

To consider request from Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust to use the former St Mark's School Playground in conjunction with youth provision at Herston Village Hall

In March Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust (S&PDT) contacted the Town Council seeking Members' agreement to their use of the former St Mark's school playground off of Jubilee Road in connection with youth provision at Herston Village Hall. The site is in the ownership of Dorset Council, but the Town Council has expressed an interest in taking on the management of the former school playing field, playground and access road since 2014. Heads of Terms were agreed for a 21-year lease in February 2018 and a draft lease is in the final stages of preparation.

Following an initial discussion with the Town Clerk, and on the basis that the Town Council was likely to be broadly supportive of such an initiative, S&PDT made an application to Dorset Council for grant funding to help equip the hall for youth club purposes, including the acquisition of informal outdoor play items for use on the playground. The Trust was successful in being awarded £6,100.

In a further e-mail of 8th April, the Trust offered to take on the caretaking responsibilities of the playground for a period of two years. The e-mails from Mr Bob Foster, chairman of the Trust, are copied below for information.

Mr Foster has met the Council's Operations Manager on site to carry out an initial risk assessment of the proposed use. The hard surface itself is in good condition, but remedial works are required to the fencing, gates and boundary kerbing. An estimate for these works has been obtained in the sum of £4,250. If unsupervised access to the playground is envisaged then a further £3,250 of works is required. The kerbing works are yet to be costed, but an update may be available at the meeting.

The Town Council has budgeted a total of £7,500 for works to this property as a whole in the current financial year, to be carried out following completion of the lease. The largest item of expenditure is replacement of the safety surface in the small grassed play area. This budget, agreed in 2018 following an initial report by the Council's then Operations Manager, contained a sum of £900 for fencing and kerbing repairs.

When the initial enquiry was received from S&PDT it was anticipated that the long-awaited lease agreement with Dorset Council would have been completed by now. Unfortunately, however, the in-house solicitor at Dorset Council has left and the work has had to be re-allocated. There is currently no indication as to when the lease will be completed.

Therefore, if the Town Council wishes to back this initiative it will need to support S&PDT in applying to Dorset Council for permission to use the playground prior to the completion of the lease. It is anticipated that Dorset Council will not undertake the repairs required and, therefore, the Town Council is faced with the decision of whether to seek their permission to undertake the works prior to the lease being finalised.

Decisions required

To confirm whether or not the Town Council is willing to support the use of the former St Mark's School playground, off of Jubilee Road, by S&PDT as outdoor space for youth club provision at Herston Village Hall.

To consider whether to commit funds to undertake the works to the fencing and kerbing in advance of the lease being completed.

To defer the decision about a longer-term caretaking arrangement until such time as the lease has been completed.

Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

April 2021

E-mail correspondence from Mr Bob Foster, Chairman of Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust

Sent: 17 March 2021 09:33

Subject: Playground at rear of Herston Village Hall

Dear Martin,

As discussed on Friday, we are gearing up to reopen Swanage Youth Club after Easter. We have decided to reopen it at the redecorated Herston Village Hall, due to the pressure on cleaning at the Centre due to the Childcare facility continuing to operate through the Covid restrictions.

We were planning pre-Covid to increase the number of evenings for the Club and eventually we may operate from both sites.

In the meantime, we would ideally like, if possible, to use the outside space, at the rear of HVH, currently vacant, for informal sports activities such as basketball, football, outside badminton etc.

It has been suggested to us by DC that we apply for a Club Grant of up to £10,000. Applications have to be submitted by 24 March and the funding Board will meet on 25 March to decide on the applications.

We intend to apply and it would be helpful if you could let us know if STC are prepared to allow the Youth Club, managed by SPDT, to use the playground, for the foreseeable future, please. We are applying, for the grant, on the basis of the priorities set out in the DC, Young and Thriving policy, which includes outside activities and a variety of spaces and places.

As discussed, I am happy to meet Gail, on site, to consider the H&S issues, and ongoing security of the site

If you could let me know well in advance of our deadline of 24 March, please, I can include a list of outside equipment, needed, as part of our application.

We intend to take on additional youth workers and promote the opening and the new approach, well in advance, to build interest and membership.

Best wishes,

Bob

Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust

Sent: Wed, 31 Mar 2021 8:52
Subject: HVH and the playground

Hi Martin,

I confirm that we were successful in raising £6,100 from the DC Youth Club Grant Scheme. This provides us with enough funding to equip HVH for use by Swanage Youth Club and provide informal sports equipment for the playground, when that becomes available.

In the meantime, we are organising a survey of young people and what they require, through the schools. Once that has been completed we can start marketing and open the Youth Club.

Following my meeting on site, with Gail, we know what is required to make the playground safe ready for use.

We will not start buying equipment for the playground until STC has made the decision, on use by SPDT, for the Youth Club.

National Trust have indicated that they will donate an outside table tennis table, for the playground, surplus to their requirements, when we are ready.

Best wishes,

Bob

Sent: 08 April 2021 10:49
Subject: Re: HVH and the playground

Dear Martin,

Further to my previous email, the Trustees and I have been giving further thought to the future of the site, once it is fully equipped.

We believe that it will be a very useful Community resource for wider use, in addition to the Youth Club. We think that fitness groups, other youth groups and organisations linked to Wellbeing Swanage are likely to want to use the space on a regular basis. It will be ideal for open air exercise as we come out of Covid and beyond.

If STC are interested, the Trust would be prepared to manage both the use (bookings, keyholder, etc) and the security of the site on a full time basis. We are flexible about any legal arrangement between us, but I would have thought that a licence for, say, 2 years, with a general understanding that it can be renewed at the end of that time would be acceptable to the Trust. I would have thought that would also give STC reassurance about flexibility over future use.

In terms of the Trust's expectations of income from the site, we are only looking to recover any costs incurred, which are likely to be management and maintenance related rather than any other annual costs. The charges for Community use should therefore be minimal.

As a matter of interest, I attach a photo of the very substantial outdoor table tennis table we have been offered by the National Trust. We have said that we would like to accept the kind offer, subject to STC's agreement to the Trust's, Community Use, being confirmed at the Council Meeting on 26 April. As you can see, from the concrete construction, we will need to have it moved professionally, once the decision is made.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Bob

