

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE****3 APRIL 2012****QUEEN ELIZABETH II FIELDS CHALLENGE****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To obtain a decision from Members on a proposal to participate in a national initiative to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, and to rename Wonford Playing Fields (or a part of it) accordingly.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge is a programme being run by Fields in Trust (FiT), formerly The National Playing Fields Association. It was the NPFA who created the nationwide network of King George V Play Fields to commemorate the death of King George V in the 1950s, and Exeter has its own KGV playing field off Topsham Road. The QEII Challenge aims to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee as well as the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the 2014 Commonwealth Games by permanently protecting 2,012 outdoor recreational spaces by the end of 2012. Supported by their Patron, The Duke of Cambridge, a number of different types of sites are eligible to become Queen Elizabeth II Fields.
- 2.2 FiT has approached all local authorities to participate in the QEII challenge in an effort to achieve their target of 2,012 sites being signed up to the programme. Several Councils across the south west have already nominated sites for the scheme.
- 2.3 To mark the historic events of 2012, FiT will assist in organising a mass community event – ‘Have a Field Day’ – on the newly renamed spaces in June 2012. FiT has secured funding from a range of sponsors, including Asda and LV insurance, in connection with this.

**3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The Parks & Open Spaces service has identified Wonford Playing Fields as a strong potential candidate for a Queen Elizabeth II Field. The QEII Challenge sits neatly with a range of other initiatives already achieved or planned for the area. The site benefits from
- the recent cyclepath and Green Circle path, linking Topsham Road and Ludwell Lane
  - Playbuilder funding from the HLF which saw the installation of play equipment chosen by local schoolchildren in a woodland setting
  - ongoing work in collaboration with DCC to improve and extend the Phoenix club's use of both the community centre and playing field
  - planned further initiatives to engage with young people on the part of local police officers working with ward councillors
  - improvements to the changing rooms and pitches.

### 3.2 The advantages of the QEII scheme include the following:

- Being associated with a high profile and potentially very popular event in the Jubilee and Olympic year, offering an opportunity for the city to mark the Diamond Jubilee in an appropriate and lasting way that is likely to generate very positive publicity
- The Council showing a clear and unequivocal commitment to residents and taxpayers to safeguard playing fields and other open spaces for future generations. Members will be aware that the Council has an excellent track record of protecting open spaces in the city and this initiative builds on this
- A plaque on the chosen site provided by FiT
- Access to specific funding streams up to £25,000 will be made available for QEII sites. Sport England may also support bids financially
- In the case of Wonford Playing Fields, an opportunity would be presented to “rebrand” the area, and provide a focus for other recent and planned projects
- Only part of a site need be declared as a QEII Field, allowing, for example, development, improvements or a different “rebranding” elsewhere on the site. A plan of the site is attached at Annex 1. Zone A is an informal sports area, zone B is the existing formal sports pitch area, zone C is a natural play space, and zone D is an informal recreation and natural habitat area. There is a case to be made that designating all four areas would maximise the benefits of the QEII initiative but, equally, Members may prefer to designate a more limited section of the fields, such as zones A & B (sports) or C & D (play/recreational).

### 3.3 There are some potential drawbacks to the scheme, of which Members need to be aware. These include:

- Restrictions on the use to which land can be put by the Council, although as a landfill site the development potential of Wonford Playing Fields is limited.
- The agreements are in perpetuity.
- FiT’s permission would need to be obtained for any development of the fields, even if the type of development is acceptable e.g. changing the type of use from one form of recreation to another. This process could be time consuming and, potentially, lead to some tension.
- The external funding ‘pot’ is limited to £1 million in total and so there is no guarantee that any bids would be successful, although officers understand that there are few bids to date.
- Each party would have to cover the legal costs associated with the agreement and other formalities, although these are unlikely to be significant.

## 4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

### 4.1 There will be legal costs associated with producing agreements and a Deed of Dedication, as well as the opportunity costs of protecting the land in perpetuity. Against this, there is the potential to access external funding that would otherwise not be available.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 That Executive decide whether to approve participation in the Queen Elizabeth II Field Challenge and, if so, determine which of the zones in Annex 1 it would wish to designate.
- 5.2 If the proposal for participation is supported, that Executive also approve entering into a formal Deed of Dedication that will impose a restrictive covenant on the chosen site(s).

**ROGER COOMBES**  
**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PUBLIC REALM**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

***Background papers used in compiling this report:-***

None