



19<sup>th</sup> May 2021

**To: The Chairperson and each Member of the Climate Action, Environment, Recreation & Amenity Strategic Policy Committee**

**Re: Policy on Fencing at Public Playing Pitches and Amenities**

Galway City Council manages twenty three (23) Parks of varying sizes that contain active sports and recreation facilities including playing pitches. These Parks contain a total of thirty six (36) grass pitches (suitable for Rugby, Soccer and Gaelic Games) and are situated by Electoral Area as follows;

Electoral Area	East	Central	West
Number of Parks	9	9	5
Number of Grass Pitches	18	13	5
Number of all-weather pitches	1(lease)	2 (lease)	1
Number of MUGA's	1	1	2(subject to repair in 2021)

Other facilities such as basketball courts, tennis courts, running tracks, dressing rooms, exercise equipment and all weather cages are also provided throughout the city.

The Policy regarding fences at public playing pitches was discussed with the Environment & Climate Change, Recreation & Amenity SPC in 2020 as part of an overall preliminary discussion on the management of Council owned pitches and other facilities.

The Policy states that Galway City Council will seek to secure the external boundaries of Parks against intrusion by large animals such as horses, and implement a no dogs on playing pitches rule through installation of appropriate signage, and that Council will not fence off individual grass playing pitches as is the practice and norm in all local authorities providing playing pitches in public parks. All- Weather Pitches and MUGA's will be fenced with steel mesh fencing.

The policy of Galway City Council is that playing pitches located in public Parks should be open to all members of the public to enjoy (provided they leave no trace) other than when organised training or matches are being held.

All Parks should be secured at the boundaries to prevent access by large animals such as horses. This may include cattle grids, fencing, hedging, turnstiles etc. as appropriate.

All areas where a road or car park forms a boundary with a pitch should have a boundary such as a fence or hedge to prevent cars driving onto the pitch or persons running off the pitch towards a car.

In general, fencing around grass pitches will not be provided. Fencing was installed at two pitches over recent years to address specific local issues and it is not intended to provide fencing around any other pitches. Dogs are not permitted on pitches either on or off a lead. Extensive signage will be erected to advise of this fact.

Playing pitches in public parks are part of a wider amenity. If fencing is permitted at playing pitches there is a concern that advertising hoarding will be sold by sports groups who have permission to play on the pitch under licence. There is also concern that the fences will be viewed by the wider community as exclusionary and that casual games and activity on the pitch will be restricted or prohibited by licensed sports groups. Concerns in relation to protecting the pitches can be addressed in alternative ways, including securing the outer boundaries of the parks to prevent incursion by animals or scrambler bikes.

Is it's not proposed to amend the current policy but consideration will be given in 2021 to securing the boundaries of parks at Castlepark and Millers Lane.

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