

---

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Education &amp; Communities Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>7 May 2019</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Education, Communities &amp; Organisational Development</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>EDUCOM/42/19/HS</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Hugh Scott Services Manager</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 715459</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Crawl Space Access to Pitches</b>		

---

## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the provision of crawl hole pitches across the estate, highlighting the additional 6 month review of the pilot at Inverclyde Academy's 3G pitch. In addition, this report seeks approval from the Committee to increase the number of crawl spaces across the school estate.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 A petition was 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. The petition was considered at the Petitions Committee on 15 June 2017.
- 2.2 The Petitions Committee decided to support the petition and required that a detailed report be brought to the Education & Communities Committee for the Committee's consideration.
- 2.3 The initial pilot for one year was not a success due to the damage of the pitch. However, due to the strength of feeling in the local community, a decision was taken at the October 2018 meeting of the Education and Communities Committee to extend the pilot for a further 6 months.

Following this 6 month extension of the Inverclyde Academy pilot, there were no reports of any further damage to the surface or surrounding area but it should be noted that there is still an increased demand on Janitorial services due to increased litter picking duties each day and especially after weekends and school holidays.

- 2.4 Following the successful extension of the pilot at Inverclyde Academy, officers are seeking to develop this model at other sites across Inverclyde on a phased basis commencing with access to the other Secondary Schools which would include Port Glasgow Community Campus, St Columba's High School, Gourrock and open discussions with the operatives of the two 'PPP' schools namely Notre Dame High School and Clydeview Academy.
- 2.5 There are a number of issues that still need to be considered around the provision of new crawl holes. Security and the risk of damage to the pitch and equipment such as goals and nets remain a possibility at the new sites. There are also likely to be increased demands on janitorial staff in litter picking and ensuring that the pitches are safe and suitable for school use. Specific consideration will be required in relation to physical access to the crawl hole at Port Glasgow Community Campus and at St Columba's High School in Gourrock.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Agrees to the provision of the crawl hole at the Inverclyde Academy 3G pitch to remain in place following the successful pilot with monitoring procedures in place to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
2. Agrees to commence the roll out of other crawl holes within the wider schools estate on a phased basis commencing with the Secondary School pitches on a trial basis over the next 6 months.
3. Agrees to consider the further roll out of crawl holes within the Primary estate provision if further trials in the secondary schools are successful.
4. Agrees that any damage to pitches with crawl holes be monitored and that authority be delegated to Officers to close any crawl holes if significant damage occurs.

**Ruth Binks**  
**Corporate Director**  
**Education, Communities and Organisational Development**

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 The Petitions Committee convened on 15 June 2017 to consider the following petition which had been submitted to the Council with 593 signatures:

“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 Petitions Committee had two possible options:

- to reject the petition, bringing the matter to an end; or
- to support the petition and require Officers to submit a detailed report to the appropriate Service Committee on the subject matter of the petition

The Committee decided to support the petition in principle for a period of one year and then approved a further extension to the pilot for an additional 6 months.

4.3 There are a number of issues that still need to be considered around the provision of new crawl holes. Security and the risk of damage to the pitch and equipment such as goals and nets remain a possibility at the new sites. There are also likely to be increased demands on janitorial staff in litter picking and ensuring that the pitches are safe and suitable for school use. Specific consideration will be required in relation to physical access to the crawl hole at Port Glasgow Community Campus and at St Columba’s High School in Gourock.

4.4 If the decision is made not to make the crawl hole at Inverclyde Academy permanent, the petition asked for the creation of a separate 3G pitch in the immediate locality. Unfortunately, even if the budget were to be available for this there is no obvious site in the area for another 3G pitch. It is also the case that provision of another 3G pitch would be extremely unlikely to attract any external funding given the overall level of artificial pitch provision in Inverclyde.

## **5.0 PROVISION OF CRAWL HOLES ACROSS INVERCLYDE**

5.1 There are currently 10 full sized 3G pitches in Inverclyde together with 4 full sized 2G. Of these there are crawl holes at 3 pitches: Parklea, George Road and Lady Octavia. There was once a crawl hole at the Broomhill Pitch however this was blocked up following a vandalism incident which resulted in the pitch being out of operation for a number of weeks.

5.2 Crawl holes were originally installed at the pitches due to concerns over the Council’s potential liability should anyone be injured climbing into a pitch. There were also concerns regarding potential delays in rescuing anyone should there be an incident in a locked pitch. On the former point, current advice is that the Council would not be liable in any way should anyone be injured climbing a fence; an insurance claim to that effect has in fact been successfully repudiated. On the latter point, the emergency services, in particular Fire & Rescue, have equipment which would allow access to a pitch in an emergency.

5.3 The wording of the petition suggests that open access to 3G pitches is the norm across Inverclyde. This is far from the case with only three pitches having this facility and large areas of Inverclyde are a significant distance from a 3G pitch with a crawl hole. It should also be noted that the pitches with crawl holes are only accessible for free recreational use when there are no bookings on the pitches. This may be the case for a period during the day through the summer however for most of the year these pitches are heavily booked and are in use most evenings.

## **6.0 CURRENT PROVISION**

6.1 There were a number of issues that came to light during the initial 12 month trial period of the crawl hole. The school reported that over the year, they had seen an increase in damage to the pitch and equipment such as goals and nets. This had a direct impact on the delivery of the PE curriculum for

the school. However, over the past 6 months, there have been no reports of any damage to the pitch, goals, nets or surrounding area.

- 6.2 Whilst broken glass has always been an issue because of youths drinking on the pitch, incidents of broken glass have decreased over the past 6 months. A significant reduction in complaints have been received from both the school and those who hire the pitches. The Community Warden Service continue to visit and monitor the sites on behalf of Inverclyde Council.
- 6.3 The additional 6 month trial has seen the same demands on janitorial staff and letting officers for picking up litter and ensuring that the pitch is safe and suitable for day to day use.
- 6.4 Officers recommend that the crawl hole provision at Inverclyde Academy remains in place with the same level of monitoring procedures in place. This is because the recent trial extension has seen no issues with the pitch and therefore the trial has deemed to be a success. In addition, whilst incidents of litter and damage did increase during the first year, they were always present in some way and this needs to be balanced with the opportunity for the community use of the facility.
- 6.5 Following the successful pilot at Inverclyde Academy, officers are keen to trial the crawl hole access at other Secondary School sites across the authority. It is important that there is parity across the estates and that the local communities have a similar level of access. It is proposed that a similar trial period be considered to ensure that the new sites are effectively monitored. Discussions could also take place with the operatives of the PPP schools to determine the viability of installing crawl holes at these locations.

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

### Finance

- 7.1 The provision of a crawl hole could lead to costs in terms of staff time for safety checks and litter picks, of increased wear and tear on equipment and potential damage to the pitch and equipment.

#### Financial Implications:

##### One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

##### Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

### 7.2 Legal

None

### 7.3 Human Resources

None

#### 7.4 **Equalities**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

X

YES (see attached appendix)

NO - This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

#### 7.5 **Repopulation**

None.

#### 8.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 None.