

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: Education Resources Sub Committee	Subject: Use of ground at Knowetop Primary School and Firpark School by Motherwell Football Club
From: Director of Education	
Date: September 2000	
Ref: MM/IR/LA	

Summary

This report updates the sub committee on the negotiations with Motherwell Football Club for the part time use of playgrounds at Knowetop Primary School and Firpark School for match day parking.

Recommendations

The education resources sub-committee is recommended;

- (i) to note that no agreement has been reached with Motherwell Football Club on the fee payable by the club for the use of the playgrounds.
- (ii) to approve either the termination of the existing parking arrangements or the continuation of negotiations to achieve a settlement acceptable to the council.

Members wishing further information about the paper should contact:

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Michael O'Neill

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Use of ground at Knowetop Primary School and Firpark School by Motherwell Football Club

Report by the Director of Education

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting in February 2000 the sub-committee considered the use made by Motherwell Football Club of playgrounds at Knowetop Primary School and Firpark School for car parking on match days. It noted that for the previous 3 years the club has paid £3,000 annually and agreed that an increase to that proposed should be negotiated.

2 PROGRESS OF NEGOTIATIONS

- 2.1 The education department has made extended efforts to reach agreement with the club on future payments. Although the club expressed the view that £2000 per year would be more appropriate, the following offer was made:

- (1) The continuation of an annual payment of £3000 but with an annual inflation increase. At the current general retail price index inflation rate of 1.9% this would be with an increase of £58 in 2001-2002.
- (2) An additional annual £1000 in the form of access to training facilities and coaching.

- 2.2 For the following reasons this offer is not considered to give the council adequate recompense for the facility.

- (1) Car parking at the school generates cost to the authority, for example greater wear and tear to the playground surfaces and damage to fencing. Over the last 3 years spending on playground repairs at Knowetop Primary has been £13,000. Recent damage to the security gate at Firpark will require to be repaired at cost to the council.
- (2) Restrictions on the title deeds for Knowetop Primary state that the ground cannot be used for other purposes. Should the agreement be renegotiated there will be legal costs associated with a minute of waiver from the superior.
- (3) The car parking also generates costs for the schools. The school board at Firpark School has complained that the lining and numbering of parking spaces in the playground makes it more like "Colditz" rather than the preferred "decorated games area". The Knowetop community is critical of various aspects. Firstly, the wear and tear to the surface causes particular difficulties for the visually impaired children in the school. After matches playground litter is a problem. Secondly, the football club stewarding arrangements are not effective. Keys have been lost. The gates have been left unlocked after the matches and the janitor has been called out to make the campus secure. Thirdly, the school is not always given prior notice of games and on these occasions the gates have been forced open. Finally, the proposed dates of school meetings and functions occasionally require to be changed to accommodate match car parking.

- (4) Comparisons with a similar agreement between Edinburgh City Council and Heart of Midlothian Football Club suggests that an increased payment is reasonable. In that case an increase to approximately £8,000 is being discussed.

Glasgow City Council charge Rangers FC on an hourly basis for access to the playground at Ibrox Primary School. In this case the annual payment is over £8000.

- (5) Based on the financial information supplied by Motherwell FC the overall annual cost of the base to the club is around £1,000. This is because 80 of the 190 spaces are sold to season ticket holders. Were more to be sold there is the potential for the car parking to generate profit for the club.
- (6) The education department has major reservations about the additional offer in kind. Firstly, there is evidence that the club is already failing to meet an earlier commitment for access to training facilities. In 1998 the planning and development (buildings and property) sub-committee approved the sale of part of the Knowetop Primary School site to Motherwell FC for the development of training pitches. One condition was that the council would have access to the facility for 1½ hours on 4 afternoons per week and Saturday morning. In reality, the availability to Knowetop Primary has been very restricted, particularly during the football season. Secondly, under the SFA partnership Motherwell FC is already contracted to deliver coaching to primary schools in the local area. The annual payment from the department is £2,700 and complaints have been made by schools of frequent failure to meet the full 2 hour session contract to individual schools.

2.3 Since the expiry of the previous arrangement at the end of season 1999-2000 the football club has been allowed to use the facilities and no charge has been made.

3 CONCLUSION

3.1 As a result of the considerations detailed above and the failure of negotiations it is proposed that the use of the campus at Knowetop Primary School and Firpark School for car parking by Motherwell Football Club be discontinued.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The education resources sub-committee is recommended:

- (i) to note that no agreement has been reached with Motherwell Football Club on the fee payable by the club for the use of the playgrounds,
- (ii) to approve either the termination of the existing parking arrangements or the continuation of negotiations to achieve a settlement acceptable to the council.

MM/IR/LA
September 2000