

COUNTESS WEAR CRICKET CLUB
Emergency General Meeting: 28th May 2014
Held at The Coaver Club, Exeter
commencing at 7.30 pm

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chairman's opening remarks
3. President's remarks
4. Reason for meeting/background
5. Progress to date
6. Options for the future
7. How to take the matter forward
8. Questions from the floor
9. Summary

Present: Anthony Martin, Bob Adams, Neil Pateman, Claire Colman, Peter Darke, Peter Skinner, Mark Davey, Mike Fernbank, Bob Berry, John Liddon, Martin Bovey, Colin Willett, Jon Heaver, Phil Wakely, Dave Harkness, Kav Dias, Carl Downes, Matt Woodman

		Action By
1.	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Terry Webster Ian Ballinger Phil Irish Nick Lyttleton James Bogue Steve Millington Gary Spragg Vikki Hawkins-Downs</p>	
2.	<p>Chairman's Opening Remarks</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and remarked that it was good to have a good turnout as we had some important decisions to make about the future of the club. He also pointed out that some of the discussions we would go on to have would need to remain confidential, given the nature of the issue at hand, and although minutes of the meeting would be circulated to all club members, some discretion was need to ensure that negotiations with F&C Reit were not compromised. He also pointed out that there was to be a meeting between club members and F&C Reit the following day (29th May) and minutes of that would be added as an addendum to the EGM minutes.</p>	
3.	<p>President's Remarks</p> <p>The President opened by saying that the club had now been in existence for 6 years, and he still remembered the start of the club with his father as Chair. There had been various venue changes but we have enjoyed 23 years at Winslade Park and have been very grateful for our time there.</p> <p>He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and welcomed contributions from all present.</p>	
4.	<p>Reason for meeting/background</p> <p>Although we had known for a while that Friends Life were due to vacate Winslade House, it was only in February this year that we were advised that there were proposals to develop the site. Mike Fernbank (MF), Neil Pateman (NP) and James Bogue (JB) attended the planning meeting to hear the proposals and discovered that the plans extended to the entire site, including the cricket ground, and that that could have disastrous consequences for the club.</p> <p>As part of the initial proposals, they had factored in relocating the current sports provision to the nearby field, but having spoken to a contact in the Environment Agency, we were advised that this was not a viable option as the nearby field was in a flood plain and at high risk of flooding.</p> <p>In the initial meeting with F&C Reit (the development company dealing with the site), it was made clear that whilst planning applications may take some time to go through, at the end of the current season, ie from September onwards, we would not have access to the ground as they would be fencing off the entire site and securing it, and even if we could somehow gain access, there would be no services</p>	

	<p>on site (ie water, electricity etc). This has now been confirmed in writing by F&C Reit and the reason is so that they can secure the perimeter of the site which is likely to be kept formant for some time until all the plans are approved.</p> <p>Heavitree Youth FC, who use the football pitch, have also been given notice of the planned development.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Progress to Date</p> <p>In March, the club (through Bob Adams) sent letters to Exeter City Council, East Devon District Council and Devon County Council alerting them of the planned development and the fact that the alternative provision they had set aside was not viable.</p> <p>East Devon District Council just pointed us to the local plan which specifies that there could be no loss of sports provision unless a suitable alternative is provided. However, as the local plan has been deemed unsound, developers can currently put in plans to develop sports provisions.</p> <p>Exeter City Council initially felt it was not within their remit as we were outside the City, but having pointed out that we have been doing a lot of work with juniors in Exeter (at St Luke’s and other schools in the city) they showed more interest. In particular, the local Councillor for Countess Wear would be keen to support us should we decide to move the club back to Countess Wear.</p> <p>Devon County Council – Mike Howe is the local Councillor and knows of our situation. He is supportive of our plight, but cannot comment too much as he sits on the planning committee.</p> <p>‘Right to Bid’ - Mike Fernbank and the chair of the football club also sit on Bishop’s Clyst Parish Council. As a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) there was an opportunity for the club to put forward an application to the District Council for Winslade Park to be an asset of community value. If this is approved we then have a ‘Right to Bid’ which means that the land cannot be sold without first giving us the option to buy it. However, the Parish Council had heard that a planning application for the land was imminent and therefore in order to avoid any delays, applied for the Right to Bid themselves. We are therefore now just waiting for the outcome of that application. The Parish Council and the Club have been independently invited to attend a meeting with F&C Reit on 29th May, however, F&C Reit do not know that we have been in discussion with the Parish Council on this aspect.</p> <p>We have also been in discussion with Sport England and F&C Reit have now had a meeting with them and have changed their plans slightly from the original version. They now have a green belt around the planned residential development which includes a sports provision, although there is no guarantee that it will be designated as cricket provision or that we would be the only club/group able to use it, although it would be difficult for them not to give us first refusal.</p> <p>The fact remains, however, that with effect from September there is a high chance that we will not have access to the ground and therefore three important things need to be considered at this time:</p>	

1. What more can we do to prevent the development of the ground and stay where we are
2. If we do have to vacate at the end of the season, where can we play in the short term, given that any new ground we prepare from scratch will take at least 3 years before it is up to playing standard
3. In the long term, where do we want our home to be. There is a chance that we could move back to Winslade Park, or we could use this as an opportunity to move back to Countess Wear, although we would need to find a suitable alternative site.

Questions/comments

Q: A question was raised about the level of support the local Councillor would be willing to give, ie would there be any financial support for us to move back to Countess Wear.

A: The feeling was that it would be more support in name only, rather than financial, but this is an area that could be explored.

Q: If we did manage to get the asset of Community Value status, what would the price of the land be?

A: Again, this is an area that would need to be looked at but it was thought that they would have to sell it to us as a sports field as it is currently designated as such, and not as expensive development land.

Q: There was a thought that even if the new plans include a sporting provision, they could move the football field up to part of the cricket field and make it a combined sports facility.

A: If this is the case, they would need to put in additional drainage as the ground gets very wet in the winter and they would also need to provide better changing facilities etc.

Q: Can we make as much of a nuisance of ourselves as possible and simply refuse to move? Are we working together with Heavitree Football Club to achieve this.

A: We need to seek legal advice to see exactly what security of tenure we have given that we don't have a formal written agreement or lease. Once we know where we stand we will endeavour to do all we can to stay put and will use the media contacts we have to raise awareness in the press.

6. Options for the Future

1. What can we do to stay

The first action is to get some legal advice on our situation and the Committee had provisionally agreed that an amount of between £500 and £1,000 of club funds should be set aside to pay for a solicitor to review our position. We also need advice on whether we can claim any compensation from the developers which could help to pay for a new ground.

[Proposal: up to £1,000 of club funds to be spent on legal advice](#)

[Vote: Carried unanimously](#)

2. Short terms grounds

Suggestions were made about where we could play next year if we were not able to gain access to the ground. The preferred options, previously identified by the committee, were :

- a) University of Exeter 2nd ground on Topsham Road
- b) Killerton (as they don't have a Saturday team)

Q: What is the quality of the university pitch and would we be able to work on it?

A: The quality is pretty good, but we would have to look into whether we could work on it or if their groundsmen would.

Q: Would we be able to use it mid-week for practices and for Colts matches.

A: We will have to ask the question of the University.

The majority seemed to be in favour of the University ground, so a vote was taken.

Proposal: If we have to leave Winslade Park after this season, we would prefer to pay our matches at the University of Exeter 2nd Ground.

Vote: Carried unanimously (on the proviso that we can use it mid-week).

NB: There may be cost implications and if there is rent to pay, it was suggested that we should attempt to reclaim that from F&C Reit.

If anyone can think of another short term ground in the meantime, please contact the committee.

3. Long Term plans

Although this situation has been forced upon us, it could be the making or the breaking of the club and we need to make the solution work for us and make sure that all club members are happy with any proposals.

Whilst we have enjoyed playing at Winslade Park, and it is a good ground, it is too far out of the city and is a long way for people (especially juniors) to travel. Moving back to Countess Wear could in the long run work out better for the club and attract more colts who are the life blood of the club.

If we need to start from scratch, we would need around 2 hectares of land and at least three years, with assistance from some contractors, to get it to a suitable standard. It is a lot of hard work and will require expert input from our ground team but could be a purpose built ground that would stand us in good stead for the future.

Suggestions for long term replacement grounds were:

- a) King George V Playing Fields
- b) 100 Club
- c) Any land available at Duckes Meadow
- d) Any land behind ISCA College
- e) Any land along by the Blue Ball
- f) Land at Pynes Hill beyond Michelmores (Ludwell Valley Park?)
- g) Move back to land offered by F&C Reit behind current ground

	<p>The most promising options are the King George V Playing Fields and the land beyond Michelmores. The committee now need to establish who owns the various plots of land, how we would go about buying them and whether we would be able to build a club there, which will involve discussions with the various Councils.</p> <p>Again, if any club members have further suggestions, please contact one of the committee members.</p>	
7.	<p>How to take the matter forward</p> <p>Actions for the committee arising from the meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find a Solicitor that deals with property law and get some legal advice (up to £1,000). (Suggested asking if any property lawyers play for Exeter Geriatrics – contact Steven Lawson) 2. Pursue the Asset of Community Value application with the Parish Council 3. Approach the University of Exeter about using their 2nd ground as a short term measure 4. Investigate two areas of land identified as possible long term options and discuss with DCC and ECC 5. Investigate storage for equipment if we do need to leave the ground at the end of the season 6. Make provision for paying rent on any temporary ground (and attempt to reclaim this from F&C Reit) 7. Get the Press involved 	
8.	<p>Questions from the floor</p> <p>No further questions.</p>	
9.	<p>Summary</p> <p>As above – NB: See additional minutes from meeting with F&C Reit attached.</p>	

The meeting closed at 9.40pm

Signed by..... Chairman	Date:.....
-------------------------	------------

WINSLADE PARK PROPOSALS – MEETING HELD ON 29 MAY 2014

Venue: The Pavilion, Winslade Park

Present: Bob Adams & Mike Fernbank – CWCC

Maurice Fitzgerald – F & C Reit

1. In answer to a query on recreation proposals for the Meadows area on the S side of Grindle Brook, Maurice explained these would take the form of walking/running trails, etc. There were no proposals for cricket or football pitches there, as it was liable to flooding.
2. Maurice said that, since our previous meeting (MF, JB, NP on 9 April), the Planning Inspector examining the draft Local Plan for EDDC had found it “unsound” in various aspects, including provision of numbers for new housing. EDDC are currently working with neighbouring authorities to reassess housing needs. In anticipation of more housing being needed in this area, F & C Reit are urgently working-up proposals for outline planning permission for Winslade Park. They anticipate up to 500 houses.
3. When asked if he had anything new to show us, Maurice tabled a draft plan showing a cricket square (orientated NW to SE and much closer to the main access road than our existing NE to SW square). A full size football pitch was shown to the NW, with a junior football pitch to SE. We pointed out that the cricket pitch boundaries and size of square were too small for our requirements. Included in the proposals (but not shown on the plan) would be a new pavilion with changing rooms, showers, etc, plus a community room.
4. Some houses close to the sports area would benefit from “green” views. We pointed out potential problems with dog-fouling, etc.
5. Maurice envisaged that these facilities would be run by a ‘Sports Club’, combining cricket and football interests. Many players would probably choose both sports.
6. Should outline planning permission be forthcoming, Maurice considered that it would be possible to keep the existing cricket/football facilities open for next season – i.e. September 2014 onwards. Although most of the rest of FP’s site would be “mothballed”, he thought it possible to maintain electricity (and water?) to the pavilion.
7. CWCC would have to arrange for cutting the cricket outfield in 2015 (and until such time as the Sports Club is officially constituted).
8. We asked if FP would be prepared to give the Sports Club a lease for 10 yrs (preferably) or 7 yrs (minimum). He promised to look into this. Current football clubs using the site are Heavitree Youth and Brixington Blues.
9. Bob asked if, should we have to find a temporary home for 2015, FP might be willing to fund our pitch hire expenses - based on Exeter University charges of £70 a game for our schedule of 45 to 50 home matches. Maurice thought this unlikely, but said he would enquire.
10. We expressed our acceptance of the principles for cricket/football outlined in these proposals.

Maurice promised to send us a revised drawing showing a larger area reserved for cricket use.