

Haxey Parish Council, Newsletter, February 2013

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Westwoodside Playing Fields and Pavilion

The Westwoodside Playing Field facilities situated off Akeferry Road have been an ongoing project for the community over the last 30 years. The Conveyance of the land, which was gifted and signed over to the "Trustees" of the Westwoodside Playing Fields Association (WPFA) in 1979, set out that "the land was to be held in trust for a recreation ground for the benefit of the inhabitants of Westwoodside, registered with the Charities Commission and the general management and control of the Trust property and the arrangements for its use shall be invested in a Committee of Management consisting of 6 elected representatives". This Committee allows existing organisations with interest in WPFA aims to appoint a representative to it.

Haxey Parish Council appoints such a representative to the Committee on an annual basis.

Since its inception, the WPFA Management Committee has overseen the setting out of the sports grounds, the building of a Pavilion and over the last 7 years, the available outdoor amenities have been developed and are now considered a first class local facility. Funding streams for this work have come from various organisations such as the National Lottery through North Lincolnshire Council's LEADER and Grant Aid programmes and the Axholme Lions. Two years ago, an all-weather sports court was built, which is now used by a number of local sports clubs and clubs as far away as Epworth and Misterton. The court has floodlights which allow year-round usage. A child's play-park with state of the art safety certified equipment has been installed at a cost of around £200,000 and more recently a refurbished skateboard track has been re-installed. In order to allow youngsters to play in small group activities, a ball wall has been built enabling them to hone their skills at football or simply kick a ball around without interrupting more organised team games or using the Pavilion walls. Throughout, Haxey Parish Council has provided and continues to provide community investment in the form of financial support by grant or funding guarantee.

The major element of the provision of this top class facility has now been completed and WPFA now enters a period of consolidation, improvement and maintenance. Despite the completion of the capital works, there is still a considerable amount of work required to maintain the status quo. Unfortunately, the WPFA Management Committee now finds itself in a position of dwindling commitment from its membership, so much so that it has become very difficult to convene meetings on a regular basis; several members have left the Committee and the frequency of meetings has decreased; moreover, it has proved impossible to recruit any new support from the local community. The Parish Council has been asked to provide assistance and is currently working with the WPFA to see how it can provide meaningful support. The initial part of this support is taking action to publicise the seriousness of the situation, which this article aims to do.

There is an urgent requirement to organise and manage fund-raising initiatives, which, despite the money raised through the hire of the existing amenities and grants, are still required to maintain the facilities and pay the day to day costs, much less the provision of any improvements that the passing of time requires. The current fear is that without further direct support there would be a gradual deterioration of the facilities, which would prove disastrous for the users of the facilities and the adjacent Residents, not to mention the waste of the considerable investment provided by numerous local agencies over the years.

In summary, the WPFA outdoor sporting facilities are currently first class; however, to maintain the utilisation there is a major element of maintenance required on an annual basis. The current funding situation is extremely tight and there is no funding available for any improvement/refurbishment work on existing facilities, in particular the Pavilion, which is now in urgent need of upgrading, the car parking facility, the access road and the general complex outdoor lighting system. The WPFA facilities provide an extremely useful and well used capability for the local community which considering the initial local "gifting" of the land and the subsequent major local investment, needs to be preserved for future generations. The Parish Council is currently in the process of developing a plan within the powers available to it to sustain the Management Committee; however, there remains an urgent need for more community involvement and Residents of the Parish interested in supporting this project are encouraged to contact Haxey Parish Council Clerk to volunteer their services to this worthwhile community facility.