

**Draft Minutes of a meeting of Wellow Recreation Trustees**  
**Held on January 26<sup>th</sup> at The Granary, Upper Baggridge**

**Present:** Hugh Prentice (Chair)  
Mike Clarkson  
Rob Greig  
Peter Gaines  
Marcelle Speller  
Debbie Clarkson  
Beth Jackson  
Ollie Hartnell

**Apologies:** Heather Andrews  
Bea Dowty

**1. Progress with Lease and Report Back from Wellow Valley Tennis (WVT)**

There has been no progress with the signing of the lease. The Trustees agreed that, as they are accountable to the people of Wellow, there should be full and detailed openness about the reasons for this.

It was reported that, for a number of months, discussions had been taking place to secure the immediate surrender of the WVT lease for the tennis courts in order that one lease for the whole playing field area be let to Wellow Recreation – as intended by the Parish Council. There had been opposition to doing this from Andy Smith, a WVT Committee Member. These reasons, which were stated on a number of occasions in writing and in person, including at a final meeting to seek a resolution on 22<sup>nd</sup> January that involved Rob Greig, Andy Smith, Mike Clarkson and Debbie Clarkson, were that:

- The level of activities achieved so far in sports other than tennis is not acceptable. Evidence of the Wellow Recreation competence would be demonstrated by other sports achieving the same level of activities as tennis.
- He did not have confidence in the Wellow Recreation Trustees operating Wellow Recreation in a way that would not be detrimental to the interests of tennis
- He believed that the Wellow Recreation Trustees might divert money raised through tennis away from tennis to other sports or activities.

Given this, were the lease to be surrendered, he would resign from the WVT Committee.

Debbie, Mike and Hugh (also Chair, Treasurer/Trustee and Trustee of WVT respectively) reported from a WVT Committee meeting on January 24<sup>th</sup>. For reasons of concerns about participation levels in sport other than tennis, financial security, and a perceived lack of synergy between tennis and the rest of WR's activities, WVT did not agree to the Parish Council and Wellow Recreation request to surrender its lease. Instead, it counter-proposed that WR accepted operating without a lease for a further six months and focused on increasing

participation in other sports. At that point in time, WVT would review its position and consider whether it then felt able to surrender the lease, dependent upon Wellow Recreation's success in this. They also reported that up to £2000 would be under-written from WVT tennis funds towards the costs of contracting football coaches for junior and adult sessions (male and female) during 2017 in order to encourage greater participation in football on the playing field.

There was lengthy discussion of this by the Trustees and the reported views and proposal were rejected by the Trustees for the following reasons:

- It represents a misunderstanding of the role of the Wellow Recreation Trustees, which is not to organise and run different sports, but rather to provide the basic legal, finance and site infrastructure that then enables villagers (as WR Members) to organise and run different sports (such as tennis). The Trustees can and will encourage more sporting activity, but villagers have to want to lead and do that.
- A comparison of participation levels between tennis and other sports is false. Tennis has LTA standard courts and a pre-existing participation across the village. The other sports have lower standard facilities, competition from other places (e.g. Hinton Charterhouse cricket club) and lower levels of demand from within the village. It is unrealistic to expect the different sports to have similar participation levels.
- Given the limited time Wellow Recreation has been in place, and considering the amount of time spent negotiating with WVT and resolving problems arising from the lack of a lease, activities and participation levels in a number of activities are good. (e.g. school activity, regular football matches along with hugely increased informal football, use of the cricket nets during season, boules evenings, netball sessions etc)
- Full guarantees have been given to WVT (and all other sport groups) that finances will be ring-fenced to different sports, including an offer to retain a separate WVT bank account for a period. A budget has been developed that demonstrates break even and income to date is on target.
- Most fundamentally, the sports facilities were developed on an understanding given to the Parish Council, village and funders, that a multi-sport facility was being developed. It was on the basis that synergy existed between different sports that substantial parts of the funding were received.
- The Parish Council agreed to establish Wellow Recreation as a multi-sport entity in September 2014. The lease was granted to WVT in January 2015 as an interim measure in order to receive funding given that the legalities of creating Wellow Recreation had not been completed. WVT holding the lease does not comply with the Parish Council's conditions of supporting the recreation development, which included the whole site (including tennis) being managed by one organization - that also has limited legal liability (which WVT does not).
- Wellow Recreation is accountable to its membership, and to an extent to the Parish Council and not to any one individual. It is inappropriate for one individual or another village group to set standards and thresholds that have to be met prior to enacting the Parish Council's original

intention of integrated field management with one lease to an organisation with limited liability.

The Trustees re-emphasised their belief that an organisation that has co-ordination of only part of the activities on the field (i.e. excluding both the tennis courts and the village hall) is not viable - as having three different village entities with different responsibilities on the small site would be foolish. The Trustees had previously resolved to close down Wellow Recreation in the event of the lease not being signed. However, there was concern about the impact this would have on some sports (and the proposed theatre production) and also the Parish Council's ability to take on full responsibility for the facilities in the short term.

It was therefore agreed that Wellow Recreation should offer to continue, for a period of time, to provide a basic management/support service to the field and different activities to enable them to continue for now. This would involve:

- Coordinating (on behalf of the Parish Council) maintenance on the playing field
- Maintaining a bank account that enables the different activities to continue to operate.

All other matters, would thus remain with the Parish Council. This includes responsibility for resolving drainage issues, progressing the pavilion proposal and managing the renewal of the play area. Different sports would continue to be responsible for initiating their own activities.

The Trustees agreed that this arrangement is not tenable other than in the short-term. It therefore resolved to ask the Parish Council to make clear its position on this whole issue and ask them to see if their democratic authority could persuade WVT to come to a different conclusion. A time limit should be put on this and, if the situation did not change, then the Trustees would seek to close down Wellow Recreation.

The follow resolution was then agreed for discussion at the AGM on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Draft Motion for Wellow Recreation AGM**

*This AGM notes that:*

- 1) Wellow Recreation was established at the request of the Parish Council to provide an integrated management/support structure for all the activities on the playing field site.*
- 2) Wellow Recreation has been unable to carry out those responsibilities to date because it has not been granted a lease for the playing fields from the Parish Council. Hence it has not (for example) had the authority to take forward action on issues such as the drainage, pavilion or play area.*
- 3) The lease has not been granted because Wellow Valley Tennis has declined a request to surrender its lease over the tennis courts to enable the one, integrated lease to be signed as drafted by the Parish Council.*
- 4) The Wellow Village Hall Committee have previously stated they do not wish to join Wellow Recreation immediately but consider the matter again in the future.*

- 5) *Wellow Recreation only has a reason to exist if it is carrying out those full responsibilities. Otherwise, it is just another organisation adding to the complexity of village activity.*
- 6) *Were Wellow Recreation to close down immediately, then that would create difficulties for the Parish Council and some of the other activities on the field*

*This AGM therefore resolves:*

- 1) *That it will continue for a period of time to provide a basic site management resource to enable activity organised by different sports groups and the theatre production to continue*
- 2) *To confirm to the Parish Council that, in the absence of a lease, the Parish Council remains and will be responsible for all major site issues, including the drainage, future of the play area and the pavilion*
- 3) *That if it is not granted a full lease over the playing field area, including the tennis courts, within 9 months, to hold an EGM to close down Wellow Recreation at that point in time.*

*This AGM asks the Parish Council to make a clear statement at its next meeting about what the Parish Council, as the representative body of the village, wishes to happen with Wellow Recreation and the present Wellow Valley Tennis lease, including whether it also wishes the Village Hall to become part of this entity in due course.*

## **2. Annual General Meeting**

The AGM is taking place on Thursday March 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Village Hall. It was agreed that the agenda would consist of:

- I. Report from the Chair on the successes and achievements of Wellow Recreation
- II. Debate on the motion outlined above.
- III. Presentation of accounts
- IV. Election of new Trustees
- V. AoB

It was agreed that:

- Rob will arrange for the purpose of the meeting and the motion to be publicised in advance as required by the constitution. **Action: Rob**
- Amendments to the motion will be accepted from the floor as the debate progresses
- All Trustees would personally approach a number of people to encourage attendance, with a focus on site users, emphasising the potential impact of the decision about the motion on them. **Action: All**
- Rob would act as returning officer for elections as he will not be re-standing – inviting nominations in advance and accepting them at the meeting. Self-nomination is acceptable. **Action: Rob**
- Mike and Hugh will liaise over the production of relevant accounts. **Action: Mike and Hugh**
- Hugh will arrange food and drink. **Action: Hugh**

### 3. Minutes of Previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on November 30<sup>th</sup> were agreed as a true record.

### 4. Matter Arising

Health and Safety checks on the play area are taking place under the auspices of the Parish Council. Beth noted that she and Rachel Kotchie wished to have a role in this as regular users. Debbie agreed to pass this information onto the Parish Council. **Action: Debbie**

### 5. Financial report

Mike reported cash in the bank of £3,675 plus monies owed/due to Wellow Recreation of a further £3,500. Debts or monies owed totaled £4,006.75. The balance of funds, on paper, is thus currently £3,168.25p.

### 6. Fund-Raising

Peter reported that he and Marcelle have a meeting scheduled with Ron Humphries to further discuss possible approaches to fund raising.

It was noted that £810 had been raised from the Safari Supper (plus similar amounts to the shop and Friends of St Julians) and £80 from the very rainy New Year's Day boules event. £1,000 is to be received from the Tesco bags of Help. Thanks were noted to all who had contributed to all of these.

Beth will attend the next Wellow Community Chest meeting as Wellow Recreation representative.

Serious concern was expressed by Marcelle about the current arrangements with Local Giving. People have been donating money on the understanding, from the wording on the website, that they are giving to Wellow Recreation. However, the money has been going into Wellow Valley Tennis's account. Particularly given the development noted above, this is not acceptable. It was agreed that Mike and Marcelle would speak to resolve this as an urgent priority. **Action; Mike, with Marcelle.**

### 7. Other site Issues

It was reported that:

- A number of people from the WVT committee are going to look at alternative options for the Pavilion given the current funds available
- Peter Downey had offered to take action over the drainage issues.

Given the lack of a lease, it was noted that these are not the responsibility of Wellow Recreation and so were noted for information only.

### 8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on Thursday February 23<sup>rd</sup> at Hugh's.