

Meeting Notes

Community Enhancement Group: Jubilee Field Proposed Developments

Notes of the Meeting held on 14 January 2019 from 19:00 to 19:45

Present: **Parish Councillors Joan Buller, Sue Forward, Paul Kelly** (*at the point indicated*), **Sam Lain-Rose (Chair), Barrett Manning, Paddy Riordan and Gill Smith. Residents Luke Wolland, Gordan Reader and Adrian Lacey.**

1. Apologies for Absence

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Parish Councillors Tom Burnham and Elaine Symes.

2. Councillor Declarations

Parish Councillors Lain-Rose, Riordan and Smith declared an interest in the agenda item relating to Jubilee Fields. Parish Councillors Lain-Rose and Riordan have a dispensation already granted by the Council until the end of their term of office.

3. Staplehurst Monarchs United Football Club – Proposed Developments at Jubilee Field (Q&A)

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained the purpose of the meeting and the rationale for the meeting to be called, which was to provide the opportunity to Councillors to informally discuss the proposed development and investment at Jubilee Field and to address one of the conditions that was set by the Council in September 2018 which was that “stakeholders are to be satisfied with the proposed development and suitable mitigation arrangements are to be planned and enacted.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose confirmed that the planning application details had been circulated to all Councillors and although the details of the application are relevant, the Planning Committee is the relevant forum for the application details to be discussed.

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Luke Wolland explained that although the venture is football orientated, as it the Football Association that would provide majority of the funding, he felt that it would provide a positive outcome for the entire village for years to come.

Luke Wolland gave assurances that the developments would not cost the Council any money in terms of capital expenditure and did not believe that the Council would be relied up to fund any revenue expenditure once the capital project had been completed.

Councillor Forward enquired how the capital venture would be funded. Luke Wolland explained that 70% of the funding would be provided, if approved, by the Football Association. The remaining 30% has been secured from financial backers/sponsors

Luke Wolland explained that the funding has not always been available to the Football Club and may not be available in the future; and he felt that it was a unique opportunity for the Football Club and the village to be able to seize. This funding is instrumental to enable the Football Club to go up a league and without the funding, the Football Club cannot go up the league, despite the achievements of the Men's First Team during the season, which is in the at the top of the league, with the team either being in position on one or two, depending on the game on Saturday 19th January 2019.

Luke Wolland explained that the benefits of the developments would be far-reaching beyond the Senior section of the Football Club, as the Juniors could utilise the facility, the primary school could utilise the facility, as well as other local primary and secondary schools. The Football Club want this to be a community asset, rather than a facility solely benefiting them and the facility could generate additional revenue streams for Jubilee Field Management Committee, by hiring out to other local teams, which during a year could increase revenues by £1,000 alone (a conservative estimate).

Parish Councillor Paddy Riordan explained that this would be a huge achievement for the village, if this was secured and developed and referred to Policy C5 of the Council's Neighbourhood Plan, which states "maintain and enhance the Jubilee Field sports and recreation site, including the development of new and improved facilities at the site."

Parish Councillor Forward questioned whether, despite the upgrades, the ground would remain the same, would this be able to take the amount of usage that is being proposed. Parish Councillor Riordan explained that it would always be dependent on weather, however, the Groundsman, John Gower, manages the usage of the site and he will authorise usage of the site. However, if it is an important game, like a Cup Final, say in February, the Jubilee Field Management Committee would know this date in August the previous year. Therefore, the weeks leading up to the important game, the Groundsman would protect the integrity and standards of the pitches, by ensuring that minimal (if any) usage on the site by the Football Clubs.

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Parish Councillor Riordan also confirmed that all football teams have no priority on which pitch is available to them, they are booked by the Jubilee Field Committee, with consultation with the Groundman. Therefore, the Men's First Team will not have priority over the facility.

Parish Councillor Forward expressed her concerns on the ongoing maintenance cost associated to the increase usage (revenue costs) and how this will be funded. Parish Councillor Riordan explained that there would be no more mowing than currently happens, so there will not be an increase to the costs of maintenance in this sense.

Luke Wolland confirmed the quantity of games played on the pitch is not anticipated to increase, although the quality of the games would be better, as the team would be able to be promoted to the next league.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose clarified that question on land maintenance due to the increased usage, is not one for the Football Clubs as such, as the maintenance of the grass and associated groundsman work is the responsibility of Jubilee Field Management Committee. In addition, the external letting of the potential facility would be the responsibility of the Jubilee Field Management Committee.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose expressed that, in his view, and he appreciates he also sits on the Jubilee Field Management Committee, that the current running costs of the site need to be reviewed and the associated income and fees, also need to be reviewed. Therefore, this will need to be undertaken by the Jubilee Field Management Committee unilaterally, notwithstanding, the Council's desire to review and clarify the management structure/model and associated responsibilities. Luke Wolland confirmed the Football Club is expecting change.

Parish Councillor Buller enquired regarding the fencing associated to the development. Luke Wolland explained that there is a slight alteration to the plans available at the meeting, that the Guides fence line would be altered based on discussions with the representatives of the Guides.

Parish Councillor Buller also questions about the three fencing sides on the pitch and whether the Football Club was happy that the public could also utilise the facility when not in use. Luke Wolland explained that in an ideal world, they would prefer if the facility was fully enclosed. However, the Football Club is fully aware that the site is also a public open space and therefore decided to go down this route to make the facility as accessible as possible.

Parish Councillor Buller commented that young people may gather around the facility, potentially, increasing litter on the site. Luke Wolland explained that the ideal scenario the development would include measures to make it more secure. However, Parish Councillor Riordan confirmed that the Groundsman would review any increase in litter and ASB activity on the site and the Management Committee would look at the action to be taken as it occurs.

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Parish Councillor Paul Kelly arrived at this point.

Parish Councillor Forward enquired about the perimeter fencing. It was confirmed the perimeter fencing would be 1.8 meter high.

Parish Councillor Kelly enquired whether the Football Club was aware of the concrete that is underneath the field. Luke Wolland confirmed that they were aware, and assessment had previously been carried out and this had been considered when developing the plans.

Parish Councillor Manning explained he was involved with the Monarchs in 1979 to 1985 and on a question of health and safety; Councillor Manning raised the concern of dog mess on the fields. Parish Councillor Riordan explained that it was the Jubilee Field Management Committee responsibility to ensure that the field is free from as much dog mess as practical. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that it is the Council's responsibility to change policy on whether to or not allow dogs on the field and at this stage did not believe that there is a willingness within the Council to change the current policy. However, having a pitch fenced, would hopefully minimise this for at least one of the pitches.

Parish Councillor Kelly apologised for being late and asked whether those present had discussed financing and whether there would be any unexpected costs which the Council should be aware of or whether the Council should be concerned about the on-going maintenance costs. Parish Councillors Forward, Buller and Smith confirmed that this had been covered previously.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose asked those present if they had any further questions – there were none and generally everyone present was more content with the proposals.

4. Any Other Business

Luke Wolland mentioned that the Football Club will be playing their most important game on Saturday 19th January 2019, with kick off at 14:00 at Jubilee Field and welcomed everyone to attend.