

9. REPORT OF THE QEII ATHLETICS TRACK SUBCOMMITTEE

Responsibility QEII Athletics Track Subcommittee	Author Julie Sadler
Corporate Plan Output: QEII Park	

The purpose of this report is to submit the outcome of the investigations of the QEII Athletics Track Subcommittee into the replacement of the QEII Park athletics track.

BACKGROUND

The Leisure Manager reported to the April meeting of the Committee on the condition of the QEII athletics track. The present track was installed in 1991. It had a seven year guarantee and a 14 year life expectancy. Based on the projected life expectancy, funding of \$1.55M was provided in 2003/04 for the replacement of the track. Unfortunately, the track has deteriorated more rapidly than originally envisaged and will not achieve its projected life expectancy.

An evaluation of the track was undertaken in December 1999 by Mr Robert Jones, Australia's foremost sports surface consultant. In his report on the condition of the track, Mr Jones concluded:

“The existing synthetic surface has deteriorated, since the last inspection in 1997, at a faster rate than was projected at that time, which now leads to concern over several areas.

The high jump fan is in a poor condition and needs urgent replacement.

The areas of bubbling and delamination, particularly on lane one of the track, will increase as the average daily air temperature increases over the next few months.

Because of the track's condition in some areas, doubt must be raised as to whether it would still meet all nine clauses of the IAAF's Performance Specification for Synthetic Surfaces Athletic Tracks (Outdoor) January 1990. In particular clauses 1.1 Imperfections, 1.2 Surface Flatness, and 1.9 Drainage. It is a requirement of the IAAF, if international athletics is to take place on a facility with comfort and safety for the athletes, that the synthetic surface meet the performance specification requirements at all times throughout its total life span.”

On the issue of replacement surfaces Mr Jones recommended as follows:

“Given the delamination and bubbling problems which can be experienced with sandwich systems, which is the synthetic surface currently installed on the new Queen Elizabeth II Stadium track, we would recommend that consideration be given to the new surface being a solid system. Either precast such as Mondo, or cast-in-situ such as Recortan.”

The report, in addition to signalling the need for the early replacement of the athletics track, also sought direction from the Committee on whether the track should be located to another area at QEII Park.

The Committee appointed a subcommittee comprising the Chairman, Councillors Baker, Corbett and Sheriff to investigate the issues raised in the staff report and to report back to the Committee on the best option for the replacement and relocation of the new track.

RELOCATION ISSUE

At its first meeting on 14 April 2000 the Subcommittee addressed the track relocation issue and requested staff to report back on a range of matters, including:

- current usage of the main stadium
- consequences of not having a major stadium for athletics
- usage levels of other similar outdoor sports facilities
- current and future requirements of sports codes which are likely to use the main stadium
- the cost of relocating the athletics track

The Leisure Manager reported back to the Subcommittee, at its second meeting on 5 September 2000. The report canvassed the following options:

1. Not providing a major international athletic venue in the city.
2. Replacing the existing track in the main stadium.
3. Relocating the athletics track to another site at QEII Park.
4. Relocating the athletics track to another venue in the city.

After considering the advantages and disadvantages of each option, the Subcommittee unanimously concluded that the athletics track should remain in the main stadium.

In addressing the track replacement issue, the Subcommittee noted staff advice that, while the existing surface had deteriorated and was not in good condition, it could be used for another season. It would, however, not last until 2003-04.

The Subcommittee is therefore recommending that the funding provided in 2003-04 for the replacement of the track be brought forward to the 2001-02 financial year. It is recognised that it is unusual for such decisions to be made in advance of the financial plan process. However, if the track is to be completed in time for the 2001/02 season, preliminary work will need to commence early in 2001. Certainty about the funding of the project is therefore essential.

The Subcommittee's recommendation has been discussed with the Director of Finance who comments as follows:

“The Financial Plan has made provision in 2003/04 for this project of \$1.55 million. The request to bring this project forward to 2001/02 is principally one of timing rather than financial provision. It will have an impact of increasing budgeted debt servicing costs for 2001/02 by approximately \$34,000 and in 2002/03 of \$68,000 but after this the costs impact will be the same as has been provided in the long term forecasts (assuming the remainder of the funding is retained for other refurbishment at QEII costs). The impact on the operating costs of the Council is relatively small in relation to fluctuations which would normally occur in putting the budget together. In view of the urgency of this work and the lead time needed to do the planning work I am comfortable with supporting this requested change in timing.”

The above report was before the Parks and Recreation Committee at its meeting on 13 September 2000. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Subcommittee.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the athletics track remain in the QEII Stadium.
 2. That sufficient funding to cover the cost of the track replacement be brought forward to the 2001/02 financial year.
 3. That the balance remain in the 2003/04 capital works budget for the replacement of the wooden embankment seating.