

Watchet Resident Pickleball Request

Appendix 5

This week, we have received a request from a resident, who wishes to start a Pickleball group in Watchet and would like to use the Watchet Tennis Courts to do this. The mail is as follows:

'I am keen to set up a Pickleball group in Watchet. Currently, anyone who wants to play has to travel to Minehead or Taunton. It would be wonderful if we could get something going in Watchet. The ideal place is probably on the tennis courts next to the memorial ground. I want to know if I need permission to lay down temporary tape to mark out the pickleball courts. My dream is that when the council sees how popular this sport is, they will paint something more permanent and maybe even supply nets.'

The resident has also supplied the following information on Pickleball for the Council's attention:

'Pickleball is one of the fastest growing and inclusive sports in the country. It's fun, social, easy to learn and brings people of all ages and abilities together. I always describe it as a cross between badminton, tennis and table tennis and it's an easy game to learn. It's played on a court, similar to the size of a badminton court, with a 'paddle' (like a very large table tennis paddle) and a fairly light plastic ball with holes in. Basically, two or four players use solid paddles made of wood or composite materials to hit a perforated polymer ball, over a net (like a slightly modified tennis net).

In a nutshell, it is:

- ***Suitable for all ages, Exercise made easy***
- ***Improves heart health***
- ***Improves flexibility and balance***
- ***Improves muscle strength***
- ***Easy game to learn***
- ***Low cost to participate***
- ***Socially inclusive***

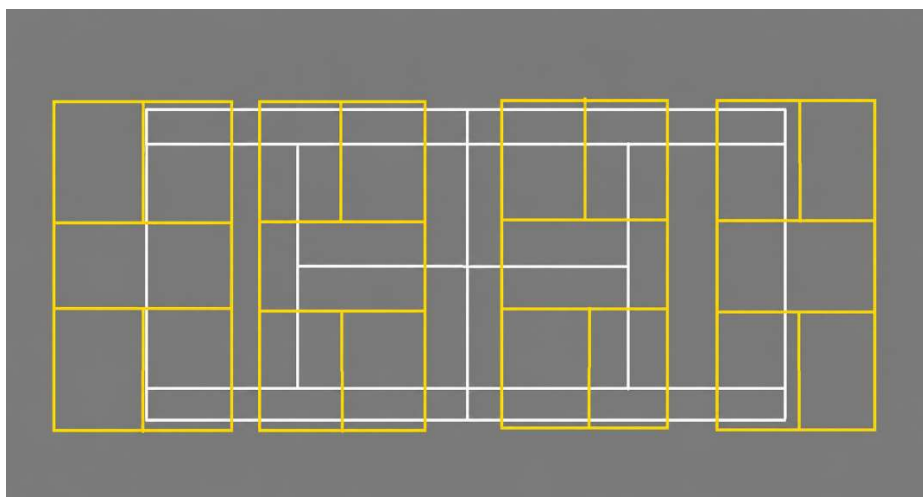
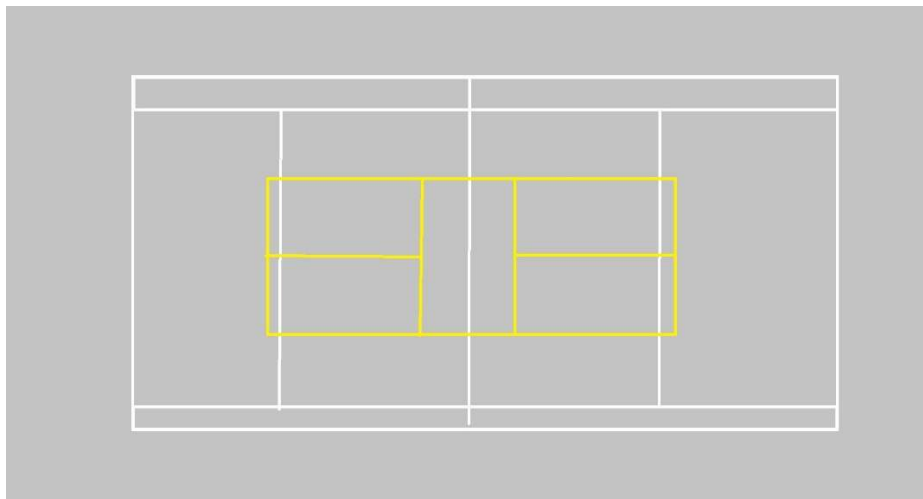
Good for memory development and reactions - learning how to score, keeping the score, learning strategies and techniques, concentration and focus.

To demonstrate how popular the sport is, there are two pickleball sessions a week at West Somerset College, Minehead, and both sessions are more often than not oversubscribed. In Taunton there are various pickleball venues run by Taunton Pickleball (<https://www.tauntonpickleball.co.uk/>) that are always busy and have to be booked in advance to be sure of a game: Blackbrook, Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Wellington Leisure Centre, Bishop Fox's School, Taunton School, Cotford St

Luke and Kings College. There is also Somerset Pickleball Club
<https://www.tauntonpickleball.co.uk/> who are also usually extremely busy.

There are a few ways that lines could be painted (see attached):

- **One single pickleball court painted over the existing tennis courts. This would allow us to use the tennis net. This would work even though it is not ideal as the tennis net is higher than the required height of a pickleball net. Downside is that once the lines have been painted we would not be able to expand beyond one game of doubles per tennis court at any one time.**
- **One, two, three or four pickleball courts painted widthways, across one tennis court. This would allow 16 players to play at any one time. The downside is that we would need movable nets.**



Recommendation

Members to discuss the residents' suggestion and suggest next steps if approved.