

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE:	15 April 2010
DIRECTOR	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT:	Northfield & Cummings Park Sports Facilities
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/10/042

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update, as requested, on the progress to develop sports facilities and opportunities in the Northfield and Cummings Park area, following a report to the North Area Committee in September 2008.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- i. Note the progress to date in developing sports facilities and opportunities in the Northfield and Cummings Park area.
- ii. Note that Fairer Scotland Funding be used to improve the drainage for football pitches in Northfield.
- iii. Note that for Fairer Scotland Funding to be used to provide a programme of taster, coaching and coach education sessions for Northfield Academy pupils by Active Schools in conjunction with Aberdeen Amateur Boxing Club.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

£35,000 had previously been allocated by the Fairer Scotland Fund 2009/10 towards the upgrading of the tennis courts at Northfield Outdoor Sports Centre. However due to a lack of external 'match funding' being attracted towards the project within the timescale, this funding allocation had to be reviewed by the Fairer Scotland Fund.

Following a resubmission, the revised proposal, which was considered and approved by the Fairer Scotland Fund Board on 13 March 2010, is to allocate:

- £4,682 towards the drainage improvements to the football pitches adjacent to the Allan Douglas Park and at Northfield Academy; and

- £4,110 towards the provision of a development programme at Northfield Academy in conjunction with Aberdeen Amateur Boxing Club.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

This report is in keeping with the Community Plan Challenge to develop Aberdeen as an Active City, and encourage participation and develop active communities.

The proposals within the report play a part in helping the City Council to deliver the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, 'Fit for the Future'.

The report also contributes to "Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking" in recognising the role that Sports and Arts can make in tackling anti-social behaviour, and increasing participation in sport. There are also links with 'Closing the Gap' and Regeneration strategies for the Northfield area.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Whilst the proposed improvements to the drainage of the grass pitches are classed as a temporary solution to the problem, they should significantly improve the quality of training and playing facilities, and crucially can be undertaken within the timescale for the Fairer Scotland Funding. Further major works would need to be carried out to fully resolve the drainage problems flooding in the Northfield area, as identified in the Hydrogeological Study, though the proposed works do provide an interim measure, whilst a more permanent solution is investigated further.

The original proposal was to investigate an all weather floodlit multi sport facility for use all year round. However if floodlighting is not an option in the Northfield area, this will put pressure on existing indoor venues to provide an all weather and all year round facility suitable for football and other sports.

6. REPORT

In 2008, Councillor Gordon Graham submitted a Motion to the North Area Committee, for the Council to:

'work in partnership with officials of Byron Boys Football Club and Aberdeen Amateur Boxing Club to provide options for state of the art facilities on the former Cummings Park School site'.

Officers met with representatives of both Clubs, and brought forward a report to the North Area Committee in September 2008, with more detail being presented to the meeting in January 2009.

The Committee resolved to:-

- (a) note the progress which had been made in clarifying that floodlighting of all-weather pitches at the two 3Rs Schools in Northfield should not take place;
- (b) note the submission of application for funding for upgrading the existing

tennis courts at the Northfield Outdoor Sports Centre; and
(c) request further reports from officers, when the outcome of the funding application was known.

In 2007, as part of preparatory work for regeneration in the Northfield, Middlefield and Cummings Park Neighbourhoods, the City Council commissioned specialist consultants to carry out a detailed Middlefield Hydrogeological Study of the area. This identified particular problems with drainage in many parts of the area, including the football pitches adjacent to the Allan Douglas Park. These problems were well known by local football clubs, including the expanding Byron Boys Football Club, which was struggling to find training and playing facilities, partly due to their growth in numbers, and partly due to the poor standard of the pitches.

The original proposal in 2008 was to develop all weather training facilities, in the form of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), on the existing dilapidated tennis courts at Northfield Outdoor Sports Centre, but was not at the time planning to address the inherent drainage problems on the grass pitches.

In November 2008 an application to the Cashback for Communities Fund (Sports Facilities) was made but was unsuccessful due to the high volume of applications. In July 2009, £35,000 was granted from the Fairer Scotland Fund towards upgrading the tennis courts surface, on the understanding that the required match funding of between £25,000 - £35,000, would be attracted from other sources of external funding by the end of March 2010. However a further application to the Fairer Scotland Community Safety Fund in 2009/10 for fencing and storage was unsuccessful.

Officers worked closely with the Council's External Funding team, and made several applications for the necessary match funding to completely refurbish the tennis courts. Unfortunately sufficient funds were not obtained in time, and in order not to lose the Fairer Scotland Funding, it was agreed, in conjunction with Byron Boys Club, that a revised request be made to Fairer Scotland Fund to improve the drainage of the existing football pitches adjacent to Allan Douglas Park and at Northfield Academy.

The improvement to existing pitches will enable Byron Boys Club will have access to better quality training and playing pitches, which will enable them to continue their development as a community football club. This revised proposal will allow time to further investigate future funding for the wider development of sports facilities in the Northfield and Cummings Park area in conjunction with the Community Groups, including Byron Boys Club.

In order to broaden the scope of the benefit of the Fairer Scotland Fund grant, the revised proposal was expanded to include an Active Schools project to work in conjunction with Aberdeen Amateur Boxing Club based at Cummings Park Community Centre. This project builds on early discussions with Aberdeen Amateur Boxing Club and Council Officials following the committee motion in 2008. The aim of the project is to; provide taster sessions and after-school coaching at Northfield Academy; enable pathways to be formed between the local schools and Aberdeen Amateur Boxing Club; to purchase new equipment and to provide training opportunities for senior pupils, volunteers and sports coaches

The revised proposal was endorsed by the Northfield Forum on 23 February 2010, prior to being approved by the Fairer Scotland Fund Board on 13 March 2010.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report and minutes of North Area Committee meeting of 23 September 2008
Report and minutes of North Area Committee meeting of 6 January 2009
Middlefield Hydrogeological Study May 2008