

## REPORT ON OLD BASING ROVERS FOOTBALL CLUB USE OF THE RECREATION GROUND

A meeting between Cllrs Renwick, Brown and the Clerk (Cllrs Doust and Tuck attended for the first 30 minutes) and OBR Football Club representatives took place on 2 March. This meeting was not productive and the Club Chairman and his wife were the main contributors to the discussion, at times appearing aggressive.

When made aware of the damage caused to the outfield due to play during the weekend of 5/6 February they refused to accept responsibility or to contribute towards the cost of renovation. They also refused to accept the proposed charges for 2022/23 and would not listen to any explanation as to why the increase was necessary. They also flatly refused to appoint a Parish Liaison Officer as suggested by Cllr Renwick.

The general tone was that of contempt towards the Parish Council and the view that the Parish Council was trying to get rid of football at the recreation ground. This is most certainly not the case as indicated later in this note.

The visit to the recreation ground on the previous Sunday by a Councillor was referred to although the version of events was totally different to that Councillor's explanation - they went so far as to say she was lying.

The group left the meeting stating that the PC should expect a large group of parents to attend the meeting when football is discussed, including a representative from the local press and suggesting that the PC should hire a larger room to accommodate everyone.

An email from the Club Chairman was subsequently received with **his** proposal as to how the Club would use the recreation ground next season and what the Club was prepared to pay, stating that they would accept no additional costs for end of season renovation work. He indicated that he had sought advice from Hants FA and the Borough Council's Sports Department.

This was followed by a further email dated 6 March stating that, to reduce the costs further, the Club would have to give up use of the tea room and stating the revised charges.

The Borough Council and Hants FA have since been contacted by the Parish Council and both fully support any action the Parish Council decides to take.

### **Since the Club arrived the Parish Council has:**

- Marked up additional pitches within the main two original pitches to accommodate different aged junior teams.
- Allowed the club to practice at the front of the recreation ground – this has never been made available for football previously and complaints about noise have been received.
- **On a trial basis for the 2021/22 season** marked an additional pitch at the rear of the field to accommodate the new youngest teams.
- Allowed the club use of the tea room and changing rooms/showers (at a preferential rate sufficient to only cover basic cleaning costs) to accommodate the new Veterans Team and enable them to offer tea/coffee to parents.
- Purchased a heavy duty storage container for which the club is charged rental due to the club not having a clubhouse and allowed them to store larger items in the changing rooms during the football season.

- In addition, the Archery Club agreed to move its Sunday morning “exclusive use” shoot to the afternoon to accommodate the club’s fixtures and, when the Veterans team was formed, agreed to revert back to a Sunday morning to accommodate the fixture change to a Sunday afternoon.

All the above has involved a huge amount of work by both the Grounds Manager and Clerk, none of which has been included in charges to the club. From 1 April Grounds Staff time will be a chargeable factor and the exact cost of maintaining the pitches is now apparent.

As previously reported the damage caused by using the newly created pitch will cost a considerable amount to restore to which the club has refused to contribute.

Following play over the weekend of 5/6 March the changing rooms and tea room were left in such a muddy state that the cleaners saw fit to take photos and additional cleaning was necessary.

**The Parish Council has now done everything it can to accommodate the increasing demands of the club,** possibly more than needed to compensate for any perceived personal opposition from some Councillors.

A decision should now be made as to whether it is a good use of parish funds and fair to residents or those sports clubs at the recreation ground that accept their grounds charges to use parish funds to subsidise one football club.

**The proposal is:**

1. The Old Basing Rovers Football Club will complete its 2021/22 season (the final weekend being 19/20 March) earlier than previously agreed to allow time to restore the grounds for cricket.
2. The Old Basing Rovers Football Club will not be permitted to use the facilities in the future unless the Club’s circumstances change.
3. There will be no football for at least the 2022/23 season to enable the Parish Council to recoup at least part of the £12,342.00 cost of the renovation work. This will also leave the Pavilion empty for the proposed refurbishment of the changing rooms and showers.
4. All football at the front of the recreation grounds must cease to keep this area free for general public enjoyment.