide a suitable location for a running track around its perimeter. The lack of lighting at both Normanston Park and the Denes Oval could be an issue for running and athletics, though runners could use other sites during winter months.

The SDO had been liaising with the Suffolk FA on improvements to the Normanston Park football pitches. The FA would fund 75% of the project. The Facilities and Contracts Manager had been exploring options for the changing rooms, in line with building regulations and ensuring options met with the eligibility criteria of the funding. Currently, demolition of the existing building and replacement with four modular buildings seemed the most feasible and cost-effective option.

The AID Committee had discussed using land adjoining the car park on Whapload Road for football provision. This land was currently still leased to Tingdene, though liaison with the Town Council's solicitor was underway.

Rosedale Park

Though there were no key suggestions arising at this site and the response rate had been relatively low, it held a lot of potential with the space available.

The site was popular with dog walkers, which would need to be taken into account. There were goalposts at the park, which were being renovated. Outdoor fitness equipment had been suggested. The SDO considered the potential for a MUGA, potentially with a specific netball configuration, however it was noted that netball hoops were smaller than basketball hoops and would not therefore support play with a basketball.

Sparrows Nest

Given the site was used for several large-scale public events, there was little space available for the development of new sports provision.

The Grounds Maintenance Team had been exploring options for securing the bowling greens.

Provision of goal posts on the grass area in front the Maritime Museum were suggested. Officers had concerns about proximity to the Museum and the potential for damage, and proximity to Whapload Road, if footballs were to be kicked over the fence. There may be potential for five-a-side football goals at The Ness, however, levelling of the ground may be difficult given the encapsulation of the contamination beneath the surface.

Suggestions arising from this meeting would be fed back to the AID Committee, to consider priorities and scheduling into the five-year plans.