

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
17 FEBRUARY 2010**

SUBJECT: ADVERTISING AT COUNCIL OWNED FOOTBALL GROUNDS

BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is for Committee to consider whether or not to allow the use of 'permanent' advertising boards at Council owned football grounds.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the Council's statutory powers to support activities related to the development of recreation, sport, culture and heritage.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:-

a) Approves, in principle, the use of advertising boards at Council sports pitches with spectator fences at Pinefield, Elgin and Coularbank, Lossiemouth as described in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.11 below.

b) gives officers delegated authority to determine an interim charge for the use of advertising boards at the identified sports pitches.

c) instructs officers to inform clubs that the use of 'permanent' advertising boards is subject to planning consent and that clubs would be solely responsible for obtaining such consent.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Over the last 2 years the Council has supported 3 football clubs (Lossiemouth United FC, New Elgin FC and Bishopmill United FC) to enclose Council owned pitches in order to enable them to continue to compete within the Scottish Junior Football League.

3.2 In principle, the agreement with the clubs was that they would erect enclosing fences (assisted with a grant from the Council), be responsible for their maintenance and that the Council would continue to own and manage the pitches as widely available community facilities.

3.3 During discussions on the agreement, all clubs requested to be able to sell advertising space on the pitches. This would be in the form of boards fixed to the spectator barrier. The clubs regarded this as a potentially valuable income stream, particularly at a time when funds had been stretched to meet the fencing costs. The practice is common at many sports venues.

3.4 Officers were concerned over 4 issues. These were:-

- ◇ That use of advertising hoardings for longer than 28 days would require planning consent;
 - ◇ That it was important that Council pitches were not perceived as the preserve of any individual club;
 - ◇ That there was no history of advertising on Council facilities;
 - ◇ That the Council might wish to charge for the advertising space.
- 3.5 As the clubs concerned required early entry to the pitches, interim arrangements were agreed which allowed restricted use of temporary advertising boards. In essence, at officer's discretion, clubs were allowed to erect boards on the spectator barrier for the duration of their hire only. See **Appendix A** for an example of the boards used at Pinefield.
- 3.6 This arrangement has been in place now for several months and an initial assessment has been carried out. From the perspective of clubs, the temporary nature of the advertising (boards are put up at the beginning of games and removed at the end) meant it was difficult to attract local businesses. To date, a maximum of 8 boards have been in use at any one pitch. From their contacts however clubs remain convinced that if the boards were allowed to be up more permanently many more local businesses would take advertising.
- 3.7 From officers' perspective, the use of advertising boards has presented few problems. The types of organisations taking advertising space have been legitimate local businesses. The only difficulty that has arisen has been the need to frequently remind clubs to remove the boards at the end of games. This difficulty would reduce if boards were allowed to be more permanent.
- 3.8 In order that the sports pitches do not become regarded as the exclusive preserve of any individual club, it is proposed that any sports organisation regularly hiring the pitch can take advertising space for the duration of their season only.
- 3.9 The use of advertising boards at Council sports pitches will require planning consent. Advertising that is on display for a period of more than 28 days in any 12 month period, and where the content isn't related to the purpose of the site, requires consent. Should Committee be disposed to allowing advertising, then it is proposed that the organisations wishing to display the boards be responsible for obtaining the necessary consents.
- 3.10 Clubs would have to obtain permission from the council for each advert displayed and this would be conditional upon obtaining planning consent if required.
- 3.11 Organisations would also need to indemnify the Council against any injuries that might be caused through the use of advertising boards.
- 3.12 Some consideration has been given to charges for permission to advertise on Council pitches. As a minimum, it is felt that charges should meet any additional costs associated with monitoring and control. However, the sale of

advertising space may present an opportunity, albeit small, for some additional income to the Council. It is extremely difficult to estimate what this income might be. The value of advertising space is dependant upon its profile and the level of competing demand. Whilst there is some demand for advertising at the pitches, it does not appear to be substantial. As a consequence, if members are inclined to set a charge, it is proposed that officers set an interim charge in discussion with clubs. This charge would then be evaluated and fully reviewed as part of the next 'charges review' for 2011/12.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

- (i) This report supports Action Areas 3 (Equally Well) and 17 (Sports, Arts and Leisure Development) of the Service Improvement Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no policy implications arising directly from this report.

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

The financial implications arising from this report are as detailed in the body of this report.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have been undertaken with Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant; Craig Wilson, Planning Officer, the Lands and Parks Officer, the Acting Head of Estates and Educational Services SMT. Where comments have been received, these have been included within the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The report seeks Committee approval for the use of advertising boards at enclosed Council sports pitches.

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Background Papers:

Ref: DMD/JR/Reports/Children and Young People's Services Committee/
17 February 2010/Advertising at Council Owned Football Grounds