



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee.
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Cherryvale Playing Fields</b>
<b>Date:</b>	10 October 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stephen Walker, Departmental Portfolio Programme Manager

1	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of Members the current position regarding proposals to install a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation artificial turf pitch and associated ancillary structures (floodlighting and fencing) in line with the Pitches Strategy. Members will be provided with the background information and will be asked to agree a preferred course of action.</p> <p>The Committee will recall that the Pitches strategy was formally agreed at Council in March 2012. Members are reminded that a central strand of the strategy was the need to intensify use owing to the shortfall in the number of pitches across the city. Given the lack of open space in the city and the desire to avoid using further open space for pitches, it was agreed that the construction of artificial turf pitches was the preferred method of increasing use. Members will be aware that these are suitable for greater use as opposed to the limited use of natural turf which requires recovery time between games and at the end of each playing season.</p> <p>Members are reminded that Cherryvale Playing Fields were prioritised as part of the evaluation process based on an assessment matrix agreed by Committee. This process took into account several factors one of which was partnership funding. In this case there had been an offer of funding from GAA to help improve provision for GAA on a number of sites across the city, one of which was Cherryvale Playing Fields. The Committee will recall that at its meeting in April 2013 it noted the approach with GAA and agreed that Officers continue to meet with the GAA in order to reach agreement.</p> <p>In essence, Officers were tasked to deliver a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation artificial turf pitch in Cherryvale Playing fields.</p> <p>During the past year there has been a series of meetings between Council Officers and representatives from GAA with the aim of agreeing a scheme layout. This was proved to be challenging owing to the constraints of Cherryvale itself and the use of the facility by other sporting codes, including Rugby and Association Football. Whilst Cherryvale is designated as Playing Fields, the facility also contains a children's playground and is regularly used by dog walkers, joggers etc.</p> <p>A number of options have been examined with a view to minimising the impact on the playing fields and the detriment to each of the sporting codes and other users. The main options are set out below. Members will note that all of the options contain an artificial turf pitch which was the agreed position approved by Committee.</p>

**Option 1 – Replace existing GAA natural turf to 3G (Appendix A)**

**Disadvantages**

GAA will lose an existing grass pitch

Some residents have voiced concerns against additional use, lighting and noise

Some non sports affiliated users have expressed concern that use of the playing fields will be restricted owing to the inclusion of fencing;

Funding from GAA may be at risk;

**Advantages**

This would intensify use

There would be no detriment to rugby or soccer

Lighting and noise would be further removed from the immediate vicinity of the residents.

**Option 2 – Proposed Agreed Option from Sporting Codes (Appendix B)**

**Disadvantages**

There is detriment to rugby, soccer and GAA

Some residents have voiced concerns against additional use, lighting and noise

Some non sports affiliated users have expressed concern that use of the playing fields will be restricted owing to the inclusion of fencing;

**Advantages**

GAA will retain the existing grass pitch

All sporting codes will gain use of the artificial turf pitch through a pre agreed management plan

Artificial turf pitch will permit intensification of use

**Option 3 – Reduced Scale Artificial Turf Pitch (Appendix C)**

**Disadvantages**

A more limited artificial turf pitch will not meet the needs of GAA;

Some residents have voiced concerns against additional use, lighting and noise

Some non sports affiliated users have expressed concern that use of the playing fields will be restricted owing to the inclusion of fencing

**Advantages**

There will be intensification of use

There is no detriment to rugby or soccer

	<p>Discussions have been widened out and there has been several meetings with residents who live immediately adjacent to the park as well as users from the wider community which would include dog walkers. A group of residents and other non sports affiliated users of the playing fields have expressed concern about a number of issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The lack of consultation with the residents;</li> <li>2. The proposal to install a floodlit artificial pitch in the playing fields adjacent to residents accommodation with the associated increase in noise and light levels and increased use of the facility;</li> <li>3. The inclusion of fencing will restrict use of the playing fields by non sports affiliated users.</li> </ol> <p>The strong view from those objecting is that they do not want any form of 3<sup>rd</sup> generation artificial turf pitch located in Cherryvale.</p> <p>For this reason a 4<sup>th</sup> option is presented to Committee, this option excludes the artificial pitch.</p> <p><b><u>Option 4 – Do nothing and leave site as is (Appendix D)</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Disadvantages</u></b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There will be no intensification of use;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Funding from GAA will be at risk;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Sporting groups at Cherryvale are likely to object.</p> <p><b><u>Advantages</u></b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The concerns of those residents and non sports affiliated users will have been removed.</p>
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<b>2</b>	<p><b>Key Issues</b></p> <p>The Committee is asked to consider the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cherryvale is essentially playing fields;</li> <li>2. Council has through the Pitches Strategy taken a decision to support local sports through increasing the capacity for use of its facility by installing artificial turf pitches, floodlighting and fencing;</li> <li>3. Cherryvale, owing in part to the partnership funding, has been identified as a site;</li> <li>4. Following significant discussions with sporting codes Option 2 (Appendix B) is presented as a proposed way forward to deliver this project within the Pitches Strategy;</li> <li>5. A group of residents and other non sports affiliated users have stated their opposition to the proposal owing to concerns around opening times; lighting, noise and increased use;</li> <li>6. Consideration has been given to the needs of other users and a trim trail around the perimeter of the site has been added to the proposals;</li> <li>7. Representatives from the residents and non sports affiliated users read out a prepared statement and asked if it could be presented to the Committee;</li> <li>8. It is likely that should the members agree to the proposed option 2, there will be opposition to this in the planning process;</li> <li>9. The Committee is asked to note that whilst there is opposition to the proposal not all residents are of this view and a number spoke out at the recent public meeting in support of the proposals. In addition, one of the local schools located immediately adjacent to the pitches openly supported the proposals on the basis that it provided an opportunity for the school to gain access to improved facilities in the area. The school currently has no playing field provision of its own.</li> <li>10. The importance of the views of those who live immediately adjacent to our</li> </ol>
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	<p>facilities and those who use them cannot be understated and it is important to address these concerns through locality sensitive management of the facility;</p> <p>11. It is equally important that the development and improvement of our facilities to meet the needs of other users be progressed;</p> <p>12. Officers are confident that through sensitive management of the facility the impact of the concerns can be minimised;</p> <p>13. Members are asked to note that as part of the planning process Council will be required to submit ecological survey; Lux (lighting) surveys and noise surveys to satisfy planning requirements on these matters;</p> <p>14. If Committee decides not to support the proposals for investment in Cherryvale and to support Option 4, consideration would be given to investing in the next sites identified through the Pitches Strategy which were Northlink Playing Fields and Boucher Road Playing Fields.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There are no additional costs at this time.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <p>There are no additional human resource implications at this time.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no equality implications

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	The Committee is asked to consider the report and its contents; to consider in particular the concerns highlighted in the report and to direct Officers to the preferred approach.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	An update report will be brought to Committee at a future date.

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	None

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix A – Option 1</p> <p>Appendix B – Option 2</p> <p>Appendix C – Option 3</p> <p>Appendix D – Option 4</p>