
Report To:	The Petitions Committee	Date:	1 February 2018
Report By:	The Head of Legal and Property Services	Report No:	LP/014/18
Contact Officer:	Peter MacDonald	Contact No:	01475 712618
Subject:	Long Term Lease to Inverclyde Leisure of Inverclyde Indoor Bowling Club.		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is bring before the Committee for consideration a petition by Mr Angus Munro (the Petitioner) seeking the support of Inverclyde Council for the granting of a longer term lease of the Inverclyde Indoor Bowling facility to Inverclyde Leisure.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 A petition has been created on the Council's website seeking the support of Inverclyde Council for the granting of a longer term lease of the Inverclyde Indoor Bowling facility to Inverclyde Leisure.
- 2.2 This petition was initiated on 10 October 2017, and as it has gathered in excess of 100 signatures within the publication period, it is now being brought before the Committee for consideration.
- 2.3 The comments on the Petition by the Council Services affected by it are set out in Appendix 2, and additional comments by the Petitioner are set out in Appendix 3.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee

- 3.1 considers the terms of the petition, and as part of that consideration consider oral representations (if any) made by the relevant Council officers and by the Petitioner, all in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Oral Representations adopted previously by the Committee (Appendix 1); and
- 3.2 following such consideration **either**:
- (a). supports this petition, remitting to the Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities to bring a report to the appropriate substantive Committee of the Council with recommendations on this matter; **or**
 - (b). reject the petition, bringing matters to an end.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Petitioner, an individual residing in the Inverclyde Council area created an online petition on the Council's website on 10 October 2017 seeking the support of Inverclyde Council for the granting of a longer term lease of the Inverclyde Indoor Bowling facility to Inverclyde Leisure.
- 4.2 The full description of this petition entered by the Petitioner and shown on the website is as follows:

“Inverclyde Leisure Indoor Bowling Club requires new lights/lighting and carpet. This can only be achieved by Inverclyde Leisure being afforded a long term lease to allow capitalisation of the assets etc over a longer period of time.

The bowling club has produced a Scottish Bowling Singles Champion (youngest ever) with approx 30 caps for Scotland and other younger members who have been capped for Scotland. As well as the normal competitive bowling, the club is very much a Community facility which provides facilities for disabled and blind bowlers. It is also a 'meeting place' for many senior citizens who play in the mornings and remain to meet with friends, but without this facility they would probably remain at home.

The Club has welcomed an increasing membership since we offered various pricing breaks to encourage more people to take up the sport at any level. A new carpet and new lighting, within an upgraded facility, allows the Club to attract more National, possibly International bowling tournaments.

The Club has tried previously with a submission to host a British Bowling Tournament, but lost out due to the deterioration in both the carpet and lighting. The Inverclyde community cannot afford to lose this club.

- 4.3 As at the date of this report, this petition has received 285 signatures. As it has within the publication period received more than 100 signatures, the petition is being brought forward for consideration by the Committee, all as provided for in the Council's Petitions Criteria.
- 4.4 The Rules of Procedure for Oral Representations at the Petitions Committee were approved by the Committee at its meeting of 15 June 2017, and are designed to ensure a fair hearing for all concerned, in relation to petitions coming before the Committee. These will apply in relation to the consideration of this petition by the Committee and are reproduced at Appendix 1 for ease of reference.
- 4.5 The appropriate Council service, in this case Safer and Inclusive Communities, has set out its view in relation to the Petition in terms of Appendix 2. The Petitioner has also provided a written statement in respect of the Petition, in terms of Appendix 3.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 5.1 None from this report.

Legal

- 5.2 The Committee approved “The Rules of Procedure for Oral Representations at the Petitions Committee” on 15 June 2017, which designed to ensure a fair hearing for all concerned, in relation to petitions coming before the Committee. These rules will apply at this meeting of the Committee in relation to the consideration of this petition
- 5.3 In terms of the Council's approved petitions procedures, in their consideration of a petition, the Committee can decide that:
1. that the issues raised merit further action and will refer the matter to the relevant

- decision making body (which may be within the Council) and which may require further work, resolution or influence from the Council;
2. that the issues raised do not merit any further action; or
 3. to take any other action, provided there is no financial impact for the Council's service committees, as may be decided as appropriate.

It is the view of Officers that, by its nature, any support of this petition will have financial implications and that the appropriate route, should the Committee decide to support the petition, is that the matter be remitted to the appropriate Service Committee.

- 5.4 Any lease renewal will also require the agreement of the tenants, Inverclyde Leisure, before it could proceed.

Human Resources

- 5.5 None from this report.

Equalities

- 5.6 None from this report.

Repopulation

- 5.7 There are no repopulation implications.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities has been consulted on the terms of this report.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

INVERCLYDE COUNCIL**PETITIONS COMMITTEE****RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE ORAL REPRESENTATIONS AT THE PETITIONS COMMITTEE.**

During the consideration of a petition as an item of business (“**the Petition**”) at the Petitions Committee, the person responsible for the submission of the Petition (“**the Petitioner**”) will be given an opportunity to make oral representations in relation to the subject matter of the Petition. Council Officers (“**the Council Officer(s)**”) from affected Council Services will also be given the opportunity to make such representations, as will any Ward Members (see g) below). Below are the rules of procedure under which such representations will be heard at meetings of the Petitions Committee (“**the Rules of Procedure**”), and they have been designed to:

- create the right atmosphere for discussion;
- eliminate or reduce formalities; and
- give everybody a fair hearing.

The Rules of Procedure are as follows:

- a) The Convener will conduct the consideration of the Petition.
- b) At commencement of consideration of the Petition, the Convener will identify those intending to make oral representation on the merit of the Petition, namely : the Council Officer(s) present; the Petitioner (if present, or any person who, with the approval of the Convener, the Petitioner wishes to speak on his or her behalf); and any Ward Member in terms of g) below.
- c) The Convener will outline the procedure, explaining that it will take the form of a discussion which he will lead based on the Report to the Petitions Committee issued in relation to the Petition (“**the Report**”). The Report will have been circulated to the Members of the Committee, the Council Officer(s) and the Petitioner prior to the meeting. Copies will also be made available at the meeting.
- d) The Convener will ask the Petitioner whether or not he/she is content with the synopsis of the Petition contained in the Report. If the Petitioner disagrees with the summary he/she will be invited to clarify. This allows the Petitioner to ensure that the members of the Committee have a good understanding of the Petition.
- e) The Council Officer(s) will be invited to present the view of the affected Council Services on the merit or otherwise of and implications of the Petition, with their recommendation as to whether or not it should be supported, to set the scene for the discussion, with a time limit of 5 minutes.

- f) The Petitioner will be invited to speak to his/her Petition and comment on the representations made by the Council Officer(s), with a time limit of 5 minutes.
- g) Where the Petition relates to a specific part of the Inverclyde Council area, any Member of the Inverclyde Council whose ward includes all or some of that part ("**Ward Member**") may make representation in support of or against the Petition. Any such Ward Member present will be invited to do so, with a time limit of 5 minutes.
- h) Where a Ward Member makes representation in terms of g) above and is also a Member of the Committee, he or she will not be entitled to participate in the decision of the Committee on the Petition. Similarly, any Member of the Committee who has prior to the consideration of the Petition at the meeting made it clear that he or she is either for or against the Petition will also not be entitled to participate in the decision of the Committee on the Petition. This is essential to ensure that the Petition is given a fair and proper hearing and will avoid any impression of bias in relation to the Committee's decision-making processes.
- i) The Council Officer(s) will be invited to reply to the representations of the Petitioner or any Ward Member (introducing no new material), restricted to a time limit of 5 minutes.
- j) The Convener will allow the Petitioner the final word (introducing no new material), if he/she wishes it, by way of summary and in relation to any comments by a Ward Member, or the Council Officer(s), restricted again to a time limit of 5 minutes. The Convener will discourage repetitive or superfluous comments. At no time will cross examination be permitted. The Convener will indicate when he or she considers that sufficient clarification of the Petition has been achieved, and the discussion will then move on in terms of these rules, the oral representations element being at an end.
- k) The Committee will then proceed with consideration of the Petition as an item of business in terms of the Standing Orders.

Inverclyde Indoor Bowling Club

Background

Inverclyde Indoor Bowling Club has been leased to Inverclyde Leisure on an initial 3 year basis since 2011. This arrangement was put in place following the closure of the club and the keys to the premises being handed back to Inverclyde Council. Matters were brought to a head at that time by a decline in membership and the total failure of the heating system.

The then Regeneration Committee agreed to the premises being leased to Inverclyde Leisure on a peppercorn rent and to the investment of £150K to replace the heating system and carry out other minor repairs. The estimated cost of a total upgrade of the facility at that time was over £750K. The Committee approval was subject to there being a sufficient level of members being in place. At the time this was set at 260 members. This number was reached and the repairs and lease were taken forward.

The Situation Since 2011

Inverclyde Leisure has managed the facility on a rolling lease since then. Any discussions about further investment either by Inverclyde Council or by Inverclyde Leisure have been limited by the decline in membership since 2011. This has been gradual but marked year on year and has largely been as a result of ageing membership not being replaced. It should be noted that this is an issue also affecting the outdoor bowling clubs from which the Indoor Bowling largely recruits its membership. Inverclyde Leisure however reports that there has been an increase in membership in 2017-18 from 205 to 242, an 18% increase. If this could be built upon the long term future of the facility would be more sustainable. Inverclyde Leisure has taken advice from Bowls Scotland on the future of the facility. They advise that indoor bowling facilities should be designed on the basis of 40-50 members per lane. At current membership levels therefore a 5-6 lane facility is justified. Any carpet renewal might therefore proceed on that basis with the additional lanes being kept for overspill or training with the original carpet to reduce costs.

The Current Position

Members will be aware that the current budget consultations include a significant reduction in the Inverclyde Leisure management fee. It is recommended that any decision by the Petitions Committee takes into account the fact that council officers are currently in discussion with Inverclyde Leisure on how this would be progressed. Discussions will be held with Inverclyde Leisure on the future lease and operation of the indoor bowling and any upgrades to the facility however this cannot be dealt with in isolation from these wider considerations.

Inverclyde Leisure Indoor Bowling Club Petition.

Seven years ago Inverclyde Leisure, in conjunction with Inverclyde Council decided to respond to appeals to save the club from disappearing by providing funding to save it. This involved new boilers, refurbished flooring and upgrading the cafeteria. This, at that time, with a rolling three year lease.

For this we will always be grateful.

However, the only areas not refurbished or upgraded were the bowling carpet and stadium lighting and the peaked roof which has caused a concern with heat loss and varying temperatures in the stadium.

We have a bowling carpet that is over 30 years old and light fittings of the same era.

There are many lights that cannot take new tube fittings due to changes in electric fittings over the years. This results in different areas of the playing surface having different levels of brightness. The bowling carpet has had seams repaired many times by carpet specialists over its 30 plus years.

The success and the attraction of any sporting facility are:

Is it a modern, fit for purpose facility?

Will visitors to the facility be impressed and possibly join?

Will it attract National and International competition from the National organisation, SIBA.?

Sadly, we have lost out on hosting National and International Competition because of our carpet which has a very slow playing surface compared to the requirements in the modern game for excellent playing surface and excellent lighting. The various lighting and speed of the carpet has been commented on many times by visiting bowlers, of all playing abilities, as probably the heaviest and slowest carpet with the worst lighting of the large number of bowling clubs within the Scottish Indoor Bowling Association.

I like to think that Community Facilities are not always about budget constraints but more about encouragement to survive in the modern era.

As a club, we have tried for various grants from many places but they always end up the same way, ie, We are not a private Club but part of a much larger organisation, Inverclyde Leisure.

We require financial Investment that will allow Inverclyde Leisure to capitalise and depreciate the improved assets over a longer lease period and part of their other leases which are much longer and not just a small rolling lease.

Since taking on the Indoor Bowling facility, Inverclyde Leisure have been very supportive and tried, where possible, to improve the club. The members have raised the money which allowed us to upgrade the bowls ditches, around the carpet, to International requirements.

The bowling club itself gets no direct financial gain from the need for investment. However, the improved facility will attract more people to join and increase our growing membership which could result in joining and playing fees being reduced, which in itself will attract new members.

Finally, the club's Management Committee, which includes the Club Manager from Inverclyde Leisure, decided to offer special fees for new members. This was approved by IL and resulted in over 20 new members for the club.

Thank you!

A Munro