

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

6 February 2020

Report by Director of Environment

COWAN PARK CHANGING AND OTHER FACILITIES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise the Cabinet on the options available and proposals to consolidate and improve changing and other facilities within Cowan Park, Barrhead to allow a community based approach within the park while at the same time delivering best value for the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet considers the 3 options outlined in the report and considers approving option 3 as the best value solution to fulfilling the Council's outstanding commitment to provide changing facilities for Barrhead Youth Football Club and wider ambition to improve the layout and operation of facilities within Cowan Park Barrhead.

3. Should option 3 be approved as the preferred option it is further recommended that the Cabinet agree specifically:

- (a) The arrangement of a lease to Barrhead Youth Football Club for a period of 25 years for the 7's pavilion and new 4G pitch, at a rate of £1 per annum on the terms and conditions as outlined in paragraph 35 of this report;
- (b) The future management, operation and maintenance of the current Barrhead Youth Football Club artificial pitch and associated changing facilities transferring from Barrhead Youth Football Club to the Council;
- (c) An application be made to the Sheriff Court for the removal of Common Good land at the current location of ERC's 7's Pavilion, and its replacement with an equivalent amount of non Common Good land elsewhere within the park; and
- (d) That Barrhead High School will continue to have exclusive access to both the 3G and 4G pitches and the running track during the day for the school week Monday to Friday inclusive.

BACKGROUND

4. In February 2012 the Council approved a proposal to make a financial contribution towards the creation of a 3G pitch and changing facilities to be provided within Cowan Park and managed by Barrhead Youth Football Club.

5. In October 2012 the Cabinet considered a report on the detail of a proposal to implement this decision.

6. The Cabinet at that meeting agreed:

- To provide an area of ground within Cowan Park to Barrhead Youth Football Club at a notional rent through a lease or licence to occupy. This was to allow for the construction of the 3G pitch.
- To grant a lease or licence to occupy the existing Johnnie Kelly pavilion at a notional rent to Barrhead Youth Football Club upon the completion of the replacement Barrhead High School. This was to allow the Club to use this pavilion as changing facilities. This was considered a better and more cost effective option than a previous proposal to build them a new changing facility. The report flagged up that this would in due course require the provision of changing rooms within the replacement Barrhead High School project for the existing users of the Johnnie Kelly pavilion (i.e. the Environment Department who used it for changing accommodation in relation to the grass football pitches). The proposal at that time was to change the proposed specification for changing facilities within the new school to accommodate this requirement. The report noted that temporary arrangements for Portakabin type changing accommodation would need to be put in place for Barrhead Youth Football Club until the school new build project was completed but that this could be achieved with assistance from **sportscotland** at little or no cost to the club or the Council.
- That the school would have sole access to the 3G pitch during the school day from Monday to Friday inclusive.
- That the Education Department would make a contribution of £3500 annually to Barrhead Youth Football Club towards their (Education's) share of any maintenance and energy usage costs

7. In December 2014 the Council considered a report proposing an alternative site for the school within Cowan Park. This was in response to a Court of Session decision relating to common good issues which effectively meant that the Council was unable to progress the proposed replacement Barrhead High School on the site originally proposed. The Council agreed to relocate the replacement school to a site on and around the existing Johnnie Kelly pavilion. The report made clear this would involve the demolition of the existing Johnnie Kelly pavilion, the creation of a new Johnnie Kelly pavilion(but not changing accommodation within the school as was previously proposed) along with the relocation of the skate park as part of the school project.

8. As a consequence of this, the Council was unable to fulfil the commitment to provide Barrhead Youth Football Club with changing facilities at the old Johnnie Kelly pavilion. Since that time the Club have continued to use the changing rooms within the existing 7's pavilion and their own portable cabins as temporary non refurbished accommodation. (The club could not use the new Johnnie Kelly pavilion as changing facilities for their out of school hours football activity since it is required by the Environment Department to service the grass pitches lets at evenings and weekends).

9. There has therefore been an unfulfilled commitment for some time now for the Council to provide Barrhead Youth Football Club with permanent and more suitable changing facilities within Cowan Park.

10 In recognition of this an indicative Capital programme provision of £300,000 was approved by the Council to provide changing facilities since 2017 and remains available. This was produced quickly and based upon a simple modular design.

11. When Barrhead High School was rebuilt, a 4G pitch was included in the design. Funding for the pitch was not included in the Scottish Government's funding of the new Barrhead High and was funded entirely by the Council. The new 4G pitch is maintained and operated by the Environment Department at the Department's expense. An agreement is in place between the Education and Environment Departments that should major repairs be required to the pitch the cost would be shared equally between those Departments. The pitch is let by the Environment Department at nights and at weekends. However, it is available for exclusive school use during the school day from Monday to Friday inclusive

12. A new Johnnie Kelly Pavilion was also built as was agreed and is located near to the Council's 4 grass pitches and also the current Barrhead Youth Football Club 3G pitch. It comprises 8 changing rooms and is currently used exclusively and managed by the Environment Department in relation to Council organised football pitch lets on the nearby grass pitches in Cowan Park.

13. Cowan Park also includes a pavilion referred to as the 7s Pavilion. The 7's pavilion which comprises changing facilities which is located at the Aurs Road entrance to Cowan Park was originally used mainly in relation to the smaller grass pitches. However, it has recently had a partial and modest refurbishment to accommodate sufficient changing capacity to service the new 4G pitch belonging to the Council at a cost of £111,000.

14. As stated, whilst the 7's pavilion is operated by the Environment Department Barrhead Youth Football Club have been allowed access to it. This is to the basic non-refurbished changing rooms as a temporary measure to complement their basic changing rooms at the original 3G pitch.

15. Extensive discussions have been ongoing with Barrhead Youth Football Club over the last few years regarding subsequent potential designs of buildings which would meet both the ambitions of the club and the Council. In particular the Council has been keen to achieve the regeneration of Cowan Park and see the provision of modern fit for purpose changing facilities in Barrhead.

16. Ideally, the project would have the following objectives:-

- have sufficient changing accommodation to allow 2 teams to utilise the pitch whilst the next 2 teams change
- provide unisex facilities to encourage wider participation
- allow the facility to be used as a venue for interclub competitions
- allow the provision of basic refreshments
- have some meeting space

17. A specification for a new build modular facility was prepared to meet these objectives. This included: –

- home team changing facilities
- away team changing facilities
- officials changing space/disabled facilities/kitchen
- small clubroom
- storage container
- services connections
- external lighting and security

18. However, the costs associated with this proposal are estimated to amount to around £730,000 and possibly more.

19 As an alternative an exercise has been carried out to ascertain what could be provided on or near the existing changing facility operated by Barrhead Youth Football Club at the 3G pitch within the envelope of the £300,000 available in the capital programme. However, this exercise has shown that to provide a very basic modular facility comprising 2 changing rooms only would cost in the region of £520,000.

20. It is considered that the recent refurbishment of the 7's pavilion in Cowan Park and the production of a draft Cowan Park Masterplan could provide the opportunity to improve the layout of the sporting facilities within the park to better achieve the aims of both the Council and Barrhead Youth Football Club. This is explained in further detail below.

21. Given the background, Officers within the Environment Department have therefore carried out an options appraisal with the aim of providing a solution which given all the circumstances and the desired outcomes provides best value for the Council.

REPORT

22. A plan of the park and the various facilities is attached (appendix 1).

Options Appraisal

23. In essence there are 3 main options available to the Council should the desire remain to provide Barrhead Youth Football Club with suitable changing facilities.

Option 1 – a new build bespoke modular facility costing around £730,000

Option 2 – a basic budget new build modular facility costing around £520,000

Option 3 – reconfiguration and lease of the 7's pavilion and lease of the 4G pitch to Barrhead Youth Football Club at an estimated cost of around £300,000.

Option 1 – A new build bespoke modular facility costing around £730,000

24. This would be a purpose built modular facility near their current artificial pitch including a kitchen and clubroom and would meet all or most of the club's desires with regards to changing facilities to meet its ambitions as outlined earlier in the report.

25. However, further consideration would have to be given to the available space to locate the facility given its size and also to services/utility supply costs for the site.

26. This option is considerably more expensive than the £300,000 currently available within the capital programme.

Option 2 – A basic budget new build modular facility costing around £520,000

27. This would be a very basic functional modular option at their existing pitch with the modular units fitted out as 2 changing rooms only. There would be no club room or kitchen and no disabled accessible toilets. Most of the club's ambitions/desires would not be met.

28. Again, further consideration would have to be given to services/utility supply costs for the site.

29. This option would be considerably more expensive than the £300,000 currently available within the capital programme.

Option 3 – Reconfiguration and lease of the 7’s pavilion and lease of the 4G pitch to Barrhead Youth Football Club at an estimated cost of around £300,000.

30. As stated above it is considered that the recent refurbishment of the 7’s pavilion in Cowan Park could provide the opportunity to improve the layout of the sporting facilities within the park to better achieve the aims of both the Council and Barrhead Youth Football Club.

31. In consultation with Barrhead Youth Football Club it has been proposed that the 7’s Pavilion facility could ideally form their new changing facility through the further provision of meeting room space and other club requirements such as further reconfiguration of changing facilities. This could be met within the £300k funding within the capital programme. The 7’s pavilion is also ideally located to service the new 4G pitch.

32. Specifically, the £300,000 could be used to further refurbish the existing building to provide a clubroom/meeting room, disabled access (ramps) and disabled accessible toilets on top of the existing 4 changing rooms.

33. Given the background there would be sense strategically in relocating Barrhead Youth Football Club to the 7’s pavilion, transferring the new 4G pitch to them and giving back to the Council control of the existing 3G pitch and changing facilities at the lower end of the Park (i.e the existing Barrhead Youth Football Club pitch).

34. Under the proposal Barrhead Youth Football Club would be asked to sign a lease agreement to take over and be responsible for all aspects of maintaining and operating the 7’s pavilion and new 4G pitch.

35. Specifically, under the proposal Barrhead Youth Football Club would be required to sign a lease agreement to;

- take over and be responsible for all aspects of maintaining and operating the 7’s pavilion and new 4G pitch including the perimeter fence.
- be responsible for pitch surface refreshment **and replacement** in due course.
- ensure exclusive school use of the 4G pitch during the day for the school week Monday to Friday inclusive.

36. The school would continue to have exclusive use during the school day of the existing running track which runs around the perimeter of the 4G pitch.

37. The Environment Department would become responsible for the management, maintenance and operation of the existing Barrhead Youth Football Club 3G pitch and changing facilities. The maintenance costs can be absorbed within existing resources. A recent inspection has shown that the 3G pitch is in reasonably good condition for its age and will not require surface replacement for several years.

38. The running costs for the 7’s pavilion including the maintenance of the 4G pitch amounts to on average £15,000 per annum (based on the last 3 years). Under this arrangement Barrhead Youth Football Club would become responsible for these costs and also for the eventual resurfacing of the pitch for which they would be obliged to provide a “sink” fund.

39. However, it should be noted that the 7’s Pavilion sits on land which is currently classified as Common Good. This would require an application to the Sheriff Court for the proposed use but it is anticipated that this would be successful. If it was successful it would mean the displacement of a small amount of land to be replaced with equivalent sized Common Good ground elsewhere in the park. It could take several months to complete this process.

Benefits

40. There would be several benefits through this proposal including;

- It would allow the Council to fulfil its commitment to Barrhead Youth Football Club to provide permanent and appropriate changing facilities and to do so within the existing capital allocation.
- It would help the Council to achieve its ambitions with regard to the improvement of Cowan Park and the availability of good quality football facilities within Barrhead.
- It would allow the club to be more diverse/inclusive and to be able to host their own football events.
- It would allow the Council to divest itself of the management/running/maintenance costs of the 7's pavilion and the 4G pitch.
- It would allow the Council to divest itself of the cost of eventually replacing the surface of the new 4G pitch.
- Instead of staffing 2 pavilions the Council would only require one member of staff (at the new Johnny Kelly Pavilion) when the grass pitches are in use.
- It would allow the Council to better maintain and improve the old pitch thus improving the standard of facilities overall in the park.
- Exclusive school access to both pitches and the running track will still be available during normal school hours.

41. Given the overall situation this is considered to be a sensible approach to offset the lack of funding available to build Barrhead Youth Football Club brand new changing facilities while at the same time providing best value for the Council.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

42. There is currently £300,000 available within the current years Capital Programme to assist Barrhead Youth Football Club with changing facilities within Cowan Park and it is estimated that amount would be sufficient to fit out the pavilion to provide additional and appropriate clubhouse facilities.

CONSULTATION

43. Extensive discussions have taken place between the Council and Barrhead Youth Football Club. Barrhead Youth Football Club committee members have agreed to this option, subject to official Council approval.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

44. A number of services have been consulted on this proposal including Education, Strategic Services, Property Services, Technical Services, Parks and BYFC. Education were consulted on the new lease agreement and approved the proposed terms and conditions which still allows Barrhead High School pupils full access to both artificial pitches and the running track during school hours.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

45. The proposal will enable a long term strategic and more informed approach to park management resulting in multiple benefits including better value for money. This plan will have no negative impact on staffing, legal, IT or equalities.

CONCLUSIONS

46. In order to provide Barrhead YFC with suitable and sufficient changing room and meeting space within the available budget, the sensible approach would be better utilisation of current facilities and the re-organisation of pitches and pavilions to meet user needs.

47. Barrhead Youth Football Club have a commitment to the continued growth of grassroots football and to develop young athletes and encourage young people to be part of, and actively participate in, sporting activities. They run teams from 4 a sides up to Under 21's and have successfully produced professional football players. They have had recent Scottish cup winning success. They attract hundreds of young people from the local area who play or train each week at Cowan Park and the provision of changing facilities and a clubhouse will allow them to build on this provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

48. It is recommended that the Cabinet considers the 3 options outlined in the report and considers approving option 3 as the best value solution to fulfilling the Council's outstanding commitment to provide changing facilities for Barrhead Youth Football Club and wider ambition to improve the layout and operation of facilities within Cowan Park Barrhead.

49. Should option 3 be approved as the preferred option it is further recommended that the Cabinet agree specifically:-

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- (d) That Barrhead High School will continue to have exclusive access to both the 3G and 4G pitches and the running track during the day for the school week Monday to Friday inclusive

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from: Andrew Cahill –Tel No:- 0141 577 3036
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January 2020

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Map Reference: NS5059SE

Date: 18/11/19

SCALE: 1:4000

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