

**EF25-030 NORMANDY COMMON**

**i) Leases**

NTC – This is currently with the solicitors for the amendments that the council requested.

NCC – The Deed of Variation is now ready for review. Please read and review

**ii) Normandy Youth Football Club**

The football club has agreed to pay £50 and a new contract will be sent shortly. They have requested permission to use some portable flood lights for training once a month in the evening.

**Matters for consideration**

Does that committee agree to the football club using the lights?

**iii) Sunday Football club football**

The council has received a request from a group that includes three Normandy residents, to use the football pitch on a Sunday. The organisers have recently formed a new team this year by merging two previous teams that folded. They previously sought (informally) to use the pitch, they were advised that the pitch's poor quality made it unlikely to withstand the pressures of an additional team, which led them to secure a different venue. They have returned with the request, keen to use their local facility, and have requested it is formally considered. The request is for every other Sunday, however there may be 3 Sundays in 1 month and only 1 on the next, depending on match requirements.

While sports use by local residents aligns with the council's goals for community engagement and health, there remains genuine concern about further degradation of the pitch and the conservation status of Normandy Common. Regular use places pressure on the playing surface, which has been noted to suffer from under-maintenance, this has been due to a lack of need from residents in the past 5 years.

Concerns from a conservation point of view

- width

The adult pitch needs to be wider than the youth football pitch which means that more needs to be kept cut and low. We have allowed a 3-4m long grass/vegetation strip around the football pitch to provide cover for wildlife, improve the diversity of species and thus broaden the habitat.

The grass is mostly left long through the summer months (April to early September), though leaving some of the edge areas longer through the winter is beneficial for wildlife.

The north side of the pitch (cricket pitch side) is the most interesting grassland and includes patches of acidic grassland which is an increasingly rare habitat in the UK and especially Surrey.

- Pitch improvements

The adult club may be required to (by FA) or may wish to do some pitch improvements to meet any standards for the level they play at.

Much of the pitch is covered with a range of wildflowers that provide nectar throughout the summer, even with the regular mowing. Though the pitch is thought to have some level of drainage, the ditches are being used to hold water back in times of high rainfall, rather than hasten water away. Flooding of the pitch is preferable to flooding of homes, roads etc

Pitch improvements that require any pesticide or herbicide should not be allowed at all.

From previous discussions with the FA about potential pitch improvements these can be:

- Only in the main areas of high use (centre circle and around the goals)
- Across the whole pitch.
- Can be from a bit of additional soil and reseeding (eg around the goals/heavy area use zones) to covering the whole pitch with soil and re-seeding.
- To use of herbicides to remove non-grass species along with adding soil and reseeding.

The Council have a herbicide policy which should be followed and any improvement across the whole pitch will impact the existing biodiversity.

**Matters for consideration:**

Consider the request, balancing the desire to support a new, local team with the responsibility to conserve the SNCI and maintain the pitch quality.

1. Does the committee have enough information to make a decision?
2. If no, what other information does the committee need?
3. If yes;

Option a. Agree that Adult football can use the pitch on a Sunday, no conditions

Option b. Agree adult football can use the pitch on a Sunday, with conditions.

Option c. Adult football cannot use the pitch on a Sunday.

Potential conditions could be:

- a trial year for 25/26 to assess the impact on the pitch
- management during the season (up to X date) to be done by the club and not by NPC and is limited to mowing the grass and putting in lines, of a colour agreed with Youth Football so marking is clear.

- Once/twice during the season, renovation of the goal area/other heavy use areas to be identified and agreed with NPC, renovation limited to adding soil, smoothing out the area and reseeding.
  - No herbicides or pesticides to be used anywhere on the pitch
  - No mowing or cutting of any vegetation beyond the agreed lines (eg 3-4m width) after X date and before Y date.
4. Consider the hire fees for them to play - other clubs pay £5 per hour, but do so on a monthly basis not per week.