Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

Title of Report:	**Facility Management Agreements – Sports Facilities**
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 November 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)	
Strategic Theme	P1 Engaging and Communicating with our Customers P2 Empowering and Supporting our People
Outcome	Providing opportunities to influence council services Citizens with improved physical and mental health and wellbeing
Lead Officer	Head of Sport & Wellbeing

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	Unknown

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Officer time
Included in Current Year Estimates	**YES/NO**
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	5 days @ £200 per day

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	**YES/NO**
Legal Opinion Obtained	**YES/NO**

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to progress discussions with two local sports clubs who wish to take on responsibility for management/maintenance of Council facilities. Those discussions will culminate in proposed management agreements to suit the capacity of each club and their aspirations, alongside Council's obligations to ensure facilities are managed in the most advantageous manner for the residents of the borough and provides value for money.

2.0 Background

2.1 In May 2021 Council approved a Strategic Outline Case which assessed the various legal options available in the event that Council is approached by a Borough based Sports Club or Community Association to take on responsibility for the management and maintenance of a council owned pitch and associated changing pavilion.

2.2 As a form of Community Asset Transfer the L&D Committee report in April 2021 outlined the "drivers" for Community Asset Transfer;

Drivers for the local authority

- Response to legislation and guidance
- Focus for community-led service provision
- Opportunity for new funding and partnerships
- More efficient and effective use of assets
- Potential capital receipts
- Unlocking latent enterprise and volunteer commitment
- New approach to a long-standing problem
- Reduce liabilities
- Cost savings.

Drivers for a club

- Freedom to operate and security of tenure
- Improving the quality of experience for users
- Opportunities to increase its membership
- Opportunities to increase its facilities and progress through the league system
- Strengthen community relationships and support the development of new partnerships
- Provide a solution to a failing site or a site at risk of closure
- Strengthen the operational, legal and governance structure of the club
- Develop skills/knowledge base of club.

2.3 The Strategic Outline Case also highlighted the need to reduce risks in asset transfer, such as;

- Historic lack of investment in facilities;
- Poor location of an asset and/or hidden structural problems;
- Lack of strategic alignment and capacity within the club;
- Limited market demand for an asset due to changing needs of user groups;
- Restrictive leases for clubs and community use;
- Failure to explore all current and anticipated costs (management and maintenance);
- Costly environmental liabilities such as contaminated land or asbestos; and
- Unrealistic expectations by all parties leading to disputes and failure to meet obligations.

2.4 In order to minimise the level of risk, the report recommended that Council follow the English FA Guide to Asset Transfer1 (specifically the 'Ten Steps to a successful asset transfer'.) The 10 Steps are contained in **Annex A**.

3.0 Current Position

3.1 Council officers have been approached by two local sporting clubs with a request to consider the development of a form of asset transfer that meets the current needs of each club. (see **Annex B**)

3.2 Officers have been asked to explore with each club a range of options;

- Lease
- Licence
- Shared Management Agreement.

3.3 Any discussion with each party would require consideration of the above "drivers" for asset transfer in 2.2, plus the "Ten Steps to a successful asset transfer" in 2.4 / **Annex A.**

3.4 It is acknowledged that some forms of asset transfer already exist within Council, some of which are supported with a grant available to parties to assist with the on-going management and programme development of a facility – Community Development grants. Officers are keen to explore whether a similar arrangement might be appropriate for sports facilities, depending on what type of transfer is agreed with each party.

3.5 Prior to any formal agreement, officers would plan to engage with internal Land & Property, Legal and Strategic Asset Management officers to consider the value of these forms of asset transfer to Council and how they might align with Council's Estates Strategy and Land & Property Policies and Procedures.

3.6 The outcome of the above internal and external discussions would be brought back to the relevant committees for further consideration prior to any final decision being taken.

4.0 Recommendation

Members are asked to recommend to Full Council approval to progress discussions with two local sports clubs who wish to take on responsibility for management/maintenance of a Council facility. Those discussions to culminate in proposed management agreements which suit the capacity of each club and their aspirations, alongside Council's obligations to ensure facilities are managed in the most advantageous manner for the residents of the borough and provides value for money.

Final proposals to be brought back to L&D Committee / Full Council for consideration and approval.

ANNEX A

The English FA Guide to Asset Transfer - The 'Ten Steps to a successful asset transfer'.

https://www.thefa.com/-/media/cfa/northamptonshirefa/files/funding/capital-funding/asset-transfer-guide.ashx

1. **Is there a clear football need?** What are the needs of your football club? how will your club meet the needs of the transferring body?
2. **What options have been considered?** is an asset transfer the most effective way of realising the sites potential whilst protecting and safeguarding football and the community interest on the site?
3. **Seek independent legal advice**. Early professional advice will help protect the clubs interests
4. **Agree outline objectives between all parties**. Set out in broad terms the expectations of each organisation
5. **Set realistic time scales**. Ensure that the football club are afforded the time to work up realistic and deliverable proposals.
6. **Develop a business plan / feasibility plan.** You need to demonstrate a sustainable solution for the club and the site.
7. **Openly consult stakeholders**. Jointly assess the strategic need for the facility and proposed use with relevant stakeholders (this helps to align the political, policy and community support). it may be appropriate to seek support from other clubs or the relevant league.
8. **Manage the risk**. Protect the Football Club by not executing the legal terms until a sustainable solution is agreed and achieved in light of independent legal and financial advice.
9. **Protect the asset**. The site should remain open and current levels of operation / subsidy maintained whilst negotiating an alternative solution
10. **Adopt a long term strategic partnership approach**. This is essential in underpinning the viability and sustainability of the site.

ANNEX B

Heights Football Club

From: Alan Steele<heightsfcdo@gmail.com>
Sent: Tue 27/10/2026 19:20
To: Pat Mulvenna;Wendy McCullough;Adam Deeney <heightsfctreasurer@outlook.com>;heightsfcchairman@outlook.com;heightsfcsecretary@outlook.com

Subject: RE: Request for Consideration of Asset Transfer Agreement – Heights Football Club

Dear Pat,

I am writing on behalf of Heights Football Club in relation to our ongoing discussions regarding the future development of football provision at the Rope Walk.

The Club would like to formally request that consideration be given by Council of entering into an agreement with Heights Football Club for a form of Asset Transfer.

We would ask that that transfer considers a range of options including;

- Lease
- Licence
- Shared Management Agreement

The request from Heights Football Club would be for Council officers to work with the Club to explore what the most advantageous agreement might be for both the Club and council. We have aspirations for developing the ground to allow us to progress and participate into the Conference League which will create wider opportunities for the West Bann community.

The Club believes that a partnership approach of this nature would not only secure the long-term sustainability and growth of Heights Football Club, but also deliver wider community benefits, increased participation, and improved facilities for the local area, in line with Council's own leisure and community development objectives.

We are keen to meet with officers at your earliest convenience to discuss next steps and are happy to provide any further information, including our Club Development Plan and governance documents.

Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully

Alan Steele
Heights Football Club
Ground Development Manager

Portrush Bowling Club

From: [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, October 07, 2026 11:08
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Portrush Bowling Club

Hi Pat

I would appreciate your help.

Portrush Bowling Club previously held a longstanding lease agreement with the Council for the upstairs extension within the former Portrush Recreation Grounds building, which supported the activities and operations of the Club. We have been located at the Recreation Grounds for 103 years.

We are keen to continue our positive relationship with the Council through a similar arrangement that reflects both the enhanced facilities now available at the Recreation Grounds and the Club's ambitions for continued growth and development. Since returning to the new premises in 2023, we have held a series of open days to engage with the local community and have welcomed a number of new local members, including women and girls and people with disabilities. In conjunction with the Irish Bowls Federation, we also host a disability bowls hub at the Club every Thursday morning, one of only three such hubs in Northern Ireland.

We are keen to expand our community engagement activities and, as part of our club development plan, improve the quality of our playing surface. In the longer term, this will enhance the experience for everyone using the green, help attract new members and support the retention of our existing membership.

To this end, the Club Committee respectfully requests that Council officers engage with the Club to explore a range of options that would best achieve these objectives. These could include the renewal of a lease agreement under the Council's standard arrangements for sports clubs, or an alternative arrangement that would allow the Club to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the bowling green.

While the Club continues to thrive competitively, with a distinguished history of success at Irish, British, International, World Championship and Commonwealth Games level, it remains, like many sporting organisations, constrained in its financial capacity to meet significant lease and capital investment costs. We are therefore keen to explore alternative options that could prove beneficial to both the Club and the Council.

The Club would be grateful if this correspondence could be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and if Council officers could engage with Club representatives at the earliest opportunity to discuss the options available. This would build upon the constructive high-level discussions that have already taken place.