

CITY OF GREATER GERALDTON



Sporting Facilities Support Review

Report

April 2016

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1. Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of a six month review conducted by a working group consisting of representatives from various teams within the City along with representatives from the Mid West Sports Federation as the peak body representing sporting groups in the region.

The report was initiated in response to Council concerns that there was a real or perceived inequity in the allocation of City resources for the operation and maintenance of sporting grounds and facilities.

The review covered the following four aspects of provision of support for operation and maintenance of sporting facilities:

- Grounds managed by Ground Management Committees;
- Facilities (land/buildings) leased from the City by sporting groups/clubs;
- Cricket pitches; and
- Floodlighting.

The review was informed by various existing Council endorsed policies and makes a series of recommendations under each of these four areas. The recommendations aim to provide a more transparent and robust foundation for decision-making resulting in more equitable and focussed support to the sporting community.

‘Equitable’ in the context of this review requires clarification. In the context of this report, equitable does not mean all grounds will receive the same level of support or funding; rather in this context equitable refers to allocation of support and funding commensurate with a tiered system against which each ground is assessed in terms of its relative use and impact in the community.

This review was conducted in partnership with the Mid West Sports Federation.

2. Recommendations

2.1. GROUND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MANAGED GROUNDS

- 2.1.1. Adopt the three-tiered approach for categorising Ground Management Committee (GMC) managed sporting grounds;
- 2.1.2. Adopt the attached criteria (see attachment A) to assess GMC managed sporting grounds and assign each ground to a tier;
- 2.1.3. Endorse the current tiering of GMC managed sporting grounds as follows:

Tier 1
Eadon Clarke
Wonthella Oval
Tier 2
Woorree Park
Utakarra Ball Park
Walkaway Recreation Ground
Greenough Oval
Recreation Ground
Mullewa Recreation Ground
Little Athletics Centre
Moonyoonooka Recreation Ground

Tier 3
Spalding Park
Muir Park
Alexander Park
8th Street West

See attachment B Scoring of GMC managed grounds against criteria.

See attachment C Maps of GMC managed sporting grounds.

- 2.1.4. Adopt the proposed Operational Maintenance Service Levels for each tier as per attachments D and E.
- 2.1.5. Maintain the fee structure outlined in CP050 (i.e. clubs are charged on an number of players) to continue to offset expenditure by an average of 7% and work with GMCs to ensure they better understand the fee structure, expenditure on grounds based on the tiered system and communicate these principles to all members of the GMC.
- 2.1.6. Enable GMCs to apply for once-off funding via Community Grants to increase the capacity of their ground to host one-off events, noting that the ground would revert to its substantive tier and receive the level of service commensurate with that tier after the event;
- 2.1.7. Make provision for GMCs to apply to the City to have the tier of their ground reassessed against the criteria should their circumstances change. Applications to be assessed by a working group that includes representatives from the MWSF;
- 2.1.8. Advise GMCs that the proposed service levels apply only to the service level provided/funded by the City and that groups wanting an increased level of service can make necessary arrangements with the City or private contractors at their own cost;
- 2.1.9. Review the tiering and operational maintenance requirements 12 months after implementation; and
- 2.1.10. Amend *CP050 Ground Management Policy* to align with the above.

2.2. LAND LEASES

- 2.2.1. Amend Council Policy *CP049 – Community Group Land Lease / License Policy* to remove Clause 4.1 that states that the City will be responsible for providing building insurance on behalf of sporting clubs/community groups on a cost recoverable basis and add a statement stipulating that appropriate building insurance is the responsibility of the lessee;
- 2.2.2. Advise the Croquet Club that all conditions of CP049 will apply should they seek a new lease when their current lease expires in 2025;
- 2.2.3. Advise the Geraldton Tennis Club that all conditions of CP049 will apply to their new lease with conditions phased in over a three year period – i.e. the ground maintenance grant will be phased out in instalments of 1/3 each year over three years (full amount in 2015/16; two-thirds in 2016/17; one-third in 2017/18 and ceasing from 2018/19 onwards.)

2.3. CRICKET PITCHES

- 2.3.1. Limit the City's contribution to \$45,000 pa GST inc. regardless of the number of pitches; and

- 2.3.2. There is a presumption against an increase in the number of turf pitches with a reduction in the number preferable.

2.4. ARENA FLOODLIGHTING

- 2.4.1. Investigate the City assuming responsibility for arena floodlighting on City maintained areas (i.e. non-leased grounds) and conduct a more detailed analysis of costs to develop a draft policy for stakeholder consultation and more detailed consideration by Council.

3. Overview

(This section provides background and an overview with more detailed information contained further in the report.)

The City of Greater Geraldton is a community that prides itself on the range, diversity and quality of its sporting facilities with almost every sporting code catered for. Many of these facilities have been developed by clubs and associations through the efforts of dedicated volunteers over many years. These sporting facilities are valued and appreciated by the community and the City; however there are growing concerns that the current distribution of City resources such as staff time, equipment and materials into operating and maintaining sporting facilities is inequitable.

As the decisions regarding levels of support provided by the local government were made by three separate local governments prior to the two amalgamations, there is a strong view that these decisions have lacked consistency and transparency and that there is no clear rationale for the differing levels of resource allocation.

The matter of expenditure on sporting facilities was also highlighted during the March 2015 Community Summit where all expenditure was reviewed by Summit participants and an inequity of resource allocation was observed.

Sporting Facilities are currently managed under two different management models; Ground Management Committee managed grounds/precincts and facilities that are leased from the City by sporting clubs.

3.1. Ground Management Committees

There are currently fourteen sporting grounds/precincts that are managed by Ground Management Committees (GMCs). These grounds have multiple stakeholders sharing the grounds and GMCs are the representative group of all users of the ground/precinct. The grounds are not fenced and therefore accessible to the public. GMCs are responsible for season bookings and ensuring all users' needs are considered and negotiations on any conflicts are done at a GMC level. Council's position on GMCs is articulated in *CP050 Ground Management Committees*. See attachment F - CP050.

CP050 stipulates that the City will charge a standard fee per user to partially offset the cost of maintenance carried out by the City on the ground. The offset ranges from 0% to 21% noting that the number of users and operational maintenance costs for each ground also vary.

3.2. Land Leases

There are currently thirty-four sporting leases between the City and sporting clubs. Leases are applied where the intention is to grant exclusive possession of a property or part thereof. These facilities, or part thereof, may be fenced and are not generally accessible to the public. Council's position on leases is articulated in *CP049 Community Group Land Lease/Licence Policy* (see attachment G - CP049). CP049 stipulates that the Lessee is responsible for all

maintenance, cleaning, repairs and operational costs of the leased area/s. The Policy also stipulates that the City will be responsible for arranging building insurance and will recover the costs of that insurance from the Lessee as the City was able to leverage economies of scale to obtain insurance at a cheaper rate than could be obtained by individual sporting clubs. An audit conducted in 2015 has shown the following:

- Thirty clubs have not had any City funded works carried out on their premises in 2014/15;
- The City has paid utilities charges for nine clubs as follows;
 - Both water consumption and electricity – five clubs;
 - Water consumption only – four clubs;
 - Electricity – five clubs.
- The Croquet Club received support to the value of \$19,550.19 in 2014/15 and the Geraldton Tennis Club received a cash grant of \$37,586 in 2014/15 for court maintenance, along with financial support for other items giving a total of \$38,945 until March 2015 making these two clubs the largest recipients of City support provided to clubs with leased facilities (\$57,136 out of the total \$71,280);

In transitioning clubs to the conditions stipulated in CP049 the practice since then has been that as a lease for a sporting facility expires the conditions of CP049 are applied in developing a new lease. The Geraldton Tennis Club's lease expired in June 2015 and in negotiating a new lease, the Geraldton Tennis Club is seeking a continuation of the ground maintenance grant (\$41,345 in 2016/17). Provision of funding or support to clubs with leased facilities is inconsistent to the conditions stipulated in CP049, therefore the Executive was not able to support this request and the Geraldton Tennis Club raised their concerns directly with Council.

In response to these various concerns and issues, Council requested a holistic review of support provided to sporting groups for the operation and maintenance of sporting facilities. This report is in response to Council's request. The following report articulates the purpose, outlines the process and makes a series of recommendations for Council consideration.

NB - Inconsistency in support provided by the City for arena floodlight maintenance arrangements emerged as an issue during this review and is addressed as a separate issue later in this report – see point 11.

4. Objective of the Review

- 4.1. To work in partnership with the Midwest Sports Federation (MWSF) in reviewing the current level of assistance provided to sporting clubs and organisations in operating and maintaining sporting facilities; and
- 4.2. To make recommendations for a consistent, equitable and transparent allocation of the City's resources for the operation and maintenance of sporting facilities at the appropriate levels of service.

5. The Process

5.1. Audit Current Arrangements

The following audits were conducted in March 2015 and updated regularly until the end of the financial year.

- City Expenditure on GMC Managed Sporting Grounds; and

- City Expenditure on Leased Facilities.

The audits confirmed the anecdotal view that current arrangements are ad-hoc, lack consistency and transparency and are not equitable.

5.2. Form a working group that includes representatives from the MWSF as independent sports specialists to ensure the sporting community is represented

A working group was formed and included three representatives from the MWSF.

5.3. Consider grounds under GMC arrangements and Land Leases as two different matters and separate them for the purpose of this review

The working group felt that the matter of community-use sporting grounds under GMC arrangements needed to be considered separately to facilities managed under leases. The reason being that GMC managed grounds are shared facilities used by multiple groups and are also open for community use whereas leased facilities allow for exclusive use only and are not available freely for public access. Sporting facilities under leases are therefore considered later in this report – see section 6 on page 10.

5.4. Develop a system for categorising GMC managed sporting grounds

The following three-tiered system was developed as a system to differentiate the levels of sporting grounds appropriate for a regional capital city.

Tier One - A multi user ground that has a high number of regular users comparative to other grounds and is capable of hosting high profile events with minimal increase in maintenance or capital improvements. This type of facility would be capable of hosting sporting events of an elite/professional level whilst still catering for semi-professional sporting events and activities at lower levels such as community events.

Tier Two - A single or multi user ground that has a medium number of regular users (less than Tier One) and is capable of hosting local level events and with a significant increase in cost to maintenance or capital improvements it may be capable of hosting sub-elite level of events. This type of facility would be capable of hosting semi-professional scale sporting events and amateur events whilst still catering for community events.

Tier Three - Usually a sport specific or single user ground that has a low number of regular users (less than Tier Two) and is capable of hosting local level sporting events only. This type of facility would be capable of hosting amateur level sporting events whilst still catering for community events and providing passive recreation spaces for the community.

5.5. Determine the level of service appropriate for each tier

Levels of service for each tier were developed on the advice of City Parks / Grounds Management experts. The principles underpinning these recommended services levels include:

- Differing service levels to differentiate between the three tiers;
- All grounds will receive the required level of service to ensure maintenance is commensurate with use; and

- Under the proposed service regime, none of the grounds would become degraded to the point they are not fit for purpose.

5.6. Develop a set of criteria for assessing GMC managed sporting grounds to be used to categorise GMC managed sporting grounds into the tiered system

In developing the attached set of criteria, the working group considered and adapted the criteria developed by the 2014 Participatory Budgeting Community Panels. The criteria were amended by the working group to better reflect the specific subject – i.e. the impact and role of sporting facilities (see attachment A).

5.7. Assess GMC managed sporting grounds against criteria and a tier allocated to each ground

The fourteen sporting facilities managed by Ground Management Committees were assessed collectively by the working group against the criteria and the grounds were ranked as follows:

Tier 1: Eadon Clarke, Wonthella Oval, Utakarra Ball Park

Tier 2: Woorree Park, Walkaway Recreation Ground, Recreation Ground (Augustus Street), Mullewa Recreation Ground, Little Athletics, Moonyoonooka Recreation Ground

Tier 3: Spalding Park, Muir Park, Alexander Park, Greenough Oval, 8th Street West

NB: See attachment B for scoring sheet.

5.8. Assess the budget/resourcing implications

The estimated investment into these fourteen GMC managed sporting grounds in 2014/15 was \$953,159. It is worth noting that these costs are thought to be under-estimated. The true costs are presumed to have been higher as some services that were provided were likely to have been absorbed in general grounds maintenance budgets. However based on budgeted expenditure, the proposed service levels would increase expenditure by \$214,040. See table below for cost comparisons.

Tier	2014/15 costs	Proposed service level costs	Difference
Tier 1	\$270,655	\$377,397	\$106,742
Tier 2	\$466,630	\$555,344	\$88,714
Tier 3	\$215,874	\$234,458	\$18,584
TOTAL	\$953,159	\$1,167,199	\$214,040

5.9. Develop recommendations for Council consideration

Recommendations outlined below have been developed for Council consideration:

Recommendations - GMC Managed Sporting Grounds

- 5.10. Adopt the three-tiered approach for categorising GMC managed sporting grounds;

- 5.11. Adopt the attached criteria (see attachment A) to assess GMC managed sporting grounds and assign each ground to a tier;
- 5.12. Endorse the current tiering of GMC managed sporting grounds as follows:

Tier 1
Eadon Clarke
Wonthella Oval
Tier 2
Woorree Park
Utakarra Ball Park
Walkaway Recreation Ground
Greenough Oval
Recreation Ground
Mullewa Recreation Ground
Little Athletics Centre
Moonyoonooka Recreation Ground
Tier 3
Spalding Park
Muir Park
Alexander Park
8th Street West

See attachment B Scoring of GMC managed grounds against criteria.

See attachment C Maps of GMC managed sporting grounds.

- 5.13. Adopt the proposed Operational Maintenance Service Levels for each tier as per attachments D and E.
- 5.14. Maintain the fee structure outlined in CP050 (i.e. clubs are charged on an number of players) to continue to offset expenditure by an average of 7% and work with GMCs to ensure they better understand the fee structure, expenditure on grounds based on the tiered system and communicate these principles to all members of the GMC.
- 5.15. Enable GMCs to apply for once-off funding via Community Grants to increase the capacity of their ground to host one-off events, noting that the ground would revert to its substantive tier and receive the level of service commensurate with that tier after the event;
- 5.16. Make provision for GMCs to apply to the City to have the tier of their ground reassessed against the criteria should their circumstances change. Applications to be assessed by a working group that includes representatives from the MWSF;
- 5.17. Advise GMCs that the proposed service levels apply only to the service level provided/funded by the City and that groups wanting an increased level of service can make necessary arrangements with the City or private contractors at their own cost;
- 5.18. Review the tiering and operational maintenance requirements 12 months after implementation; and
- 5.19. Amend *CP050 Ground Management Policy* to align with the above.

6. Land Leases

As outlined above, there are currently thirty-four leases between the City and sporting clubs. On 25 February 2014 Council endorsed *Council Policy CP049 – Community Group Land Lease / License Policy* which is based on the principle that Community and Sporting groups granted exclusive use under a lease are to be wholly responsible for the ongoing operations and general maintenance of their leased area. The policy has been applied to the majority of clubs therefore those clubs received no financial or maintenance support in 2014/15. Minor assistance (circa \$5000 or less) has been provided to other clubs via payment of some utilities, insurance (which is recouped) and some maintenance. Two clubs receive substantial support from the City for their leased premises:

6.1. Geraldton Croquet Club

The Croquet Club have a current lease which expires in June 2025. Their lease stipulates that the City will maintain the playing surface. An extract from the lease reads:

“...the Lessor [the City] shall...be responsible at the Lessor’s cost to properly maintain the surface of the croquet court...”

(City of Geraldton and Geraldton Croquet Club Inc. Lease, 2004, p. 2)

The estimated value of work carried out by the City for the Croquet Club from July 2014 to June 2015 is \$19,550.19 and was \$29,550.19 from July 2013 to June 2014.

The view of the working group is that this commitment should be honoured for the remaining term of the lease (nine years) giving the Croquet Club ample time to become self-sufficient.

6.2. Geraldton Tennis Club

The Geraldton Tennis Club’s lease expired in June 2015 and they are on the ‘Holding Over Clause’ contained in their lease enabling the Club to continue on the same terms and conditions until a new lease is endorsed. The Club is seeking a continuation of the ground maintenance grant (\$41,345 in 2016/17) which is inconsistent with the conditions stipulated in CP049. In a document entitled *“2015. How much does the City of Greater Geraldton value the community facility at the Geraldton Tennis Club? 143 years of history-in partnership with the Geraldton Council (council)”* delivered to Council in May 2015, the Geraldton Tennis Club outlines its case for continued financial support from the City.

The view of the working group is that providing support to one sporting club operating under a lease should not be supported as it:

- entrenches inequitable allocation of City resources to sporting clubs;
- sets a precedent that other clubs are likely to observe and question; and
- could potentially lead to expectations of similar levels of support from other clubs.

CP049 stipulates that the City will be responsible for arranging building insurance and will recover the costs from the Lessee as it was considered that the City could leverage its buying power to obtain insurance at a cheaper rate than could be obtained by individual sporting clubs. The City has subsequently increased its insurance excess from \$1000 to \$10,000. As a result most clubs have chosen to source their own building insurance as they have found the \$10,000 excess a significant potential liability.

Recommendations – Leases

- 6.3. Amend Council Policy CP049 – *Community Group Land Lease / License Policy* to remove Clause 4.1 that states that the City will be responsible for providing building insurance on behalf of sporting clubs/community groups on a cost recoverable basis and add a statement stipulating that appropriate building insurance is the responsibility of the lessee;
- 6.4. Advise the Croquet Club that all conditions of CP049 will apply should they seek a new lease when their current lease expires in 2025;
- 6.5. Advise the Geraldton Tennis Club that all conditions of CP049 will apply to their new lease with conditions phased in over a three year period – i.e. the ground maintenance grant will be phased out in instalments of 1/3 each year over three years (full amount in 2015/16; two-thirds in 2016/17; one-third in 2017/18 and ceasing from 2018/19 onwards.)

7. Cricket Pitches

In considering support provided to sporting clubs for the maintenance of sporting facilities, cricket pitches did not fall into either GMC managed ground arrangements nor leased facility arrangements and therefore needed to be considered separate to those arrangements.

The City had an agreement Geraldton Regional Cricket Board (GRCB) which expired on 30th November 2012 but is currently still being applied. The agreement included the following conditions:

The City provides a subsidy of \$47,520 pa (in 2009 with CPI applied) paid monthly to Geraldton Regional Cricket Board plus use of CGG provided equipment (approx. \$20,000 pa).

In return for this subsidy the GRCB responsibilities included:

- Maintain and repair all turf pitches (Wonthella Oval, Rec Ground, Muir Park, Eadon Clarke, noting the GRCB also has access to a turf pitch at Nabawa);
- Provide log books to the City of hours worked;
- Provide all consumables (i.e. fuel, oil, machinery maintenance etc.);
- Adhere strictly to Water Corp guidelines;
- Agree to City guidelines in regards to vehicle access to sporting facilities;
- Maintain all synthetic pitches (five at Eadon Clarke and one at Mullewa) and practices nets including sweeping, cleaning and patching of chain mesh. (Note that the GRCB also accesses approximately ten synthetic pitches in schools in around the City.)

Based on the current standard and number of turf pitches it is unlikely the City would be able to provide a similar service level to cricket pitches at the same cost.

There are concerns that the City is oversupplied with turf pitches. GRCB currently has access to five turf pitches for two senior A Grade matches each week with three pitches being rested or being used for B grade or junior cricket – which is considered a higher quality than required for B grade and junior levels.

Whilst cricket pitches are not leased from the City per se, they are sport specific and used exclusively by the GRCB. Therefore the amount of City support for facilities that are exclusively sport specific should be considered. The City will be required to renegotiate a new agreement with the Geraldton Regional Cricket Board (GRCB) to replace the agreement that expired in 2012.

It is noteworthy that the cricket players enjoy the benefits of grounds maintenance of grounds surrounding the actual pitch – e.g. Wonthella Oval, Recreation Ground, Muir Park, Eadon Clarke.

Recommendations - Cricket Pitches

- 7.1. Limit the City's contribution to \$45,000 pa GST inc. regardless of the number of pitches'and
- 7.2. There is a presumption against an increase in the number of turf pitches with a reduction in the number preferable.
- 7.3. The new cricket pitch roller agreement should include the transfer of ownership and maintenance responsibilities of the rollers to the GRCB along with finding a suitable storage location.

8. Arena Floodlighting

There are many facilities in the City with floodlighting but the City does not have a uniform policy governing the usage, maintenance and renewal of these assets. In most cases lights have been installed independently of the City by the clubs and the level of responsibility for the usage, maintenance and renewal of these assets varies markedly. Most clubs that have floodlights are fully responsible for them; however more recent actions have shown that inadequate maintenance and planning on behalf of clubs has led to poor standard facilities, reduced useful life and non-existent capacity to replace assets that are beyond their useful life. This has required the City to provide support to ensure there is no risk to the general public (e.g. La Fiamma Sporting Club) or contribute greater amounts than what policy advises (e.g. Wonthella Oval).

Clearer and more robust asset management is required to govern the use of floodlights and to ensure that all users who have access to these assets contribute towards their maintenance and renewal. The following recommendations are proposed for Council consideration:

- The City to assume full responsibility for the maintenance and renewal of all floodlighting assets on City maintained areas (i.e. non-leased grounds). This includes all regular maintenance, operational costs, inspections or facilities and replacement of assets when required;
- The CGG would on charge utility costs plus a premium (% of total usage costs) that would offset the cost of floodlighting maintenance and replacement;
- Clubs wanting to install new or upgraded facilities would still be required to contribute and apply through the CSRFF process as is the case now. However, renewal would be the responsibility of the City.
- Facilities must be made available to all users and not remain the exclusive property of one particular user. Any users wishing to have exclusive use of a particular asset can do so, however, the user will be 100% responsible for this asset (including initial capital cost, ongoing maintenance and asset renewal).

While this proposal would require the clubs to “give up” control of their assets to the City which past history has shown them reluctant to do, it would have the benefit of increasing the asset's useful life and subsequently lead to a longer period before the stakeholders request funds from the City for renewal.

Recommendations – Arena Floodlighting

- 8.1. Investigate the City assuming responsibility for arena floodlighting on City maintained areas (i.e. non-leased grounds) and conduct a more detailed analysis of costs to develop a draft policy for stakeholder consultation and more detailed consideration by Council.

9. Stakeholder Engagement

The Mid West Sports Federation is the key avenue for ensuring the interests of the sporting community were represented in this process.

In addition, the criteria developed for assessing grounds/facilities to determine the tier for each ground was sent in draft to all sporting groups/clubs and associations for their feedback as the working group felt that the set of criteria was the foundation upon which the review was based.

See attachment H for the feedback received on the criteria.

The working group felt it was essential to engage Council at this stage of the review, before further stakeholder engagement, to gauge Council's support for the proposed direction and recommendations.

Should Council endorse the direction and recommendations, the working group will progress with external stakeholder consultation, with particular focus on re-engaging with Ground Management Committees to encourage a greater sense of shared responsibility for the management, upkeep and funding of sporting grounds.

Ground Management Committees will be constituted to ensure all ground user groups have equal representation on the Committee. The City's Club Development Officer and the Mid West Sports Federation shall provide oversight to ensure the GMCs are open and transparent in the Management of the grounds.

The City's Club Development Officer will ensure the implementation, monitoring and updating of the recommendations in this report and will ensure this is carried out in partnership with the Mid West Sport Federation.

10. References

- 10.1. *City of Greater Geraldton Public Open Space Strategy, 2015*
- 10.2. *City of Greater Geraldton Sporting Futures Report, 2013*
- 10.3. *CP049 – Community Group Land Lease / License Policy, 2014*
- 10.4. *CP050 Ground Management Policy, 2013*
- 10.5. *Community Panel Criteria*

Appendices

1. Criteria
2. Scoring
3. Maps of Sporting Grounds
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5. Proposed Operational Maintenance Service Levels
6. Policy CP 050 Ground Management Committees
7. Policy CP 049 Community Group Land Lease / License Policy
8. Feedback on Criteria
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10. Stakeholder communication Strategy
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12. Users And Revenues