

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: **Culture and Sport Sub Committee**

DATE: **8 March 2013**

DIRECTOR: **Gayle Gorman**

TITLE OF REPORT: **Provision of Cricket pitches in the City**

REPORT NUMBER:

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report presents to members of the sub committee details of the cricket pitch assessment in the city which took place as part of the review of leisure assets and playing pitches. The report identifies the quality and quantity of currently available pitches and makes recommendations for future provision.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the committee:

- a. Note the content of the cricket pitch assessment in the city
- b. Agree that there is sufficient cricket pitches across the city to address current demand
- c. Instruct officers to work with the Cricket Association in the city to provide access to one cricket pitch throughout the season on a Saturday in line with the conditions set out in section 5.8.
- d. Note that the charge for the use of a cricket pitch at Duthie Park in the 2013 season is £33.50. This is line with benchmarking charges.
- e. Agree that an additional second pitch will be made available to the cricket association with the same conditions in section 5.8 at a cost of £4,475 plus VAT to the association.
- f. Instruct officers to work with the association to introduce cricket pitch user meetings in May and September 2013. These will review the usage of cricket pitches across the city and to report back to committee in spring 2014.

Deleted: when events are not taking place in Duthie Park in line with conditions set out in section 5.8

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3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of preparing a cricket wicket at Duthie Park is in the region of £5,000 per annum. These costs will be met by the Housing and Environment Service and some of the costs will be offset by income from pitch hire. The price of the pitch at Duthie Park for the 2013 season will be charged at £33.50, this is in line with the sportscotland charges for sports facilities and takes into account the lack of changing facilities.

Should the association request an additional second pitch this will be made available to them at a cost of £4,475 plus VAT. This is calculated taking in to consideration that

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the outfield is currently maintained by the Housing and Environment grounds maintenance team and this cost is for a wicket only. If the association decides to progress this there will be no additional charge per match for this pitch payable to the council.

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It should also be recognised that the cost of hiring Duthie Park for events is between £250 and £1000 per day. Should the park be unavailable due to cricket permanently taking place this would result in a potential loss of income to the council.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal, resource, personnel, property, equipment, sustainability and environmental, health and safety and/or policy implications or risks related to this report in itself.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Background

There are 14 cricket clubs currently playing in Aberdeen. In addition to a number of privately owned/leased clubs, a large number of clubs playing in the Aberdeen Evening Cricket League and Aberdeenshire Grades rely on the provision of City Council owned cricket pitches located in parks and on education sites.

Following face to face consultation with representatives from the Aberdeenshire Cricket Association and Evening Cricket league, an online survey was sent to all teams playing in Aberdeen, all of which responded. In addition, consultants met with Aberdeenshire and Gordonians cricket clubs to further discuss issues raised. Results of the consultation were used to within the pitch assessment to highlight key issues.

Please note that due to the timing of the work at Duthie Park and the impending cricket season there has not been an opportunity to consult widely on this report. However in line with the recommendations a cricket user group meeting will be set up for May and September and the outcomes of these meeting will be reported to committee in spring 2014.

5.2 Cricket Pitch Assessment

There are 13 pitches being used for competitive cricket in Aberdeen. Three clubs own or lease their own cricket facilities. The remaining clubs play on council/trust pitches

Figure 1: Location and availability of cricket pitches in Aberdeen

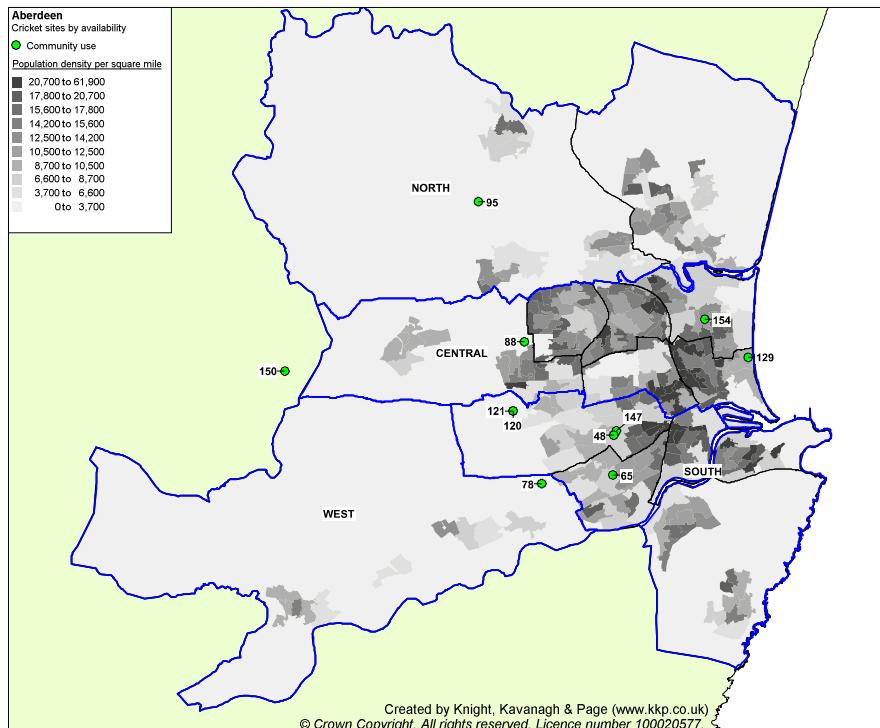


Table 1: Key to map

KKP ref	Site name	Analysis area	No. of cricket pitches	Surface type	
65	Aberdeenshire Cricket Club	South	1	Grass	Owned
150	Allan Park, Cults	West	1	Grass	Council
121	Harlaw PF, Groats Road	South	1	Non turf	Council
147	Harlaw PF, Harlaw Road	South	1	Non turf	Council
120	Hazlehead Academy	South	1	Non turf	Council
154	King's College, Aberdeen	Central	1	Non turf	University
129	Links Cricket Area	Central	1	Grass	Council/Trust
78	Robert Gordons College	West	2	Grass	Owned
48	Rubislaw Playing Fields	South	1	Non Turf	Council
88	Sheddocksley Playing Field	Central	2	Grass	Council/Trust
95	Stoneywood Dyce Cricket Ground	North	1	Grass	Owned

The three cricket pitches (grass wickets) previously provided in Duthie Park have not been included in the audit as they were replaced with artificial pitches at Harlaw Road Playing Field, Harlaw Academy Playing Field (Groats Road) and Hazlehead Academy whilst restoration works were in progress in the park as part of a Heritage Lottery Funded scheme.

5.3 Demand

Cricket clubs in Aberdeen generate 49 cricket teams. There are currently no senior women's cricket teams and junior cricket is limited to four clubs (although not all playing competitively).

Table 2: Summary of teams playing in Aberdeen

Analysis area	No. of competitive teams	
	Senior	Junior
Central	20	-
North	2	-
South	12	5
West	8	2
ABERDEEN	42	7

An analysis of match play identifies that peak time demand for senior cricket pitches in Aberdeen is a Saturday afternoon and midweek for juniors.

5.4 Quantity

As the biggest user of pitches in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire Grades require access to seven Council pitches (to accommodate 14 teams on a home and away basis on a Saturday), which it does currently have available locally. The League identifies that there has been an increase in demand from the black and minority ethnic community to participate in cricket.

In addition, there has been a significant increase in Twenty20 cricket in recent years (Aberdeen Evening Cricket League). In 2008 the League had 12 teams; this increased to 15 in 2012 and is expected to increase by a further three teams next season.

In terms of quantity, there is an adequate supply of cricket pitches in Aberdeen to meet current demand. However, this provides no additional capacity for future growth and does not take account of quality issues.

Clubs would like to see a dedicated site for parks cricket in Aberdeen. In addition, there is a desire from some clubs to take on the maintenance and/or management of such a facility.

However, there are also recognised benefits of having non turf wickets available for community use at school sites. It is hoped that this will encourage better links between clubs and schools and will result in an increase in the number of junior teams playing cricket. Currently all junior cricket is played at private clubs.

5.5 Pitch quality

Site assessments rate the majority of pitches as adequate quality. However, council/trust pitches at Sheddocksley and the Links are rated as poor quality from both site assessments and by users.

Maintaining high pitch quality is considered the most important aspect of cricket. The vast majority of cricket clubs suggest that the quality of pitches has reduced over the last few seasons. This is generally attributed to a reduction in general maintenance of Aberdeen City Council pitches such as grass cutting and line marking coupled with a lack of specialist cricket maintenance, particularly at the end of the season such as rolling of wickets.

In addition, the pitch at Allan Park, Cults is also rated as poor quality due to drainage issues resulting in matches often being cancelled.

5.6 Ancillary facilities

There is generally a good standard of changing accommodation available at cricket pitch sites in Aberdeen. Clubs rate the quality of provision at Hazlehead, Countesswells Playing Field, Harlaw Academy Playing Field (Groats Rd) and Aberdeen Grammar Playing Fields as good quality.

Opening up of pavilions on Aberdeen City Council sites has been raised as an issue by clubs. This is particularly prevalent at education sites, where janitors have to be on site to access changing accommodation. Consideration could be given to a key holder option, where clubs are willing to take on the responsibility, this is currently the practice adopted by other local authority areas and will be addressed through the bookings and lettings review which will commence mid March 2013.

5.7 Capacity

Increasing quality will help to increase the capacity of some cricket pitches in Aberdeen. For example, Allan Park, Sheddocksley and the Links. In addition, it may be possible to reduce the number of cricket pitches provided by Aberdeen City Council (and consolidate play) if investment is made in one or two sites to bring them up to an acceptable standard for both pitches and ancillary facilities. Ideally central venue sites to accommodate cricket would be the most viable option.

5.8 Duthie Park Cricket Provision

Providing cricket pitches in Duthie park has not been without issue in the past due to its openness as a public park. This relates to both a lack of access to changing rooms and unofficial use of the pitches which ultimately degrades the quality of the pitches.

Although the three pitches previously provided at Duthie Park have been replaced elsewhere, clubs who played there previously suggest that this is their preferred ground and would want to see some cricket reinstated in the park on completion of the Heritage Lottery restoration work.

Following a recent meeting with council officers and committee members of the Aberdeenshire Grades Cricket Association in February 2013 it was made clear to the association that the outcome of the review of leisure assets and playing pitches indicates that there is currently sufficient cricket pitches in the city to meet demand.

It was however recognised that cricket is part of the heritage of the park and in order to maintain this and continue to increase participation in sport and physical activity in

line with the *Fit for the Future* strategic document, it would be reasonable to provide one cricket wicket on a Saturday, out with the current core provision. This would be subject to the following conditions:

- Events (external, friends of Duthie Park and council) in the park will take priority over cricket bookings
- The council reserve the right to cancel any cricket bookings
- The council will manage and control the pitch and may be unable to guarantee in advance when available
- The cricket clubs playing in the park will be responsible for having appropriate health and safety procedures in place
- The cricket clubs playing in the park will be responsible for crowd management by ensuring that signage is displayed to advise other park users of the cricket match in progress. Boundary ropes must also be used at all times
- No changing facilities will be available to the cricket users. Participants must come changed for matches and all participants/spectators must use public toilets available in park
- The cost of the pitch will be £33.50 per match

An additional second pitch will also be available on the above conditions however this would be subject to the association covering all costs for the maintenance of the cricket wicket. This will be £4,475 plus VAT however no additional match fee would be incurred for the second pitch.

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6. IMPACT

This report relates to 'Aberdeen – the Smarter City':

- We will promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's citizens to lead more active, healthier lives.

The report relates to the Arts, Heritage and Sport strand of the Community Plan, specifically in relation to the Sports, Leisure and Recreation vision of developing Aberdeen as an "Active City".

The report relates closely to the objectives of "Fit for the Future, the sport and physical activity strategy for Aberdeen City (2009-2015)". These objectives are:

- Promote and increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for everyone in Aberdeen.
- Provide a comprehensive and high quality range of sports facilities in Aberdeen.
- Maximise social, educational, health and economic benefits of sport and physical activity in Aberdeen.
- Develop and sustain pathways which nurture local, regional and national sporting people to reach their potential.
- Raise the profile of sport in Aberdeen.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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