

# **AVEBURY COMMUNITY, SPORTS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE (ACSREC) SPORTS FIELD LEASE**

**Proposal recommending that:**

**Avebury Parish Council (APC) does not renew the lease**

**Avebury Sports & Social Club (“ASSC” or “the Avebury Sports Club” or “the Club”) take on the lease.**

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

- The lease is currently held by APC, on a rolling basis, assuming APC pays each year.
- ACSReC is a sub-committee of APC and currently manages the day to day running of the field on behalf of APC.
- ACSReC currently holds two bank accounts with a total of £3004.25
- A large amount of work currently needs doing and will continue to need doing to the pavilion. Giving the lack of funding available to repair the roof, the problems have accelerated significantly during a wet Summer in 2017.
- A health and Safety question has been raised regarding the state of the pavilion for public use. This will only get worse as more and more timbers rot through.
- ACSReC have spoken about a wish to create a new building that will be more appropriate for the changing needs of the community using the field – but (as a sub-committee of the parish council) is unable to access the vast majority of local and national funding targeting sports facilities.

## **The Objective**

With ASSC taking on the lease ACSReC believe that there will be more opportunity to develop the field and its facilities the way we believe they should be developed to best suit the sports and leisure needs of the community. The Sports Field would remain a village community facility and the change of stewardship would not affect the usage and enjoyment of it. It should be a seamless transition and all existing users should be represented on any management body.

## **The Opportunity**

Various options have been considered as ways forward.

ACSReC feel the best solution to the current situation would be to consider a new lease in favour of the Avebury Sports Club, who are in an extremely strong position to be able take on the lease should they choose. This will achieve the twin goals of improving our collective ability to access funding for the improvement of the field and its facilities, whilst removing some of the challenges that can arise in having the site operating and used by multiple bodies.

Some background on the Avebury Sports Club is set out below.

1. LEGAL STATUS: ASSC is a Friendly Society, fully set up and capable of assuming such obligations. No additional legal set up costs (or time delays) would arise in assuming the obligations associated with taking on a lease, other than certain formalities such as (a) discussion at a monthly Management Committee meeting, and (b) a subsequent EGM of the Club, which can be convened at 10 days notice.

2. GOVERNANCE: ASSC is already governed by its own Constitution, a 10-person Management Committee, and three external Trustees who oversee its activities.

3. OBJECTIVES: Under its Constitution (available on request), the objectives of the Club include:

*"to afford its members a focal point for social and cultural events and activities; to provide a focal point for members wishing to arrange charitable or cultural activities to support and provide appropriate facilities for local sporting organisations based in the Parish of Avebury; and, to sustain its own future and enjoy the other advantages of a club."*

4. PERMANENCY: As owners of its own building and land, a solid membership base, and with extremely low annual membership subscription fees, ASSC does not foresee any issues that would result in its dissolution, or any foreseeable changes in its status which would render it unsuitable as the tenant under the sports-field lease.

5. FINANCIAL STRENGTH: Under the stewardship of Secretary Alan Blake and the current Management Committee, ASSC operates an annual surplus (profit); and (as at the date of its last accounts on 31/12/16) had a current bank cash balance of around £29,375. ASSC does not foresee any issues in meeting any financial obligations imposed by the terms of the lease, provided the existing rights around occasional use of the field for occasional fund-raising activities can be assumed.

6. LINKS WITH SPORTING ORGANISATIONS USING THE SPORTS FIELD: ASSC has strong links with the two sports clubs who use the field, both of which (directly or through parents) are currently represented on its Management Committee. Of the Club's current membership (approx. 160 members), approximately 65 are also paid-up members of Avebury Cricket Club.

7. MAINTENANCE: The current maintenance contract for Avebury Sports-field is carried out by Avebury Cricket Club, which is an affiliate (through the terms of its constitution, and that of ASSC) of the Avebury Club. This relationship ensures ongoing continuity of existing maintenance arrangements, without the requirement for new arrangements to be put in place.

8. SUB-COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS: The Management Committee of the Club already delegates certain activities to sub-committees, such as the Buildings Committee, Finance Committee and Entertainments Committee. Were the Club to assume the obligations of a new lease, it would be straight forward to establish a new Sports field Sub-Committee, and to include in its terms of reference any arrangements (such as specific attendees, representatives of other organisations, etc.) as might be necessary for the smooth operation of the Sports field.

9. RELATIONSHIP WITH LANDLORD: The Club enjoys a good relationship with the National Trust, which already covers such matters as car parking, solstice arrangements, agreements around common boundaries, and participation in mutually beneficial activities such as Avebury Day (which is largely run by members of the Club). It is assumed that this would stand the Club in good stead as a long-term tenant of the NT.

## CONCLUSION

As a part of a World Heritage Site we pride ourselves on taking care of our village and all that is in it. Sadly over time the pavilion has been forgotten and we now see the strain on a building that came to us second-hand in the 1940s. Growth in sporting and leisure activities over the past twenty years or so are to the credit of all involved (including the village) but, with those organisations having no rights over the ground itself, raising any sort of funding has proved extremely difficult. Since these organisations are willing to assume these responsibilities to the benefit of all, we should seize this unique opportunity to change existing arrangements for the benefit of the whole community. We should also remember that the pavilion is the first building a visitor sees when walking into the village from the South car park, and as such should reflect what we think first impressions should be.

With ASSC becoming the home for the Cricket Club and its strong connections with sport it is the natural successor to APC to take on the lease for the field.