



Subject:	Safety of 3G pitches
Date:	9 August 2016
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officers:	Emma Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	There have been a number of articles in the local, national and international press in recent months, regarding the potential health risks of the recycled rubber crumb infill in third generation (3G) synthetic pitches.
1.2	The following report provides a brief overview for the Committee on this public interest subject and the Council's current position on this matter. Additional background information has been included in Appendix 1 to the report.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider this report and note the Council's current position.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Third generation (3G) is a generic term applied to synthetic turf carpets. These synthetic pitches generally combine grass like synthetic fibres with a mix of sand and/or rubber granule infill. The rubber granule infill (also known as rubber crumb) is manufactured from recycled scrap road tyres which are shredded to the required size. It is the rubber crumb which is generally cited as the source of the health concerns regarding 3G pitches

3.2	<p>The Council currently maintains approximately thirteen 3G pitches across Belfast. It is generally accepted that there are potentially hazardous substances contained within rubber tyres and hence the rubber crumb infill of 3G pitches. However what is not clear, is when the rubber crumb enters the body (by ingestion, inhalation or skin contact), whether the rubber remains stable or if breaks down and releases these potentially hazardous substances into the body.</p>
3.3	<p>To date, there have been numerous investigations carried out both nationally and internationally into the health impacts of rubber crumb however none have directly made any link between the rubber crumb and cancer.</p> <p><u>Conclusions and recommendations</u></p>
3.4	<p>At this time there is no research directly linking rubber crumb exposure to cancer, although there are studies which suggest that there are chemicals contained within rubber crumb which could potentially cause harm to health. There are also no legislative or best practice standards in place within the UK to limit use or exposure to rubber crumb in synthetic pitches. The material continues to be widely used within the UK and Republic of Ireland however potential alternatives are being developed including products based on cork, coconut fibres, recycled sports shoe soles and thermoplastic elastomers.</p>
3.5	<p>In determining the Council's position, reference has been made to the position being adopted by leading organisations in this area including The FA (England Football Association) and Public Health England (PHE):</p>
3.6	<p>'The FA adheres to the latest independent evidence that indicates that 3G pitches in the UK, which are built to industry-standard specifications, are safe'.</p>
3.7	<p>'Current estimates of the cancer risk associated with worst case exposure scenarios, including to children, are below levels considered of concern for human health. Therefore, based upon current research, PHE considers that artificial pitches are safe for normal use. PHE will continue to closely monitor the on-going research in this field'.</p>
3.8	<p>Further to some recent enquiries from the public, the Council had released a statement earlier in the year stating:</p>

	<p><i>“We are aware of recent media coverage regarding this matter; however we are not aware of any evidence supporting the link between rubber crumbs from 3G pitches and cancer. If research or evidence becomes available, we will of course consider it and look into matter further.”</i></p>
3.9	This remains the Council’s position.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.10	None
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u>
3.11	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	Appendix 1 – Background information

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