

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
25 MARCH 2009**

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF FOOTBALL FACILITIES UPDATE

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 and to seek approval for similar arrangements to be made at Pinefield Playing Fields. The proposed developments of these facilities are to meet the ground and facility requirements as stipulated 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) notes the progress made to date in relation to the development of football facilities used by Lossiemouth United JFC at Coularbank Playing Fields;**
- ii) agrees to offer New Elgin JFC and Bishopmill United JFC use of pitches at Pinefield Playing Fields on the same terms as Lossiemouth United at Coularbank Playing Fields;**
- iii) agrees to support the provision of perimeter fences and handrails around the main pitches at Pinefield Playing Fields up to a maximum of £8,600 with this funding to be met from Educational Services budgets for Grounds Maintenance of Sports Facilities and Planned Maintenance.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Educational Services Committee on 31 May 2006 (*para 2.3 of the minutes refers*), Committee was made aware of health and safety standards that are being enforced by the Scottish Junior Football Association (SJFA). These standards require that Clubs affiliated to either the Premier League or First Division or Clubs registering a new ground need to have access to improved pitch facilities including an enclosed perimeter fence and spectator barrier (**Appendix 1**). In the event of a Club not meeting these standards, it would result in expulsion from the league.

- 3.2 In response to this situation, Clubs and Council officers have worked together in order to meet these requirements at Council grounds wherever practical, and to avoid Clubs being expelled from the league and, importantly, maintain wider community access to the playing fields in question.
- 3.3 In regard to Lossiemouth United, a perimeter fence is now installed at Coularbank Playing Fields and a partnership agreement between Moray Council and the Club is in place. This agreement seeks to protect both Club and wider community interests (**Appendix 2**) and appears to be working satisfactorily. The ground has been inspected and passed as suitable by the SJFA.
- 3.4 Discussions with New Elgin JFC have resulted in a planning application being submitted for the erection of a galvanised steel security fence and timber spectator barrier at Pinefield Playing Fields. The perimeter fence measures 109 metres by 73 metres and 2.1 metres (height). **A copy of the plan is available in the Members' Library.** The fence will be similar to the one installed at Coularbank Playing Fields for Lossiemouth United. Its erection will be the responsibility of New Elgin JFC who hope to have it in place by the start of the new season in August 2009.
- 3.5 Subject to the New Elgin JFC securing the balance of funding and agreeing terms similar to those agreed with Lossiemouth United, it is proposed that a contribution of £4,300 from the Council towards the cost of the fence be made in line with the support provided to Lossiemouth United.
- 3.6 Extensive consultations have been held with Bishopmill United FC in relation to identifying an alternative pitch location for the Club following the drainage problems at Deanshaugh. The Club have been approached to determine their view to using the second pitch at Pinefield Playing Fields. This approach has been received positively. Officers have consulted with the SJFA who have agreed in principle to the two Clubs neighbouring each other and thanked Moray Council for their continued support to Junior League Football.
- 3.7 The SJFA requested that consideration be given to constructing fenced corridors between each individual pitch and changing facility. This, however, would be impractical due to a number of factors including the distances involved and restrictions to community access. An alternative arrangement of erecting temporary fences for matches is proposed. This has proved acceptable at many other grounds including Coularbank.
- 3.8 Consultation has been carried out with New Elgin JFC on the proposal for Bishopmill United to relocate to the neighbouring pitch. Currently there have been no objections raised to the proposal.
- 3.9 The option for Bishopmill to use a pitch at Pinefield is relatively recent. As the Club require a pitch to be registered by the start of the next season, this

matter is being progressed as rapidly as possible. A planning application for the fence has been submitted to the Planning Department, (**Copies of the plans are available in the Members' Library**) and officers have held a preliminary meeting with the Club's Manager. The Manager has agreed in principle to arrangements similar to both those in place at Lossiemouth and proposed for New Elgin JFC. He has, however, raised two concerns. Firstly, the Manager points out that Bishopmill United have had to meet significant additional costs due to being unable to play at Deanshaugh (£100 per home game for two seasons) and this may affect the Clubs ability to meet their proportion of fencing costs. More importantly, he highlights the possibility that, as the SJFA will not inspect a ground until after work is complete, it is possible that the fence could be built and the SJFA still refuse to register the ground. If this were to happen, the Manager is seeking reassurance that the Club would not be left both 'out of pocket' and with no registered ground.

- 3.10 In view of the Club's predicament and the timeframe within which a solution requires to be found, it is proposed that Committee agrees to terms being offered to Bishopmill United FC similar to those proposed for New Elgin JFC. This will enable matters to be progressed and for officers to liaise with the Club and SJFA in order to see if ways can be found to overcome the problems identified above.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

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**

It is proposed that management of the pitch ground at Pinefield Playing Fields would remain with the Authority but access to enclosed pitch(es) would be afforded to the Club(s).

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

The Management Committee of New Elgin JFC have estimated the cost of installing a galvanised steel fence and spectator handrail at between £10-18,000 (one estimate was received from Moray Training

and other estimates from private contractors). To meet this cost, New Elgin JFC has indicated that funding will be secured from the following sources (please note The Council's contribution will not be released until all the necessary funding streams have been confirmed): -

New Elgin JFC (Cash - Confirmed)	£ 3,000
New Elgin JFC (Unconfirmed)	£ 2,700
Awards for All (Pending)	£ 8,000
Moray Council Contribution	<u>£ 4,300</u>
Total	<u>£18,000</u>

The Lands and Parks Officer has also commented that at Pinefield Playing Fields a smaller mower will be used to cut the area between the fences. Fence lines will also need to be strimmed where no strimming was required before. It is estimated that there will be an additional £370.00 maintenance cost per year for each pitch. The Clubs concerned will meet these additional costs.

Risks

As identified in paragraph 3.7, the SJFA have indicated their preference for a permanent fenced corridor between each individual changing room and pitch. As this is impractical at Pinefield Playing Fields, the provision of temporary fences on match days is proposed. This arrangement has proved successful and acceptable at other venues. It is possible that upon inspection the SJFA will not agree to register the pitch for Bishopmill United JFC. Whilst this would not affect New Elgin JFC (who are already registered), Bishopmill United JFC would be unable to use the ground for Junior Football.

Staffing

The Project Officer will continue to liaise and support Lossiemouth United JFC, New Elgin JFC and Bishopmill United JFC.

Property

In relation to the proposal from Lossiemouth United JFC, Committee will note that the erection of the fence and handrails was a permitted development under the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, and therefore, no formal planning application was required to be submitted by the Council. However, the application for a Building Warrant was required. Planning applications for the two pitches at Pinefield Playing Fields have been submitted.

(d) Consultations

In preparing this report, consultations have been undertaken with Deborah Brands (Principal Accountant), Director of Environmental Services, Development Control Manager, Head of Estates, Principal

Solicitor, Educational Resources Manager, Sport and Leisure Manager, Educational Resources Officer, Lands and Parks Officer & Educational Services Senior Management Team. Comments received have been incorporated under the appropriate sections in this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Committee is requested to note the progress made in relation to the development of football facilities at Pinefield Playing Fields, Elgin and to approve the request of £8,600 as a part contribution towards the cost of fencing two pitches within Pinefield Playing Fields.**

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Background Papers: Contained with Education Services File (Project Officer)

Ref: DMD/JR/Reports/Children & Young People's Services Committee/25 March 2009/Development of Football Facilities Update