

## Ide Parish Council

### Sports Pitch sub-group of Weir Meadow Working Group

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 1 June 2023, 7.30 pm, at Plane Trees, Ide

1. **Present:** Richard Cottle (chair) [RCX], Richard Cloke [RCZ], Peter Skinner [PS], Andrew Ash [AA] and Nick Bradley [NB].

2. **Apologies:** Stuart Brooking (SB)

#### 3. **Background:**

3.1 RCX summarised the background to this meeting. At the WMWG's April meeting, the group had decided to investigate (via SB) the costs of applying for grant applications to the GMA (Grounds Management Association) and FA (Football Association), and initiate the application process. In doing this, it had also postponed action on the proposals put by PS for an agricultural plan to create a smooth grass field as a preliminary step in the development of any sports pitches.

3.2 In the subsequent weeks RCX and NB, in discussion, felt that it may have been unnecessary to postpone the agricultural solution; and that we risked losing a whole year of recreational use of the meadow by doing so, particularly since we had the funds to cover it. They felt it should be possible to run the agricultural preparation of a smooth grass field, without levelling, in parallel with - at the same time as - pursuing the ambition for large GMA and FA grants to construct a good quality football pitch: neither should obstruct the other. It was also clear that pursuing the GMA route was going to take longer than anticipated.

3.3 Time was short if we wanted to make progress this year on the preliminary phase of creating a smooth grass field suitable for further development as sports pitches and other public use. So RCX decided to convene this sub group to concentrate on the particular agenda item of sports pitch creation from the April meeting, inviting six members most closely involved (as above) for 1 June, a date chosen as suitable for all six after several email iterations.

3.4 RCX then postponed the full WMWG meeting, originally scheduled for 22 May, to allow space for the subgroup to make progress.

3.5 Unfortunately SB was unable to attend at the last minute, owing to family events, and instead sent a paper for the group to consider, which dealt with the proposed future relationships and arrangements between Ide Football Club, the WMWG and Ide Parish Council.

**4. Two approaches.** We then discussed the two approaches under consideration.

**4.1 Approach #1** is a primarily agricultural solution, to be funded out of the £23,000 earmarked in the Recreation Ground account, as detailed by PS in his paper to the last meeting. The aim is to produce a smooth grass field, without levelling [v expensive and insufficient topsoil], seeded with sports grade grass, by June 2024. PS tabled a detailed schedule of work needed, and added estimates of cost. The work involves spraying with glyphosate, topping and flail mowing, subsoiling, ploughing and rolling; then spring tining, power harrow and drill, rolling, fertilise and lime, second spray.

**4.2** The area so prepared would exclude the northern swale and the meadow perimeter against the brook, and totals 5.3 acres. The estimated cost is:

Field work    £2,500

Lime            £150

Fertiliser     £300

Grass seed   £3,000

**Total           £5,950**

This approach #1 had been put on hold at the last meeting in April.

**4.3 Approach #2** is a grant funded solution, aimed in particular at providing a high quality football pitch with drainage. This would involve spending money up front (£3,000 - £5,000) on a specialist ground report, which would then be used to apply to the GMA and the FA for funding. We do not yet know if the cost of the specialist report will be covered by any subsequent grant award. While we do not yet have estimates of the construction costs, or drainage needs, opinion in the group is that we should expect costs into six figures.

**4.4** The time frame for applying for and hearing about grants is uncertain.

Item 9 of the minutes of the April meeting of the main WMWG had an action for SB to ask GMA for a price for combining WP1 and WP2; and also ask if the price of WPs to be included in grant funding applications. The group does not have this information so far. Grant monies might, of course, not be awarded once applied for.

**4.5** SB had sent a paper for the group to consider on how he saw the future relationship between the Football Club and the Parish Council, once the pitch was in service.

## **5. Points agreed and Actions decided**

**5.1** Agreed that Parish Council must get the meadow to “point zero” where it is a smooth grass field fit for village sport and recreation: bale the hay, fill the entrance hole, and prepare the surface. This has to be done whether or when a more high grade, fuller funded pitch development proceeds.

5.2 Levelling, as opposed to smoothing, is not practical or necessary. The topsoil is only 30 cm deep, making levelling the meadow impossible; and the cost is prohibitive.

5.3 Smoothing is necessary and sufficient for initial village sport needs: for cricket club to use, and for football club to try. Using and testing the smooth grass field will determine how much further work is required or desirable.

**5.4 Smooth grass field.** It is possible to do the work in 12 months from now by June 2024 to produce a smooth grass field.

**ACTION:** PS will take his smooth grass field plan (approach #1) and work schedule to Richard Parr (for first part of the schedule) for a quote against standard market costs; and to a specialist grounds preparation company (for the second and more specialised part of the scheduled work) for a quote. This work needs to commence in July.

PS' estimate is c£6,000 for work plus materials

**5.5 Hole at entrance access.** This must be filled in. Estimated cost by AA is £3,000

**ACTION:** AA will obtain quotes from BT Jenkins and G Works for filling hole; and from Phil Bye for excavating the hole in preparation for filling.

Schedule is:

Dig down 1 metre.

200mm stone

200mm 6f2 recycled aggregate

Terram, then build up proud of surface.

Proceed asap.

AA's estimate for these works is c£3,000.

Use topsoil removed to create a boundary for the car park area.

#### **5.6 Japanese knotweed**

RCZ reported that he had approached several companies, none of whom were willing to take instructions. RCX confirmed that spraying in September was advised.

**ACTION:** RCX (Richard Cottle) will pursue other specialist companies in attempt to find a contractor willing to take this on.

#### **5.7 Sport England small grants**

**ACTION:** RCZ will look at Sport England's small grant offers, which will become available once we have a smooth seeded grass surface.

#### **5.8 GMA and FA football pitch grant applications by SB**

Agreed that these can and should be pursued vigorously, while we also get on with the tasks set out above. NB offered to liaise with SB.

**ACTION:** NB to report decisions of the meeting to SB; and to offer practical assistance in preparing and progressing grant applications.

Post meeting update: NB met with SB on 3 June to update on the above.

**6. Next full WMWG meeting:** Monday 3 July, 2023 at 7.30pm at Plane Trees.