

Pirton Parish Council



Minutes of Pirton Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting held in Pirton Sports & Social Club on 24 January 2023 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr J Rogers (Chair), Cllr S Bright, Cllr Burleigh, Cllr A Goodman, Cllr S Maple, Cllr M Parkin, Cllr N Rowe

In attendance:

Mr Edward Roberts (Parish Clerk). Two members of the public observed the meeting.

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**22-174 To receive and accept apologies for absence.**

Apologies for late attendance had been received from Cllr Rowe, absent at another meeting. He joined the meeting at 7.50pm.

**22-175 To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the Agenda and to consider any requests for dispensation.**

Declarations of interest were received and recorded from Cllr Goodman as a member of Wild About Pirton, Cllr Parkin as a member of the Wrights Farm Working Group, Cllr Maple as a member of the PSSC.

**22-176 To discuss the terms attached to the grant proposal from the Football Foundation.**

Cllr Burleigh made the point that the document was all about the "Organisation" ie the Parish Council. It was a matter of deciding how to approach and comply with the requirements while not actually being the organisation running the facility on a daily basis. The over riding factor was that the facility had to remain a football and sports club. Legal advice on any agreement was required and it needed to be future-proofed.

Reservations were expressed by some over the cost of the project and financing. If no grant was forthcoming from the Football Foundation, then it would be "back to square one".

Increased administrative work and commitments for the Clerk's role were a possibility. The Clerk agreed to conduct a detailed review of the requirements of the Foundation's document.

It was agreed that much of the work was already being done, such as reports to the Hertfordshire FA.

Cllr Maple noted that part of the charge on the land and building covered access. He thought that there should not be a problem with the Council's Right of Way, but it would need a legal check.

**22-177 To determine areas of concern that require further clarification.**

Cllrs Maple and Bright agreed that the term "best endeavours" would not normally be seen in a commercial contract and would be wary of signing up to it in normal circumstances. In this case, it should not present a problem.

Care would have to be taken over fulfilling the requirements for female inclusivity, although some provision already existed. Female players frequently went on to join the relevant teams in Hitchin. Cllr Rogers suggested that Pirton could be looked upon as a “feeder village” for these teams. Cllr Maple made the point that it was the overall development plan that the Football Foundation would be looking at.

**22-178 To discuss proposals for the future management of the Recreation Ground and Pavilion.**

It was agreed that professional advice would be required and some exemplars of other similar set-ups would need to be found. The relationship with any management body was crucial and would need to be delegated. It was not something the Parish Council itself could run.

Overall, more information, examples and legal advice were needed in order to make an informed decision. Cllr Rowe suggested that legal costs could easily be in the region of £10,000.

Cllr Burleigh agreed to try and find suitable legal representation.

**22-179 To identify, if necessary, where external assistance would enhance the application process and make proposals for such contacts.**

It was agreed that exemplars were needed prior to going for legal advice, as that would narrow down the options to be discussed.

Proposed by Cllr Burleigh and seconded by Cllr Rogers, that the Football Foundation offer of a “legal pre-check” be taken up at a cost of £750. **AGREED** by all present.

**22-180 To consider the implications of the Parish Council not being able to meet the requirements of the Football Foundation and suggest possible ways forward.**

It was generally agreed that the Parish Council would be able to meet the requirements.

In the worst case, the Football Foundation would probably take the facility over, once built, if the Council was unable to meet its commitments.

It was agreed that some clarification and detail on the charge the Foundation would take would be useful.

**22-181 To agree the funding arrangements for the next phase of the project, including borrowing versus the use of the Council’s reserves.**

Following some discussion, Cllr Maple ran through the figures for this phase. The total of £35,864 did not currently include the Football Foundation legal fees, in the region of £3000, or the requirement for storage facilities at the Recreation Ground.

It was agreed that the RFO should put together a cash flow forecast for the next meeting in order to clarify income and expenditure over the next 6 months or so. He thought that once the new precept was paid in April, then this phase could be paid for from Council funds, prior to taking out the PWLB loan of £300,000.

Cllr Maple suggested delaying the application to the Football Foundation to July, with May as a suitable month to apply for the PWLB loan.

It was suggested that each councillor try to contact other councils for relevant examples of similar projects to inform future decisions.

**Meeting Closed: 9.25pm.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_