

Addendum to the minutes of the Parent Council meeting of 30th October 2019.

10) New Madras Site – Parent Concern, School Sports Pitches

- a) The Chair introduced this item, having been requested by a Parent Member for it to be included on an already busy agenda. She noted that, in her view, the plans for the new Madras had been subject to extensive consultation, and therefore the discussion here should be restricted to a broad explanation of the decision to alter the original pitch proposal from one sand-dressed 2G pitch and one rubber crumb 3G pitch to two rubber crumb 3G pitches. [For clarity of the record, the two 3G pitches under the current proposal are termed by Fife Council as “one specialist rugby pitch and one all-weather pitch”.] A pre-prepared statement on the matter from Fife Council was circulated to Council Members.
- b) Various views were expressed in a lengthy and fractious discussion. Consensus and agreement was not reached during the discussion. A summary of this follows:
 - i) Whilst there was agreement that the new Madras plans had been open to wide consultation, the Rector informed the Council that he himself had made the decision to alter the choice of pitches to two 3G pitches, following a consultation. He had consulted with the Community Education team about his decision, who had noted there was little demand for the small sand-dressed pitch at Kilrymont and felt that there would be greater demand for two 3G pitches. The Rector stressed that the overriding factor in making his decision was that two 3G pitches would be the best option for delivering the curriculum.
 - ii) Queries were raised by another parent regarding the decision to change the pitch provision. These included differences in cost, pointing out that two 3G pitches will be more expensive than a 2G and a 3G pitch, a perceived lack of transparency and consultation with the Parent Council on the kind of pitches to be installed, which differs from the previous planning drawing, the wider impact on the Community, including local hockey clubs, the lack of suitability of the all-weather pitches for hockey beyond S3 and the limited availability of the University hockey pitch. The parent requested the technical specification of the planned synthetic pitches (ie pile depth) and asked if Sportscotland’s guidance on establishing need had been followed as this would be considered best practice.
 - iii) The Rector assured the Council Members that not only would the needs of the curriculum be best met by two 3G pitches, but should any pupils wish to take hockey at higher levels up the school, he was confident that this would be catered for. He noted that the Station Park grass pitches were available for matches and that there was an agreement made with the University for some access to its 2G pitch. He explained that the school relies on local sports clubs to deliver aspects of the curriculum at higher levels up the school, citing a current pupil who is studying PE and using trampolining as her sport, when the school doesn’t even have a trampoline.
 - iv) A parent considered that her children had enjoyed the experience of school hockey at Station Park, especially during S1-S3 and these pitches were completely adequate. At South Street, then academic subjects and other interests become higher priority, so the need to provide facilities suitable for hockey at S4 and above is negated.

- v) A parent was concerned that currently there is a charge being made for extra-curricular hockey, even though this is the only available time to play on an appropriate all-weather surface. In response, the Rector stated that the University charges for use of both its rubber crumb and sand-dressed pitches.
- vi) A parent expressed her concern that the decision had a disproportionate impact on female pupils, since far more girls than boys at Madras play hockey, some at club and district level, and Madras has in the past, had several former pupils who went on to gain international honours in the sport. The accusation of discrimination against girls was strongly refuted by the Rector and Chair.
- vii) Councillor Thompson stated that sand-dressed 2G pitches are not the best pitches for a wider range of sports, and furthermore that 2G pitches were more susceptible to becoming unplayable due to frost than rubber crumb pitches.
- viii) The Rector reported that Madras staff are being approached inappropriately out with school hours regarding this, causing major challenges and is not acceptable.
- ix) The Chair stated that it was not the responsibility of the school to provide facilities for local clubs. She suggested that Madras FPs (the local hockey club) should raise their own funds for a sand-dressed pitch in a similar way to recent investment at Madras Rugby Club (a local rugby club). A parent responded that this could cost in the region of £850,000.
- x) The Chair and Rector agreed that the provision of the new pitches for the school would not be reviewed. The Rector stated he was not prepared to change his decision but that further correspondence could be directed to Shelagh McLean. He hoped, however, that this would be the end of the matter as prolonging the issue may impact on staff morale.