



Subject:	Crumlin Star Re: Strangford Avenue
Date:	13 th June 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department Stephen Walker, Portfolio and Programme Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a situation report regarding a request from Crumlin Star FC to the Council to provide them with a 'home ground'.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">Note the ongoing work in relation to the Urban Villages Programme in relation to Marrowbone Millennium ParkNote the ongoing discussions relating to the use of the pitch at Cliftonville as an interim measure;

	<p>3. Agree that in the context of 1 and 2 above in the absence of investment from the Club at this time that the proposal to develop Strangford Avenue is no longer an option ; and</p> <p>4. Note the ongoing work in relation to the pitch at Upper Waterworks;</p>
3.0	Main report
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p><u>The Context</u></p> <p>By way of context, Members are asked to note that Council does not directly provide ‘home grounds’ for sports clubs. There are however 2 ways in which clubs have been able to meet the requirements of the Northern Amateur League to enter into the higher leagues.</p> <p>Firstly, in the past, as Members will be aware, the Council entered into Facilities Management Agreements and more recently through Partner Agreements with sports clubs and organisations. These agreements have been secured through publicly advertised expressions of interest. Successful applicants have used this process to provide preferential use of pitches for clubs and have through the erection of signage displayed the impression that these facilities are the home of specific clubs. This ability to manage the allocation process has led to a number of clubs being able to demonstrate control of the site in order to satisfy the requirements of the IFA for entry into the higher levels of the Northern Amateur League.</p> <p>The second way in which clubs have secured use of facilities is by bringing investment to the asset, such as the Ulster Council of the GAA, Clarendon development Association, Suffolk FC etc. Depending on the source of the funding it is usual for terms and conditions to be attached to the funding / investment. Normally one of the requirements will be to have security of tenure, i.e. the funding body will seek to ensure that the funding will be used for the purpose for which it was intended and will seek to ensure that the applicant (recipient of the funding) will secure the benefit of the funding. Therefore sports clubs have sought to secure funding from a variety of sources and have used this to upgrade Council facilities and in return they have sought security of tenure which effectively enables them to secure use of the pitch for their own use and meet the requirements of the IFA for entry to higher levels of the Northern Amateur League.</p> <p>Crumlin Star</p> <p>Crumlin Star has approached the Council seeking preferential use of a number of facilities. In seeking preferential use, the club wishes to satisfy the requirements of the IFA, not to</p>

gain entry to the higher leagues but to be able to play their home games within their home city. Crumlin Star First Team currently play their home matches in Larne, although they can use Belfast based facilities for training.

3.5 Members are to note that should the Council grant the request to provide preferential use to Crumlin Star it would be inconsistent with the approach to date which has been to do so within the context of:

- Seeking expressions of interest for specified sites; or
- On foot of investment to improve or upgrade facilities.

3.6 This would set a precedent for similar requests and while it is acknowledged that Crumlin Star is a successful team, this would not form a basis for offering preferential use.

3.7 At this time Crumlin Star is unable to meet either of these criteria. Officers are currently engaged with 3 other Clubs all of whom are seeking preferential use of pitches and all of whom have been advised that we are not in a position to meet the requests for the above reasons.

3.8 In relation to Crumlin Star Council Officers are currently exploring 4 possible options which would enable the Club to play its home matches in Belfast.

1. Marrowbone Millenium Park
2. Use of the pitch at Upper Waterworks (adjacent to Westland Gardens);
3. Cliftonville Playing Fields and
4. Strangford Avenue Playing Fields.

Marrowbone Millennium Park – Urban villages Programme

3.9 Members will be aware that the Council in partnership with Sport NI and the former Department for Social Development funded the development of a 3G pitch at Marrowbone. Members may also recall that the former Parks and Leisure Committee had agreed to relocate the 2 room temporary changing pavilion from Cliftonville Playing Fields to Marrowbone. Crumlin Star do use the facilities but they do not meet the ground criteria to permit the Club to use the facilities for competitive matches.

Council has agreed to act as the delivery agent for the Urban Villages Programme. This

3.10	<p>programme has designated a number of areas across the city as Urban Villages and on foot of this designation these areas will be eligible for capital and revenue support to regenerate them and encourage shared use. One of the locations is Ardoyne and within this context Marrowbone Millennium Park. It is proposed that this small linear park receives funding and discussions to date have highlighted the importance of the pitch for sports clubs in the area. While still subject to consultation, one of the options being presented is to include a pitch extension and a new modern changing pavilion to support the 3G pitch. This pitch will be targeted at soccer clubs, owing to site constraints and this option would provide a permanent solution for clubs such as Crumlin Star, who are based in North Belfast.</p>
3.11	<p>This development is likely to mean that the pitch will be unavailable for use for approximately 2 playing seasons to allow for consultation, due diligence on the part of the funder; design, planning consent, the tender process and the physical works. Therefore consideration has been given to alternative interim arrangements that can as a priority provide for the first team's league fixture needs in their local area and further consider how we address the displacement of other teams who currently use this site.</p> <p><i>Upper Waterworks</i></p>
3.12	<p>Members are reminded that this has been discussed at Committee on a number of occasions and that a mediation process is currently in progress to seek a resolution to the issue of use. A separate report will be brought to Committee upon completion of the mediation process.</p> <p><i>Strangford Avenue Playing Fields</i></p>
3.13	<p>Members will recall that this request was first considered by the Committee at its meeting in October 2016 and has been discussed at subsequent meetings.</p>
3.14	<p>To summarise, Crumlin Star FC is seeking preferential use of Pitch 3 and the adjacent changing pavilion which would be in line with a sports development plan. The Club further requested that the Council investigate the possibility of bringing Pitch 3 and the associated pavilion up to Intermediate League Standard which would enable the Club to play its home games at Strangford Avenue. The Club further proposed that the Council will remain responsible for the maintenance of the pitch and that they would pay for use of the facility.</p>

	<p>There are a number of issues associated with this proposal:</p> <p>3.15 The Council has not offered this facility to other clubs who may be interested in securing a 'home ground';</p> <p>The Club has not sought to improve or upgrade the facility through securing funding which would require security of tenure to be afforded to the Club;</p> <p>In addition:</p> <p>3.16</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The pitch is already well used and should the Council agree to the proposal it would be necessary to displace existing users and find alternative facilities; 2. The facility is well used by local residents and the erection of a fence measuring approximately 100m long by 64m wide (to allow circulation space for spectators) in the middle of the facility would restrict usage; Members will also be aware of recent press coverage (South Belfast News and Belfast Telegraph) outlining local opposition to the proposal; it would be necessary to consult with other park users regarding the proposal; 3. Planning consent would be required in relation to the erection of the fencing; 4. The IFA is currently reviewing the ground criteria which governs entry to the higher leagues within the Northern Amateur League; 5. The cost of the work would be in the region of £50,000 based on estimate from the Fencing MTC; the small works and civil engineering MTC and the provider of dug outs. <p>3.17 Following the meeting in October 2016 Council Officers met with representatives from the IFA to review the suitability of the facilities. A number of requirements were identified including the dug outs and the fencing; a space for spectators to circulate is required and council would be required to make reasonable provision for those with a disability by providing at least one of the pitch with a bitmac path to facilitate access.</p> <p>3.18 A further report was considered at the January meeting, this report recommended that consideration be deferred until the IFA had completed its review of the grounds criteria. The IFA has been invited to attend a future meeting of the committee but to date no response has been received.</p>
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3.19	<p>A further report in March 2017 provided a breakdown of the costs.</p> <p><i>Cliftonville Playing Fields</i></p> <p>Members will be aware that the council has recently completed a major development at Cliftonville Playing Fields by providing a 3G artificial turf pitch and associated floodlighting and changing. This site is one of 4 which received some additional funding from the Ulster council of the GAA. On foot of that £1m investment across 4 site, the Council has agreed to a preferential use agreement with the Ulster council. This agreement essentially enables the Ulster council, in consultation with its constituent Clubs to book the facility in line with an annual programme of use. Where the facility is not booked as part of the programme it is available for use by other users. While the pitch is currently used primarily by GAA clubs, it is not exclusively for use of GAA clubs.</p>
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3.21	<p>Council Officers have met with representatives from the IFA Grounds Criteria team and the facility would require some minor physical works to the facility including dug outs and a barrier to segregate players and officials from spectators. The cost of this would be in the region of £10,000 which can be accommodated within existing maintenance budgets.</p>
3.22	<p>Members will be aware that there is an existing legal agreement with the Ulster Council GAA which provides them with preferential use of the facility via a sports development programme. Initial discussions with the Clubs delivering the programme have provided agreement in principle to use by Crumlin Star and discussions are continuing regarding the detail of implementation around the programming.</p>
3.23	<p>If agreement can be reached it will be necessary to submit a formal proposal to the IFA for approval. Officers have agreed to provide if required a letter to the IFA to seek additional time to conclude the discussions.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There no financial implications at this time.</p>
3.24	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There has been no equality impact.</p>

3.25	
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None