

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10th November 2016

RESPONSE TO **REASONS FOR CALL IN**

Part 1

Relating to the Following Decision:

Decision: The Development of Edmonton Cemetery

Decision Date: 19th October 2016

Decision of: Cabinet

Key Decision No: KD4234

1. introduction

At its meeting of the 19th October the Council's Cabinet made the decision to extend Edmonton Cemetery, onto part of the land owned by the Council adjacent to the A10, which is currently occupied by 10 of the existing 14 tennis courts.

The main purpose being to extend the range and choice of burial options and locations within the Borough in order to meet the growing demand for burial space from an ever more diverse community

The proposals will assist the Council in achieving a medium-term sustainable income stream for the cemeteries service.

In addition, and as a result of the development, in order to mitigate the proposed reduction in tennis courts it is intended to invest £250k into existing tennis facilities elsewhere and support the development of the sport across the borough. This is a proposal supported by Sports England and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).

2. Reasons for Call In

The reasons why the decision was called in are as follows: -

1. **Borrowing.** This project will have to be funded from the redirection of capital expenditure. The Council's borrowing is already at unprecedented levels
2. **General Fund.** The Council is predicting a £7.9million overspend for 16/17 whilst this decision includes capital investment the interest charges are revenue creating additional pressure.
3. **Tennis Courts.** The development of Edmonton Cemetery will mean the reduction of 10 tennis courts.
4. **Mitigation funding.** The £250,000 investment into tennis courts does not change the fact that 10 tennis courts will be got rid of. £250,000 is not a vast sum in terms of council funding it will not create show courts in our parks.
5. **Current state of A10 tennis courts.** The arguments for removal of the tennis courts include the fact the current ones are not in the best of conditions, however that is down to the Environment Department so it is Enfield Council's own fault. It is extraordinary that the other tennis courts in the borough are not in a bad condition but these ones have been left so they are not of the same standard.
6. **Improved choice:** The department knew that by offering more burial options capacity would run out probably sooner. I understand that a lot of custom comes from outside of the borough rather than from existing residents.
7. **Decision of convenience:** The expansion on the tennis courts is just a decision of convenience because they are located next to the cemetery.
8. **Not a decision for the long term.** The expansion of Edmonton Cemetery is a short term option; Enfield needs to find appropriate capacity for the next 30years.
9. **Only option.** This decision does not explore in detail why using an existing site in Enfield is so uneconomical nor buying land outside the borough.
10. **Demand.** What if demand changes and people's choices differ due to changing demographics and cheaper options become available. Brexit may make a difference as well to this.
11. **Public Health.** OSC has recently heard how bad our obesity levels are in the borough and our Public Health strategy talks about promoting exercise and better lifestyle choices yet we are removing tennis courts where people can exercise. We have not also promoted use of our facilities in particular these tennis courts so that more people would be attracted to play there.
12. **Booking.** The draft agreement between the LTA and Enfield Council talks about bookings. At present there is no need to book at any of our tennis courts in the borough making them reasonably available.
13. **Location.** The decision states that one of the reasons that the tennis courts are not used more is their location by the A10. This did not of course matter to Power League just a few minutes up the road. The Environment Department

did not feel the same way recently it had a planning application granted for an artificial pitch located at Enfield Playing Fields adjacent to the A10.

14. **Consultation.** There was not consultation with residents regarding the removal of the 10 tennis courts.
15. **Measuring usage exercise.** This time period was selectively chosen and it conveniently missed the busiest time in the year when the tennis courts are used to capacity.

3. Response to Reasons for Call In

1. Borrowing.

The capital investment is not new or additional borrowing and is being redirected from existing approved resources.

2. General Fund.

The interests payments have been included in the financial model and will be covered from the income generated from the additional burial capacity and therefore will not create any additional pressure on the revenue budget.

3. Tennis Courts.

The tennis courts in question are underused in a poor location. The proposals will seek to invest £250k into more effective facilities elsewhere and support the development of the sport across the borough. The approach is fully supported by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Sports England.

4. Mitigation funding.

This funding has been agreed in partnership with the LTA and Sports England. Further match funding will also be explored to maximise this opportunity.

5. Current state of A10 tennis courts.

In 2013 and 2015 the Council agreed a proactive capital programme, of just under £4m, that has provided resources to assist priority repairs and maintenance across all parks and open spaces. Prior to this there was no capital programme in place.

The tennis courts on the A10 site are clearly underutilised but sufficient courts have always been provided and maintained to meet the demand and usage of the site.

Independent surveying during May and August 2016, which included school holidays, has demonstrated that only 4 courts are actively used on the A10 site. Furthermore, the Lawn Tennis Association share our view that the site is inadequate and inappropriate for priority investment.

6. Improved choice:

Proportions of earth-grave burials for residents to non-residents have remained generally constant over the last 5 years at around 90% residents to 10% non-residents. New burial choices such as Mausoleums and Burial Chambers have to date been sold at a ratio of 98% residents and 2% non-residents.

7. Decision of convenience:

The location was determined after a thorough review of the options across the Borough, see Section 5 of the Cabinet Report. The creation of an extension and the provision of 1,718 new burial plots will allow people, mainly residents, with an association with the area the opportunity to be buried in the Borough at the same location as their relatives, rather than outside the Borough.

8. Not a decision for the long term.

This decision will assist in providing provision for burials within the borough over the next 20 plus years. The Council will also explore and develop other opportunities in order to meet the long-term burial demands predicted for Enfield.

9. Only option.

Other options were explored. Indeed, as noted in Section 5, paragraph 5.6 of the Cabinet report, the option of creating a new cemetery at a different location was rejected due to the additional infrastructure costs which would be required.

10. Demand.

Any long-term strategy involves planning for a number of possible scenarios. Independent advice was sought concerning best and worst case scenarios for sales and this confirmed that even on a worst-case scenario, the business case for the extension was viable. The burial spaces can also be created and sold in phases which will make it possible to adjust supply to meet demand.

11. Public Health.

The reduction of 10 courts down to 4 courts will have no adverse impact on public health as the demand and usage is met by the 4 remaining courts.

12. Booking.

The LTA agreement mentions bookings as this is the LTA approach to gaining data to understand the use of tennis courts generally moving forward. The Council have not agreed this booking approach for tennis within the borough.

13. Location.

The decision to place a 3G pitch on Enfield Playing Fields was following a recommendation from the FA, due to a deficiency in all-weather pitches within the borough. With the A10 tennis courts, the Lawn Tennis association, which is the national governing body for tennis support the proposals made within the Cabinet report to improve the 4 remaining courts and reinvest the £250k in order to develop and improve other sites within the borough.

14. Consultation.

Residents have not been part of a consultation on the decision to develop Edmonton cemetery, but will be engaged with the development process and will also have the chance to provide representations or comments at the planning application stage.

15. Measuring usage exercise.

The survey was undertaken during May and August and included school holiday periods.