
Report To:	Petitions Committee	Date:	15 June 2017
Report By:	Head of Legal & Property Services	Report No:	LP/053/17
Contact Officer:	Peter MacDonald	Contact No:	01475 712618
Subject:	Petition for Consideration: Provision of Crawl Space Access to Inverclyde Academy's Pitches or Creation of a Suitable 3G Pitch in Locality		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring before the Committee for consideration the petition detailed in the body of this report, all of which meets with the Petitions Criteria and has received the levels of public support required in terms of the approved Petitions Procedures.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 A petition has been submitted to the Council requesting the provision of either crawl space access to Inverclyde Academy's pitches or creation of suitable 3G pitches for the area. This petition meets the criteria and has achieved the level of support necessary for it to be brought before this Committee.
- 2.2 The comments on the petition by the Council Services affected by it are set out in Appendix 1.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 3.2 considers the petition detailed in the body of this report, being a request for the provision of either crawl space access to Inverclyde Academy's pitches or creation of suitable 3G pitches for the area and, in that consideration, has regard to any party making oral representation in terms of the Committee's approved Rules of Procedure for Oral Representations; and
- 3.2 decides to **either**:
- a) reject the petition, bringing the matter to an end; **or**
 - b) support the petition and require Officers to, at the earliest practicable opportunity, submit a detailed report to the appropriate Service Committee on the subject matter of the petition, which shall include reference to this Committee's support in principle for the same.

Gerard Malone
Head of Legal & Property Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 A petition has been submitted by Mr JB Houston, in the following terms:-

“We demand the creation of crawl-spaces and opening of Inverclyde Academy AstroTurf pitches to local youngsters on a 24/7 basis or the creation of a suitable 3G AstroTurf pitch within the immediate locality to bring the area up to a similar standard with other areas in Inverclyde.”

4.2 The petition is suitable for consideration by the Committee in terms of the Scheme of Administration.

4.3 The petition was conducted privately by the petitioner through a third party website. Whilst this website is not administered by the Council, it is the view of Officers that in all the facts and circumstances, it is appropriate that it be brought before the Committee for consideration.

4.4 The petition has, through the third party website, attracted in the order of 593 signatures. The required level of support for a petition to be brought before this Committee in terms of the petitions procedure is 100 signatures.

4.5 Officers from Safer and Inclusive Communities, Education and Legal & Property Services have been consulted on the terms of this petition, from which the recommendation of those services is set out in Appendix 1.

4.6 In terms of the Council's approved petitions procedures, in their consideration of a petition, the Committee can decide:

- 1) that the issues raised merit further action and will refer the matter to the relevant decision making body (which may be within the Council) and which may require further work, resolution or influence from the Council;
- 2) that the issues raised do not merit any further action; or
- 3) to take any other action, provided there is no financial impact for the Council's Service Committees, as may be decided as appropriate.

The Committee will note the third option above has not been included in the recommendations in this report as it is the view of Officers that given the nature of the petition, support of it will have financial implications requiring consideration by the relevant Service Committee.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

5.1 None.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

Legal

- 5.2 In terms of the Council's approved petitions procedures, in their consideration of a petition, the Committee can decide that:
1. that the issues raised merit further action and will refer the matter to the relevant decision making body (which may be within the Council) and which may require further work, resolution or influence from the Council;
 2. that the issues raised do not merit any further action; or
 3. to take any other action, provided there is no financial impact for the Council's service committees, as may be decided as appropriate.

It is the view of Officers that, by its nature, any support of this petition will have financial implications and that the appropriate route, should the Committee decide to support the petition, is that the matter be remitted to the appropriate Service Committee.

Human Resources

- 5.3 None.

Equalities

- 5.4 None.

Repopulation

- 5.5 None.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Head of Education has been consulted on the terms of this report.
- 7.2 The Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities has been consulted on the terms of this report.
- 7.3 The Chief Financial Officer has been consulted on the terms of this report.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

Provision of Crawl Holes at 3G School Pitches

To date there have been no crawl holes installed at school pitches in spite of previous requests for them, in particular this issue has been raised in relation to Wemyss Bay Primary School and the Community Campus in Port Glasgow. The Council's position to date on the installation of crawl holes in schools has been that this would be inappropriate for the following reasons:

- Installation of crawl holes would in many cases give access to the school campus and give rise to potentially wider security issues than those arising at a standalone pitch.
- Where pitches are more remote from the school buildings, for example at Inverclyde Academy and the Community Campus there would be a need for greater supervision and oversight from letting officers.
- Unfettered access would also require greater staff input in cleaning the pitches and removing rubbish. Litter bins are not a solution for this as they can become the focus of vandalism, in particular fires.
- There would be an increased risk of damage to the pitches from vandalism. This has been a real issue at the pitches which have had crawl holes in the past.

The building of Inverclyde Academy on the site of a number of open access blaes pitches clearly had an effect on casual use. There is however a significant difference in the vulnerability to damage from a blaes pitch to a 3g pitch. Crawl holes were originally installed at 4 pitches because of concerns over health and safety. Specifically the concerns related to the Council being liable should a child be injured climbing the fence and should this occur would the emergency services be able to evacuate the casualty. On the first point legal advice is that there would be no liability. On the second point Fire and Rescue have cutting equipment which would allow access to the pitch in very short order should this be required.

Crawl holes were originally installed at the first Parklea 3G pitch, at the George Road pitch, at Lady Octavia and at Broomhill. The crawl holes at Lady Octavia and Broomhill have subsequently been closed up, the latter after fire damage requiring significant repairs. The pitch at George Road has also suffered fire damage in the past. There is no reason to assume that the school pitches will not suffer similar damage should crawl holes be installed. It should be noted that the pitches related equipment at Inverclyde Academy are self-insured by the Council, meaning any such damage fall to be dealt with from the Council's insurance fund.

As stated above there are only two pitches in Inverclyde with official crawl holes, neither in a school therefore this is not a standard of provision which exists across Inverclyde. Even if this were not the case there is no suitable location in the immediate locality to site an alternative pitch and no budget to do so.

The view of Officers is therefore that, for the reasons stated, crawl spaces should not be installed at the Inverclyde Academy pitches.