

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 12 November 2019

Sports Pitch Maintenance

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Routine All 39, 43
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the actions for ensuring that Edinburgh's outdoor sports pitches continue to meet the Council's Landscape Quality Standards;
 - 1.1.2 Note the existing provision of Trusted Key-holder scheme; and
 - 1.1.3 Note the intention to contact Independent schools to determine the existing and potential provision of sports facilities for the wider community.

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Report

Sports Pitch Maintenance

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council aims to maintain its sports pitches to its [Landscape Quality Standards \(LQS\)](#) and is currently procuring machinery to ensure that grounds maintenance continues to be of a high standard.
- 2.2 Both the Council and Edinburgh Leisure operate a Trusted Key-holder scheme for sports clubs regularly using pitches and ancillary facilities. This will continue and be available for all clubs meeting the required terms and conditions.
- 2.3 Contact will be made with each of the Independent Schools in Edinburgh that have outdoor sports pitches to establish to what extent the pitches are currently being used by community groups, clubs and voluntary organisations and what capacity and willingness exists to facilitate more community use.

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting of [19 September 2019](#) Council approved the following motion by Councillor Doggart:
“Council
 - 1 Recognises the benefit of organised physical activity provided by sports clubs for adults and children;
 - 2 Appreciates the health of the city is improved by the operation of the clubs;
 - 3 Values the many hours of unpaid effort by coaches, parents and players;
 - 4 Understands it has a responsibility to the clubs and participating residents to provide the paid for facilities in as good a condition as possible;
 - 5 Accepts responsibility for marking pitches to ensure fixtures can be completed; removing all grass cuttings from, and adjacent to, sports pitches and cutting grass to an appropriate length to enable fixtures and training to proceed;
 - 6 Instructs officers to provide a report to the Culture and Communities Committee within one cycle setting out the following:”

- a. the extent to which Council operated pitches have not met playing standards in the winter sport seasons up to the date of the report;
 - b. establishing an action plan to prevent future standards falling below those required by the playing clubs; and
 - c. a feasibility study into providing a “trusted keyholder” system for clubs.”
- 7 Notes further the Green budget proposal of February 2018 to allocate £90,000 a year for grounds maintenance equipment to reduce the time lost in repair workshop and seeks a progress update.
- 8 Recognises that, as well as condition of pitches, availability is also a major concern, both for playing and training, and notes that Edinburgh's independent schools sector has considerable scope to open up fuller access to playing fields and sports facilities for wider community benefit; and so, agrees that the feasibility study in 6c above be extended to look at how the charitable status of private schools can be utilised work in partnership to improve access to their playing and training facilities.”

4. Main report

- 4.1 The City of Edinburgh Council maintains 186 sports pitches, although the specific type, number and location changes seasonally. These support football, cricket, rugby, athletics, American football, bowling, golf, Gaelic football, and Quidditch.
- 4.2 The LQS set out the maintenance arrangements for pitches. These set out the range of target tolerances (dependent on sports type) for grass length, litter, grass cover, arisings, weed cover, line marking, animal fouling, evenness of surface, and overall appearance.
- 4.3 To meet these standards most “in-use” grass pitches are cut and lined on a weekly basis, although this frequency is subject to prevailing weather conditions and resource availability.
- 4.4 The maintenance schedule is focused on carrying out regular cuts, with twice the frequency of most standard amenity grass areas, to ensure that the cuttings are reduced and can compost quickly on site. The LQS does not include the requirement for collection of grass cuttings as part of the maintenance arrangements. To include this in the maintenance arrangements would require additional machinery, people, transportation and recycling facilities. Rather, operational focus has been on ensuring regular grass cutting for the pitches (twice the frequency of most standard amenity grass areas) to ensure that the cuttings are reduced and can compost quickly on site.
- 4.5 Sports matches are only occasionally called off as a result of sub-standard pitch maintenance. Rather, anticipated or actual weather conditions are the principal factor.

Call-Offs

- 4.6 During the current playing season two weekend matches have been called off by the Council. These were on Friday 9 August 2019 and Friday 16 August 2019. Both were due to the weather. Council call-offs are usually made on Friday afternoon following consideration of current pitch condition and the weekend weather forecast.
- 4.7 Match referees can also call off matches if playing conditions are sufficiently poor. To date, referees have called off four matches:
- 4.7.1 twice because of excessive grass arisings (this was due to a breakdown in the machinery which meant that the grass could not be cut as scheduled);
 - 4.7.2 once because of faint lines (this was a mid-week game which was played prior to the scheduled weekly over-marking); and
 - 4.7.3 once because the pitch was not marked (the match was arranged prior to the season starting and the Council were not advised, so the pitch had not been cut and marked).
- 4.8 The current LQS for sports pitches were developed to reflect sport association standards and the resources available.
- 4.9 However, it is recognised that the service has occasionally fallen below the stated standards in recent times.

Action Plan

- 4.10 The actions underway to improve this are:
- 4.10.1 Procurement process to replace the existing aging and unreliable pitch maintenance machinery by March 2020 (procurement for this is currently underway); and
 - 4.10.2 to ensure that sufficient staff are trained in the operation of this new machinery to enable the service to be delivered to the required standard going forward.
- 4.11 However, it should be noted that the maintenance schedule is dependent on the weather to enable cutting and maintenance to take place and therefore there may continue to be instances where the service cannot be delivered in line with the service standards.

Trusted Keyholder Scheme

- 4.12 A list of the pitches where trusted keyholder status has been applied is attached in appendix 1.
- 4.13 A key holder scheme is in place for pitches managed by the Council. This applies to sports teams with leases from the Council and provides access to associated changing rooms and storage facilities as part of the terms of their lease.

- 4.14 Edinburgh Leisure also already operates a “Trusted Key-holder” scheme, with a number of sports clubs regularly hiring pitches. Edinburgh Leisure’s scheme terms and conditions are included in appendix 2.

Independent Schools

- 4.15 The Communities and Families service will make contact with each of the Independent Schools in Edinburgh that have outdoor sports pitches to establish to what extent the pitches are currently being used by community groups, clubs and voluntary organisations and what capacity and willingness exists to facilitate more community use. The ability to make such arrangements could be dependent on the charitable status of the schools and how this can be utilised to improve access to their playing and training facilities,

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Communities and Families to make contact with each of the Independent Schools in Edinburgh that have outdoor sports pitches to establish to what extent the pitches are currently being used by community groups, clubs and voluntary organisations and what capacity and willingness exists to facilitate more community use.
- 5.2 Progress with the procurement of the new grounds maintenance equipment by March 2020, alongside ensuring sufficient staffing resources are in place and adequately trained.
- 5.3 Continuation of the Council and Edinburgh Leisure Trusted Key-holder schemes, with extension of these being applied to additional clubs where the required terms and conditions are met.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost of replacing inefficient grounds maintenance machinery is estimated at between £0.8m and £1m. This will be met from the Place Management capital and revenue programme budget.
- 6.2 There are no additional costs associated with the keyholder schemes.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Engagement with the Independent Schools in the city will follow.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 None.

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Sports Pitch Venues – Key Holder Details

9.2 Appendix 2 - Edinburgh Leisure Sports Pitch Key Holder Terms and Conditions

SPORTS PITCH VENUES – KEY HOLDER SCHEME APPLIES

Venue	Customer
BALGREEN	Balgreen Playgroup
	Craighall Council Support Group
	Croquet Club
BANGHOLM	Trinity Academy
	Trinity Active Schools Cluster
	Outdoor Education CEC
	Cycle UK
CAMPBELL PK	Edinburgh United
	Edinburgh CC
	Scott Widows CC
	Bonaly Primary
CAVALRY PARK	Cavalry Park FC
	Portobello RFC
	Marchmont CC
	Edinburgh South CC
	Portobello High School
COLINTON	AC Oxgangs
	Oxgangs Trinity
CURRIE	Balerno
	Currie (Juniors)

Venue	Customer
GYLE	RHC CC
INVERLEITH	Edinburgh Northern RFC
	Edinburgh Accies RFC
	Drummond Trinity CC
	Old Contemptibles CC
	Big Blue Touch Rugby
	Drummond HS
	BMF
KIRKBRAE	Edinburgh South FC
	Liberton RFC
	Kirkbrae Cricket Club
	James Gillespie's HS
PATIES ROAD	Edinburgh United FC
	North Merchiston Vale
	Bonaly PS
RATHO	Ratho Athl FC
ROSEBURN	Murrayfield DAFS
	Murrayfield Wanderers
	Botanics CC
	Stewarts Melville
WARDIE	Dunedin Connollys
	Broughton RFC

Venue	Customer
WARRISTON	Drummond HS
	Edin Devils Baseball
	Edin Softball
	Stockbridge PS
SIGHTHILL	BT/Rugby
	Napier Uni
	Boroughmuir RFC
UNION PARK	Corstorphine Cougars
MEADOWS	Cafe

EDINBURGH LEISURE SPORTS PITCH KEY HOLDER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Conditions of Agreement

- Edinburgh Leisure will issue 1 set of keys and 1 fob/security code to the nominated key holder.
- A refundable deposit of £50 is required. This will be returned when all keys for the facility have been returned.

The deposit needs to be paid by card please call 0131 458 2212 to pay the deposit.

- The Sports Pitch Team must be notified immediately of any alteration to the nominated key holder's details.
- Key holders are responsible for
 - Opening and closing the building.
 - Ensuring that the premises are not left unsecured at any time.
 - Ensuring that the intruder alarm is set prior to exiting the building.
 - The club must put a key management system in place to ensure the keys are traceable and who is responsible for the keys.
 - Ensuring that all lights / heating are switched off following use.
 - Reporting any building defects or issues that may compromise health & safety of users.
 - Ensuring that all bottles, debris and general rubbish are picked up from the floor of the pavilion and removed from the pitch following use.
 - Edinburgh Leisure will provide black bin bags within the pavilions for teams' use.
 - Security Alarm call out charges caused by improper use of the security system will be passed on to the Club.
 - Extended let forms for training and matches must returned before the start of your season you must notify the bookings team of any additional usage.
 - Any addition training & matches must be booked 7 days in advance with our bookings team.
- **PAYMENT.** Key holders will be invoiced at the end of each month and are responsible for contacting the School and Pitch bookings Team for any additional usage or cancellations by telephone (0131 458 - 2212) or email (school&pitchbookings@edinburghleisure.co.uk) additional bookings can also be paid in advance by card payment.

Failure to do this may result in a club being charged for a booking that did not go ahead. Failure to make payment in a timely manner will result in key holder status being immediately withdrawn.

- Any issues or problems found within the building should be reported to the School and Pitch bookings Team by email (school&pitchbookings@edinburghleisure.co.uk) or alternatively contact the help desk on (0131 458 - 2212). Any issues with grounds maintenance at any of our venues should be reported to pitchmaintenance@edinburgh.gov.uk
- Any failure to comply with the above terms and conditions or to follow Sports Pitch booking procedures may result in key holder status being withdrawn. This will require clubs to play all of their fixtures at a staffed venue.