**Bowling Green Maintenance Proposal FAQ**

**General Report Overview:**

**Q1: Why is the Council proposing changes to the funding of Bowling Greens?**
The Council is required to set a balanced budget each budget year. Due to pressures in Adults Social Care, Children’s, and Housing Services, efficiency has been required across the Council. Additionally, Public Health funding supporting the Council’s Environmental Management Service budget for bowling green maintenance is being withdrawn. £30,000 Public Health funding for bowling green maintenance is to be withdrawn from EM Service budgets in 2025/26, and the full £60,000 is to be withdrawn from 2026/27 onwards.

**Q2: What are the main recommendations of the report?**
Due to the removal of £30k funding in 2025/26 and £60k from 2026/27, the Councils Cabinet were asked to approve the proposal as a basis to consult with the bowling clubs, to agree on a system that would enable the Council to achieve the required saving and for this saving cost to be shared equally by all the clubs.

**Q3: What are the reasons for these recommendations?**
Funding will be reduced as part of the Budget Setting process to set a Balanced Budget for the Council for 2025/26. There is a need to consult on the options to reduce funding and maintain the service to Bowling Greens and facilities. Additionally, there is an opportunity to repurpose resources and reduce the council's liabilities associated with deteriorating assets, and potential capital receipts from the sale of the land and buildings associated with any subsequently closed greens if that ever happens where not required/in use or suitably utilised any longer.

**Q4: What alternatives were considered in the report?**
The original Savings Proposal to cease the maintenance of the 14 Bowling Greens outside parks and transfer responsibility to the individual bowls clubs to carry out and fund at their own expense through member/user subscription was considered but not supported by relevant officers and council members.

**Q5: What is the current funding situation for Bowling Greens?**
The Public Health Investment Strategy has provided £60,000 annually as substitute funding towards the service in previous efficiency savings works as part-funding in addition to the Environmental Management Service main budget. As part of the Budget Setting process going forward the substitute funding is proposed to be removed starting in 2025/26 (£30,000) and the full amount from 2026/27 onwards.

**Q6: How many active bowls club members are there currently?**
There are currently an estimated 1,024 active bowls club members benefiting from the greens.

**Q7: What are the financial implications of the proposed changes?**
The withdrawal of the initial substitute funding will create a £60,000 funding gap against current operations. The proposal in this report will realize the savings required to bridge this gap. Staffing efficiencies may also be realized by reallocating personnel to vacant positions within the Environmental Management Service if any future options resulting from self-management of maintenance by clubs/association are proposed. This would however be subject to further consultation with the council and that organisation on an individual basis where appropriate.

**Q8: What are the potential methods to maintain the service through consultation with Bowling Clubs?**
Through consultation with Bowling Clubs, an ongoing service could be maintained via several alternative methods, including clubs paying utility bills, taking on Grounds Maintenance obligations, paying a standard rent fee for use of the facilities, and upkeep of the pavilions. An additional option is a full Community Asset Transfer, which would require detailed work with Estates colleagues and in-depth support in the first year to secure this community transfer to the Bowling Clubs/Associations.

**Q9: What are the legal considerations?**
If required, the council must ensure compliance with any legal obligations related to the closure of public facilities, including consultations with affected clubs and adherence to property disposal regulations.

**Q10: What are the human resource implications?**
Staffing adjustments may be required if clubs take on grounds' maintenance duties. Two full-time equivalent (FTE) staff currently utilised can be repurposed to other vacant/duties posts on the same contract as they are now. Any transfer of maintenance to bowls clubs will necessitate discussions regarding staff roles and responsibilities as appropriate at that time but it is not envisaged that this will be required at this stage.

**Q11: What is the sustainability impact of the proposed changes?**
It is not anticipated there will be any negative sustainability impact because of the proposed changes. If the report is accepted and Bowls Clubs opt to take on responsibility for paying utility costs, there is a greater incentive to only heat buildings as needed, potentially reducing the carbon footprint.

**Q12: What is the impact on clubs and individual service users?**
If this proposal is adopted by the council's cabinet as-is, each club will be responsible for ensuring they provide the required cost saving pro-rata for their site, amounting to £1,363.64 in 2025/26 and £2,727.28 from 2026/27 onwards. This may impose a financial requirement on them to generate that money through members' fees, sponsorship, etc., or to take on “in-kind/voluntary” works such as mowing greens to achieve the required savings. For individual service users, assuming the club opts for a direct financial contribution for bowling green maintenance, and there are a minimum of 1,000 paying bowls club members, this would equate to a cost of £27.27 per bowls club member per annum, or a fraction over 50p per week. It would be in the interest of service users if the bowls clubs increased membership levels to reduce the cost per member. Environmental Management Service has offered to assist with this move towards a more sustainable provision to this valued and important community partnership aspiration.