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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Education &amp; Communities Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>20 January 2015</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Education, Communities &amp; Organisational Development</b>	<b>Report</b>	<b>EDUCOM/22/15/EM</b>
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on Gourock Primary School Grass Pitch</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Committee on the condition and current use of the existing grass pitch at Gourock Primary School following a request from the May Policy & Resources Committee.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The existing grass pitch at Gourock Primary School/Darroch Park is used by the School and local community for a variety of activities. The pitch is in reasonable condition but would benefit from some additional regular planned maintenance to improve the condition of the soil and drainage. Should the Council wish to investigate the upgrading of the pitch then it will be necessary to carry out further consultation and take cognisance of the issues noted within this report including allocation of the necessary funding.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the Committee note the report on the condition and current use of the existing grass pitch at Gourock Primary School.
- 3.2 That the Committee note that the Education & Communities Capital programme includes an allowance of £1.1M for 8 primary school multi-use games areas and £830K for upgrading of 3 blaes pitches within primary schools. There is no current allowance for works to Gourock Primary School grass pitch.

**Patricia Cassidy**  
**Corporate Director**  
**Education, Communities & Organisational Development**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Following representations received from the Gourrock Primary School Parent Council, the Policy and Resources Committee (at the request of the Leader of the Council) has asked that a report be submitted to the Education & Communities Committee on the use and condition of the grass pitch used by Gourrock Primary School.
- 4.2 The Education Capital Programme includes an allowance of £1.1M to address provision of small multi-use games areas (MUGAs) within 8 Primary Schools to be taken forward during 2014-2016. This funding was made available from reserves following the 2014 budget setting process. Funding in the amount of £830K was also made available from the 2013 budget setting exercise to address the upgrading of 3 existing grass pitches within operational Primary Schools. Both of these allocations prioritised schools where there was either no outdoor sports provision or where that provision was/is of a type/condition that requires upgrading. Schools with existing MUGAs or grass pitches were not considered for replacement / upgrading.

## 5.0 GOUROCK PRIMARY SCHOOL GRASS PITCH

### 5.1 CURRENT USE

Information has been obtained on the extent of use of the existing facility as follows:

**School Use:** The Head Teacher confirmed that, when the weather permits, the pitch offers alternative accommodation to extend sports and outdoor learning opportunities. The following activities were noted:

- Rugby
- Football
- Hockey
- Athletics
- Cricket
- Orienteering
- School sports day
- Outdoor learning
- Interval and lunchtime use for general play

**Active Schools:** The Active School's Co-ordinator for the school confirmed that good use is made of the pitch when it is in a dry and suitable condition. The following activities were noted:

- Rugby
- Football
- Golf
- Athletics
- Highland Games
- Orienteering

**Public Use:** The pitch is not locked and is available to the public. No letting data or recorded use out of hours are available. However from the groups consulted there is general knowledge of the type of use the pitch receives as follows:

- Football training (local team(s))
- Local Scouts / Boys Brigade use
- Informal cricket (local groups – possibly above)
- General play (various age groups)

## 5.2 CURRENT CONDITION

The Council's Environmental Services section were consulted in respect of the condition of the pitch and the current maintenance arrangements. They confirmed that the grass pitch currently received limited maintenance and is mown on the same frequency as the rest of the park. This is routinely once per fortnight but with an extra cut during periods of lush growth in spring or late summer. The pitch is also not routinely marked/lined out as a formal pitch. It was noted that the pitch would benefit from being added to the current verti-draining programme and this addition has subsequently been agreed with Grounds Maintenance (including the addition of Moorfoot Primary School grass pitch). Both pitches received their first verti-draining maintenance visit in early September with a further visit planned for February 2015 (verti-draining visit frequency = twice per annum).

Both the School and the Active Schools Co-ordinator made reference to the limitations of the pitch in respect of weather. This is not uncommon and affects all grass pitches/facilities. Environmental Services have confirmed that the availability of other nearby facilities such as those at Battery Park and George Road have also been affected due to the conditions experienced over the last few months/years. It should also be noted that the topography of the park contributes to the drainage issues. The pitch has been formed at a lower level to allow access from Davidson Drive, with the parkland along the length sloping up towards Broomberry Drive. Water shedding from the park onto the pitch possibly combined with a surface that currently receives no specific additional treatment other than grass cutting (e.g. vert-draining or similar) is likely to be contributing to the time taken for water to drain through the surface and will limit the availability particularly in the winter months.

In spite of the issues noted above the reported use is significant. The School estimates that during the summer months use can be as much as 18 hours per week. The SportsScotland publication School Playing Fields - Planning & Design Guidance states that "natural grass pitches can only accommodate a restricted amount of use whilst still maintaining adequate playing quality. A well constricted, well drained and well maintained grass pitch should be able to accommodate around eight hours per week of the varied type of use expected in a school."

## 5.3 LEGAL POSITION

It should be noted that the land forming the park and on which the school and pitch have been constructed is under a Feu contract from Major Duncan Darroch recorded 1913. The deed states that the land is a gift in memory of his father to the inhabitants of Gourrock to be used as a "Public Park and Pleasure and Recreation Grounds". There are title restrictions stating that it is to be used in all time coming for those purposes. This falls into the category of Common Good and is the reason why the existing pitch is left unlocked and available for general community use. A waiver was obtained circa 1998 to allow construction of the school.

Should the Council wish to take forward any alterations to the existing pitch the following would have to be considered:

- Alterations would have to be restricted to within the existing fenced boundary to avoid the need for further legal agreements or impact on existing rights of way within the park.
- Public access would have to be maintained i.e. left open for general use.

If the Council were to support upgrading of the existing grass pitch to form a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) or other artificial surfaced playing field this would likely not be an issue in terms of the Common Good title restrictions as the use would still be deemed as park/recreation ground, however the facility would have to be left open to the general public and would not be able to be used to generate income through Inverclyde Leisure in the same way that other school pitches/MUGA's are.

#### 5.4 ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

At this stage no formal consultation has been undertaken with the Parent Council however it is anticipated that the desire would be for the existing grass pitch to be considered for upgrading to either a polymeric or artificial turf multi-use games area. Should this be considered by the Council the following issues would also have to be considered:

**Type of Surface:** The choice of surface is likely to impact on the current number of activities noted from the consultation. Polymeric surfaces are best suited for general play, football, netball, basketball etc. but are not suitable for uses such as rugby, golf, cricket and orienteering etc.. Should a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation type artificial surface be considered then this suits predominantly football, rugby skills practice, and some athletics use but will limit the use of the pitch for anything beyond this. The current grass surface, although limited by weather, is suitable for a wider range of activities than artificial surfaces.

**Community Use:** As the area has to be retained for general community use due to the common good title restrictions there may be an expectation that an upgraded facility would consider provision of enhanced lighting. It should be noted that the current £1.1M allocation for 8 school MUGAs does not include any allowance for floodlighting. Given the proximity of housing on Davidson Drive enhanced lighting could present problems at the Planning stage. Control of any floodlighting and access to that control would also be an issue given that it would not be a bookable facility managed by let officers.

**Future Extension:** The School Estate Management Plan currently includes an allowance for a hall extension to Gourrock Primary School. This allocation is currently in future years however any alteration/development will require to consider the anticipated future plans for the school. If however, as referred to above, the pitch is developed within the existing fenced boundary this is not likely to impact on future plans. A further waiver of the existing title conditions will probably be required for the hall extension dependent on the proposed location and its impact on parkland currently out with the fenced school boundary. No feasibility studies on this have been undertaken at this time.

**Existing Pitch Facilities in the Locality:** A number of artificial surfaced facilities are currently available nearby for Community use via the Inverclyde Leisure booking office:

- St Columba's HS – 1nr full size short pile 3G pitch suitable for football, hockey and general training + 1nr 5-a-side size polymeric Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) – within 0.5 miles of Gourrock PS.
- Drumshantie Road – 1nr full size long pile 3G pitch suitable for football and general training – within 0.5 miles of Gourrock PS.
- Battery Park - 1nr full size long pile 3G pitch suitable for football, rugby and general training – within 1.5 miles of Gourrock PS.

**Physical Education Target:** The Scottish Government and COSLA announced in March 2012 a commitment to the existing target of delivering at least 2 hours per week of Physical Education in primary school and two periods in S1 to S4 by 2014 for all pupils in Scotland. The Scottish Government measured the Physical Education Target for every local authority through the Scottish Healthy Living Survey in the first quarter of 2012. At that time Gourrock Primary School was included in the reported 33% of Inverclyde Primary Schools who did not meet this target due mainly due to the availability of the single multi-purpose gym/assembly/dining hall. The provision of an enhanced Multi-Use Games Area would assist in addressing the target, however, it should be noted that the planned future hall extension referred to above, currently within the SEMP model, will allow the school to meet the target in conjunction with qualified teaching staff providing structured lessons.

**Moorfoot Primary School Grass Pitch:** It should be noted that the Parent Council of Moorfoot Primary School have also been in contact with members in respect of a similar request to consider an upgrade of the existing grass pitch at that facility.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

### Finance

- 6.1 The Education & Communities Capital Programme includes an allowance of £1.1M for 8 primary school multi-use games areas and £830K for upgrading of 3 blaes pitches within primary schools. There is no current allowance for works to Gourrock Primary School grass pitch or Moorfoot Primary School grass pitch.
- 6.2 The November Education & Communities Committee approved the issue of tenders for the primary schools with no current external sports provision funded from the £1.1M allocation. The estimated cost of the work leaves minimal budget from the £1.1M allocation and £55K of this allocation has also been approved by the Committee to address the funding gap on St Ninian's PS MUGA project (as also reported to the November E&C committee). It should be noted that the costs are estimates only at this stage. There is no scope to add any further sites to the existing proposals and additional capital funding would be required should an upgrade of the grass pitch at Gourrock PS be taken forward.
- 6.3 The table below provides an indication of the likely capital and revenue implications of taking forward a project to upgrade the existing grass pitch at Gourrock Primary School. The estimated costs are approximate based on the cost of upgrading the existing blaes pitch at Wemyss Bay Primary School which was of a similar size. This allows for a 3G surface, floodlights and new perimeter fencing. The initial capital cost of a polymeric surface in lieu of a 3G would not significantly differ however both surfaces have a different lifecycle profile (3G indicated in table below).

## Estimated Cost of Gourock PS Grass Pitch Upgrade

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Capital	TBC	2015/16 assumed	+£300-350K	n/a	Estimate based on Wemyss Bay PS.
Revenue	Grounds Maint	From 2015/16	+£6K	n/a	Add to weekly brushing / quarterly power brushing.
Capital Lifecycle	TBC	2021/22	+£13K	n/a	Rejuvenate surface.
	TBC	2027/28	+£118K	n/a	Resurface.

6.4 From the table above it is evident that significant funding would be required to take forward a development of the existing grass pitches at Gourock Primary School (and Moorfoot Primary School).

### Legal

6.5 There are no legal issues.

### Human Resources

6.6 There are no human resources issues.

### Equalities

6.7 There are no equalities issues.

### Repopulation

6.8 There are no repopulation issues.

## 7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 There are no direct staffing implications in respect of the report and as such the Head of Organisational Development, HR and Communications has not been consulted.

7.2 The Head of Legal and Property Services was consulted in respect of the potential legal issues in connection with any proposed further development of Darroch Park.

7.3 The following groups were consulted on the Gourock Primary School grass pitch section of this report:

- Gourock Primary School Head Teacher/Staff.
- Active Schools Co-ordinator for Gourock Primary School.
- Inverclyde Council Environmental Services – Grounds Maintenance.

Should the Council wish to take forward a scheme to upgrade or alter the existing pitch at Gourrock Primary School, the views of the local community council, local groups such as the Scouts, and/or general public should be sought given the current title restrictions.

## **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 MUGA's/Pitches budget cost estimates (Doe Sports) - July 2012  
Pitch & MUGA Lifecycle Analysis – July/August 2014.  
Title plot and deed of waiver – original school and pitch development – August 1998.