

Minutes of the **Recreation Ground Users Group**  
held at 7pm Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023  
in the Chamber, Council Offices, North Street, Ilminster

**Attendees:**

Cllr Sue Osborne, Ilminster Town Council  
Cllr Matt James, Ilminster Town Council  
Julie Earp, Deputy Town Clerk, Ilminster Town Council  
Jason Fontana, Recreation Manager, Ilminster Town Council  
Stuart Shepherd, Ilminster Education Foundation  
Ben Jenner-Hurford, recreation ground user  
Jonny Watkins, Vice Chair, Ilminster Youth Football Club  
Dan Haines, Chairman, Ilminster Town Football Club  
Mark Nicholas, Chairman, Ilminster Angling Association  
Craig Rice, Chairman, Ilminster Cricket Club Ltd  
Sian Sainsbury, Safeguarding & Welfare, Ilminster Cricket Club Ltd

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

Claire Oaten, Herne View CofE Primary School  
Jean Cording, Dowlish Wake Croquet Club – Jean asked for the Club to be removed from this and future meetings as they were content with their current grounds.  
Emma Jane Taylor, Ilminster Sports Club Ltd

**2. The Angling Club**

Mark Nicholas gave an overview of the Club, stating there were 150 members and they control 7 miles of the River Ile and a pond on the Dillington Estate.

Mark then gave a briefing of what the Angling Association have tried to improve the water quality of the canal on the recreation ground. He explained the major problem with oxygenation and the amount of dead silt. To try to mitigate the oxygen issues, the Club purchased an aerator at a cost of £1,000 and placed it in the canal. Due to vandalism, it only lasted three days and is currently being assessed to see if it can be repaired. To improve the situation with the silt from being dead to alive, the Club sought advice, and have spent £800 so far on an oyster shells product which claims to change the pH level and turbo charge the nutrients in the silt. The product is non-toxic to fish and is very natural and will help the natural environment around it.

The Club are planning to get a report on the quality of the water etc for the next 10 years. Dan Haines, who works in this field, offered his services to help with water testing for the Club.

The Club would like the Town Council to consider the purchase and installation of a disabled peg on the canal to make it more accessible to all and provided an example of a recycled plastic peg. The material of the peg is very similar to the benches recently acquired by the Town Council which would require very little maintenance.

**3. The Croquet Club**

This item was removed from the agenda at the request of the Dowlish Wake Croquet Club.

**4. Update since the last meeting**

The Deputy Town Clerk gave a brief follow-up from the last meeting. She had contacted Herne View CofE Primary School and Wadham to ask for representatives from their respective Youth Councils. Claire Oaten, Herne View, had responded with a suggestion of sending any potential information and questions raised at the Recreation Ground Users Group to the Youth Council of the school and they would respond accordingly. A response had not yet been received from Wadham.

**5. Update on the public consultation**

The Deputy Town Clerk gave an update about the results of the consultation. Thanks were given to all of those who completed the questionnaire and there had been 435 responses which was considered excellent when compared to other consultations. She explained that the Town Council will continue to work with the company who are assisting with the Community Plan and it is hoped this would be completed by the end of March.

The results of the consultation had only recently been received and needed further analysis however, it was clear that the refurbishment of the tennis courts was popular, and the Town Council are in the process of pursuing this. The results also showed how many people were interested in particular sports such as netball, tennis and rugby. There had been a lot of responses regarding a MUGA and a 3G pitch, however, she explained that a meeting with South Somerset District Council, held that day, had revealed that there will be no funding available over the coming years to cover these two requests. The agreement for the existing MUGA at Herne View School will need to be reviewed.

The Deputy Town Clerk added that a lot of the residents were interested in having a swimming pool/leisure facility in Ilminster. She explained with Chard recently opening a new swimming pool and the existence of one at Crewkerne, and the high cost of building and running a facility, it was highly unlikely to happen for a number of years.

**6. Potential user agreements**

Following an action from the last meeting, Jonny Watkins had provided a revised list of conditions, which referred to the original proposed conditions that had previously been presented to the Clubs and discussed in September 2022, and again at the Open Spaces Committee Meeting on October 2022.

There was a lot of discussion around the conditions, and in particular, the requirement to book pitches and the how the fees would be calculated.

The football clubs and cricket club had previously provided a calendar of their expected use of each pitch, and each club would just need to inform the Town Council if there were any changes of pitches they use. It was agreed that the easiest option would be for the Town Council to be included on the WhatsApp groups as they would be informed of any changes at the same time as the players.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that different options of fees would be put before the Town Council for them to decide, examples included a fee per match or an annual fee.

The conditions agreed:

1. Any maintenance that requires restriction of access to an area needs to be requested and agreed by the Town Council and the Recreation Manager, before any work can commence and vice versa.
2. Groundsmen need unrestricted access to all areas for which they have a responsibility to maintain, in order to complete grass cutting, litter picking and annual weed killer application. Anything that obscures this access needs to have prior agreement with the Recreation Manager.
3. Users must respect the areas used, other groups and the general public. This includes rectifying any damage to areas (beyond normal usage), clearing any debris after use and utilising the waste disposal and toilet facilities provided. Any damage beyond normal use must be rectified by the user and approved by the Recreation Manager or the Countryside Manager.
4. The Clubs to provide their fixtures/a list of days and slots (morning /afternoon /evening) of their pitch use for the year before their season begins. Should there be any changes, to inform the Town Council by social media, email, telephone as soon as is practicable.

Discussions led to a request for a 5 or 10 year licence with a 12 month break clause. This would help the clubs gain grants and funding from external sources.

Part of the discussion included the effect of the cost of living crisis and how this affects the children playing in the clubs. The possibility of gaining grants or a bursary for the children could be considered. Stuart Shepherd agreed to take this idea to the Ilminster Education Foundation for their consideration.

The MUGA at Herne View CofE Primary School was discussed as a possible place to play sports. Concerns were raised about the current state of repair, the cost of the lights in the winter months and accessibility.

The Deputy Town Clerk agreed to inform the Clubs when the report is ready to be sent out to the Open Spaces Committee prior to the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February.

**Recommendations for the Open Spaces Committee:**

1. To consider the purchase and installation of a disabled peg on the canal.
2. To accept the agreed conditions for the proposed licences between Ilminster Town Council and the clubs.
3. To agree to either a 5 year or 10 year licence with a 12 month break clause.
4. To ask for the MUGA to be added to the Agenda of the next Resources Committee Meeting to discuss the MUGA agreement and to set up a meeting with Herne View C of E Primary School.

**7. Date/time of next meeting**

June/July - to be confirmed.