

FUTURE USE OF FRANK SMITH PARK - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK REPORT

Report contact

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Meeting

Council

Approving officer

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Date

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This report is presented to Council during the caretaker period. As the matter being addressed in this report is not a designated decision as prohibited under section 91A of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 nor does it require a major policy decision that would significantly affect the Council area's community as a whole or bind the incoming Council as cited in Council's Caretaker policy; it is able to be considered by Council during the caretaker period.

Note: In considering this report Council must ensure that the decision will not progress any matter which has been identified as an election issue.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from community engagement undertaken regarding the potential future increased use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

1. Note the Community Engagement Feedback Report on the Future Use of Frank Smith Park for Organised Sport.
2. Note that the following reports will be the subject of a Council workshop in early 2023 to inform decision making on the future use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport:
 - a. Oval and Turf Pitch Demand Study (Needs Analysis) – Northern Onkaparinga and Mitcham Hills
 - b. Community Engagement Feedback Report – Future Use of Frank Smith Park
 - c. Review of Sturt Lions Football Club use of Frank Smith Park in Winter 2022
 - d. Traffic and car parking impact assessment in the context of current use and any proposed increase in activity.
3. Note that a final report seeking a Council decision on the future use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport will be presented to Council in March 2023.
4. Note that any increase in sport beyond the current primary school soccer and cricket competitions will require further community consultation in line with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1999* to amend the Community Land Management Plan.

3. Executive summary

In response to advocacy from local sporting clubs and recent Council decisions, council staff have undertaken community consultation into the potential for increased use of Frank Smith Park at Coromandel Valley for organised sport.

Community engagement ran from 21 April to 6 June 2022 (six weeks) and the Community Engagement Feedback Report is included in Attachment 1 to this report.

The key findings are:

- Frank Smith Park is highly valued by the local community and visitors for its role in supporting primary school sport, as a space for active and passive recreation and for its natural amenity and connection to nature.
- The majority (63 per cent) of the 879 respondents to the community engagement survey support the use of Frank Smith Park for increased sport in the future. Twenty-seven per cent were opposed and 10 per cent neutral.
- Detailed analysis of the responses confirms support for increased sport were not dominated by sports club members and that a notable number of people that frequent the park for passive recreation support an increase in usage for sport.
- There is still majority support when the results of a 215-signature petition in opposition to increased sport is considered as part of the consultation results.
- The community consultation confirmed that the major considerations when planning for increased sport at Frank Smith Park are access and parking, impacts on the natural environment and the impacts of sporting infrastructure. These are not necessarily barriers to increased sport, but issues that need to be carefully managed into the future.

Before a decision on the future use of Frank Smith Park can be made by Council, these community engagement outcomes and the planning considerations identified, need to be considered together with the outcomes of the:

- Oval and Turf Pitch Demand Study (Needs Analysis) – Northern Onkaparinga and Mitcham Hills
- Review of Sturt Lions Football Club use of Frank Smith Park in Winter 2022
- Traffic and car parking impact assessment in the context of current used and any proposed increase in activity

The outcomes of this will be workshopped with Council in early 2023 prior to a Council report seeking a decision on future use.

4. Background

Community Plan 2030	people: connected, engaged, active, healthy We connect people and the spaces they enjoy, including trails, open spaces and other places to be active.
Policy and/or relevant legislation	The directions of this report align with the objectives of Council's Sport and Active Recreation Action Plan 2021–25, particularly: Goal 3: Improve Facilities - We will provide safe, welcoming and fit for purpose sport and active recreation facilities that meet community demand. A Strategic approach is one of eight guiding principles in the Sport and Recreation Plan 2021–25 which ensures that facilities, programs and services meet community needs and enable the best use of council resources. It states that in assessing the need for facility upgrades or renewal, we will first seek to understand demand and supply to determine gaps and opportunities.
Who did we talk to/who will we be talking to	City of Mitcham Local residents and park users Coromandel Valley National Trust Coromandel Valley Community Centre Coromandel Valley Primary School Green Adelaide Noarlunga and Districts Junior Soccer Association Local sporting clubs – including Coromandel Valley Ramblers Cricket Club, Sturt Lions Football Club.

Frank Smith Park is located in the Northern Planning District of the City of Onkaparinga with portions in both the City of Mitcham and City of Onkaparinga Local Government areas. The park straddles the Sturt River which also acts as the council boundary.

The site is approximately 13.4ha and key features include; an oval (currently operating as one cricket oval and two junior soccer pitches), cricket nets, wetlands, BMX tracks, toilets, a small playground and shelter, walking and horse trails, horse exercise area plus a range of natural environments and habitat for wildlife. Native wildlife includes the nationally endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot and many species of woodland birds.

The sportsground (oval/pitches) at Frank Smith Park account for approximately 20 per cent of the area of the total park.

The current playing surface at Frank Smith Park is unirrigated levelled open space, with a concrete cricket wicket and no formal drainage system. The extent and nature of the playing surface largely reflects historical development which staff understand occurred during the 1960s when Frank Smith developed a vision for a playing area for future generations and began work to create the oval. It is understood work stopped in the late 1960s when excavation costs became too expensive.

There is an existing licence for the use of the oval/pitches within Frank Smith Park between the City of Onkaparinga and the Minister for Education, Training and Skills. This enables use by primary schools – Eden Hills Primary School, Coromandel Valley Primary School and Belair Primary School, on Saturdays from 8am-2pm until 30 June 2024.

The location, layout and key features of Frank Smith Park are shown in the Location and Park Zone Map (Attachment 2).

At the 15 February 2022 Council meeting it was resolved:

That Council notes:

- 1. In principle support is provided to the future use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport to allow stakeholders to seek external funding for playing surface upgrades only at this time with support being contingent on the outcomes of the proposed planning and required community engagement.*
- 2. By June 2022 City of Onkaparinga staff will engage with City of Mitcham and other stakeholders (including immediate residents, Coromandel Valley Primary School and the National Trust of Coromandel Valley) to finalise a district needs analysis and impact for the Mitcham Hills and Onkaparinga Northern Hills districts to confirm the level of demand, potential user groups, impact of increased traffic, increased noise levels on local residents and impact on historical nature of the reserve and that this information be used to inform the breadth of impact on the community and funding arrangements for future works.*
- 3. The prioritisation of capital funding for the delivery of playing surface improvements at Frank Smith Park needs to be considered in the context of other major sport infrastructure projects across the City of Onkaparinga.*
- 4. The Sturt Lions will be granted a permit for use of Frank Smith Park for junior soccer for the 2022 season and that feedback on this use will be sought from the park users and adjacent residents to support decision making on possible extension of use.*

The previous report can be viewed [here](#).

In response to the 15 February 2022 decision council staff commenced engagement with the sporting and local community.

The consultation period ran from 21 April 2022 closing on the 6 June 2022 (six weeks) and involved collecting feedback through an online survey via council's Your Say website, plus an on-site community information session held on the 28 May 2022. Hard copy surveys were made available from Coromandel Valley Community Centre and Watchman House (Coromandel Valley National Trust) and meetings/discussions were held with key stakeholders.

On 21 June 2022 Council received a petition against future increased use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport with 215 signatories. At this meeting a deputation was also made by Simon Potts, the head petitioner. In receiving the petition, it was noted that:

"the feedback within the petition will be included as part of the final community engagement report on the future use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport, which will be presented to Council at its meeting in September 2022".

A deputation was also received at 21 June 2022 Council meeting by Jarryd Simister from the Coromandel Valley Ramblers Cricket Club in support of the club's use of the park.

5. Discussion

Frank Smith Park Community Consultation

The Community Engagement Feedback Report (Attachment 2) details findings from the community consultation (via council's Your Say platform).

In summary there were:

- 2300 aware participants (viewed the project page)
- 1300 informed participants (downloaded a document/visited multiple pages/provided feedback)
- 879 submissions/responses to the survey online

- Seven hard copy surveys received through Coromandel Valley Community Centre
- 14 letters/emails received

Approximately 70 people attended an on-site community information/drop-in session on 28 May 2022, 12-3pm, where feedback was gathered and summarised.

The survey results show that just over half (52 per cent) of survey participants live in the City of Onkaparinga, with 45 per cent living in the City of Mitcham. This indicates that the park is equally important to the members of both council areas and performs an important open space role for the district.

The survey highlighted that the park is well utilised with 56 per cent of the respondents using the park weekly or more.

The key questions asked in the survey was *'to what extent do you support the increased use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport?'*. In response:

- 63 per cent of respondents support the use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport.
- 27 per cent of respondents were not supportive of an increased use for sport.
- 10 per cent were neutral.

Responses have been summarised in table 1 below:

RESPONSE	No. of Responses (%)	No. of Responses (%)
Strongly Agree	428 (48.7%)	554 (63%)
Agree	126 (14.3%)	
Neutral	86 (9.8%)	86 (10%)
Disagree	102 (11.6%)	239 (27%)
Strongly Disagree	137 (15.6%)	

Table 1 - Survey responses 'to what extent do you support the increased use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport?'

Detailed analysis of the responses confirms that they were not dominated by sports club members and that a notable number of people that frequent the park for passive recreation support an increase in sport. A breakdown of survey participants revealed that 44 per cent of respondents were members of a sporting club, whilst 56 per cent were not. Of the respondents who were not an 'existing member/player at a sporting club or association':

- 49 per cent strongly agree or agree with the potential increased use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport
- 38 per cent strongly disagree or disagree with the potential increased use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport
- 13 per cent are neutral

Further analysis of survey results is available in the Community Engagement Feedback Report.

Following the consultation period, a petition was also received against the future use of the park by sporting clubs with 215 signatories. Analysis of both the online survey and the petition reveal there was minimal duplication of respondents i.e. approximately 7 per cent of signatories to the petition had also filled out a Your Say survey.

There is still majority support for an increase in organised sport when the signatories to the petition (in opposition) are considered as part of the consultation results. Analysis of the petition shows that 41 per cent of signatories are from the City of Onkaparinga.

Through the online survey, respondents were given the opportunity to select multiple factors important to them that they would like to see considered as part of ongoing planning for future use of the park. The considerations and number of responses are summarised in the table below and discussed further in the Community Engagement Feedback Report:

Consideration	Number of Responses	% of Responses
Parking	533	61%
Natural environment	493	56%
Supporting infrastructure	476	54%
Oval surface / turf quality	465	53%
Vehicle access from surrounding roads	402	46%
Compatibility with current use	318	36%
Oval capacity and current use compatibility	234	27%
Noise levels	167	19%
Others	29	4%

Whilst the majority of respondents to the survey supported an increase in use of Frank Smith Park for sport, community consultation has provided an improved understanding and recognition of current use and strong community sentiment that exists in relation to the park. The park is highly valued for its role in supporting primary school sport, as a space for active and passive recreation and for its natural amenity and connection to nature. Therefore, formalisation for use by organised sport needs to be carefully balanced in this context.

At the time of writing this report, a review of Sturt Lions 2022 Winter use, required in line with the February 2022 Council decision, was being worked through and includes seeking feedback from residents immediately adjacent to Frank Smith Park. In addition, discussions with the Southern Districts Junior Soccer Association and Coromandel Valley Primary School are being undertaken – noting the latter have been utilising Frank Smith Park as a student drop off and pick-up area for a short period in winter 2022.

The feedback from these users and stakeholder groups, together with any proposal for an increase in sport, will be used to finalise a traffic and transport assessment.

It is proposed that this information along with findings from a Turf and Pitch Demand Study (Needs Analysis) undertaken for the Northern Onkaparinga and Mitcham Hills District be the subject of a Council workshop and report in 2023.

It has been confirmed that any increase in sport beyond the current primary school soccer and cricket competitions will require an amendment to the Community Land Management Plan (CLMP) and would be subject to community consultation and Council approval in line with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

This consultation will only be undertaken in response to a Council decision in 2023. Legal advice confirms that it is appropriate for Council to consider the outcomes of the 2022 consultation when making its final decision on any proposed CLMP amendment.

6. Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

On the 15 February 2022 Council noted that:

The prioritisation of capital funding for the delivery of playing surface improvements at Frank Smith Park needs to be considered in the context of other major sport infrastructure projects across the City of Onkaparinga.

7. Risk and opportunity management

Risk	
Identify	Mitigation
Reputation/community expectation	<p>There is a risk that the recommendations of this report will not meet the expectations of sporting clubs advocating for increased use or, conversely, expectations of community members who have concern about increased sports use at the site.</p> <p>Further consideration at a workshop with Elected Members will allow for detailed discussion regarding future use that takes into account community needs and community and stakeholder consultation.</p>
Political	<p>Given its location, Frank Smith Park is positioned to meet the needs of clubs and communities located in both the City of Mitcham and City of Onkaparinga. Ongoing consultation and a partnership approach will be required to ensure that pressures and expectations are managed.</p>
Financial	<p>Initiating a project at Frank Smith Park needs to be considered in the context of other capital project priorities and budget parameters.</p>

Opportunity	
Identify	Maximising the opportunity
Achieve increased sharing and utilisation of high value public open space for a variety of uses	<p>Community consultation has shown that Frank Smith Park has potential and capacity to be able to meet the needs of a variety of uses including sport.</p>
Partnership approach to planning and delivery of infrastructure improvements	<p>A partnership approach with the City of Mitcham should be continued when planning the future use of Frank Smith Park and any proposed future capital investment.</p>

8. Next steps

In line with the report recommendations the next steps will involve:

- Collating feedback from the Sturt Lions Football Club, Coromandel Valley Primary School, Noarlunga Districts Junior Soccer Association and adjacent residents on the Winter 2022 use of Frank Smith Park.
- Presenting findings from Future Use of Frank Smith Park - Community Engagement Feedback Report and the Oval and Turf Pitch Demand Study (Needs Analysis) for discussion at a Council Workshop in early 2023.
- Continued advocacy in consultation with City of Mitcham for sporting clubs to access suitable/additional turf playing space in the catchment area, including Blackwood High School.
- Preparing a final report seeking Council direction on the future use of Frank Smith Park for organised sport and presenting this to Council in March 2023.

9. Attachments

Attachment 1 – Future Use of Frank Smith Park – Community Engagement Feedback Report (18 pages)

Attachment 2 – Location and park zone map (2 pages)

- END OF REPORT -

Attachment 1

[5817739](#)

Attachment 2

[5820289](#)