

Roundtable Meeting between Wiltshire Council and Bradford on Avon Town Council

Re: Culver Close, Bradford on Avon

Tuesday 31 May 2011, Town Council Offices

1. Introductions:

Representing Bradford on Avon Town Council - Cllr Peter Leach, Cllr John Potter, Cllr Paul Skidmore, Cllr Simon Fisher, Cllr Vicky Landell-Mills, Cllr Jonathan Brown, Cllr Alison Craddock, Cllr Janet Repton, Val Baker (Administrator)

Representing Wiltshire Council - Cllr Malcolm Hewson, Cllr Rosemary Brown, Steve Ibbetson (Technical Manager), Richard Mortimer (Technical Team Leader - Open Spaces), Colin Brown (Play and Leisure Strategy Officer), Peter Dunford (Community Area Manager)

2. Background

The meeting had been called to discuss the better strategic management of recreation assets in Bradford on Avon where the unitary council and the town councils currently both own and manage fields and sporting activities on behalf of the community. Discussions had previously been held with both West Wiltshire District Council and Wiltshire County Council regarding the opportunity.

Wiltshire Council is supporting the principle of the transfer of community assets in order to empower and strengthening local communities. The Council believes that transferring appropriate public assets to communities leads to more responsive services that better meet local people's priorities.

Transfer of an asset can also provide the opportunity to lever more resources into a community and provide a more accessible and responsive base from which to deliver local services.

A community group or organisation can benefit from greater financial stability and build confidence through having ownership (or long term security through a lease) of a physical asset. This financial sustainability can help the organisation become less dependent on grants, provide security for further borrowing and opportunities for further growth.

Typically, organisations that would be considered appropriate are Voluntary and Community Groups/Associations, Town or Parish Councils, Trusts or Charities, or Social Enterprise Groups.

3. The Asset

A map was circulated showing the land in the vicinity of Culver Close under the ownership of Wiltshire Council. This included Culver Close itself, the Barton Farm Country Park, associated buildings and other land such as car parks. It was noted that the Barton Farm Play Area is owned by WC but is designated as 'unregistered land' by the Land Registry.

The Town Council expressed an interest in taking on ownership with full management and maintenance responsibilities for these public assets. Alternatively they could just take on the maintenance without the asset being transferred. The asset transfer could be freehold or leasehold ownership and might include delegated staff. Wiltshire Council has recently transferred the freehold of a recreation field to Calne Town Council supplemented by Section 106 monies for its development/improvement (**ACTION: Town Clerk to seek further information from Calne TC**)

Land elsewhere was also discussed, including Poulton Recreation Field and The Strips. A request was made for an asset map of the whole town to show the full portfolio of Wiltshire Council assets which could potentially be subject to local transfer. (**ACTION: Colin Brown to source and circulate a map**)

4. Community Asset Transfer Process

CAT has been a policy of Wiltshire Council since its inception in 2009 and is now supported nationally by Government through the proposals contained within the Localism Bill, likely to be enacted by the end of 2011.

Applications forms and guidance notes were circulated. The process is that the applicant expresses its interest in taking on the asset; in return a proposal is made to the applicant by Wiltshire Council; if acceptable to the applicant this proposal is then discussed by the Bradford on Avon Area Board and the transfer is approved, referred to Cabinet with conditions attached or refused with reasons given.

Delegation of services that maintain the asset is a separate process and this is triggered by the application for the Asset Transfer.

5. Appetite for Transfer

In principle, the Town Council supports the 'return' of these assets to the town.

It was considered to be appropriate that the applicant should be a third party community group or trust, suitably constituted to take on these responsibilities. The Bradford on Avon Sports Association and the Bradford on Avon Development Trust were mentioned as suitable organisations.

6. Issues for Clarification

Some of the buildings in the WC estate were considered to require investment to bring them up to a sound standard before any transfer could be considered e.g. the pavilion changing rooms and toilets at Culver Close.

The house at Culver Close is used by an employee of English Landscapes. The EL contract presently runs until November 2012.

A meeting is required with Mark Hunnybun to discuss the details of the property estate
(ACTION: Mark Hunnybun to contact the Town Clerk to arrange a further scoping meeting)

The next step will be to fill out the application forms and submit to WC. This investigative work could be done without formal approval, although any resulting actions would need to be agreed by the Full Council. **(ACTION: Town Clerk with support from Community Area Manager)**

7. Management of competing sporting uses at Culver Close

Colin Brown outlined the issue posed by the dual use of Culver Close by the cricket and football clubs. Papers were circulated containing responses from the sports clubs to a piece of rapid consultation carried out by the Bradford on Avon Community Area Partnership into the issues caused by this dual use.

Bradford on Avon Cricket Club is a successful club with a strong youth development programme and with aspirations of promotion to the regional cricket league. They maintain their cricket square at their own cost but the quality of the wicket and the chances of their promotion are being affected by the use of the field as a football pitch.

Bradford United Football Club runs teams in the local football leagues and is a feeder club to the Bradford Town Football Club based at Avon Sports Field on Trowbridge Road.

The football pitch is sited directly over the cricket square and, with poor weather, has resulted in the field becoming muddy and churned up at the time that the cricket wicket needs to be prepared for the new season.

Alternative sites for football at Poulton Recreation Field and at St Laurence School have been mooted by the Council but resisted by the Football Club as a long term option.

Wiltshire Council officers have expressed a desire to protect the future of the cricket use of Culver Close above that of the football use.

The Football Club are keen to resolve their future urgently. Councillor Malcolm Hewson, the local Wiltshire Councillor, has asked that the matter be discussed at the next meeting of the Bradford on Avon Sports Association and the Leisure Youth and Arts Committee on 5 July 2011. Colin Brown will write to both parties setting out the Council's preferred position on the matter. **(ACTION: Colin Brown/ Town Clerk)**

The Bradford on Avon Community Area Partnership, the co-ordinator of the recent Sports Festival in the town, has asked to have an independent role in community consultation to help resolve this matter.

8. Any other Business

None.