



CABINET - 15TH NOVEMBER 2023

**SUBJECT: RISCA COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL AND LEISURE CENTRE
NEW ARTIFICIAL PITCH PROVISION**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND
ENVIROMENT**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the latest position in relation to Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) and to seek Cabinet approval to proceed with a replacement 3G surface as a result of funding secured from Welsh Government to enhance the current provision.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In 2019, the Council adopted a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy for the period 2019-2029. The Vision for sport and active recreation is “to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be more active, more often”.
- 2.2 The strategy references poor levels of health in certain areas of the county; reducing budgets; the large number of facilities across the County and the deteriorating quality of our older buildings as well as increasing population and consumer demand as some of the key challenges it is seeking to overcome.
- 2.3 The strategy also references the need to maximise the impact of all sport and recreation facilities. It acknowledges that 120 sports pitches, there are more artificial turf pitches than in any other area in Wales. Ten of these pitches are 3G football/rugby surfaces. A full sized floodlit 3G pitch can provide the same level of use as 5 grass pitches. The strategy acknowledges that 3G pitches are an important part of future outdoor pitch provision and that there is a case to be made for more strategically located 3G pitches to support grass-pitch provision, also taking account of the potential to maximise the beneficial use of school facilities.
- 2.4 Caerphilly Council has secured £1M from Welsh Government’s Community Focussed Schools capital grant for the installation of a 3G pitch on the existing Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) pitch at Risca Comprenensive School and Leisure Centre. A further £1M grant allocation for a new 3G pitch at the site within the Shared Prosperity Fund has also been made available but it is proposed that this is used to maximise provision elsewhere in the county borough at a location yet to be confirmed.

- 2.5 The current Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) and supporting infrastructure (floodlighting, fencing, changing rooms) is coming to the end of its life and is not currently fit for purpose. The current pitch is used during the day by the Comprehensive School to support curriculum delivery, and at evenings and weekends by a range of community sports clubs.
- 2.6 The current users of the ATP include Risca Hockey Club and various local Rugby and Football clubs. The existing ATP surface is the preferred surface for Hockey for both training and competitive match formats. The recent and significant development of third generation artificial grass pitches (3Gs) are used primarily for Football and Rugby. Hockey training is permitted on 3G pitches, but is not the preferred surface.
- 2.7 There are two existing mini 3G pitches in use at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre which do support football and rugby usage but cannot facilitate full scale eleven or fifteen aside football and rugby matches.
- 2.8 In 2021 an investment of £390,000 funded replacement surfaces at Idris Davies School and Sue Noake Hockey Hub replacing the outdated ATP at Sue Noake. The project was implemented to promote and develop Hockey participation at a strategic location in the county borough. Financial support for the project was provided by Sport Wales collaboration funding; a mechanism which includes Hockey Wales, Welsh Rugby Union, and Welsh Football Trust.
- 2.9 With the investment in a high quality, dedicated surface at the central Hockey Hub at Sue Noake, the availability of the £1m Community Focused Schools capital grant at Risca provides the Local Authority with a unique opportunity to further the intent of its Sport and Active Recreation Strategy.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet approve:
- 1) The replacement of the existing Artificial Turf pitch at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre with a new 3G surface.
 - 2) The use of the £1m Welsh Government Community Focused Schools Capital Grant to support the replacement 3G pitch at the preferred location.
 - 3) The use of the £1m SPF funding to support a further 3G pitch at a separate location across Caerphilly yet to be determined.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To advise Cabinet Members of the £1M grant funding secured from Welsh Government and to seek approval for progressing a new pitch replacement at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre.
- 4.2 To continue to deliver modern sporting facilities in accordance with the adopted Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019 -2029.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 In 2019, the Council adopted a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. The agreed Vision for sport and active recreation was “to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be more active, more often”. The Strategy acknowledges poor levels of health in certain areas of the county as well as the reducing levels of budget. Aside from this, the Council operates a large number of facilities across the County and must also meet the costs associated with maintaining its ageing buildings.
- 5.2 The Council has a significant number of sports pitches and more artificial turf pitches than in any other area in Wales. Ten of these artificial pitches are 3G football/rugby surfaces. A full sized floodlit 3G pitch can provide the same level of use as 5 grass pitches. The strategy acknowledges that 3G pitches are an important part of future outdoor pitch provision and that there is a case to be made for more strategically located 3G pitches to support grass-pitch provision, also taking account of the potential to maximise the beneficial use of school facilities.
- 5.3 Officers from the Council’s Sport and Leisure Service and Education’s Sustainable Communities for Learning Team have been working collaboratively to secure funding to enhance the sporting facilities at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre to improve both curriculum delivery and community provision and to reduce the financial impact on the Council. Welsh Government have approved £1M grant funding to deliver a replacement pitch and refurbished changing rooms.
- 5.4 Community Focused Schools is a key Programme for Government 2021-2026 commitment, which will ‘invest in the learning environment of Community Focused Schools, co-locating key services, and securing stronger engagement with parents and carers outside traditional hours.’ Welsh Government require the funding to be spent by April 2024, although a variation in this is possible to April 2025.
- 5.5 The current ATP pitch is coming to the end of its life. The ATP surface is the preferred surface for hockey for both training and competitive match formats. The recent and significant development of third generation pitches (3Gs) are used primarily for Football and Rugby. Hockey training is permitted on 3G pitches, but is not the preferred surface.
- 5.6 In 2021 a combined investment of £390,000 funded a 3G replacement surface at Idris Davies School and the Sue Noake Hockey Hub which replaced the outdated ATP with a fit for purpose Hockey surface. The project was implemented to promote and develop Hockey participation at a strategic, central location in the county borough. Financial support for the project was provided by Sport Wales collaboration funding; a mechanism which includes Hockey Wales, Welsh Rugby Union, and Welsh Football Trust. The county borough now has a dedicated professional standard Hockey Hub to support Hockey infrastructure across Caerphilly as a whole as well as the aspirations of the clubs
- 5.7 There are currently 60 sessions available to book on the Risca ATP Monday – Friday for community use between 16:00pm - 22:00pm. The current pitch bookings confirm there are only 25 sessions (41.7%) booked with 35 sessions (58.3%) still available for hire and are not in use. Of the current bookings, 13 bookings are for Football, 6 for Rugby and 6 for Hockey.
- 5.8 There are currently 36 sessions available to book on the ATP on weekends, Saturday and Sunday’s, between 09:00am - 18:00pm. Of the current bookings, only Hockey use the pitch on some weekends for matches: 4 sessions are booked for Hockey matches

on a Saturday and Sunday, 10:00am – 12:00 noon or 14:00pm -16:00pm. In summary, 11.1% are booked with 88.9% of the sessions still available for hire and are not currently used. Football and Rugby do not currently use the ATP at weekends as the surface is not suitable for competitive fixtures.

5.9 The current registered membership numbers for the 3 user groups of Hockey, Football and Rugby across the county borough are as follows:

Sport	Clubs	Teams	Adult members	Mini & Junior members	TOTAL
Hockey	2	6	62	79	141
Rugby	26	156	1123	2452	3575
Football	43		1733	3256	4989

The current registered membership numbers for the 3 user groups of Hockey, Football and Rugby in the locality are as follows:

Sport	Clubs	Number of clubs	Total Members
Hockey	Risca Hockey Club	1	101
Rugby	Abercarn RFC Cross Keys RFC Newbridge RFC Risca RFC Chargers - Female Hub	5	834
Football	Argoed Reform Club Risca Town Coed Duon Women FC Risca United FC Trinant AFC Newbridge Town AFC Fields Park Athletic FC Crumlin FC Pentwynmawr Athletic AFC Abercarn United FC Wattsville FC Treowen Stars AFC	12	1512

- **Hockey** figures are from Hockey Wales, the sport's governing body and are registered players as of 15th September 2023.

- **Rugby** figures are from the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU), the sport's governing body, and were registered players as of the 31st of August 2023.
 - **Football** figures are from the Football Association Trust (FAW), the sport's governing body, and are registered players as of 15th September 2023.
- 5.10 As can be seen from the above the current ATP is significantly underused. Replacing the existing surface with a new ATP surface would perpetuate that underuse. It is possible to replace the current ATP with a like for like ATP and construct a new 3G pitch on one of the school grass pitches. This option would require an estimated £900,000 additional funding, on top of the current £1M grant that has been secured. There is a further £1M allocation for a new 3G pitch within the Shared Prosperity Fund, but this would not be available to maximise provision elsewhere in the county borough if it were used to fund this option.
- 5.11 Replacing the current Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) with a 3G pitch would maximise the usage of the facility and go towards addressing some of the unmet demand that exists. As stated above, 3G is not the preferred surface for hockey and Risca Hockey Club can be offered the opportunity to transfer their bookings to Sue Noake Hockey Hub which is able to accommodate the current hockey bookings at Risca.
- 5.12 There are also two existing mini 3G pitches in use at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre which do support football and rugby usage but cannot facilitate full scale eleven or fifteen aside football and rugby matches.
- 5.13 The current users of the ATP at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre have been invited to provide their views on whether to renew the existing ATP with a new ATP or a new 3G surface and the responses received are included at Appendix 1. In summary, the headteacher at the school and the football club responses support the 3G proposal, with Risca Hockey club, opposing the 3G proposal.

Conclusion

- 5.14 The existing ATP surface is underused and replacement of it with a 3G pitch would maximise the use of the facility for the greatest number of users. To replace the existing surface with a new ATP would likely result in a relatively low level of usage as at present and detailed above.
- 5.15 Cabinet are asked to consider the proposal to proceed with replacement of the existing ATP surface with a 3G pitch. Subject to approval, officers will progress a procurement process to meet the Welsh Government funding timeframes of project completion by 31st March 2024. Officers will support Risca Hockey Club in transitioning to the Hockey Hub at Sue Noake Leisure Centre

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and positive impacts are identified as a result of the proposed upgraded facilities. There is a potential for a negative impact resulting from the additional travel distance to Sue Noake Hockey

Hub. However, this will only impact on travel where this results in longer travel times to alternative facilities depending on point of origin.

Link to IIA

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The authority has secured £1M Welsh Government grant funding to deliver a replacement pitch and refurbished changing rooms at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre at time of application with no additional cost to the authority. Welsh Government require the funding to be spent by April 2024.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this project and report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have been incorporated accordingly. Cllr Shane Williams was consulted on this report in his capacity as Vice Chair of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and responded as follows:

This hockey facility is vital for all those who play and seek to play hockey in this part of the borough. The fact that there are over 60 children that participate, along with successful senior teams, demonstrate the continued growth and success of the sport. The suggestion that these young children should now travel miles to Ystrad Mynach to try and continue their sport beggars belief.

By concentrating only on rugby and football in Risca, this will inevitably mean that many of these children, and seniors alike, will now be denied the chance to play hockey. And for those that can travel, there is no guarantee of suitable availability at Sue Noake given its current usage.

As this is a thriving and growing club, its benefit particularly on women and girls playing sport is immeasurable. The planned removal of the hockey pitch at Risca will at a stroke, further undermine our best efforts to get more women and girls playing sport.

Sport Caerphilly's stated aim is to get, and I quote:

"more women, more active, more often. By doing so, it will increase confidence to allow them to be the best version of themselves physically, mentally and socially while allowing physical activity to be the 'norm' in everyday life".

Taking away this hockey provision, will do exactly the opposite of what we have pledged to do, and it will have a lasting negative impact on many women and girls particularly.

It seems the decision, despite this 'consultation', has already been made. But even so, for the reasons I have given above, I oppose this report and the planned removal of this hockey facility from Risca.

- 10.2 The current users of the ATP at Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre have been invited to provide their views on whether to renew the existing ATP with a new ATP or a new 3G surface and the responses received are included at Appendix 1 and summarised in 5.13. above.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Author: Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager

Consultees: Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Nigel George, Risca East and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways
Councillor Philippa Leonard, Risca East and Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection
Councillor Arianna Leonard, Risca East
Councillor Bob Owen, Risca West
Councillor Ceri Wright, Risca West
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation
Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1: Responses from user groups.

Appendix 1

The below information was shared with the current ATP user groups of Risca Community comprehensive school and Leisure centre as part of the engagement process.

RE: Risca Leisure Centre – Facility Development Options

For the past few months, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Sport & Leisure Services have been undertaking exploratory works to establish the options available to replace the current Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) that is reaching an end-of-life position and as such not being fit for purpose and not providing the level of experience that our customers expect.

Following these exploratory works, we are now able to present to current users a proposal for your consideration and input.

PROPOSAL: The replacement of the existing Artificial Turf pitch at Risca Community Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre with a new dual use 3G surface.

ATP – Is a second-generation sand based short pile surface used primarily for training purposes and competitive Hockey. Not suitable for competitive Rugby and Football fixtures

3G – Is a third-generation synthetic surface that replicates grass surfaces and is used for both training and competitive fixtures for Rugby and Football. Not suitable for competitive Hockey

To inform the decision-making process and ensure the most appropriate development and outcomes for Risca Community Comprehensive School and the users of Risca Leisure Centre, Sport & Leisure welcome your observations and views and request that these are provided in writing to leisure@caerphilly.gov.uk by Wednesday 25th October 23.

User Group Observation and comments

Following the user group engagement process above, we received observations from three community Clubs, AFC Pontymister Seniors, Risca Hockey Club and AFC Pontymister Youth as well as Risca Comprehensive and community school Headteachers comments.

AFC Pontymister

To whom it may concern,

We at AFC Pontymister are very much in favour of a new 3G pitch at Risca Leisure Centre for the follow reasons.

As a football club, the surface is much more conducive for both training and playing on as the roll and bounce of the ball is more akin to playing on grass pitches.

The hard surface of an ATP is very unforgiving, and users can and often do get injuries should they fall on the surface or even from the sheer impact on the bodies joints from running on it.

Both Rugby and Football are way more popular in the area and a 3G surface will be of great benefit to these 2 sports.

A 3G pitch will have a greater financial benefit to the borough as clubs will be queuing up to use it on weekends to play competitive fixtures on. Should the facility be constructed to the FAW's criteria for tier 3 clubs, then the facility will be able to host 'big' games and attract large crowds.

Clubs frequently have games postponed due to bad weather however, having access to a 3G pitch will be of benefit to football clubs such as ours.

The area and indeed the school deserves a new 3G pitch as seeing other schools get new pitches, we feel that Risca has been left behind.

With the greatest respect to those that play the game, we believe that hockey is a minority sport. We realise that those who play the game are passionate about the game and want to play in their hometown however, with a new hockey pitch being constructed at Bassaleg school, they won't have to travel far to play their sport.

As a club who have trained at RLC for decades, firstly on the 'red gravel' surface and now on the ATP it would be great to have a facility which is tailored to our sport.

There is far more demand for 3G pitches throughout the area than there is for an ATP.

Whilst some of our reasons may appear to be a little selfish, we believe we speak on behalf of all those Football and Rugby clubs out there. Furthermore, none of the reasons given in the letter are intended to be discriminatory in any way or a slight on those who are in favour of an ATP.

We hope that the above reasons are self-explanatory however, should you require anymore detail, please feel free to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Chairman/Secretary
AFC Pontymister

Risca Hockey Club

I am writing to you to express our concerns, observations and points to consider regarding your proposal to transform the current ATP pitch at Risca Leisure into a 3G pitch.

Whereas we appreciate the need to replace the current ATP due to the age and state of the pitch, we are strongly against the replacement of the ATP pitch with a 3G pitch because, as stated in your proposal, hockey is not a sport that can be played on a 3G pitch.

Please consider the following reasons against the current proposal to replace the ATP with a 3G at Risca Leisure Centre:

Risca Hockey Club is home to a large number of senior female players that form 3 teams in the South Wales Women's Hockey League that has been a successful club for 30+ years - one in Division 2, one in Division 5 and a Development Team that caters for those members who are developing their hockey skills, returning to hockey, coming up from our Junior Section as a stepping stone or have never played hockey before. These three women's teams highlight the fact that the club support promoting women in sport and are vital for creating provision for women to access competitive sport in the local community.

Our Junior Club is thriving with members on our books ranging from age 6 to age 13 that train every Wednesday and play most weekends at Tournaments and Hockey Festivals. These children live in the local area to Risca and the club provides high quality training from our resident Junior Coach, a social opportunity to mix with children from local schools in the area and a chance to play competitive hockey with children from other clubs.

Our 5 year plan set back in 2021 at our AGM was to expand our club and create a men's team at Risca. We are currently increasing our uptake of boys within our Junior Section to nurture and create a growing interest from young males in order to grow our club to provide sport for both male and female members.

Another point to consider, is that Risca Hockey Club is an advocate for creating a safe, approachable and inclusive space for all members regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic minority or culture in the local community. 11% of our club identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community, a community that need a space to be able to feel safe, included and welcomed in a social setting.

By proposing to update the ATP to a 3G pitch, not only are you limiting the usage of the pitch to Rugby and Football only, you are totally removing the opportunity for hockey players local to Risca to play hockey on a pitch that is one of only playable league-fit pitches in the area within a certain proximity to Risca. This would have a detrimental effect on our members should we have to consider playing elsewhere, not only for the geographical location close to Risca itself but for members that would have to travel further to play. For example, some members live in Newport City Centre and to continue playing for Risca Hockey Club, should we take the advice to move up to Sue Noakes Leisure Centre to train, that is approximately a 16 miles journey taking around 36 minutes without any traffic implications. This is quite a large difference to a 5.9 mile journey taking around 19 minutes. Risca Leisure Centre is a central meeting point for a lot of our members.

Next, we have the argument of appealing to a wider selection of sports. A 3G pitch is very limiting to the amount of sport that can be played on the grounds. Whilst we understand the need to enhance the facility, we worry that this will have an adverse effect on not just the Hockey community but other sports too, for example, wheelchair sports. Wheelchair sports are vital to be available to access for inclusivity and accessibility. 3G pitches can't

accommodate for wheelchair users as the chairs damage the ground. An ATP can accommodate wheelchairs and a variety of wheelchair sports with no damage due to the type of surface.

Already, there have been a number of ATP pitches across England and Wales that have been turned into 3G pitches without considering the wider impact of other sports aside from Football and Rugby. Talking from a hockey perspective, many teams in Wales have had a similar problem where proposals have been granted to upgrade ATPs to 3Gs without considering the national problem that this will inevitably create where there becomes a very limited access to ATPs across England and Wales.

Another question to consider is where would the children at Risca Comprehensive play and learn how to play hockey? A varied selection of sports need to be available to play on appropriate ground to be able to teach sports alligning with the National Curriculum for Wales. Hockey is an integral part of the variety of sports learned during P.E lessons. How will the children learn how to play?

Unfortunately, Risca Leisure Centre, if this proposal was to be passed and approved, would play a part in creating a very limited opportunity for a sport like hockey to thrive and will join other leisure centres in the local area and across the nation in completely eliminating a sport.

I hope that before taking a vital decision in upgrading the pitch to a 3G forcing the club to train and play elsewhere away from their home ground, you will consider our observations, points and wishes as valued customers for a large number of years. This pitch is important to us and has provided a haven to a huge amount of members over the years to be able to play sport, socialise and have fun.

In conclusion, we are asking you to reconsider and provide an alternative option for all 3 sports (hockey, football and rugby) to be included at Risca Leisure Centre. There should be provision at a large, local leisure centre for all three popular sports to be played.

Thank you for your consideration and an opportunity to put an argument forward to overturn this decision, we hope that you find this helpful, informative and that we have outlined our passion for our sport, drive to keep our home turf and the importance of appealing to the wider community.

Kind regards,

(Chairperson and Secretary of Risca Hockey Club)

AFC Pontymister youth

We at AFC Pontymister youth are very much in favour of a new 3G pitch at Risca Leisure Centre for the follow reasons.

As a football club, the surface is much more conducive for both training and playing on as the roll and bounce of the ball is more akin to playing on grass pitches.

The hard surface of an ATP is very unforgiving, and users can and often do get injuries should they fall on the surface or even from the sheer impact on the bodies joints from running on it.

Both Rugby and Football are way more popular in the area and a 3G surface will be of great benefit to these 2 sports.

Clubs frequently have games postponed due to bad weather however, having access to a 3G pitch will be of benefit to football clubs such as ours.

The area and indeed the school deserves a new 3G pitch as seeing other schools get new pitches, we feel that Risca has been left behind. As we have no access to quality winter training anywhere down our end of the valley

With the greatest respect to those that play the game, we believe that hockey is a minority sport. We realise that those who play the game are passionate about the game and want to play in their hometown however, with a new hockey pitch being constructed at Bassaleg school, they won't have to travel far to play their sport.

As a club who have trained at RLC for decades, firstly on the 'red gravel' surface and now on the ATP it would be great to have a facility which is tailored to our sport.

There is far more demand for 3G pitches throughout the area than there is for an ATP.

The new pitch would be a missive boost to the local area for football rugby and the school.

We hope that the above reasons are self-explanatory however, should you require anymore detail, please feel free to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Chairman
AFC Pontymister youth

A response was also received from Risca Comprehensive and Community School:



Martin Hulland
Head Teacher
Prifathro

**OUR COMMUNITY,
OUR SCHOOL**
...making the difference

**EIN CYMUNED,
EIN HYSGOL**
...yn gwneud
gwahaniaeth

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26th October 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am delighted to be able to support the proposal from Caerphilly County Borough Council to replace the outdated ATP at Risca Community Comprehensive School with a new dual use 4G surface at the school. This is an exciting opportunity to transform sport in the local area and promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and social cohesion. The school is proud to be a "Community School" serving the local community with passion and professionalism over many years. Sport has a high profile at the school and this new facility will benefit our current students and the wider community. We are proud to support our local sporting clubs and this facility will extend partnerships and promote higher levels of engagement. The school has a highly effective and committed WRU "Hub Officer" who links up with other schools and clubs to promote high levels of activity. A new 4G will make a huge difference to participation rates and develop Rugby skills further. In addition, it will allow us to play football and rugby on days when the current grass pitches are unplayable or there is insufficient natural light. Further, a new 4G pitch will raise the profile of the school further and cement its place at the heart of the community. It further enhances the natural link between sport, education and the community.

From a curriculum perspective, the new 4G pitch will align with the 4 purposes of the New Curriculum, most notably the aim for "healthy, confident" pupils. The PE and PSE curriculum will be enhanced greatly and we can host far more competitive fixtures with this excellent facility. The new pitch should foster a lifelong love of sport and promote the twin values of healthy living and playing by the rules. This will, of course, have wider community benefits and positively influence future generations. Ultimately, this is part of a wider strategy across a forward-thinking local authority committed to sport and active recreation. I am totally committed to the value and importance of sport and know it has the power to transform lives and build bridges in an increasingly complex world.

Your Sincerely,

Mr M. Hulland
Headteacher/Prifathro

Risca Ward Members were also informed of the engagement process and the following response was received from Cllr Arianna Leonard:

I am writing to give my opinion, as requested, on the proposed change to a 3G pitch at Risca Leisure Centre, instead of the existing ATP pitch that is currently in existence. I am very much against the move.

You will be already aware that this change would mean that Hockey will be a sport that cannot be played on the pitch.

Hockey in Caerphilly, and in many areas is predominantly played by women. This move will disproportionately impact female sport in the borough, an area in which we should be trying to actively encourage women to be getting involved with not taking away options. Team sports are already dominated by men, in Caerphilly & across the country and this will move us backward & not forward, especially when it is being replaced with a 3G pitch which favours Football & Rugby (mostly male sports).

Risca Leisure Centre has a critical placement for women in Newport & Caerphilly in relation to Risca Womens Hockey Club, as it is accessible to many people. The only comparable pitch is at Sue Noakes over 12 miles away from their current home at Risca and would mean there would be no Hockey facilities at all in the Eastern part of the borough. As many of the club members already come from a large geographical area, this move further afield will mean many of the individuals who attend will no longer be able to.

As well as Risca Hockey Club it is actively used by Gwent Hockey Club, Sue Noakes Hockey Club and is regularly used for Welsh Master games. Risca Comprehensive School also uses the Hockey Pitch, taking it away will mean Hockey cannot be taught effectively as part of the curriculum in the future.

We must think about how this will be affecting local women & young girls in the area. It will have an immediate negative impact on many young girls, affecting their wellbeing, fitness levels, comradeship, inclusion & potentially sporting careers.

Risca Women's Hockey Club alone, has 3 ladies teams & a growing squad of 65 juniors, it has been running for over 40 years and keeps growing.

They have said 'It is a club where many young girls start playing hockey and stay here throughout their life due to the invaluable community built, as well as the lack of any other sporting opportunity for girls in the area.'

As members of these teams already travel to get to Risca, there will be many individuals who will be unable to remain at their clubs if they have to travel 12 miles further afield to each session, especially young women who rely on parents or public transport to get them to training. This would be a terrible shame for a thriving sport, but also a terrible shame for many young women & their wellbeing in Caerphilly. This is why I cannot agree with the change from a ATP pitch to a 3G pitch.

Thanks,
Cllr Arianna Leonard.