

AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

29 SEPTEMBER 2020

Aylesford Football Club 3G Football Pitch Proposal for the Forstal Road Recreation Ground

Members may recall that in March this year Aylesford Football Club submitted a proposal for a 3G football pitch on the Forstal Road Recreation Ground. A copy of their application at that time is attached to this report. In this report they set out the details for their proposal for the development of a new floodlit all weather sports pitch on the recreation ground open 7 days a week and operating until 21.30-22.00pm. They were looking to the Council to support the scheme and to consider granting a 50+ year lease to the club for the site for this new facility.

At that time, Members agreed to support the scheme, in principle, including the granting of a 50+ year lease but on the basis that, the Council would require that before giving any final commitment to the scheme that it must be satisfied with and agree to all aspects of the scheme.

Following this decision further discussions have taken place with the Football Club including the Sports Committee holding a zoom meeting with representatives from the Football Club and the Football Foundation. It was clear from that meeting that the Football Foundation were very supportive of the scheme and were looking to fund about 60 – 75% of the scheme. This would leave the Football Club to fund the remainder of the scheme. At this stage there was no definitive cost for the scheme but it was suggested that it could cost around £600k to £800k. It was also clear from this meeting that the Football Foundation were encouraging both parties to make a joint application as this would lead to a significant reduction in the costs of the scheme with the Council, as a joint applicant, able to reclaim the VAT. This approach has been successfully undertaken in a number of other instances across the country.

The idea of the Council working with the Football Club and becoming a joint applicant and making a joint procurement was discussed with the Inland Revenue. Their view was that if the Council was procuring the scheme, which it would be doing as a joint applicant, it would be able to reclaim the VAT on the scheme as it was no different to any other procurement that the Council would make. This together with the fact that it has been done elsewhere the Football Club and the Football Foundation are encouraging the Council to become a joint applicant. By becoming a joint applicant this will significantly reduce the cost of the scheme and thereby making it more likely that it would get Football Foundation support, on the basis that they would fund less or that their funding would go further.

At this stage there should be a note of caution in that the application could secure Football Foundation funding but there will be an amount, as yet not known and will not be until the

final cost of the scheme is known and the level of Football Foundation grant is agreed, that the Football Club will need to fund. The Council might wish to make clear, at this point, that it will not help fund the scheme directly and reserves the right to withdraw at any time if it feels uncomfortable with the ability for the totality of the scheme to be funded.

The detail of the current proposal before Members is very similar to that submitted to in the initial application which is attached to this report. In terms of the size of the proposal a number of Members have come and seen its dimensions on the ground and this can be seen in the original application and on the attached plan. The effect of this scheme is the loss of under 17.5% of the total area of the recreation ground and in terms of football pitches the loss is one pitch which is replaced by the pitch in this facility. The scheme will ensure that it will still be possible to walk completely around the new facility and that access to Yoakley land and the public bridleway next to the Waitrose site is maintained.

The main change being proposed by the Football Club is that the Parish Council joins with them to make a joint application because of the benefits highlighted above. The Football Club have also asked that if the Council does not want to be a joint applicant that it still supports the scheme by granting a lease as originally proposed, which whilst not having the financial benefits already mentioned still gives the opportunity for this scheme to hopefully proceed. The lease would also set out the stipulations required by the Council and any potential rent.

The next step for the Council is for it to decide how it wishes to proceed and that can be done by responding to a number of questions the answers to which will determine its approach going forward.

Question 1 – Does the Council wish to support this scheme?

If the answer is No that will mean the end of this scheme.

If the answer is Yes then the approach will need to be determined and the subsequent questions answered.

Question 2 – Does the Council wish to be a joint applicant?

If the answer is No then the next step would be to proceed with a lease on the basis of the original application and what was previously agreed in principle.

If the answer is Yes then it would need to ask itself the next question

Question 3 – Would the Council wish to jointly operate the scheme with the Football Club?

If the answer is Yes then the Council would jointly operate the venture including the day to day running and general maintenance issues that arise. It would also have to jointly fund the running costs though also benefitting from any funds made through the operation of this venture.

If No then the Council, upon completion of the new facility, would end its involvement leaving the management and running of the facility to the Football Club. The Council would then lease the land on which the new facility is built to the Football Club. The Council could set out in the lease any controls it wishes to apply and have the ability to charge rent as it does for the Rugby Club and the Netball League. The Council would also not have any responsibility for the management of this facility and any of its maintenance costs. If this approach is adopted then the details of the lease can be discussed and agreed over the next few months.

Members are asked to consider the issues highlighted above and to determine how they wish to proceed.