

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Motion 1

The Provision of Facilities for Youth Football Across Milton Keynes

Councillor Hopkins (3 October 2023)

“1. That this Council notes that:

- a) When presenting the outstanding Leah Williamson on 28 February 2023 with her Freedom of the City award this council undertook to ensure that there would be a legacy across MK in her honour to mark this momentous achievement.
- b) Girl's football has been growing at a phenomenal rate in recent years, and the success of the Lionesses at European and World level has certainly accelerated that demand. Add to that the ever-growing population growth and expansion in MK - demographically still a young profile, means that the continued growth for already thriving mixed grassroots youth football will continue for the foreseeable future.
- c) Sadly, the reality is that MKCC is still playing catch up in terms of facilities, and in many ways failing to reach its own rather modest targets set before the Lionesses recent achievements. Nowhere represents this more than in the Danesborough & Walton ward and in Wavendon in particular. Wavendon is MK's fastest growing area and home to the largest and oldest grassroots football club with more girl's teams than any other.
- d) Historically Woburn & Wavendon FC has relied upon pitch provision in Central Beds to satisfy demand for its members (who are mostly MK residents), reflecting a deficit in pitch provision.
- e) The Strategic Land Allocation in SE MK promised 8.6 hectares of playing fields to satisfy demands from new developments. However, only just over 2 hectares will eventually be delivered, simply adding further to the deficit. Similarly, grassroots football requires adequate midweek artificial floodlit facilities. These too have lagged behind demand. Already the new 3G at Glebe Farm Combined School in Wavendon is fully booked with a substantial waiting list.

2. That this Council believes that youth football enables our young people to:

- a) Make friends - making friends is an important part of social development for young people. Youth soccer teams provide not only the opportunity for our children, settled or newly arrived and of either gender not only to make friends, but also find a place where they can belong, build self-esteem and confidence, and create a safe space to talk about tough issues. Peer feedback and problem-solving addresses the causes of teenage vandalism and associated anti-social behaviour in some young people by giving them somewhere to go and somewhere to belong.

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- b) Build life skills - playing football helps our young people build valuable life skills, such as hard work, decision-making, problem-solving, and communication. Through healthy competition, it also teaches the importance of teamwork and cooperation, balanced by good sportsmanship.
 - c) Be active and healthy – youth football is a fun activity that helps young people to stay active and helps combat childhood obesity. With physical activity comes many health benefits like muscular development, but it's also important for kids to learn motor skills like coordination and balance.
 - d) Promote gender equality - gender equality is core to effective and sustainable development, and participating in youth football can help break down gender stereotypes.
 - e) Experience the joy of childhood - when it comes down to it, football is a game! It's an outlet for kids to play and have fun.
3. That this Council resolves to ask the executive to:
- a) Provide more safe, well designed and constructed grass pitches within future expansion areas in line with real not minimum estimates of demand. The provision of playing fields needs to match the promises made in full. Past deficits need to be addressed. Football facilities need to be delivered earlier in line with housing development (not years later after the majority of houses have been constructed and the communities have moved in).
 - b) Address the need for more floodlit artificial surfaces in line with new housing developments and population growth.
 - c) Address the issues associated with costs and accessibility – be it grass or artificial surface, there has been some reliance on schools to open up their facilities across the city for community use. Community access agreements need to be delivered with all schools be they Academies or Maintained, with a requirement in the agreements to offer realistically priced and year-round community access.
 - d) Undertake a city-wide audit of all youth football facilities and existing grass pitches to assess the level of investment required to improve quality, reduce postponements and grow truly local participation.
 - e) Include a specific section (prepared in conjunction with Sport England) either included in or as an associate document to Plan:MK 2, devoted to setting out just how Plan:MK 2 will ensure the delivery of open space provision for youth football through an ambitious determination to accelerate the provision of such facilities and meet the demand for grassroots football (especially for girls) and in so doing engage and work with the National Football Foundation to garner advice, financial assistance and guidance.”