

Kirkcaldy Area Sports Council Public Meeting

13 May 2008

Adam Smith College, Kirkcaldy

Apologies: Cllr's Tom Adams, Susan Leslie and Jim Young. Sports Council Committee members George MacDonald and Graeme Scoon

Chair – Mark Bramwell, Minutes- Dave Paton, Guest- Steve Grimmond, Community Services, Fife Council

Attendees: First count 34 people then approximately 4-5 others arrived.

The Chair opened the meeting and offered all present a copy of the Kirkcaldy Area Sports Council's (KASC) response to the Local Authority (LA) document **A SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY FOR FIFE**.

The Chair introduced the purpose of the meeting, being: to bring everyone together, presenting a collective voice from those interested in Sports provision in Fife; to gain public views. A brief overview of the KASC response was given and the assurance that the Sports Council was keen to work alongside Steve Grimmond and the strategy driving sport provision.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Steve Grimmond to the meeting

Steve welcomed the invite to the meeting and informed the attendees of his purpose during this meeting: 1) Process of taking the views of the public and KASC. 2) To give and update on the current strategy. Steve proceeded to giving an update:

The strategy will provide future provision of sport facilities in fife, LA are currently consulting with key stake holders and final decisions are to be agreed later in the year.

The strategy considers a wide range of sports, indoor and outdoor and not just provision by the LA. It recognises the need to replace the current pool complex and enhance the fitness suite and provide a sport hall. Additionally meet the needs for more general pitches and multi purpose sports pitches. He acknowledged that there is significant need in the Kirkcaldy area and over the next few months, will be building upon the existing strategy.

Steve Grimmond recognised the Swimming pool is a live issue and advised that last year £50 million was agreed for investment. £11.7 million for a like for like pool at Kirkcaldy, this was in consultation primarily with Kirkcaldy Area Committee. Steve now has the remit of exploring the option of an enhanced sports facility, and to ascertain the viability of this at the Tolbooth site, suggesting it would be an iconic sight and contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre. Additionally it would be accessible with public transport close by. It would encompass: two swimming pools, 25 meter and a training pool, café, sports hall and a fitness centre. Early estimates for an enhanced facility are an additional £3.4 million, studies are being undertaken to estimate the extra income this enhanced facility would generate. The Kirkcaldy Area Committee has suggested other venues which may be more appropriate, more exploration is to be done over the summer and the LA hopes to agree a site at the end of this summer. Steve emphasised that looking at the future of the pool is only one aspect of the strategy, suggesting investment in community schools etc, however he appreciates the feedback contributing to sports development.

The Chair encouraged questions to Steve Grimmond or KASC.

Will Farquarson-local resident and parent, has issues with the likely entrance to a facility on the proposed site, particularly in winter and at nights for children and young people.

Jan Anderson - local resident, suggests Kirkcaldy is second best and the land that time forgot she would like to see the plans the LA has.

Steve acknowledged the concerns, argument for and against the town centre site and sought to have knowledge of any other sites that would be feasible. No plans are being made for a 50 metre pool, but they will continue to explore this for a smaller demand of elite training. Initially, there is no commitment and it would incur capital costs of an extra £4 million and £300,000 PA running costs, this funding is simply not available. Steve informed the meeting that SportsScotland is supporting 50 metre pools in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee but not Fife. The vast majority of need will be met by providing flumes and leisure use and anything further than this is beyond the level of resource the LA has.

Marilyn Livingstone- MSP gave credit to Steve Grimmond and the Kirkcaldy Area Committee, she concurred that Kirkcaldy has been neglected, however not to ponder, to look forward and use this opportunity to debate sports provision. She supported the investment, reiterating Kirkcaldy is the largest town in Fife, has multiple deprivation and that sport development is crucial to the regeneration of the area. However, she is concerned about the reduction in car park space and the restrictions in future development of the town centre site. She made a plea for other sites, such as the 12 acre Victoria Road site, to have equal consideration and use innovation and attract other partners to gain funding for further development in the future.

Ian Lewis - Fins competitive swim club, made comment upon the busy main road at the town centre site and in term of competitive swimming, the proposals were regressing instead of improving. A new pool will have very limited spectator facilities which will not attract competition. A 50 metre pool would attract inward investment and retain the current swimmers, improving the standards of competitive swimmers.

Alistair Cameron - ACA sports and parent of daughter who swims, explained he had seen a report a few years ago which suggested that Kirkcaldy was one of the worst areas for sports facilities in Scotland. He felt the LA can find plenty space for housing development but very little for sports development. Alistair felt the LA needs to get sport minded people involved in the decision making, suggesting we need to get it right this time as we will not have this opportunity again for the next 40 years. Alistair went on to emphasise consulting with sports experts and that it is not just about the swimming pool, so there must be consideration given to the future growth and development of a sports area/facility for our children

Steve Grimmond acknowledged the deficiencies in the Kirkcaldy area and advised that they cannot provide facilities to meet everyone's aspirations and the current level of funds had to be used intelligently.

Gary Innes - KASC felt the pool should be accessible for all and have the potential for growth. He felt it should be attractive to young people and they should be encouraged to use the facility. Gary preferred the Victoria Road location as it is central.

David Ross - Kirkcaldy Area Committee, concurs with the concerns, but wants to promote the debate and extend the consultation. He has asked the committee to look at other areas, but feels the high street should be turned towards the sea and that the proposed site would contribute to the regeneration of the town centre, the difficulties of crossing the road could be overcome.

Trish Ding wall – Roller Hockey felt she was experiencing de-jag-vu as in May 1998 there was talk of investing in sports to get the kids of the streets, but 10 years on they are still trying to get an appropriate suitable venue for the purpose of roller hockey. Through their national and international competition they have played on some fantastic pitches south of the border. They would like to have the opportunity to continue to invest in young people and enable growth in numbers and potential of young people. She feels there is an under investment in the volunteers that operate these sports clubs, indeed many clubs struggle with time consuming running tasks and the cost of hiring inappropriate expensive venues, which will never attract inward investment.

Stuart Azury – athlete and parent commented that sport provision and investment must consider the progression between leisure and competitive sport. By closely linking competitive clubs and leisure clubs/facilities it would encourage progression, development, sign posting, and mentoring, growing elite athletes for 2012 Olympics. Consider multi-purpose centre.

Joe Cocker- Kirkcaldy athletics official stated that athletes are being injured on their current training facility. In the winter the track at Balwearie is often flooded or frozen over.

Steve Grimmond acknowledged the poor conditions of Balwearie, but reminded the attendees there are significant facilities in Fife but not currently in Kirkcaldy.

Jim Cooper - local resident, previous swimmer and keen sports enthusiast, suggested that by having localised smaller venues the running costs would be higher, having to employ more staff etc. By having one multi-purpose building the cost would reduce, a building where every sports/leisure person can go and for it to be open at all times, led by demand, not by lack of staffing/space etc. A wee silly thing would fall into disrepair. Have significant investment into a multi-purpose centre which could inspire people to try all forms of sport, inward investment through diversity. This would be attractive to young people.

Representative from Orienteering club believes one big sport centre with variety, would also encourage sustainability, productivity, growth, sports advancement by giving clubs the opportunity to network and share resources.

Gary Innes- put forward the inclusion of an Ice Rink, which would retain customers and bring money into Fife.

Neil Crooks – Councillor, commended the Fife Free Press on widening the debate and he wants the best for the £50 million. He was surprised that there is very little partnership contributions available and encouraged Fife Council to explore. He suggested that funding may be available from Sect 75 payments from developers and emphasised how an extra few million investment would pay dividends giving examples of good practice, where midnight football leagues made a significant impact upon youth crime statistics.

Alistair Cameron - ACA Sports, suggested a feasibility study be done and look at how other areas (Guilford/Rotherham) have achieved, we need a site that will have the potential to grow and develop. He also suggested the driving force (Strategy leaders) should have the necessary skills and motivation to provide for Kirkcaldy area.

Steve Grimmond responded: the council has statistics about Fife and have used the national facilities planning model, this confirmed what they already know – Kirkcaldy does not have good provision of sports facilities. However the current level of resource £50 million will not make the desired change and although private investment is not commonly evidenced in the UK it is evidenced abroad and this should be explored. Again he emphasised the need to look at some of the issues surrounding the town centre site.

Marilyn Livingstone - suggested the Victoria Road site would be more appropriate for future development and that the Local Authority needs to be innovative in searching for funding.

Steve Grimmond accepted this is a challenge, it is restrictive in terms of funds and partners are not readily identifiable.

Les Soper suggested merging the project with other initiatives to gain funding, Dunnikier, Seafield, improvements to the sea wall, utilise tidal and wave power, green energy funding and reduce running costs. Link it to the Hovercraft development. He encouraged the LA not to be restricted to LA sites, speak to Raith Rovers and other partners.

David Osborne – Inveriel farm, parent and sports person. Said he would give land for free if it was suitable. He suggested looking at sponsors and a long term-plan. He has land available up to 40 hectares and believed that if Fifers were Senior Council members there would be progress. He encouraged the LA to enter into negotiations with himself.

Alice Soper- Cllr has been involved in in-depth discussion about the swimming pool and she is keen for all options to be explored and emphasised this is happening. She accepted that it appears that many would rather not have the Tolbooth site developed. Alice requested feed back from the Fife Free Press.

David Ross suggested setting up a sports advisory group to give the LA guidance and advice.

Steve Grimmond informed us they have partnership groups but wanted to engage other stake holders and the Sports Council.

Dave Paton asked for the LA to consider what could be achieved by investing the whole £50 million into one complex situated in central Fife ideally Kirkcaldy. This would attract inward investment and realise the needs of sport clubs and the general public.

Roller hockey representatives encouraged the LA to consult the school children and see what investment they would like. These representatives vented their displeasure at being refused access to some venues and having to travel out of the area to access training facilities.

Question from attendee - Why does Kirkcaldy have the smallest investment when reports from various sources state Kirkcaldy is one of the worst areas for sports facilities.

Steve Grimmond informed that the £50 million investment is addressing the priority needs.

An attendee highlighted the some of the benefits to officials and sports networks through having close working relationships in a multi-purpose complex.

Ken White suggested a multi-purpose complex would attract significant inward investment.

Dave Paton concurred, highlighting the growing market in health and fitness, suggesting the LA should capitalise on this, instead of private clubs making huge profits.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:50pm after thanking everyone for their contribution and encouraging their continued dialogue with the Kirkcaldy Area Sports Council.