

## **Draft Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2020 at 7pm**

**Present** – Simon Buggey, Jane Trevanion, Sheryl Williamson, Andy Brown, Peter Howell, Peter Tye. There were 4 members of the public present.

Due to Covid 19 the meeting was conducted via video/teleconference. The conference was recorded following all attendees consent. The recording will be kept until the minutes are approved at the next meeting.

### **1. Apologies for Absence** – Caroline Ilott, Huw Liddell

Simon Buggey explained the format of the meeting, the background to this agenda item and key points for consideration.

Dynamo Foxton's request for U18 pitch use on Sundays, received on 13 August 2020, was initially rejected by the Parish Council. The Parish Council subsequently received a letter of appeal dated 4 September 2020 from Dynamo Foxton which was considered at the Parish Council meeting on Monday 7 September 2020. The Parish Council was unable to reach a decision at this meeting, partly due to the short notice for considering the appeal letter, and therefore this extraordinary meeting has been called to make a final decision on the matter. All previous decisions will be set aside with a fresh look at the facts.

*There were no declarations of interest for items on the Agenda*

### **2. Open Forum for Public Participation**

The Parish Clerk had received an email from a local resident regarding Dynamo Foxton's use of the school playing fields and other matters. As these do not relate to the business to be considered at this meeting, this will be dealt with separately.

Marcus Kohler, the coach of the U18, team thanked everyone for attending and appreciated the demand on everyone's time. He emphasised the importance of having a recreation ground for all and accessibility for a key cohort of the community. He explained that Dynamo Foxton is asking for permission for an U18 team to play up to 11 matches on the full-size pitch, for 90 minutes, once every 2 weeks over a period of 9 months. They will be using less than a third of the recreation ground and just over 1% of the weekend diurnal time for recreation ground use for that period. This team has a precedent of 3 seasons playing on the adult pitch previously, with no complaints received and no extra expense allocated. The club has made outstanding contributions to the upkeep of the recreation ground and also contributes a lesser amount towards pitch use at Fowlmere. Marcus explained he is aware of the ground condition issues but considered that many other recreation grounds in the area would have similar issues. He believes that Foxton is looking closer at this recreation ground largely due to the outstanding stewardship by dedicated individuals that give so much time to its upkeep. He asked

whether 11 games would make that much of a difference to the recreation ground as they would make a huge difference to the team.

Bruce Gilliam, secretary of Dynamo Foxton, explained that the U18 team was a fantastic group who have historically played at Dynamo Foxton and it was lovely to welcome them back. Bruce emphasised that playing football had amazing benefits for the players. Dynamo Foxton would like to support this U18 team and work in partnership with the Parish Council to find a way forward.

Jane Kohler, Marcus Kohler's wife explained that her son was on the U18 team and was hoping to play on his home pitch at Foxton. The team have a long history of playing on the Foxton pitch and there is nothing like playing home matches at home. The children are still children and she would like them to feel welcomed to play in Foxton. She understood these matches would have an impact on others but, having watched many of the matches over the previous three U18 seasons, found it hard to understand why this couldn't happen again.

### **3. Consideration of request for pitch use for Dynamo Foxton U18 team and appeal letter (see Appendix 1)**

Simon Buggey summarised the key points:

The Dynamo Foxton U18 team has requested the use of the adult football pitch on Sundays for 11 games over a 9-month period, although there may be a couple of extra cup matches depending on their progress.

The adult pitch is currently used once per week during the football season by the adult football club.

The Parish Council may wish to consider the following:

- The impact this number of matches will have on the adult football pitch, taking into account this is a village recreation ground and not a professional football pitch
- Whether the pitch can sustain the additional use.
- How the Parish Council prioritises who is entitled to use the adult pitch, at the moment it is only used by the adult football club.
- The impact of any additional use of the recreation ground on a Sunday morning. In the submission from Dynamo Foxton there is a precedent for Sunday matches, having played previous seasons on a Sunday morning.
- The contributions made by Dynamo Foxton towards the maintenance of the recreation ground and whether it is considered that these contributions are simply towards the areas used by Dynamo Foxton or whether they represent an overall contribution towards the recreation ground.
- Should there be any additional work, how the cost is shared between the various users

- Whether to accept adhoc bookings of the adult pitch. The adult football club use the pitch every Saturday but there is no official booking system.
- The application is for this season only.
- Whether it supports U18 children playing football. Marcus and Bruce have emphasised the importance of sport for this age group.

Simon acknowledged Dynamo Foxton's commitment to comply with all Covid regulations and their offer to assess the playability of pitches before use so it is not used in frozen or waterlogged conditions.

Simon asked why the U18 team was registered to play at Fowlmere at present?

*Bruce explained that Dynamo Foxton has trialled using Fowlmere's pitches for its smaller U11,12 and 14 teams to reduce the impact on the Foxton recreation ground.*

*Marcus added that this was an error as Bruce had filled the form in on Marcus' behalf. There is no agreement with Fowlmere Parish Council to use their pitches at this time.*

What proportion of the contributions detailed in the letter dated 4 September 2020 are towards the school playing field rather than the recreation ground?

*Bruce explained he did not have the data to hand.*

*Marcus explained that Dynamo Foxton has a much bigger footprint on the recreation ground than the school pitch. He estimated that the contributions for the school field would be less than half of the overall contributions.*

The Parish Clerk read out the feedback from councillors who were unable to attend the meeting.

Caroline Ilott proposes to refuse the request based on the following:

- The poor ground conditions and the extra work for the Parish Council to work out who pays for any extra wear and tear on the adult pitch, noting it will be difficult to assess this fairly.
- The recreation ground should be kept free of matches on Sunday for Foxton residents.
- Concern about parking issues.
- The request came in late not allowing adequate time to consider the consequences for all users of the recreation ground.
- Concern about lack of Covid risk assessment and communication with the village hall about use of facilities.

Huw Liddell gave the following feedback:

- I would always encourage youth football in any village and being a member of a football clubs board appreciate the need for football during these ages.
- Adult football is available to 16 years and older. We at Hardwick have 4 players playing adult football aged 16/17 and no youth team available.
- The under 18's team in question are already registered with the league at Fowlmere.
- At Fowlmere there are 2 adult pitches and 4 teams adding a 5th would share the pitch load across 2 pitches rather than 1.
- Foxton have 1 adult pitch and 2 teams. Most clubs in our division only have a maximum of 2 teams playing on 1 adult pitch.
- This would suggest that Fowlmere would be best suited to hold further matches on their adult pitches and is only 1 mile away from the village.
- If only 3/4 players are from the village again for the sake of the pitch and issues we have had and continue to have on the recreation ground my preference would be for them to play at Fowlmere as they have stated this with the league.
- I think we have established that the money being paid by Dynamo's is for maintenance on the small pitches and the school ground so again do not have concern with the Parish Council.
- If Fowlmere or Sawston was not available then I may have a different view but when the ability to play these elsewhere while the recreation ground is recovering it seems to be the sensible approach for both parties. (The team would have less games called off if issues with the pitch continued).

Councillors in attendance made the following comments:

Peter Howell explained that the Parish Council had spent 2-3 months trying to address the poor condition of the recreation ground and any additional wear on the pitch would need to be thought about very carefully. He expressed concern about how excess wear on the pitch could be assessed and whether matches on a Sunday would create noise and parking issues. He acknowledged that Sunday may be the only day families are able to have a kick around but he appreciated the match would only last for 90 minutes.

Jane Trevanion acknowledged that this was a very difficult decision and, in her view, either option, under the circumstances, would be a bad decision. She explained that Foxton has a recreation ground with a limited acreage. The village is lucky to have active and successful sports team, with many people dedicating a lot of hours and free time towards them. As a result, the ground requirements are more than the village can currently offer. There has been limited time to consider this request and any game allocation between clubs and sharing of remedial work costs. She noted that there had perhaps been a lack of appreciation of the work the Parish Council has undertaken over the last few years to monitor the condition of the recreation ground. The Parish Council should consider that this additional pitch use would likely cause a lot of additional work for the football clubs and the Parish Council, although this was not a reason to refuse the request. She added it would be a real shame to deny the U18 team a chance to play on their home ground although it was a difficult decision to make in the short term. She concluded that the limited pitch space in the village will continue to pose an issue over the next few years and for the next Parish Council.

Peter Tye asked what time the matches would start explaining that enough time should be allowed for the ground frost to clear. Playing on a surface not completely free of frost can cause damage. He also asked who would do any remedial work on the pitch and whether the club had procured goal posts.

Marcus explained that matches would normally start at 10.30 and this could be a fixed time if important. The start time could be deferred to 11am if necessary and the club will assess the pitch condition the night before. If there is a frost the start time can be delayed. The club had never experienced parking issues nor needed to carry out any remedial work when playing previous seasons on a Sunday.

Bruce added that Foxton Dynamo has always been a responsible user and taken Andy Cambridge's advice on whether to postpone matches.

Simon noted that the procurement of goals was not an issue for the Parish Council. This should be negotiated with the adult football club or alternatively sourced independently, although this would have storage implications.

Andy Brown explained that he was conflicted in his decision and could see both sides of the argument. He asked for clarification about the U18 team's precedent for using the pitch. He acknowledged there would be extra wear and tear on the pitch which would require time and effort to repair. If the Parish Council approved Dynamo Foxton's request for U18 pitch use, some arrangement would be needed to address the additional damage.

Marcus explained that the U18 team had previously played on the adult pitch 2 to 3 years ago and played for 3 consecutive seasons. He added it would be important for all the clubs to monitor their impact on the pitch as this would allow each club's impact to be measured.

Sheryl Williamson had nothing to add but had noted all the arguments presented.

Simon Buggey explained he had no doubt that it is likely there would be extra wear and tear on the pitch but the Parish Council could not, at this time, assess what this will be. Until the Parish Council know what the damage will be it is hard to put any mitigation measures in place. He added he did not think this was a reason to refuse the request but there may be consequences that would need to be addressed in due course. He is fully supportive of all age groups being able to use the recreation ground facilities and is conscious not to give preference to one club over another. He acknowledged that 11 games over a 9-month period is a relatively small number of games and will be limited to one season. He concluded that the Parish Council may need to accept the risk and deal with the consequences afterwards, although there may be costs associated with this decision.

A vote by a show of hands was taken on whether to allow Dynamo Foxton U18 to use the adult football pitch on the recreation ground for this season only.

4 Parish Councillors were in favour and 2 against. It was agreed to allow Dynamo Foxton U18 team to use the adult sports pitch on Sunday mornings, as detailed in their letter dated 4 September 2020, for this season.

Simon added that he hoped the sports clubs and the Parish Council will work together to deal with any consequences of this decision.

**Next Parish Council meeting on 5 October 2020 7.45pm**

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

Annabel Wright  
Foxton Parish Clerk, 21 September 2020

## Appendix 1

### Appeal letter dated 4 September 2020 from Dynamo Foxton



Dear Members of Foxton Parish Council,

Dynamo Foxton Football Club would like to re-submit the application for our U18 team to play on the adult football pitch.

#### Details of our application

Our team would play one home game on the main pitch, on average less than once every two weeks. Four games are scheduled for the remainder of this year, with up to another seven games between January and May 2021. This means that we are asking permission to play in effect slightly over once a month on the pitch, although cup games may add a couple of matches. However, at most it will be less than once every two weeks. It is also likely that some games may not be played later in the season as U18 teams often fold as a level exams approach. The heart of the U18 team (eight players) learned football and enjoyed coaching and playing for Foxton from an early age until the team unfortunately folded in 2018.

#### Our History

Dynamo Foxton Football Club were formed in 2008, and since then have grown to support well over one hundred children at any one time, from Foxton and local villages, in their sporting and team development.

#### Rec Contribution

As Dynamo Foxton FC grew more popular and successful, the teams grew too large to only use the School pitch, Foxton Rec has been used and the club have made an annual contributor to the pitch maintenance. The club have been able to make significant financial support to the upkeep of the Rec including some ambitious restoration initiatives such as the earthquaking of the Rec, which although not seen as a need for our club to spend money on, were supported in the spirit of community.

Below is a list of the contributions that the club have made over the last three years, a total of nearly five thousand pounds;

Year	Contribution	Amount
2017	Fuel for mowing of Rec	£50.00
2017	Grass seeding of Rec	£325.00
2018	Pitch Marking	£263.40
2018	Grass seeding of Rec	£338.00
2019	Slitter to aerate roots and stimulate grass growth	£120.00
2019	Fuel for mowing of Rec	£50.00
2019	Grass seeding of Rec	£350.00

2019	Purchase of fertiliser	£200.00
2019	Earthquaking of cricket and football pitches	£250.00
2019	Weed control	£120.00
2019	Grass cutting	£300.00
2020	Contribution to purchase new mower	£650.00
2020	Purchase of fertiliser	£600.00
2020	Grass seeding of Rec	£350.00
2020	Weed control	£120.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£4,871.40</b>

#### **Precedence**

Councillors have expressed concern over Sunday morning football and the impact on car parking/ church and disturbance to residents

When the application to play on the adult pitch, we did not envisage any problems with this as Sunday youth football had taken place before on the Rec for three previous seasons 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18.

During those three seasons, the club received no complaints regarding car parking, nor from local residents about the events. On match days, there were no negative community issues, in fact there was a huge positive atmosphere of a young cohort of teenagers getting great exercise, developing as team players and having enjoyment on their local Rec. The proposed format of games would be exactly the same as previous seasons, with additional safeguarding in regard to social distancing and Covid-19 guidance.

#### **State of the pitch**

The grounds for refusal were based upon concerns about the state of the pitch and especially the compaction issues. We respect that the Rec is a finite resource. However, Dynamo Foxton FC are conscientious users of this resource and have been a significant contributor to its upkeep and welfare since we began playing. Most of the teams are young with very little footprint or impact upon the rec at all although we respect the impact of an older side is more significant.

The question that we ask you to consider is whether the Parish Council consider that games that we propose to play, at very most once every two weeks over a **nine month period**, is really going to make a significant degradation of the pitch.

We would also like to repeat the view that Foxton recreation ground is unlikely to be any worse than any other Rec of equivalent level, it just that due to the exceptional care and attention that is given to this Rec, the council have looked harder at the issues.

#### **Game pitch monitoring**

DFFC recognise the sensitive nature of the Rec and will be happy to keep a photographic library and monitor the games both before and after, should that be deemed necessary by the parish council. We are responsible in assessing the playability of the pitches in extreme weather conditions, for example potential waterlogging or ground frost. This would be of value in informing future teams as long as all adult teams were doing it.

#### **Adult goals**

Dynamo Foxton FC would request the hiring of Foxton FC goals, as we did for the previous three seasons. If this is refused then we would purchase another set, although this would be an

unnecessary additional storage headache on the Rec and it is hoped that the former option will be possible.

**Covid-19**

Dynamo Foxton FC will follow Covid-19 guidance from the Football Association. Currently this means that no players will use the changing rooms and come to matches and leave with their kit.

**The importance of this team to this group of players**

This team is hugely important to these young players. They have a tremendous team spirit and made a brave decision to refuse to split up and play adult football. This cohort are facing unprecedented disruption to their social lives and education in the year they take their A level exams. Their training provides great motivation and drive as a team and they cannot wait to play a game. For them, it is a hugely important release from their studies. Their desire to stay together and play as a group was the principal reason for Marcus to agree to coach again, as he was more than happy to have hung up his boots. However, he sees supporting them this year as important over and above the football and would ask the council to consider this benevolently in their decision making process.

The view of us as local residents, parents and coaches is that surely, we want a Rec used positively by young adults. We feel that a talented group of local players, that love playing at Foxton and playing there as they get older is a great thing to nurture and that this is one of the things that a recreation ground is for, especially at a time when such opportunities are in short supply. As a club we have consistently paid generously towards the upkeep of the Rec and we should have the right to play there, in a considerate and responsible manner.

We ask you to please re-consider our application.

On behalf of the Committee of Dynamo Foxton Football Club



Bruce Gilliam  
Secretary