

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
11 JUNE 2008**

**SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL FACILITIES: COULARDBANK
PLAYING FIELDS, LOSSIEMOUTH**

BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Committee of the progress made to date in relation to the development of football facilities at Coularbank Playing Fields by Lossiemouth United FC. The proposed development of this facility has been sought by the Club to meet more stringent ground and facility requirements imposed on them by the Scottish Junior Football Association (SJFA).
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Children and Young People's Services Committee in terms of Section D (13) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to dealing with the management of indoor and outdoor facilities operated by the Council for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:-

- i) Agrees to support the provision of a perimeter fence and handrail around the main pitch at Coularbank Playing Fields, Lossiemouth up to a maximum of £4,300 with this funding to be met from Educational Services Budgets for Grounds Maintenance of Sports Facilities and Planned Maintenance.**
- ii) Approves the main terms of an agreement with Lossiemouth United for the provision of a fence being those as detailed in Appendix 4.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Educational Services Committee on 31 May 2006 (*para 2.3 of the report refers*), Members were made aware of health and safety standards that are to be enforced by the Scottish Junior Football Association (SJFA). These standards require that all Clubs affiliated to the league need to have access to improved pitch facilities including an enclosed perimeter fence and spectator barrier (**Appendix 1**), and that the Club must have sole use of the ground or shared use approved by the SJFA and be in a position to establish security of tenure for the ground.
- 3.2 At that time the local clubs particularly affected by these regulations were Bishopmill United, Fochabers FC, Lossiemouth United and New Elgin FC.

- 3.3 There have been developments affecting all these clubs and it is intended that a report providing a comprehensive update will shortly be put before this Committee; however, for reasons of urgency, this report will deal exclusively with proposals affecting the Club.
- 3.4 The long term proposals for the Club are for improvements to the southern end of the playing fields as shown in **Appendix 2**, including enclosure of an additional pitch by a 2 metre high fence and, at a later stage, the construction of a pavilion. The timescale for this proposal is around 3 years.
- 3.5 In the meantime, the Club won the Scotscup North Region Division 2 title in the Spring of 2008. While this entitles the Club to be promoted to a higher division, it also means the Club will need to meet the SJFA pitch requirements by August 2008.
- 3.6 As the long term proposals detailed at 3.5 are not achievable by August 2008, it is proposed as an interim measure that the Club should temporarily use the existing pitch in front of the pavilion at Coularbank Playing Fields (**Appendix 3**).
- 3.7 The benefit of this temporary arrangement would be that the Club could utilise the existing Council changing pavilion. Nevertheless, a fence would still need to be erected to meet SJFA requirements.
- 3.8 At an estimated cost of £22,900, the Club have subsequently presented to Officers plans for the erection of a galvanised steel security fence and timber spectator barrier. The perimeter fence measures 109 metres by 74 metres and 2.1 metres (height). There will be a number of gates in the fence which will remain unlocked. **A copy of the plan is available in the Members' Library.**
- 3.9 The Club and the Council will undertake the proposed development as a partnership initiative and a planning application has been submitted. The Council do not propose to exclude other groups from using the facility and existing arrangements for the booking and hire of the facility will continue. The Club are confident that these arrangements will prove acceptable to the SJFA.
- 3.10 The Club have submitted a number of funding applications to meet the construction costs in addition to providing an 'in-kind' contribution of £3,600 and a cash contribution of £5,000 from themselves. A funding breakdown is outlined under paragraph 4.2 of this report.
- 3.11 A funding shortfall of £4,300 nevertheless remains. Since the fence will enhance the Council facilities at Coularbank Playing Fields and will continue to be available for community use, Lossiemouth United has requested if the Council would consider meeting this shortfall.
- 3.12 Whilst there is no direct benefit to the Council in fencing of the pitch, it is felt that this arrangement presents a potential practical solution to problems that

have been seemingly intractable for a number of years. For this reason officers are of the opinion that the proposal should be supported. It is also possible that a solution may develop from this arrangement that could assist other football clubs in a similar position.

- 3.13 However, officers are also concerned at a number of risks to the council that could arise. These include additional grounds maintenance costs and maintenance of the new fence. It is felt that these issues would be best addressed through a management agreement the principle elements of which are detailed within **Appendix 4**.
- 3.14 Subject to Member's approval and the securing of additional funding, it is the intention that the fence and spectator rail would be in place for the beginning of the new season in August 2008.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

- 4.1 The Physical Activity, Sport & Health Strategy for Moray (2007-2012) identifies as a priority the need to develop improved leisure facilities. The Moray Community Planning Partnership Natural Grass and Synthetic Turf Pitches Strategy (2007-2012) has identified as an objective the need to assist local football clubs in meeting the new SJFA requirements.

(b) Policy and Legal

As noted within paragraph 3.12 of this report it is the intention to develop a management agreement which will protect the Council's interests in the Coularbank Playing Fields.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

4.2 Financial

The Management Committee of Lossiemouth United FC has estimated the cost of installing a galvanised steel fence and spectator handrail as £22,898. To meet this cost, Lossiemouth United FC has proposed that funding will be secured from the following sources:-

Lossiemouth United (Cash - Confirmed)	£5,000
Lossiemouth United (In-kind Labour - to be confirmed)	£3,600
HIE Moray Small Grants Scheme (Confirmed)	£2,000
Awards for All (Pending)	£8,000
Shortfall	<u>£4,300</u>
Total	<u>£22,900</u>

It is recommended that Council meet the funding shortfall up to a maximum of £4,300 from the Educational Services Budgets for Grounds Maintenance of Sports Facilities and Planned Maintenance.

The erection of fences will result in some additional grounds maintenance costs which are estimated at £375 per year for the pitch. These additional costs will be met by Lossiemouth United.

4.3 Risks

There is a potential risk of the pitch fence not being maintained to an adequate standard. This risk will be mitigated through the drawing up of a binding agreement detailing the Clubs responsibilities and the action to be taken should these not be met.

4.4 Staffing

The Leisure and Healthy Living Project Officer will continue to liaise and support Lossiemouth United FC.

4.5 Consultations

In preparing this report, consultations have been undertaken with Deborah Brands (Principal Accountant); Principal Planning Officer; Head of Estates Service; Lands and Parks Officer; Alasdair McEachan, Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Conveyancing); Principal Contaminated Land Officer; Educational Services Senior Management Team and Chief Executive. Comments received have been incorporated under the appropriate sections in this report.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Committee is requested to note the progress made in relation to the development of football facilities at Coularbank Park, Lossiemouth and to approve the request of £4,300 as a part contribution towards the cost of fencing a pitch within Coularbank Playing Fields.

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Background Papers: Contained within Education Services File (Leisure and Healthy Living)
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