

Ide Parish Council

Weir Meadow Working Group

Report and proposals for lease and management of the Playing Field

1. The working group has examined the important features of setting up the Playing Field as set out in the fund raising prospectus; allow good public access; understand the expertise and traditions of the two clubs involved at this point – cricket and football; plan what equipment will be needed first; consider the costs involved and the funds available; and work out the best leasing arrangement between the Parish Council who own the land, and the clubs as tenants or hirers. This paper reports on this work; and makes recommendations for the Council to consider in its decision making.

2. Roles of clubs

2.1 The cricket club has a tradition of and expertise in maintaining their own grass pitch and wickets. The club has a pool of around 60 people from which to select a team for matches and for volunteer work. They are willing and resourced to lead the process of setting up the new pitch and maintaining it.

2.2 The football club draws on a much smaller pool of players, and has no tradition or experience of maintaining its own ground. SB was clear that they would not be in a position to take this on themselves.

2.3 The football pitch will be on the eastern side of the meadow, and to the north, leaving a large area of non playing grass in the south east part of the meadow.

2.4 The cricket pitch will be in the west and northern part of the meadow, with the western boundary near the western hedge, and with a 50 metre distance from the wicket to the boundaries all round.

2.5 The cricket club is willing to enter into a lease for both sports grounds, to create and maintain them. It would then hire the football pitch out to the football club, and other clubs by agreement with the Parish Council, on behalf of the Parish Council, on a match by match basis, with appropriate financial thresholds and safeguards in place.

2.6 The cricket pitch playing area will need to be protected by roping it off to prevent damage by dogs and people. The football pitch will need to be protected against dogs from fouling.

Note - the whole meadow is 6.5 acres, leaving plenty of space outside the sports playing surfaces. And now that the Northern Fields are no longer let for farming, we have 17 additional acres for dog walkers.

2.7 There will be a definite but small lozenge of land in the centre of the meadow where the cricket and football pitches overlap. Football season starts properly on 15 September, with occasional warm up game early September, ends early May. Cricket starts late April

through to early September. Clubs say they can accommodate brief overlaps at each end of the season.

3. All weather cricket wicket

3.1 An all weather artificial wicket will mean that fewer matches will be cancelled by bad weather; more matches a year can be played because there is no limit on the number as there is now; maintenance costs and time are reduced, and the best quality ones create a safe, reliable surface with even, predictable bounce. They are ideal for clubs such as Ide.

3.2 Ide CC favour moving to Weir Meadow for a larger ground with 50 metre boundaries; a north/south aligned wicket to avoid low dazzle from a western sun; the ability to install an all weather wicket; and better security of tenure.

3.3 Ide CC is confident the cost of c.£11,600 plus VAT can be raised by the CC. Ide CC will not be looking for grant funding from Devon or National Cricket Board sources, as the conditions attached are too extensive for a club of Ide's size; and it should be possible to construct the wicket without external funding. Ide Parish Council would have to place the contract to be able to reclaim the VAT. As it owns the land and is integral to any plans, this should not cause a difficulty.

3.4 It takes two working days to construct an artificial wicket, followed by 3.5 weeks without playing on it to allow it to bed in. Possible schedule: construct mid August 2024; one or two games played second half of September 2024.

3.5 A new car park with special construction will not be necessary in year one.

3.6 The CC suggest a shipping container as temporary changing room for both clubs, to replace the derelict wooden shed currently in situ on southern edge of meadow.

3.7 Timing: the new grass must be left alone under Sam Burdick's curation until late July 2024 earliest. Anticipate laying new artificial wicket mid August 2024, then waiting 4 weeks before first use in mid September 2024.

4. Gang mower

The working group agreed the most efficient solution is to have one mower for all three elements of the meadow: cricket, football and general use grass areas. Cost: £10,000 plus VAT, plus a shed to store it in. Football Foundation funding is available and is being applied for through the PitchPower scheme.

5. Options for leasing

Option 1.

Parish Council to organise and fund the creation of all pitches and new all weather wicket, maintain whole playing field by employing sub-contractors to mow and mark out pitches. Be responsible for protecting playing areas. Hire out pitches on match by match basis: at going rates that clubs expect to pay now, this would yield approx. £750 pa from football, and approx. £1,000 from cricket.

Pros: none that the group could think of.

Cons:

- a) financially not viable because a weekly cut at commercial rates (£140 a cut) = £7,280 pa.
- b) IPC in no position to give it the time or personnel required without help from clubs
- c) Cricket club unwilling to entrust its new square and wicket to the parish council
- d) Football Foundation funding needs affiliated Football club to be involved.

Option 2.

IPC enters into two separate leases, one tenancy to each club.

Pros: relieves IPC of the task

Cons:

- a) unclear how and who would manage the rest of the ground that is not sports pitch
- b) need to double up on mowers
- c) extra work and complexity
- d) Football club unlikely to manage own pitch

Option 3.

IPC enters into a joint tenancy with both clubs for the whole meadow including non playing areas.

Pros: relieves IPC of the task

Cons:

- a) Confusing to sports funding bodies
- b) Each club wishes to remain distinct as they have different requirements, styles, finances, numbers, traditions and seasons.

Option 4.

IPC enters into a tenancy through a lease with one of the clubs – the cricket club – for both sports pitches. Cricket club leads on constructing new all weather wicket. CC grants a discontinuous sub lease to the football club for a fee. IPC maintains control of the non playing areas. Cricket club maintains both pitches; and agrees to mow the non playing areas, less frequently, using a common mower. IPC grants a licence to football club to place a storage container on southern boundary as a changing room without shower or WC facilities (required as minimum to qualify for playing in football league). The aspiration of a pavilion, included in the planning permission, remains, but will need additional funding and design.

NOTE - all four options involve:

- a) No incursion onto the new grass at all until mid August 2024 earliest.
- b) Specialist curation of the meadow by Sam Burdick until mid August 2024 at expense of IPC Weir Meadow fund, which does not have sufficient funds to cover this.
- c) Tractor, mower and secure storage facility
- d) Permanent all weather cricket wicket August 2024
- e) kit for football pitch (marking out, goals, flags)
- f) changing room “container”

Option 4 is the option favoured by the Weir Meadow Working Group, and the one it recommends to the Parish Council for further action.

6. Details of Lease as in Option 4

6.1 Suggested cost in first year £500, the fee that the cricket club currently pays for its ground, using a contracted out one year business tenancy starting on 1 August 2024, with a view to a six year renewable lease. The reason for this is to understand and assess how the arrangements and finances work, in order to enter into a well constructed and fair six year tenancy after one year.

6.2 The Parish Council would commit not to grant a lease to another club or team at the end of the first year.

6.3 If more than say 18 games of cricket (which generate £60 per game) are played by inviting selected teams, extra income will be split equally between CC and IPC. Details TBA.

6.4 TBA: The fee to be paid to the Cricket Club for each football match.

END

12 Nov 2023 ncab