

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 7 FEBRUARY 2001

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARTNERSHIP TO DEVELOP LEISURE FACILITIES WITHIN SCOTT ELLIS PLAYING FIELD, KILMARNOCK IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SCOTTISH FOOTBALL PARTNERSHIP

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval in principle to enter into discussions with Kilmarnock Football Club regarding the establishment of a partnership to develop leisure facilities principally within the Scott Ellis Playing Fields, Kilmarnock in the context of the Scottish Football Partnership.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 1999, the Scottish Executive announced that it was making £10 million available for the development of football academies in Scotland. Sportscotland and the Scottish Executive subsequently developed appropriate criteria for these facilities and then developed a separate lottery strand administered by Sportscotland for the consideration of applications for grants to develop such facilities
- 2.2 Kilmarnock Football Club has been considering developing a football academy for some time and have looked at various sites within East Ayrshire including the site of the former Ballochmyle Hospital. However, for various reasons none of the proposed sites were suitable and the Football Club ultimately decided to develop the facility at Muirmill Farm which is a former equestrian centre near Symington. The Club has conducted a full feasibility study on the site and is on the verge of seeking full planning permission from South Ayrshire Council for the project.
- 2.3 The estimated cost of the proposed development at Muirmill is in the region of £3 million of which it is anticipated that £1 million will come from Sportscotland-administered funding. A substantial part of the development cost is due to the extensive ground work which is needed at the site to improve drainage and to convert the existing indoor equestrian facility to the required standard.

- 2.4 Whilst the grant is site specific at the present time, if successful, it is anticipated that the grant could be made available for an alternative site if this was proven to be better and more cost effective. No announcement has yet been made on the original application but initial indications are favourable.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 Kilmarnock Football Club is currently committed to the development of Muirmill. However, the Club is keen to maintain their links with East Ayrshire and they have always felt that a site within Kilmarnock would be the most-preferred club-community option.

- 3.2 Whilst the exact detail of the new facility has not been developed it is likely to include an indoor all-weather football surface, changing facilities and the associated infrastructure. It would be complemented by an outside all-weather football pitch. The existing football pitches at Scott Ellis would also be upgraded. Although the jointly-developed facility would require to be the official site of the football academy and to meet the relevant criteria for grant-funding, it would also be possible and desirable to accommodate the needs of other sports and sports clubs in the development if funding allows. For example, it may be possible to develop an all weather running track if the Athletic Club were involved.

- 3.3 The Council works closely with the football club on a number of initiatives, many of which would form part of the on-going work of the proposed football academy. It also already part-funds the two Football Development Officers. If this suggestion were progressed, two Football Development Officers would be based at the new facility.

- 3.4 It is also envisaged that if the facility is developed, the football club would have use of it during the day and it would be open for community use in the evenings and weekends. It would also effectively meet some of the unmet demand for sports facilities which has been highlighted in the Facility Planning Model which the Council commissioned from the Sports Council in 1998.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The cost of the proposed development is not known at this stage but excluding land it is likely to be in excess of £2 million. It is expected that Kilmarnock Football Club will attract £1 million grant-funding from the sources mentioned at 2.1. The balance would have to be funded through a variety of sources such as the Council, the Lottery, Enterprise Ayrshire and possibly European Funding.

4.2 Considerable work is required to establish final costs as well as the revenue cost of upkeep but it may well be if appropriate use is made of the facility it could be revenue neutral.

5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposals to develop the Scott Ellis Playing Fields for leisure purposes in the context of the Scottish Football Partnership are in line with the Council Plan and the Leisure Strategy.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The development of a facility of this nature would be a high profile project and would provide state of the art football training facilities for the community and for Kilmarnock Football Club.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) approve the report, in principle;
- (ii) remit to the Director of Community Services to enter into discussions with Kilmarnock Football Club in connection with the proposed development and to explore the costs involved and the nature of the partnership; and
- (iii) seek a report to a future meeting on the outcome of these discussions.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/JS

12 January 2001

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

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AGENDA