

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 21 OCTOBER 2009

EAST AYRSHIRE ATHLETICS FACILITY PROGRESS

Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on progress with the development of a state of the art athletics facility in Kilmarnock and the proposal to purchase land required to build the facility at Queens Drive, Kilmarnock from the Royal Incorporation of the Buchanan Bequest.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Council approved the development of an athletics facility as part of the General Services Capital Programme report on 11th February 2009.
- 2.2 To facilitate the development of the athletics facility the East Ayrshire Athletics Partnership was established by Leisure Services staff. This Partnership brings together East Ayrshire's four main bodies for athletics development i.e. Leisure Services, Educational and Social Services, Kilmarnock Harriers Athletics Club and Scottish Athletics.
- 2.3 Corporate Management Team have considered and approved this report.

3. PROGRESS: EAST AYRSHIRE ATHLETICS PARTNERSHIP

- 3.1 East Ayrshire's Athletics Partnership (EAAP) was established in January 2008 and seeks to provide a united framework for developing the sport across East Ayrshire.
- 3.2 The EAAP has a defined and structured work programme which is in operation throughout the year and has already had a very positive impact on the sport. There has been an increased number of young people participating in regular community and school based athletics events, record numbers attending Summer Athletics Camps and School Cross Country Championships, and the establishment of a new satellite club within the Cumnock area. As a result of the Partnership's preliminary success it also gained national and international recognition winning the 'Partnership' award at the recent annual Scottish and UK Athletics Awards.
- 3.3 The expertise within the EAAP has also been crucial in developing a specification for the proposed Athletics facility and the chairperson of the Partnership is part of the project implementation team.

4. PROGRESS: FACILITY SPECIFICATION

- 4.1 A multidisciplinary project implementation team has been established to drive this project forward. The Project Team consists of Council Officers from Neighbourhood Services - Leisure Services and Asset Improvement Services, a consultant

representative of the Scottish and UK Athletics with expertise in certification and international facility development, and the chairperson of East Ayrshire Athletics Partnership.

- 4.2 The process of identifying the desired specification has involved national benchmarking with several operational athletics facilities, consultation with National Sports organisations and the Kilmarnock Harriers and consideration of East Ayrshire's own needs and aspirations.
- 4.3 The key features of the facility include an outdoor 400 metre oval Athletics track with porous 'Mondo' surface and full event specified equipment to comply with hosting Grade 1 athletic events; an indoor training area incorporating sprint straight, throws and jumps areas, strength and conditioning room and club / classroom; and a spectator stand to accommodate up to 120.
- 4.4 This specification is aspirational however this standard will ensure that the facility meets the needs of local, regional and national athletics community; promotes community regeneration within East Ayrshire and maximises the social and economic benefits associated with high end events including 2014 Commonwealth Games training camps.

5. PROGRESS: SITE IDENTIFICATION

- 5.1 Initially it was envisaged that an improved track and associated building would be sited on the current athletics area at Scott Ellis Playing Fields which is the training venue of Kilmarnock Harriers and has historically been known to host athletics. Unfortunately following internal investigations it was deemed that the Scott Ellis site, which is part of an operational flood plain, would not be suitable for the new facility.
- 5.2 A process of identifying and assessing alternative sites was then undertaken by the project team along with colleagues from Outdoor Amenities. As well as a site which could physically accommodate the proposed facility the strategic location and regeneration potential were key considerations.
- 5.3 The main areas considered in this process included Queens Drive, Kilmarnock; Bellfield Park; Lainshaw Avenue, Shortlees; Townholm near to the Kilmarnock College facility; and an area off Western Road, Kilmarnock. It should be noted that this list is exhaustive in that there appear to be no further sites within the Kilmarnock area that could accommodate a facility of this size and standard.
- 5.4 None of the above sites provided a suitable space for the construction of the proposed facility. Each site raised several issues and concerns including, further operational flood plains, poor access routes, lack of visibility and potential security issues.
- 5.5 Following various discussions, investigations and assessments it emerged that a section of land, within the ownership of The Royal Incorporation of the Buchanan Bequest, existed near the Queens Drive location which combined with the Council's existing land would be sufficient in terms of size to site the development. (See Appendix 1)

- 5.6 In light of the above, it was agreed that the site at Queens Drive was the preferred option given its excellent transport links to the A77 and A71, its high visibility location providing a point of interest for those entering the town and ultimately its proximity to the former athletics site at Scott Ellis. Subsequently, an approach was made on behalf of the Council to the Buchanan Bequest who indicated that the land could be made available for a sum of £140,000.
- 5.7 Topographic surveys and site investigations have now been completed. The final written report is awaited; however reports indicate the soils and substrates to prove adequate to the needs of the outdoor facilities generally. The ground will require to be augmented by short bore piles up to 4m locally to accommodate the imposed loading of the indoor facility itself.
- 5.8 Preparatory concept design works have been concluded in conjunction with ASC (Athletics and Sports Consultants) to determine the orientation and positioning of the track and buildings upon the site to meet UK Athletics Grade 1 certification. In addition a site visit to the nearest similar facility in Grangemouth was undertaken by the project team in late May and this allowed final design specification to be completed. An image of how the facility might look is attached as Appendix 2.
- 5.9 Principal terms and conditions have been agreed to acquire the area of land extending to 3.21 acres or thereby at Queens Drive, Kilmarnock from the Buchanan Bequest.
- 5.10 A Planning Application was submitted in August and alongside discussions with stakeholders already utilising the Queens Drive area including Kilmarnock Academy and Kilmarnock Cricket Club have taken place.
- 5.11 Discussions with the Head Teacher, P.E staff and Parent Council members of Kilmarnock Academy highlighted some concerns with the potential loss of facilities required for the delivery of the P.E curriculum. The current layout and location of pitches can be reviewed to accommodate the Academy's requirements. The Academy will use the changing facilities at the new Athletics Track, and could have access to three pitches at Queens Drive plus the added benefits of access to the new athletics track, indoor sports facilities and the pitches at Scott-Ellis playing fields via the footbridge over the river to be included in the development. To accommodate this, consideration must be given to the re-location of the cricket pitch, and the most effective solution would be to re-site the cricket facilities to the existing athletics track site at Scott-Ellis playing field. It will be possible to create new cricket facilities, with exclusive use for cricket, utilising the existing track site and allowing access to the section of the changing pavilion and storage facilities that are currently used by Kilmarnock Harriers Athletics Club. This proposal would support the Kilmarnock Sports Park concept that links Scott-Ellis playing fields and the Queens Drive facilities and concentrates the provision of sports facilities for several major sports on one site. The footbridge link over the river planned for the new development will ensure that people can move freely between facilities. If resources allow, consideration should also be given to upgrading the changing pavilion at Scott-Ellis playing fields and re-surfacing the car park to improve facilities for all users.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The original budget allocation approved by Cabinet on 11th February 2009 was £3.750million. A separate report was presented to Cabinet on 6th May 2009 outlining progress with regard to the project and indicated that an uplift of approximately 50% (equalling to £1.875million) would be required to accommodate the enhanced scheme. It is fully expected that the development will be completed within this revised allocation of £5,625million.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This development will support the delivery of key targets and actions within the community planning themes of Improving Health and Wellbeing and Promoting Community Regeneration.

8. LEGAL AUTHORITY / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The land acquisition will be subject to the Solicitor to the Council obtaining satisfactory evidence of title relating to the Royal Incorporation of the Buchanan Bequest's ownership of the land at Queen's Drive and to ensure that there are no inhibitions preventing the Bequest from disposing of the land to the Council.
- 8.2 The development of the new facilities will be subject to the statutory planning requirements and the design of the building will meet all the necessary legislative standards.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- (i) Note the location details and outline specification for the new athletics facilities at Queen Drive, Kilmarnock;
 - (ii) Note that procedures to the requirement for Cabinet to acquire land at Queens Drive, Kilmarnock extending to 3.21 acres or thereby from the Royal Incorporation of the Buchanan Bequest have commenced;
 - (iii) Remit to the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to bring full details of the new facilities and associated costs to Cabinet as soon as possible; and
 - (iv) otherwise note the content of this report

William Stafford
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

WS/JAG/CF
15th October 2009

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS USED

EAAP: Refers to East Ayrshire Athletics Partnership

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Feasibility and Design Study (ASC)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01563 578178 and ask for John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services

Implementation Officer – (john.griffiths@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)



