

**MINUTES OF THE COURTS WORKING GROUP
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 2022
AT 10am AT THE CLUBHOUSE, TROTTISCLIFFE TENNIS CLUB**

PRESENT:

Trottscliffe Parish Council Attendees:

David Goodworth (DGG), David Gaunt (DG), Louise Leyden (LL), Ian Mills (IM),
Alison Prountzos (AP).

Trottscliffe Tennis Club Attendees:

Tony Piper (TP), Richard Hogbin (RH)

Trottscliffe Church Of England Primary School

Lucy Henderson (LH)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Louise Goldsmith (Clerk), 5 members of the public

01/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was accepted from Richard Vallance and his reason for absence was accepted.

02/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

03/22 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was resolved that DGG sign the minutes of the meeting held on the 3 May 2022 as a true and accurate record.

04/22 OPEN SESSION

A representative from the emerging village netball club explained that the group has started training at the school and have approximately 20 members, a few of which do not live in the village. Although grateful to the school for the use of the court it is not ideal for adult netball as it is small court and is constrained by a brick wall. The representative suggested that other tennis clubs accommodate netball teams and that the emerging team should have access to local facilities. The netball club would prefer to have access to one of the tennis courts and believe netball posts can be sourced cheaply. The netball club hopes to increase its membership across all age groups and is seeking advice from the Netball Players Association. The netball club is considering playing at the multicourt in Wrotham but commented that the hire charges are prohibitive and were questioning why they should be forced to travel to another court given there is a facility in the village.

A member of the public queried why the public hire fee for the courts is set at £20.00 per hour and commented that this is excessive.

It was suggested by a member of the public that any decision about whether the existing courts should be adapted for an emerging netball club is delayed until more is known about the feasibility of a MUGA being installed at the recreation ground.

05/22 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The draft terms of reference for the group, approved by Full Council, were considered. TP circulated some comments. The Clerk advised that the draft minutes of the meetings will be circulated to members of the working group prior to being presented to Full Council and placed on the website. The draft minutes will contain recommendations for Full Council to consider as the working group has no delegated powers. The Clerk explained that the purpose of the working group is to manage any user groups and to discuss any maintenance

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requirements. The courts are owned by the Parish Council but in recent times have been managed and maintained by the tennis club with some financial support from the Parish Council. TP explained that The 'Official Document Stating Responsibilities for Tennis/Netball Courts', dated 4 July 1996, and rewritten by the Parish Council in 2008 does not reflect how the club is now managed.

Recommendation: Full Council to review the terms of reference when a decision has been made about the long term arrangements for the tennis club.

06/22 SCHOOL USE OF THE COURTS

LH advised that after school tennis coaching continues on two nights a week and that curriculum tennis lessons have been taking place this term. LH was pleased to advise that the school recently took two teams to the Maidstone Schools' Netball Tournament which was their first competitive match. One of teams came second and came home with silver medals which was an amazing achievement given some of the team have only been playing netball since Easter. The teams struggled at first on the day with the full size netball courts as they are used to a much smaller court. LH explained that the school would like to have use of a full sized netball court, which would mean it could also host matches. However, LH explained that the school were fully aware of the difficulties facing the tennis club committee in trying to timetable any additional use and manage the cost of the maintenance of the courts.

07/22 TENNIS CLUB

- a) To receive an update on the financial position of the club
- b) To receive an update on the membership of the club
- c) To receive an update on the Tennis Club activities

TP gave a comprehensive presentation which is appended to these minutes. TP explained that the structure of the club has changed since its inception. The situation today is substantially different with a variety of mandatory policies in place to cover Health & Safety, Safeguarding, GDPR and Diversity; a published Club Constitution and a dedicated website. The current membership is 106 adult members and there are around 75 junior members. Approximately 20% of members reside in the village. As is the experience of most clubs there has been a change in attitude. Members expect to pay a membership fee but do not wish to volunteer to assist with maintenance and projects which has put a lot of financial pressure on the tennis club committee. There is also pressure on court time and the timetabling of activities has become difficult and the school use has added to this pressure. The tennis club committee feels it is subsidising the school use. The 'Official Responsibilities 2008' document states The Parish Council is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the courts, fences, and equipment. Over the past decade this responsibility has been passed by default to the tennis club committee who now organise and pay for routine maintenance including grass and hedge cutting, fence repair and renewal, court cleaning/treatment, and net/post replacement. The annual routine maintenance is approximately £3315.00 but the long term maintenance costs could average as much as £10,000.00 per annum. The additional operating costs such as electricity brings the total annual funding requirement to approximately £16,000.00. Subscriptions and additional fees generate approximately £13,000.00 per annum meaning there is a £3,000.00 shortfall per annum. RH advised that the LED floodlights need to be replaced immediately at an estimated cost of £14,000.00. TP explained that annual subscriptions go some way to support this expenditure but that members are questioning why their subscriptions are being used to subsidise the school use and therefore would not entertain the idea of subsidising use by a netball team. There are many challenges facing the tennis club committee including no security of tenure resulting in an ability to access loans or

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grants; the short and long term maintenance costs and a lack of a formal agreement for maintenance. TP advised that the exact details of the Tennis Club's finances would not be disclosed in a public meeting.

08/22 PUBLIC USE OF THE COURTS

The public can book the courts through the website. It was acknowledged that the hourly fee is quite high but this is to cover the administration costs involved in the booking and for someone to arrange access. There has been a couple of bookings recently by groups of four which does make the hire charge more affordable.

09/22 NETBALL

TP circulated a document, appended to these minutes, outlining the practical issues that need to be addressed should the Parish Council decide that the courts are to be used by the emerging netball club.

- a) Court Surface - The current surface, Matchplay II, can be used for netball but ideally in dry conditions and the slip resistance can be compromised when wet or damp.
- b) Line markings for netball - these could be installed by either standard spray paint which would need to be refreshed regularly or by making cuts into the current carpet surface and installing permanent lines. The former is preferred as the latter could create a trip hazard.
- c) Netball posts - Portable self-standing netball posts could be a potential solution as permanent netball posts could disrupt the surface. The storage of the posts and other equipment would need to be considered.
- d) Removal of tennis nets and posts - This is an issue as the existing net posts are heavy and removing these without damaging the surface could be challenging.
- e) Tennis Club Membership - There are approximately 30 LTA Team Members who would not welcome the additional netball lines as the additional markings may affect the club's participation in the Kent LTA League. This could have an adverse effect on membership and any reduction in membership numbers could jeopardize the club's ability to fund the long term maintenance requirements.
- f) Court contention - There is immense pressure on the courts already. The tennis club is expanding its junior activities, membership is generally strong and the tennis club committee is already finding it hard to accommodate the school use. The introduction of netball could create further issues which could lead to a loss of members and funds.
- g) Scheduling of use - The tennis club committee currently manages the use of the courts on behalf of the Parish Council which includes both the public access and the local school use and consideration would need to be given to how netball sessions are planned and managed.
- h) Health & Safety responsibilities - The tennis club committee manages all the policies on behalf of the Parish Council to include the use of the school and the public. Consideration will need to be given on how netball users will be covered.
- i) Insurance - The Parish Council insures the courts and equipment but the tennis club committee has its own comprehensive insurance for tennis playing. Any netball club would need to arrange its own insurance.
- j) Maintenance - As explained above there is already a forecasted shortfall on long term maintenance funds. TP suggested that the tennis club cannot be expected to subsidise a netball team. Any netball team would need to make a contribution towards the annual maintenance costs and long term repairs given the additional wear on the playing surface.

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- k) Clubhouse – The clubhouse is owned and maintained by the tennis club which includes the toilet. The netball players will have no facilities.

Recommendations to Full Council:

The netball club needs to put forward a formal request to the Parish Council to use the courts for netball.

When considering a request from the netball team to use the courts Full Council need to address all of the points listed overleaf and discuss any recommendations and/or decisions with the user groups.

10/22 PROPOSAL TO INSTALL A MUGA ON THE RECREATION GROUND

It was noted that the Parish Council is progressing a proposal to install a MUGA on the recreation ground next to the playground to provide a number of activities for the whole village. It was agreed that the facility could be used by the school and village clubs such as a netball club. The Parish Council is checking on whether planning permission is needed and is consulting with residents. The aim is to submit a grant funding application in September to the FCC Community Action Fund who offer grants up to £100,000.00. The Parish Council has obtained quotes for a MUGA which circa £80-100,000.00. This quote does not include the provision of floodlighting. It was agreed that this could be a fantastic facility for the village however it was acknowledged that it could take 12-18 months before it is installed. The Parish Council has agreed to provide 10.75% of the funding if successful which is a requirement. It was suggested and agreed that the village could fund raise to cover the cost of floodlighting. LL mentioned that when the Parish Council originally leased the land which is used for the courts the possibility of having additional courts was discussed. DGG as the tenant of this land agreed to ask the landowner whether they would willing to lease a further area to the rear of the courts. It was agreed that if this was still possible this could be an alternative location for the MUGA. The Clerk has received three letters of concern about the MUGA being installed on the recreation ground. The working group were in agreement that the land at the bottom of the courts could offer a practical solution and TP questioned whether two more courts could be installed rather than a MUGA. TP agreed to advise the club members of the proposal for the Parish Council to apply for funding for a MUGA and to encourage them to respond to the consultation and send in letters of support.

Recommendation to Full Council:

To consider an alternative proposal to install either additional courts or a MUGA on the land to the rear of the current courts subject to the landowner being willing to lease the land and any other relevant consents and funding.

11/22 COURTS CAR PARK

TP advised that the drainage issues in the car park appear to be resolved. Earlier in the year the Tennis Club committee excavated a chamber for collecting the rainwater and a sump pump was installed to move water into the ditch. The new pipework runs from the main drain on the far side of the field to the side of the club house and seems to be working well.

12/22 MAINTENANCE OF THE COURTS

The ‘Official Document Stating Responsibilities for Tennis/Netball Courts’ 2008 does not reflect how the club is now managed. TP advised that the tennis club committee has taken on the responsibility of the short term maintenance of the courts without any security of tenure. The Clerk advised that in June 2021 the Parish Council was considering a tenancy agreement or sub-lease and by December 2021 had sought some legal advice on this. The landowner had also agreed to a sub-lease. However, at the courts meeting in May 2022 it was confirmed that the sub-lease was on hold whilst discussions took place regarding netball use of the courts. However, the long term maintenance remains an issue. The Clerk explained that the Parish

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Council does not currently have the funds to maintain the courts on an annual basis and has relied on funds from the tennis club. The Parish Council could increase look to increase the precept to cover the maintenance of the courts which would have an impact on the whole village.

The annual maintenance costs as outlined in 07/22 are being financed by the tennis club. The floodlights need to be replaced urgently at a cost of £14,000.00. The tennis club committee has funds to support this expenditure. IM suggested that the Parish Council consider contributing £500.00 towards the cost of replacing the floodlights.

Recommendation:

Full Council to agree to place an order for the replacement LED lights at a cost of £14,000.00 (including VAT) subject to confirmation from the internal auditor that the VAT can be recovered. Full Council to agree to contribute £500.00 to the total cost.

Full Council to re-consider the implication of a sub-lease of the courts to the tennis club to include clauses on maintenance and to include the free use of the school.

13/22 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Nothing additional.

14/22 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 19 October 2022. Time and venue to be confirmed.

There being no further business the meeting closed 12.11pm.

Signed: Date:

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