

Exploring the case for 3G pitches

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Working with you, working for you



South Norfolk Council

- Small, Conservative-led authority, reaching from urban fringes of Norwich down to the rural border with Suffolk, circa 120k residents, but growing.
- Only district in Norfolk with in-house leisure management operation. No parks though – town/parish councils responsible for these.
- Commercialisation a key theme of Council's working including trade waste, Build Insight consultancy and Big Sky Developments; Council-owned companies all generating income and contributing to keeping Council Tax down.
- Elected members willing to invest capital if returns are worthwhile i.e. better than bank interest rates. Mantra of Leader 'I'd rather earn a pound than save a pound'.



Background to project – Sports Hub

- ▶ Playing Pitch Strategy in place (in conjunction with Norwich and Broadland), outlined the need for a number of AGPs across the policy area.
- ▶ PPS takes into account anticipated housing growth in Long Stratton, circa 1800 new homes earmarked in Long Stratton Area Action Plan.
- ▶ Emerging FA strategy, and that of Norfolk County FA, points to the shift towards the provision of AGPs to help subsidise the provision of natural turf pitches; with more than 80% of pitches in public ownership, football is exposed to local government funding cuts like few other sports.
- ▶ Suggestion that instead of refurbishing existing sand-dressed AGP at Parish Council playing fields, a new one is provided adjacent to Leisure Centre.

Application process

- Application to Football Foundation, the FA's charitable, grant-making arm.
- Business case developed using Grantshot, which is the FF's application and monitoring system. Templates for business case provided. Useful document in providing a programme of use, with lots of automatic calculations.
- Football Development Plan was also crucial – need for a Key Footballing Partner to underpin the project and fill peak usage, in this case Long Stratton FC. Support from County FA crucial here, and FF staff.
- Use of FA's AGP Framework (developed in conjunction with RFU, EH and Sport England) – quicker and cheaper, especially for smaller authorities.
- Planning permission – relationships with planners helped here!!

Construction

- Delayed due to utilities companies (especially Anglian Water) not being very quick.
- Tiger Turf appointed main contractor, one of the six on the AGP Framework.
Tenders varied widely (£100k difference), total costs £470k, (£216k from FF, £25k from School and £229k from SNC)
- RLF (Framework Managing Consultant) acting as QS
- Started September 2016, handover 9th December, approximately 12 weeks.
- 54 weeks from initial idea to handover – very quick – normally closer to 18 months.

Business Case in more detail....

- FF provided toolkit useful up to a point, used by assessors to judge viability – we use our own business planning to build budgets, slightly different to FF figures.

Description	17/18 Budget
LSLC 3G pitch Salaries	£ 9,579.00
LSLC 3G pitch NIC Employers	£ -
LSLC 3G pitch Superannuation	£ -
LSLC 3G pitch Ground Maintenance	£ 1,300.00
LSLC 3G pitch Sinking Fund	£ 15,000.00
LSLC 3G pitch Advertising	£ 1,300.00
LSLC 3G pitch Fees & Charges	-£ 45,000.00
	-£ 17,821.00

ROI = 7.7%!

- Pricing – key footballing partner cheapest, Charter Standard clubs get a discount, casual 5-a-side bookings £35 an hour.
- Expecting 2017/18 to be better as more local clubs mover over to the new facility.

Learning

- ❖ Football Clubs – some resistance to payment, used to getting other facilities for free and wanted ours free too.
- ❖ Size – 9v9, FA would not have supported full-size (needed 60 teams in catchment, about 40 currently), regret not pushing harder on this, would have given greater flexibility.
- ❖ Dealing with utilities companies – don't underestimate the time that it will take to get them to do anything.
- ❖ We're taking that all learning into next project – full-size AGP project in Wymondham, in partnership with Town Council there, on a park site – different challenges!

