

Football Pitches meeting held at Corn Exchange

12 August 2021 17:00 to 19:00

Present: Cllr Vicky Gwatkin WTC

John Hickman WTC

Tracy Minns WTC

Angus Whitburn WTC

Lorraine Harwood WTC (notes)

Andy Earnshaw - FA

John Philips – Tower Hill

Claire Anton – Tower Hill

Colin Morris – Witney Royals

Steve Wright - Spartan

Alfie Saunders - Spartan

Steve Bott – Witney Vikings

Mike

Apologies: Paul Wilson – FC Mills

Intro from Cllr Gwatkin which gave an overview of the current situation regarding the football pitches in Witney.

More pitches will become available. Tower Hill full to capacity. King George's, not ideal without facilities. One Four Leys pitches available for play, but other had to be shut for health and safety reasons. One on Eton close is not a proper pitch just for kick about recreation– but parking an issue.

Lots of planning in place to get more pitches – Madley Park pitches, 2 adult and 2 juniors. WODC own them and as a result not managed. Ground is rough, they have changing rooms and astro turf. Issues are booking with Wood Green school and not open on Sundays. WTC have met with school who are receptive to us taking on pitches and management. WODC own under agreement with OCC and Wood Green School. WODC prepared to lease to us until 2029. Requirement to get legal together for WTC to take ownership.

KKP consultants due to release WODC Playing Pitch Strategy in October 2021.

New Curbridge development – two pitches already built and laid to turf. Will be 24 months before available. Room for extra secondary school – but if not proceeded with, WTC will hopefully have football pitches, pavilion, and parking for 60 cars. Currently ascertaining if WTC can have use of pitches before decision on school.

Suggesting that money £800K ATP might be used there if school not built. Would like the ATP to be at West Witney. KKP are consultants for playing pitch strategy for WODC as well as WTC.

Potentially 5 pitches. Need to determine where pitches are to be located. FA say need a solution of 3g pitches. Stage C supply and demand current feeling 4.5 games pitches adults.

Discussion around issues teams have

Teams were given an opportunity to raise questions before the meeting and the responses are attached:



Football
Questions.docx

Teams have wait lists and cannot satisfy current demand. Problem is now or was before and not in 2 years' time. Lack of places to train is an issue for teams. Demand has doubled and standard of pitch quality required has increased.

Henry Box pitches – can't look at them just yet. Suggested the teams talk to Henry Box to see if they can take them on. They are enclosed – no dogs.

Wood Green School to access their pitches too. They have opened to rugby league in the summer and are more open minded than Henry Box School

The ATP is now WGS responsibility. Not in their interest to have the liability of people on their site.

Will there be investment in quality at West Witney? – Andy Earnshaw confirmed not suitable for drainage.

Individuals need to hear the teams' voices. All teams have managers who would be happy to come in and speak to whoever they need to.

Suggested contacting Councillor Jane Doughty WODC Cabinet portfolio holder for Sport & Leisure jane.doughty@westoxon.gov.uk

Discussion around FA Foundation funding and process for applying

FA – have new funding called Pitch Power. Ducklington and Carterton have already been given grants. Pitches assessed by app get a report, apply for 6 years of funding and 10 years of agreement. Categorized a good grass pitch. FA trying to get all from basic to good. If already good – funding; If poor or basic, more funding. Key thing is needs to have lease or licence. In terms of options 1. New pitch 2. improvement of existing

Could FA look at clubs, service level agreement for improvement of stock. FA will take through Council. They will obtain the funding and organise contractors to complete work agreed. In terms of WW do 3g pitch and do a substantial improvement grant.

Looking at pavilion investment as well. Funding also available for maintenance equipment. Real opportunity to make quick decisions

[Application Support Documents | Football Foundation](#)

SLA 4 pages – straightforward application, insert name and sign and recommendations to be inserted. FA - Andy E can give an independent report. Know what we need to do and what funding needed. Grass pitch investment programme.

The Leys: Not possible to carry out sustainable ground de-compaction due to compaction from continuing events throughout the summer and early Autumn.

Hard pitch can be played on, but it has become dangerous and can't now be played on safely for matches or training.

3g technology is closest we can get to play on grass and can take punishment, unlimited. More and more of them now. They have to demonstrate there is money for maintenance.

FA are investing in 3g as more usage; however, nothing can beat grass as playing experience.

Discussion over pitch allocations

JH – can't teams spread days of playing – Sat and Sun? Covid made us stagger kick off times and required being more flexible.

League representatives are volunteers, and it was felt changing fixtures would be a nightmare.

Witney has increased this year to 56 teams from 40 plus last year. Have had to ask teams to play on different days.

Teams feel it is almost impossible to manage the staggered kick off times. Teams are at the sharp end. Leagues state that all games have to be played by certain times.

JH - Leagues, players and parents need to be flexible to fit in around the facilities and when they are available. Teams need to talk, and stagger kick off times. Clubs should be asking leagues – they are affiliated with a number of leagues. AGMs need to be attended to ask the leagues to address and listen. Lots of governing bodies telling the clubs what to do so that we can fulfil fixtures

Tower Hill happy with allocations. Were given permission to use pitch 3. Teams are understanding that they will be playing on different pitches.

Discussion over improvement of stock and facilities available

WTC are using funds to improve current stock and also trying to take on more and have been actively doing this for 2 years. Pitches are there but not provided in a state that can be used and probably won't be able to take some on.

We have no say on pitches in other parish councils. Steve Bott has been trying to contact all parish councils for pitches.

Requirement of changing facilities and toilets. Safeguarding issue. Leagues have created rules knowing that pitches don't have facilities to provide.

FA asked if we could look at min specification so would be difficult for teams that don't have that provision.

Constant battle with lack of funding to provide the facilities. With exception of King George. All other three sites have toilets. Girls especially need access to toilets.

Ratio of pitches to changing rooms is low. There are additional funds for extra changing rooms at Burwell and WW.

Community changing rooms were put within Wood Green school. Standalone facilities might need to be provided e.g., standalone portable toilets at King George.

Funding opportunities for improvements

FA have started looking at storage units to turn into changing rooms and toilets. Identifying key sites that could be provided with storage units.

WTC can come to FA and ask for funding - Football foundation.org.uk

List of items available for funding inc 3g pitches, pavilions work, existing grass pitch improvement, fencing, storage all under £25k

Playing pitches strategy is important – only looked at Chipping Norton, Witney and Carterton and only has a shelf life of 3 years. This is first time Andy of FA has completed a playing pitches strategy.

Includes a pitch assessment of each grass pitch. FA has challenged this. Mitigation against pitches not having been played during Covid. Final draft will be available in Sept.

Discussion around booking system

FA raised question regarding current booking system. WTC has gone back to individual booking forms per pitch. Very time consuming for teams.

ACTION: Looking to review the booking system. VAT discussed HMRC don't want to charge.

ACTION: Speak to Adam/Tina/Hollie regarding the booking system and VAT issue

Additional questions raised

Colin Morris raised some additional questions just prior to the meeting:

- Dog excrement - Not a new issue but continues to be an issue on council football pitches. More notices and additional bins.
- General bins - Lack of bins in accessible places for people to dispose of rubbish (not just football clubs but for those making use of the public space)
- Costs -

Requests / Facilities

- Storage - Witney Vikings have the large storage unit at Burwell, we have asked to have some storage space within the changing rooms (Referees room) - we were happy to fit and pay for ourselves so that, but that was refused.

- Floodlights - Not necessarily at Burwell (Unlikely) but there is no place to play Veterans in Witney (ATP isn't an option due to existing bookings) - Nearest local are Clanfield (Occupied), Carterton (not available) and North Leigh (not available).

Responses:

Dog poo – Burwell additional dog bins and additional bins. All entrances and exits. Burwell broken glass and no benches near bins. Will re-position bins to be by benches

Signage for WW and bins. Will be reviewed.

Suggestion to contact dog warden at WODC regarding poo on pitches

Storage – Burwell small storage requested for nets flags first aid kits. Happy to build a cupboard – JH to review the request

Looking at a second changing room there and will look at storage. Comes down to planning and there is a certain amount of funding.

WW not a field in trust at the moment as there are limitations on use

Flood lights – new lights they have been replaced with LED

Any funding for flood lights? FA can agree funding – portable an option flood lights – not subject to planning

Burwell – allowed for training near hedge.

Poss. West Witney or Leys – WTC are not against flood lights. WTC need Ideas on where teams would like flood lights.

Other items discussed:

Discussed future meetings and frequency and attendance – there is a need for regular future meetings and all teams being represented.

Ages 16,17,18, difficult to keep the youngsters due to training times. Cross over between children and adults' teams and need better integration.

Need to go forward as a town and have communication between teams.

Changing facilities, lights, will be future developments. Teams suggested forward thinking 5/10 years ahead, so town is not shafted.

Shores Green – ask for funding for the town – District Council negotiate with developers

Opportunities with schools. Great land which they are not using and needs to be opened up to the community

Open spaces strategy – toilets, storage, pitch maintenance.

WW has been priority – hence consultancy in place.

Teams enquired if any allocated land for pitches? Some pitches are sitting idle. E.g., Madley needs a collective to love it and invest in it.

Discussed the need to make the most of existing stock and as developers come forward, they will be asked to provide football pitches and changing – not necessarily on the same site.

Pitch strategies have to be renewed every three years.

Legacy of Covid – Burwell – goal mouth renovations have taken place. Pitches available for play from 4th September.