

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 29 MAY 2012

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**Title:**

**WESTFIELD LANE, WRECCLESHAM**

**[Portfolio Holders: Cllrs Julia Potts and Stephen O’Grady]**

**[Wards Affected: Farnham Wrecclesham & Rowledge]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to agree the most appropriate future management vehicle for the Westfield Lane Recreation Ground, to explore potential uses of the site and propose the option that offers the greatest value for money for the Council.

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**How this report relates to the Council’s Corporate Priorities:**

Leisure provision exists as one of the Council’s corporate objectives, and the opportunity to bring this recreation ground into use for a wider user base positively affects participation, improving the lives of those in Waverley. The report also explores the options that not only achieve our leisure and improving lives objectives but also offer the most value for the Council.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

The introduction of ‘pay as you play’ pitches increases opportunities for use of the site by other football clubs. The current provision of the clubhouse and also access on site is not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and presently only really caters for one group. Redevelopment of the clubhouse and surrounding site will address this status.

**Environment and Climate Change Implications:**

Any improvements to the ground or clubhouse will be evaluated under the auspices of our environmental objectives.

**Resource/Value for Money Implications:**

The report looks to propose the option that provides the greatest value for money for the council in the short and longer term.

**Legal Implications:**

As the current tenant leaves the facilities we will need to carry out the necessary legal requirements set out within the current lease which loosely describes responsibilities of tenant and landlord. When we enter into a new arrangement with another tenant legal advice will be needed regarding the lease and any capital investment.

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## **Background**

1. Farnham Rugby Club has been present at Westfield Lane since 1979 and through the lease agreement with the Council; the club has financed and extended the clubhouse and grounds to cater for the increase in demand from its ever-expanding membership. The club has continued to grow in size, and has now outgrown the current Westfield Lane site. The club has long planned to move to a newer larger site at the David Lloyd Leisure development site in Monkton Lane, Weybourne.
2. In WBC's cultural strategy 2009 -2013 High level action plan, theme 2. Sport and Leisure, ref: 2.7. Waverley Borough Council has committed to working with Badshot Lea FC, senior and youth teams to support their improvement plans.
3. Following news of Farnham Rugby Club's imminent departure from the site, two football clubs expressed an initial interest in the Westfield Lane site, Badshot Lea Football Club (BLFC) and Bourne Blades Football Club (BBFC). To date no other Rugby Club has expressed an interest in the site, nor are we aware of any demand for Rugby facilities in the area.
4. BLFC has been working with the Council for a number of years, in the hope that it can secure a suitable home ground for their first team. During this period it has had to undertake ground sharing with several clubs, in order that it can play football using facilities that meet the Football Association's strict ground grading criteria; the club currently plays home games in Godalming, some miles from their home town. This has been a costly arrangement for the club and it has lost out on significant revenue income as a result of this.
5. BLFC has looked at Weybourne Recreation Ground and Sandy Hill as potential sites for a home ground, however these have been deemed unsuitable in planning terms. Since being aware of the potential future vacancy of Westfield, the club has been in discussion with the Council and previous portfolio holder about the potential of the site. In order to progress matters BLFC has employed a sports consultant to develop a detailed proposal and seek funding grants from various sources, in order that its proposal is seen as a serious contender.
6. If BLFC is unable to secure a home ground after a search of 8 years and history of ground sharing, it is likely the club may not be able to continue to be successful as it has been. It is anticipated players would start to leave the club, if it cannot secure promotion due to ground grading criteria set by the FA not being met. This may result in a negative turning point for the club after all the years of hard work.
7. BBFC has relatively recently contacted the Council over the site in the summer of 2011, and presented an initial outline proposal to the Council in February 2012. However it has since withdrawn its interest in the site, as the club was not able to partner with Weydon School and was unable to secure the funding streams necessary to develop the site for football.

## **Introduction**

### **Farnham Rugby Club Move**

8. Council officers have met with Farnham Rugby Club to discuss its intentions over the Westfield Lane site and the move to the Monkton Lane site. The clubhouse being built at Monkton Lane is 5 weeks behind schedule and is due to be completed July 2012, the club then intends to play at the site from September 2012.
9. The club's last event at Westfield lane is 7 July 2012, however it would like to keep Westfield lane as a fallback position, should problems arise with completing the clubhouse in Monkton Lane (unlikely to occur). The club should know by June a definitive answer to the exact departure date from Westfield. The club will provide a list of fixtures & fixtures they intend to keep and those they intend to leave to WBC.
10. Following the surrender of the lease, WBC will be responsible for the site unless a new tenant is found. There is a sub-tenant at the site and it would be the intention to maintain this arrangement.

### **Westfield Lane Site - Condition**

11. A pitch survey has been undertaken on the Westfield Lane playing fields to assess its condition and future potential, the following issues have been identified:
  - Drainage system is poor and requires renewing to prevent water logging.
  - Cross fall gradients across junior rugby pitch widths greatly exceed 2% recommendation by Sport England.
  - Senior rugby pitch current size would not accommodate a full sized senior football pitch; require car park relocation to make appropriate space.
  - Topsoil of pitches contain high stone/flint/clay content, would present problems if topsoil was cultivated and limits permeability of water.
  - Grass coverage on Senior Pitch poor and does not meet Sport England criteria. Weed density exceeded Sport England criteria on all pitches.
  - Number of hours of play that can be supported by pitches without causing excessive wear or damage to the soil structure limited by current condition.
  - Initial estimates of pitch improvements costs are £100k for the senior pitch and £164K for both junior pitches.
12. A visual condition and structural survey has been undertaken on the clubhouse building by the Council's property surveyor. Showers, electrical wiring (needs rewiring), external rendering, roof covering (needs replacing), insulation are all in a poor condition. The rest of the facility is in a fair to good condition. Repair costs are estimated at £74,000.
13. In summary should the Council be required to take over the site and create football pitches (high demand in Farnham area for more football pitches) on a 'Pay to Play' basis and undertake maintenance, capital costs are estimated circa £340,000. The ongoing maintenance of the site is circa £10,000 pa for the pitch areas and another £2,500 - £5,000 pa for the pavilion, access road and car park.

### **Westfield Lane Development Potential**

14. Officers have explored whether the site had any potential for a small scale housing development; with the potential to release planning infrastructure contributions towards playing pitches. The planning officers have provided the following headline comments on the development potential of the site.
- The site is within an Area of Great Landscape Value, housing development would not be appropriate here.
  - Under existing and proposed planning policy, the site would be unsuitable for housing or industrial/commercial development. However, should there be a future change in the Council's policy approach, this should be taken into account when drawing up a lease for the long term
  - There are site specific constraints which include; poor access, poor drainage and proximity to an industrial sand pit. These would need to be considered before any development could take place

### **Badshot Lea Football Club Proposal**

15. To improve and modernise existing facilities to allow the playing of high standard of football on the main pitch and to bring into service two pay to play pitches which could be used by other clubs in a phased approach. The club intends to continue the existing sub-letting arrangement during the week.
- Phase 1 - Construct pitch for exclusive use by BLFC 1<sup>st</sup> team, install floodlights, turnstiles, dug outs, fenced off ground, covered stand area to meet FA criteria. Construct and provide new parking area. Improve pavilion to meet FA ground grading criteria. Re-level, drain and provide 1No. Pay to play pitch - £450,000
  - Phase 2 - Provide additional pay to play pitch after re-levelling and to provide a modular 2 room changing block or separate building for 'Pay to Play' teams - £150,000

Total capital costs circa £600,000.

### **Financial Considerations**

16. BLFC has employed a sports consultant (Sports Solutions GB) to look at the various funding grants available to provide the necessary capital investment in order to develop the site for the club's requirements and to also provide community use pitches. To date £440,000 has been identified through such grants from; Football Foundation, Sports England, Landfill Communities Fund, Charitable Trusts and the Surrey Playing Fields Association. Further funds would also be sought from the BLFC Club members (see [Annexe 1](#) for details). The BLFC proposal also passes ongoing maintenance of all pitches and the Clubhouse to the Club.

17. To assist with the extensive improvements necessary for the site to be used BLFC have requested a 30 year lease and £50,000 capital support from the Council. This will assist not only with the creation of the main pitch but with the introduction of the 'pay as you play' pitches. The grant funding shows a greater deficit than £50,000 to complete phase 1 but the work can be spread in line with cash flow. However, this investment and long term lease arrangement for the Club is crucial to the successful implementation of this proposal as the Council commitment is vital for grant funding applications. Any contribution from Waverley would be agreed subject to all other funding required to complete the project being fully approved or received before the Council's grant is paid.

### **Community Impact**

18. The impact on the local community should BLFC move onto the site is anticipated to be less than what has previously been experienced with Farnham Rugby Club. BLFC intend to have only their first team playing on the site, with the other pitches being rented out to other community teams, the number of matches that will be played is anticipated to be lower than the number the Rugby Club has been operating at in recent times.
19. The over use of the site by the Rugby Club has negatively impacted on the condition of the pitches, traffic movements on the nearby Riverdale estate and created significant parking problems on nearby roads. Furthermore the annual mini rugby tournament operated by the Rugby Club created additional problems with numbers of teams playing on site and in the nearby recreation ground and further exacerbated traffic and parking problems in the neighbourhood.
20. BLFC are fully aware of the problems created by the present use of the site by the Rugby Club and through the negotiation of a new lease, the Council could seek to limit the number of matches played on site and also place restrictions on traffic movements.
21. It is not felt necessary to advertise the availability of a lease to the community as to date, only two football clubs have shown an interest in a lease of the site. Since the Bourne Blades have retracted their interest, no other club has expressed an interest.
22. The summary table below identifies the financial impact on the Council in relation to the two remaining options for managing the Westfield Lane site.

Management Options	Capital Costs	Yearly Ongoing Revenue cost
1 WBC	£300,000 - £340,000 to create football pitches and improve clubhouse	£12,000 - £15,000 – pitches and surrounding site, pavilion, car park and access road
2 BLFC	£50,000 grant to assist in the creation of 'Pay to Play' pitch	No ongoing cost to the Council. BLFC will pay for all ongoing maintenance of the pitches, site and clubhouse

## **Conclusion**

23. Presently the site is not suitable for development whether this is residential or industrial under current and proposed planning policy. However allowance should be made within a new lease arrangement, to address development potential should the Council's planning policies change.
24. Considering the demand for playing pitches in the Farnham area, the Council's corporate commitment to leisure and improving the lives of our community and the site's inability to be developed, two options exist.
  1. The Council maintains and improves the pitches at Westfield lane, therefore incurring all associated costs; circa £300,000 – £340,000 capital and ongoing maintenance costs of £12,000 – £15,000 pa.

OR

2. The Council seeks to obtain a new tenant (BLFC) for the Westfield Lane site through the securing of a 30 year lease, who will then develop the site for sporting purposes. Open up two 'Pay to Play' pitches and take on a full repairing lease for the clubhouse and ongoing maintenance of the pitches. With a capital commitment of £50,000 from the council to assist with the development of community facilities. Allowance to be made in lease to cater for any change in Council's planning policy.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that

1. Option 2, Badshot Lea Football Club's proposal for Westfield Lane, be approved as the only viable option for the Council;
2. authority be delegated to the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holders and Property services to negotiate lease arrangements with Badshot Lea Football Club;
3. the commitment of £50,000 of capital funds be approved to assist in the provision of a new 'Pay to Play' football pitch in the area and to improve the pavilion changing rooms and the grant paid subject to the other external funding being obtained by BLFC; and
4. the £50,000 is identified from the unallocated provision for urgent schemes budget in the first instance but offset by savings in the capital programme and planning infrastructure contributions that arise during the year.

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## **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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# ANNEXE 1

BADSHOT LEA FC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT / WESTFIELD LANE COMMUNITY SPORTS FACILITY																
SSGB ACTION PLAN FOR CAPITAL FUNDING 2012																
PHASE 1 - target completion of works by June 2013																
GRANT	TARGET AMOUNT (£)	RISK	COMMENTS/ KEY ACTIONS	TARGET SUBMISSION DATE	KEY MILESTONES			SUBMISSION		ESTIMATED DECISION						
					Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13
Football Foundation - Grassroots Facilities Fund	100,000	High	Consultation with County FA required, needs fresh FDP & needs statement. Charter standard update?. May only fund the pitch works for Pitch #1 and #2	June												
OR...Football Foundation - Build the Game	50,000	Medium	Back up option if FA advises against applying to above fund	June												
Football Stadium Improvement Fund	100,000	Low	Consultation with FF's technical advisor required once design developed to next stage	May/ June												
Sport England Inspired Facilities Fund	50,000	Medium - High	Consultation with community groups required, need to identify another sport or activity group	July-September				Fund opens								
Sport England Protecting Playing Fields	50,000	Medium	No date for next round of funding but 2 planned for 2012 - one likely to be open by the Summer	? No dates yet												
Landfill communities fund	50,000	Medium - High	Strong case needs to be put together; hard to make the case for sports projects	May/ June												
Waverley Borough Council	50,000	Medium	Possible that this funding could be utilised for project costs/ professional fees	?												
Charitable Trusts and small grants	25,000	Medium	Ongoing research required - club's grant funding person to support	Ongoing												
In-kind contributions/ fundraising by BLFC	10,000	Medium	Club to lead research into this	Ongoing												
Surrey Playing Fields Association	5,000	Low	Consultation required, useful top up fund at the end	August												
<b>Funding total</b>	<b>490,000</b>	(-£50k if grassroots fund not possible)														
<b>Estimated cost for Phase 1 (May 2012)</b>	<b>444350</b>															
<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>-45650</b>															
PHASE 2																
Additional cost of £150,000 for a third pitch and modular changing room building - TBC																
Notes:																
1. Phase 2 implementation target is 2014 or 2015																
2. Grant funding potentially available in 2014/15 is hard to identify at this point.																
3. Further assessment is needed of the internal configuration of the building to determine if a modular changing room building is needed																
4. Suggest that £40,000 for the additional pitches may be included in Phase 1 if fund-raising efforts are successful																





