

Title of Report: Update Report on Melvin Arena Pitch and IFA criteria	Officer Presenting: Head of Community Development & Leisure Author: Head of Community Development & Leisure and Head of Capital Development & Building Control
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To update Members on proposals for Melvin Arena to meet the criteria of IFA's Championship/Premier Intermediate League.

2 Background

- 2.1 Members will aware that there is presently a Council approved, fully funded scheme for the long term redevelopment of the Melvin site that will ensure compliance with the IFA's Championship/Premier Intermediate League Criteria.
- 2.2 Further to a discussion at Full Council around a possible short-term interim option (C28/19), a site meeting was held at Melvin Arena to discuss the issue of a spectator stand and IFA criteria. This meeting involved Council Officers, Members, NIFL/IFA and also representatives of user groups and other relevant stakeholders/residents.
- 2.3 Council has recently appointed an Integrated Design Team to take this project forward. In addition, there is a Project Steering Group set up that meets up on a monthly basis. Membership of this group consists of all user groups at Melvin, Residents, Council Officers and Elected Members. This has been agreed as the forum for user groups to identify their proposal and their facility needs. Also it is a forum where local residents can raise any concerns and issues they may have with the development and these can be brought through Project Board structures.
- 2.4 Any long-term and interim proposals must meet the requirements of the current edition of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds and any safety issues must be suitably managed by the football club when the ground is occupied by spectators. Where segregation of spectators is required by current IFA criteria then further consideration will need to be given as to how this can be achieved.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 At the on-site meeting it was accepted by all attendees that the proposed short term proposal would most likely require planning permission.

- 3.2 It was also confirmed by NIFL/IFA that there would be no movement on the date of 30th April 2019 to meet the required criteria necessary to compete in the IFA's Championship/Premier Intermediate League Criteria. NIFL/IFA also stated that all statutory approvals (such as planning and building control) must be in place by the 30th April.
- 3.3 In addition, NIFL/IFA confirmed there would be no deviation or exemption allowed regarding the compliance of the existing changing rooms with championship football requirements.
- 3.4 It was the general consensus of Members, Council Officers, NIFL/IFA and relevant stakeholders that it would not be possible to carry out the necessary works to the facility and obtain the necessary statutory approvals to meet the deadline set by the IFA of 30th April 2019.
- 3.5 NIFL also expressed concerns over the value of an inspection of the grounds in April 2019 if the stand provision was to be removed after each game. They have also queried the Health and Safety implications of using such a moveable, demountable stand and who would be responsible for certifying the safety of the stand each time it is re-erected. In addition, NIFL has concerns that by approving the use of such a semi-permanent structure (i.e. a moveable, demountable spectator stand) at Melvin, this would set a precedence for other clubs to attempt to gain compliance with NIFL's stadia criteria by providing semi-permanent facilities. Based on this feedback from NIFL, the moving of a demountable stand in and out for games cannot be guaranteed for approval.
- 3.6 Since the site meeting at Melvin, Officers have had further discussions with planning officers and they have provided the following advice on this suggested interim proposal:
- If the moveable demountable stand was to stay permanently in place for the duration of the football season, the Permitted Development Regulations would not provide grounds for exempting the stand from needing planning permission.
 - If the moveable demountable stand was to be erected and dismantled for every game and removed off site between games, then the stand would not require planning permission.

- Based on the requirement for a 500 spectator capacity ground, approximately 180 car parking spaces and one bus parking space would be required. A very preliminary assessment of the existing space available between the stadium and the adjoining public road would indicate that it may be possible to create 80 car parking spaces.
- An assessment of the stadia criteria for this league would indicate that the existing combined player and referee changing cabin on site will need replaced as the internal spaces are smaller than the required regulation. Current NIFL criteria requires a 15 sq metre floor space for changing rooms. Based on this criteria, any new cabin at Melvin would require planning permission.
- Planning officers do not consider that Council's permitted development rights extend to the proposed development at Melvin as the proposed works are not required for the purposes of any function exercised by Council on the land in question, or required in connection with the operation of any public service administered by it.
- Planning officers consider that a planning application for the stands and increased size of the changing rooms and floodlighting is required.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

- 4.1 At present, there are no implications in respect of finance, equality, legal, HR or improvement.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That Members note the contents of this report

Background Papers

C28/19