

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

To: Leisure & Development Committee

Dervock Community Centre and Football Pitches

8th December 2015

For Information

Report to Committee

Linkage to Interim Corporate Plan	
Strategic Themes	Health & Wellbeing
Lead Officer	Wendy McCullough – Head of Sport & Wellbeing Julie Welsh – Head of Community and Culture
Cost: (If applicable)	Officer input to date

The purpose of this report is to provide members with information relating to the development of a new Community Centre in the village of Dervock and upgrading of the existing football pitches. This was a legacy project approved and completed by Ballymoney Borough Council.

Background

Ballymoney Borough Council received funding (75% of total cost) from the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-13. Grant aid was provided for the sum of £247,500 to build Dervock Community Centre.

Six project objectives were set out;

1. To complete capital build of the community centre by 31st March 2015.
2. To improve access to sporting, leisure and community facilities by 31st March 2015.
3. To hand over the completed centre to Dervock DCA by 31st March 2015.
4. To have the official opening of the centre to the community by June 2015.
5. To meet average usage levels of 20hours per week.
6. To ensure sufficient income is generated to meet annual operating costs of the centre.

At the same time Ballymoney Council agreed to upgrade the outdoor playing surfaces next to the new Community Centre site and improve the changing facilities for the pitches. The total cost of investment was circa £1.036 million.

In July 2015 Causeway Coast & Glens Officers were approached by members of the local football team, Dervock FC, and asked to review the quality of provision in relation to the new pitches. Their concerns were that the upgrade had not met with expectations and had resulted in pitches which were no better, if not worse, than what they had been using before the upgrade. At the same time members of the local community expressed concern that the Community Centre was not being used and that the capacity did not exist within the community to take control of the operational requirements of the centre.

Subsequent reviews of the full project by officers highlighted the following;

Community Centre

- Ballymoney Borough Council had failed to meet 5 of the 6 objectives set out in the contract (items 2 to 6 of the above list).
- Despite numerous attempts, Ballymoney Borough Council were unable to establish a Company limited by guarantee which was balanced and representative of all key stakeholder/user groups in the village in order to enable transfer via lease to the local community.

Outdoor facilities

- The project was completed as per the Council agreed plans which included two IFA minimum standard Adult size pitches (90m x 45m) plus a Junior size / training pitch with floodlights installed on the training pitch and central adult pitch.
- The local team, which prior to the upgrade had been using the venue for their “home” matches, were refusing to play on the pitch with floodlights as the size was significantly smaller than any other pitches in the area and in reality was only conducive to juvenile match play. Opposition teams were also stated as being reluctant to play on the pitch.
- The second pitch had subsequently been increased in size from the original specification in order to allow the team to use that pitch for match play – width is now 51metres.

Current position

Community Centre;

In August officers met with an RDP representative. Council was directed to address the lack of progress against the targets as a matter of urgency prior to any further action being taken by the Department in relation to non-compliance.

Agreed interim actions;

- Council would put in place interim arrangements to ensure the Centre was immediately available for community use. This included the daily management and upkeep of the building, providing caretaking staff and facilitating bookings.
- Council staff would facilitate a user group / forum comprised of representatives from each user group in the village to agree the interim arrangement plus medium to long term plans to develop the role of the community within the facility.

This work is on-going and Council officers are working on capacity building projects with the local community.

Outdoor facilities;

Officers met with members of Dervock FC and agreed with the current situation regarding the size of the two match pitches, that they were not fit for purpose. The following was agreed;

- Retention of the floodlights around the main pitch was not viable if Council was to increase the size of the playing surface to an acceptable level. A remedial plan has been developed which will see the size of both pitches increased to the maximum size available on the site which would result in both pitches being comparable with other pitch dimensions in the borough. The action plan will be phased in order to allow the team to continue to play home matches without disruption.
- The floodlights will be relocated to another site in the Ballymoney area, it is likely to be the main Riada Playing Fields site to add value to current development works on site. This will increase capacity for training at that facility by a number of teams in the area and should offset associated costs with increased revenue from training bookings.