

Report of the interim Strategic Director

**HICKINGS LANE RECREATION GROUND – PROPOSED LEASE
WITH STAPLEFORD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB**1. Purpose of report

To advise members of a proposal from Stapleford Town Football Club to enter into a 25 year lease with the Borough Council for Football Pitch 3 at Hickings Lane Recreation Ground.

2. Background

Stapleford Town Football Club was formed in 2012 and use Hickings Lane Recreation Ground as their main home ground. The club has grown significantly over the last few years and the use of the pitches at Hickings Lane Recreation Ground as their “Home” ground has worked well for both the club and the Council. Details of the club’s formation and development are shown at appendix 1.

3. Proposal

In order for the club to progress to the next level at Hickings Lane there are certain standards that must be achieved relating to pitch quality, pitch size, provision of a boundary fence and installation of dug outs. In order to achieve these the club is looking to apply to the Football Association for funding. However, one of the FA requirements is that the club has a 25 year lease for the site. The club have submitted a formal application for such a lease and details of this and the view of the Council’s Estates and Legal teams on this proposal are detailed in appendix 2.

4. Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications for the Council relating to this application. If the club are successful in obtaining a lease then there will be a potential reduction in the direct maintenance requirement for the Council on the site and the opportunity for the club to secure additional funds that will improve facilities. The club would fund directly the provision of dug outs, perimeter fence and any changes to the footpath on the site to allow the pitch size to be increased.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND to the Policy and Performance Committee that the Council subject to agreeing Heads of Terms with the Stapleford Town Football Club to grant a 25-year lease for pitch 3 at Hickings Lane Recreation Ground to Stapleford Town Football Club.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX 1

The Club: Its Formation and Development

The roots of Stapleford Town Football Club go back to 2002 with the formation of Stapleford Villa Football Club in 2002.

The vision at the heart of Stapleford Villa's football activities was the desire to provide and expand football facilities for youth and local residents of all ages with Hickings Lane Recreation Ground as the clubs home ground, supplying a base where players' love for the game of football could be developed and expanded.

After early successes the club declined due to a lack of professional management and resources.

In 2012 a core group consisting of some members of the previous management team and a group of supporters from the community in Stapleford, including parents, young people, local businesses and football enthusiasts, came together to relaunch the Club now known as Stapleford Town Football Club.

The management team of the relaunched Stapleford Town Football Club were determined that the Club be a grass roots community based club with an emphasis on providing a safe football facility that was welcoming to all.

From the very beginning the club identified its vision as ensuring that all young people had the opportunity to take part in football activities and be able to fulfil their potential.

The clubs aims are to:

- Raise the profile and awareness of football in Stapleford and the surrounding areas.
- Increase the number of players participating in football activities.
- Improve the quality and professionalism at all levels including both playing and coaching.
- Provide opportunities and pathways for talented individuals to perform and excel.

Since its inception the Club has expanded from 3 teams in 2012 to 27 teams, with 331 registered players.

The club has 31 fully qualified FA registered coaches.

The club runs teams from U8's to U16's with a men's senior and reserve team. The club also run soccer schools for ages 3-7 years.

As the club has developed the professional standards applicable have risen. The club has achieved FA "Charter Standard", an award made by the FA under an accreditation

scheme that sets a gold standard recognising and rewarding, commitment, quality and achievement.

APPENDIX 2

Request for a 25 Year Lease for Pitch 3 at Hickings Lane Recreation Ground

Since 2016 the Club has successfully worked with the Council in utilising the football pitch's at Hickings Lane Recreation Grounds as their main "Home" ground.

The area which the club is seeking a 25 year lease for is shown within the bold line on the plan at Appendix 3.

The club would be responsible for maintaining the pitch and its surrounds to the extent of 2 metres beyond the boundary of the playing area. The Council would continue to be responsible for maintaining the area of the recreation ground outside this defined area including boundaries, tree and hedge maintenance.

During the lease the club would plan to:

- Maintain and improve the pitch's playing surface by the application of a regular sports turf maintenance programme, this includes mowing, scarifying and fertilising and implementing the recent FA Pitch Improvement Plan for the site.
- Levelling the playing surface by removing localised high spots.
- "Verti-draining" the pitch.

With a 25 year lease the club would be able to increase the standard of football played on pitch 3. The FA measure pitch and facility standards with a numbered grading system. The club would initially look to achieve step 7 standard. In addition to the facilities already provided on the site, this requires:

- Security of Tenure for 25 years on the ground.
- Pitch perimeter barrier. A concrete post and metal rail is the standard used on other similar sites. This would have double gates for machinery and access. The public would not be excluded from this area (see Appendix 4).
- A minimum playing area of between 90m x 45m and 120m x 90m. The club area looking for a mid-range size of 100m x 64m. This can be achieved by extending the length of the pitch by 3 metres and an adjustment to the stone path on the site. The club would fund all this work to the Council's specification.
- Technical area and training box. The club are proposing secure lockable brick built structures within their defined area.

As a long term aim the club would like for their first teams to be able to play at the next level up, i.e. step 6. This does however require additional facilities to be provided such as floodlights and a boundary fence. The club recognise however that these would need further consultation with the Council and a detailed planning application.

The club are aware that there may be changes to the pavilion on this site at some point in the future and are keen to work with the Council to achieve any possible improvements. The involvement of the football club offers the potential to work with the Football Association to potentially secure additional funding for such a project with Hickings Lane pavilion listed as priority in the emerging Broxtowe Local Football Facilities Plan. This document is being produced in partnership with Nottinghamshire FA.

Comments from Estates and Legal

The land has always been held by the Council as public open space, the Council will be able to rely on the Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 powers to lease part of the land. There will be procedural requirements to adhere to (such as advertising and consultation).

There is also a restriction on the land for it not to be used other than as a public children's playground, but this applies to the children's play area and not part of the open space which the pitch will be situated on.