

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: SYNTHETIC SPORTS PITCHES**  
**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 20 October 2015**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & HOUSING SERVICES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Executive of 24 February 2015 agreed to invite applications for Council funding from third parties and organisations interested in developing synthetic pitches.
- 1.2 An evaluation process was approved, along with arrangements for evaluating the bids received. The closing date for receipt of applications was the 31 May 2015.
- 1.3 This report notes the outcome of the application process and the assessment of the applications received.

**2. APPLICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT**

- 2.1 In total seven applications for funding were received from
  - Newton Park Association (Bo'ness Junior Football Club) ("Newton Park")
  - Dunipace Junior Football Club ("Dunipace JFC")
  - Syngenta Junior Football Club ("Syngenta")
  - Falkirk Rugby Club (Falkirk RC")
  - East Stirlingshire Galaxy ("East Stirlingshire")
  - Falkirk GHG Hockey Club ("Falkirk HC")
  - Graeme High School and Central Football Academy ("Graeme High School")
- 2.2 The application from Graeme High School is unusual in that it is a bid from within the Council. In addition, it is seeking funding to replace an existing synthetic pitch provision on a school site managed by Class 98, the Council's private sector partner under a PPP arrangement. Any works to the pitch would require, under the schools contract with Class 98, to be instructed by the Council and be carried out by Class 98. Given these circumstances it is not thought appropriate to evaluate the application in line with the other applications, however the merits of this proposal are covered in a separate section later in the report.
- 2.3 The assessment process provided for an initial assessment (Stage 1) based on the information provided in the application and also a more detailed appraisal (Stage 2), where applicants would provide the Council with detailed design, technical, functional and financial details. The initial assessment was undertaken corporately with officers from Finance, Legal, Development, Policy and Community Planning and the Community Trust.

- 2.4 In the first instance it was considered whether potential applicants could adequately demonstrate that they have the appropriate organisational arrangements in place to manage the financial, legal and technical issues involved in planning, developing, operating and maintaining a synthetic pitch.
- 2.5 Subject to the comments above in relation to the Graeme High School bid, based on the overall quality of the applications received and the initial information provided there was nothing to rule out any of the remaining six applicants at this stage of the process.
- 2.6 All the proposals, as detailed in the application form, were then evaluated and scored against the following criteria:
- Location of pitch facility (noting that, without very good reason, it would be difficult for the Council to make awards to different proposals located in close proximity and consideration requires to be given to overall area provision of sports pitches) – 30% Weighting
  - Facilities to be provided and infrastructure available at the pitch location – 20% Weighting
  - Financial sustainability (including revenues and costs arising from operating and maintaining the pitch in a long term sustainable manner) – 30% Weighting
  - Community use and benefits from operating the pitch – 20% Weighting

Based on the criteria detailed above the assessment of each bid is summarised below as follows

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Est. Cost £'000</b>	<b>Est. Grant £'000</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Finance</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Newton Park	648	388	30	15	15	15	75
Dunipace JFC	779	300	30	15	15	15	75
Syngenta	948	533	20	15	15	15	65
Falkirk RC	798	400	20	15	15	15	65
East Stirlingshire	715	250	12	15	15	15	57
Falkirk HC	380	190	12	15	13	15	55

- 2.7 As can be seen from the table above, it proved very difficult to differentiate between the bids on the basis of the facilities, finance and community benefit. The key issue separating the bids was location. A plan is appended which shows the locations of each of the proposals as well as the locations of existing 3G synthetic pitches in the area (Appendix 1). As noted at para 2.6 above, consideration has been given to existing provision of equivalent pitches in the locality of each bid as well as the proximity of the proposals to each other.

- 2.8 The applications from Newton Park and Dunipace JFC scored highest on location given the lack of equivalent pitch provision at both the east and west of the district. The location of the proposed pitches from Falkirk RC and Syngenta score less highly given the existence of equivalent pitches at Stenhousemuir and Falkirk Football Clubs and the proposals would also be adjacent to each other at Stirling Road and Sunnyside. With regard to East Stirlingshire and Falkirk HC, the proposed location for both bids is Little Kerse which again would be in close proximity to each other and, significantly, on a site which already contains a 3G pitch along with other pitch provision.
- 2.9 As noted above, the facilities proposed were all deemed to be satisfactory and of a similar standard, although in respect of community use there was, as expected, a considerable provision to the specific club training and competition requirements of the user community rather than general availability to the public. Given that all the applicants have specific interests, the expansion of the clubs' current user communities would have to be explored further at a later stage. Providing greater clarity on usage impacted on the financial assessment and further information would be required to link usage with expected revenues.
- 2.10 Notwithstanding the evaluation process, the other significant factor to consider is that the level of resources available to the Council is limited at £740,000 (with up to £10,000 per bidder moving to Stage 2 having been agreed previously by Members towards detailed bid development costs), while the funding requested ranges from an estimated £190,000 to £533,000. It is therefore not possible to approve all the applications, unless the Council were to award significantly less to bidders than their estimated requests. In addition, all of the applications will also require significant funding from other parties (i.e. **sportscotland**), so awarding a smaller amount could adversely impact on the achievability of the projects taken to Stage 2 in terms of securing the total funding required.
- 2.11 Therefore, based on the evaluation process and the total level of capital funding available to the Council, it is suggested that the two bids taken forward are those from Newton Park and Dunipace JFC, with each bid potentially receiving circa £360,000 should they be successful after Stage 2. This would broadly be in line with the estimated funding level requested.

### **3. GRAEME HIGH SCHOOL**

- 3.1 As noted above a proposal has also been received from Graeme High School which is a centre of excellence for football. The current pitch is 2G and is provided under the PPP contract with Class 98. The pitch is annually assessed by an independent certifier as to condition and has been deemed fit for purpose. The estimated replacement date is 3/4 years and the contract provides for a like for like replacement. However, consideration of the type and quality of any replacement pitch could be given at a later date.
- 3.2 The school would like to bring the replacement date forward and replace the pitch to the same standard as other similar football centres across the country. The money requested from the Council is £35,000, leaving a significant amount (circa £165,000) to be sourced by the school externally.

- 3.3 There are a number of further factors which need to be considered before the Council could progress this proposal further. Consideration has to be given the contractual implications with Class 98 and the additional costs that may arise from increased community demand. We would also have to give due regard to the asset provisions at other high schools.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The first stage of the process has been concluded and subject to the recommendations agreed by Members, matters can move onto the next stage. It is worth pointing out that successful applicants still face a considerable challenge in obtaining the total funding required and any award of grant made by the Council does not guarantee that the pitches will be provided.
- 4.2 As can be seen from what is written above, the quality of bid from all parties was of a high standard and very welcome. The key differentiating factor is the location of the proposals both in relation to each other and other 3G pitch availability in the area combined with the level of funding available to the Council.
- 4.3 If further funding should become available for such community based synthetic sports pitches, the unsuccessful parties will be notified of any opportunity to bid.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

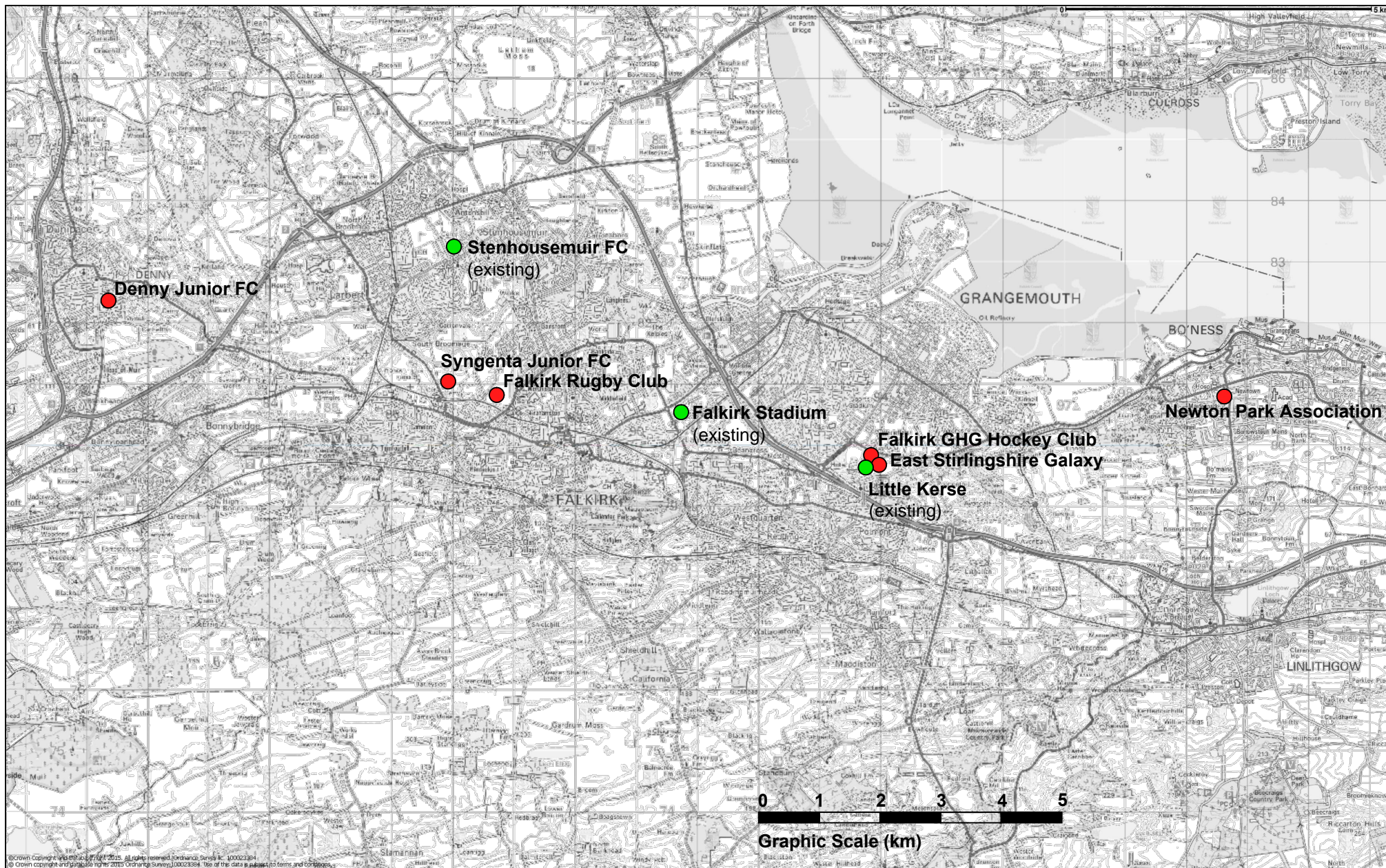
##### **5.1 Members are asked to:**

- (a) Agree that the bids to be taken forward to Stage 2 are those received from Newton Park and Dunipace JFC, with the level of funding being in the region of £360,000 for each applicant;
- (b) Agree that Officers will report back to committee in the event that any significant issues arise during Stage 2 or beyond; and
- (c) Agree that the proposal from Graeme High School will be put on hold to allow consideration of the factors detailed at para 3.3

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Director of Corporate & Housing Services  
Ref: AAP201015 – Synthetic Sports Pitches  
Date: 28 September 2015  
Contact Officer: Danny Cairney

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL



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Development Services

Scale 1:60000



### Synthetic Pitch Locations (3G full size external)

- Red dot: Proposed location & applicant
- Green dot: Existing location of 3G full size external pitch



**Falkirk Council**