THE FRANK MONTGOMERY PLAYING FIELD TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CONSULTATION EVENT HELD ON 13 JUNE 2025 AT 5.00PM IN WICKHAMBREAUX VILLAGE HALL, THE STREET, WICKHAMBREAUX

Present: Linda Lodge
Caroline Rees (C. Rees)
Charles Rees (CH. Rees)
John Cotton
Tracy Harris
Mary

Gail Hubbard, Secretary

11 Members of the Public

1. **CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

L. Lodge thanked everyone for coming and introduced the members of the committee present. Apologies for absence were received from P. Mills, E. Stewart AND Oban. L. Lodge also advised the meeting would be recorded.

L. Lodge handed over to C. Rees to explain the project origins in further detail.

2. **NEW EQUIPMENT FOR THE PLAYING FIELD**

C. Rees read the following statement explaining how the ideas originated:

Before we begin I would just like to say thank you for everyone for giving up your time on a Friday evening.

I also want to clear the air and hopefully share a little more information as to how we got to this situation we are in.

I joined the playing field committee in 2014 after I had organised a major working party of some 40 people, who helped cut back years of un tamed bramble and nettle growth within the boundary fence of the playing field. This was many hours of work, we had a tractor and trailer removing the off cuts until the trailer got a puncture, so the rest was disposed of by several bonfires. The difference to the open space was incredible and we gained approximately an 1/8 the of area back.

Our then small committee started fund raising to replace the old, no longer fit for purpose play equipment.

We started with collecting clothes for cash and in 2016 we hosted our very first classic car show raising £3.5k.

We consulted several play companies and in 2015, we hosted a community wide consultation with plans from a variety of play companies and residents were asked to vote on the type of equipment they preferred.

Our small committee chose wood play equipment in-keeping with the style of our village.

The parish council fully supported the FMPF committee, and the PC purchased the pirate ship costing over 10K. We continued to fund raise, apply for grants and with many working parties the old equipment was removed and replaced with new equipment.

This has been an ongoing project to improve and provide play equipment for the children of this and surrounding villages for e.g. Ickham who did not have easy access to play equipment.

Every step of the way has been documented, discussed, agreed, and had full parish council support. During the period between 2014 and 2017 we had very little complaints from any residents in relation to the development, even after the play equipment was installed. Yet there has always been a very 'open door' attitude from the committee with residents, with most residents having my mobile number and some my home number, most have or certainly have access to the clerk of the PC mobile number or email address, along with Linda and I's email address.

One summer, we received around13 emails - all from the same resident - in a 3 week period after the zip wire was installed; we have had the odd email regarding the boundary fence, and we had an email in relation to the willow dome being installed.

I have turned myself inside out, trying to please all residents that have contacted me, including responding to calls at 9pm and cycling down to the playing field with a coat over my PJ's to ask people to leave, but I have had to accept that I will never please everyone, but I would if I could.

In 2017 and 2022 we held our 2nd and 3rd classic car show and fetes.

In 2022, we had further consultation and by the residents' guidance, we chose to install the all-inclusive roundabout, which was first out of a list of possible equipment.

Next on the list was a football goal and a basketball hoop, these had been requested from several residents with teenagers and pictures of the MUGA units were being sent to me.

I had to start somewhere, and having been sent pictures asking if we could have a MUGA, it seemed a good starting point.

A bit like the chicken and the egg, we needed to know how much money we needed to raise, and so quotes were started to be obtained in 2022. We applied for grants and these were unsuccessful. Again, all quotes, the discussions, decisions were documented, recorded in both FMPF meetings and reported to the PC.

As you all know, we have just held our 40th birthday celebration of the playing field. Preparations for this started for me back in August last year and since January this year, all of my weekends, and spare time, even taking time off work and not doing as much for my family or my home, have been consumed with preparations and planning.

Then we were successful with our grant application to the CCC, and we now had just enough money to purchase the goal and the Netball net. Then unfortunately I got an email from our preferred company to state that prices would be increasing in May. This would have out priced us and put us back to below budget. We also have had to spend the grant money in this period, so to be perfectly honest, my head was crammed full of classic car show. I now needed to get a decision on said goal, and so I immediately put it on the next PC and got our clerk to write a letter to residents.

This is how we got to this position.

I wish to apologise to you all about the grief this goal has caused. I never wanted to upset anyone but, as many of you already know, I strongly believe that this goal would be the perfect addition to our playing field.

C. Rees then opened the meeting up and invited views from those present.

3. **FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**
A summary of the points raised at the meeting are as follows:

- Concerns were raised over smaller children using the playing field being hit by footballs.

- It was mentioned that the kids already use jumpers as goals so arguably they already play there.
- It was noted that the playing field is ‘young children heavy’ at present with nothing for the teenagers/youth.
- Concerns were raised over the football goal attracting groups of teenagers, possibly from outside the village. Other villages have their own goals (like Littlebourne) so those children wouldn’t travel to Wickhambreaux just for a goal.
- This playing field is for the children of Wickhambreaux and Ickham. Ickham now have an outdoor table tennis table at the little green, Wickhambreaux kids may well go and use this facility and vice versa.
- Questions over how the curfew (currently dusk) would work. Reality is it can’t be policed, if an antisocial problem developed something else would have to be done. As with any current issues they should be reported to the Police or the Community Warden.
- Questions on size and dimensions of the goal were asked. This has not been decided but it would not be a full sized goal, but one suitable for teenagers under 15 years. Advice would be sought and this would all need to be agreed by the committee. The committee have a selection of brochures from suppliers.
- Concern raised that if a fixed goal is installed at one end then jumpers may be used for the other end to create a proper game. It was argued this already takes place.
- Although they understand the need for something for the youth, could non group activities be considered; like adult gym equipment – which would attract much less noise. Other options need to be explored.
- CH. Rees spoke on behalf of the teenagers/youth to say team activities is what they want, they can play at home on their own on games consoles, they want to interact with each other.
- The question of who will make the decision was asked. C Rees explained that following this consultation event, the Committee would meet again and agree what recommendation to make to the parish council, who as owners of the playing field have the ultimate decision. The decision would be made at a full parish council meeting.
- It is likely that any full consultation amongst the village (council tax payers) would be positive as people would want the equipment and the majority would be less affected by its installation.
- It was suggested perhaps getting a team to play/train on the playing field on a Saturday would be better – to have an organised session, residents would then know there would only be noise on that day. Lack of volunteers/other problems could arise from this.
- The school used to put up their football goals for the season then remove out of season, is this an option?
- The goal might prove to be a novelty when first installed, then the use might tail off. The zip line was certainly very popular for the first year.

- L. Lodge suggested maybe a trial with a temporary goal, this was met with a positive response amongst those present.
- Would there be an uplift in activity created by the goal? That is the question – a trial could answer this.
- The current proposed position of the goal is 13m from J. Cotton's boundary fence, with the thinking that with a smaller/lower goal the balls wouldn't be aimed so high so would go sailing over the fence, especially from this distance.
- The grounds man confirmed there would be no mowing problems with a goal in situ.
- There were two full size goals on the playing field some 20 years ago, but now there are not the quantity of children in the village as there were then. There is unlikely to be lots of teenagers.
- It was suggested a smaller goal is a good idea and also a temporary one
- Currently the zip line creates the most noise on the playing field.
- Mary suggested a temporary goal is installed and then the residents are consulted again.
- The basketball hoop was mentioned, and it was asked if it would have a backboard as this could create noise. Backboards can be provided softened for installation in rural areas. The proposed position of the hoop is away from the rear of any properties, near the roadside.
- Summer holidays were suggested as a good time to monitor a goal at its worst, it would be interesting to see how late kids want to stay out playing football.
- The committee don't want to lock the gates to the playing field, this brings problems with key rotas and volunteers.
- It was asked if the sign could be altered from closing at dusk to 8pm or another time.

L. Lodge thanked everyone for the comments and said she hoped this had allayed fears.

4. **NEXT STEPS**

Committee to meet again and discuss the views and points raised from this evenings meeting then to decide what to recommend to the parish council for their July meeting.

The meeting closed at 6pm

Signed……..... (Chairman)

Date…….....