

**PADDOCK WOOD TOWN COUNCIL**  
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**Minutes of the Local Plan Sports Discussion held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
at 4:30pm at the Day Centre, Commercial Road**

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**PRESENT:** Cllr Carol Williams (in the Chair, Chair of PWTC Planning Committee), Cllr Sarah Hamilton (deputy Chair of PWTC), Cllr Jeremy Thompson (PWTC Chair of Estates), Cllr Andrew Mackie (PWTC Planning committee member) Enza Small (Deputy Clerk), B Cllr & PW Cllr Mark Munday, B Cllr & PW Cllr Don Kent, B Cllr Adrian Pitts, Cllr Matt Lowe (TWBC cabinet member for Planning) Cllr Pamela Wilkinson (TWBC cabinet member for Sports, Leisure & Health), Tony Batchelder & Richard Harris (Athletics club chairman), John Hall (PWFC chairman), Zane Cheeseman (Hot Shotz Tennis director), Dave Cross (PWBC member), Steve Guthry & Kevin Turner (chairman and committee member of EP & PW Rugby Club), Peter Danby (interest in a PW cricket club)

## **1. Introduction**

Cllr C Willaims welcomes all to the meeting.

Cllr C Willams gave a short introduction into why the meeting was organised: The Local Plan is currently under a further six-week public consultation phase (Wednesday 11th September 2024 until midnight on Wednesday 23rd October 2024) due to the release of further supporting documents. Part of this discusses the Sports and Leisure plans for Paddock Wood. Because of this, Town Council felt it was beneficial to invite the Paddock Wood Sports teams to discuss these plans as well as discussing what plans the sports teams had for their individual clubs.

Paddock Wood Town Council does have a Neighbourhood Plan in place. The suggested sports option in this is for a new Sports hub to be located in the Eastlands area. This would provide a club building for all sports to centre around, along with new and drained playing pitches.

When Town Council members have had conversations with TWBC planning officers, they have explained a sports hub will no longer be an option due to the drop in housing potentially planned in Paddock Wood causing a lack in funding.

There appear to be planned sports hubs and centres going into Tunbridge Wells and other TW parishes, according to the Local Plan, so feel this may need to be challenged.

## 2. Putlands

Cllr C Willams explained a lot of the Local Plan sports suggestions centre around Putlands. The building and grounds are in need of updates and growth. Cllr C Williams asked each of the clubs to give an update on the clubs and the current needs:

### Rugby

Steve Guthry & Kevin Turner (chairman and committee member of EP & PW Rugby Club) provided the following information:

There are currently 45 members. The club would like to expand into youth and female teams. 2 pitches would be needed, with 1 flood lit. This would allow for the new groups to play on both Saturday and Sunday (youth and female teams) as well as a training evening in the week.

The club has been promoted the last 2 years in a row (Kent 5 league, which is the highest the club has been in 30 years) and aiming for a promotion again this year. The current pitches are prone to a lot of flooding causing a lot of matches being called off which will affect the chance of promotion.

The access to Putlands is also a big issue. Even though games are preorganised with Fusion, the building is often found locked. This has caused players often having to change at their cars with no access to showers after games. This always looks very poor to the visiting teams.

Social side of rugby is a big part. To have the added benefit of having somewhere to reconvene after a game would be beneficial. A bar area where players could put money back into the facility would be a real positive.

Because of the poor facilities, the club do lose better players to clubs with better facilities.

A sports hub would have been a great option and the rugby club would have been very happy to work along the other sports clubs in Paddock Wood to support this option.

The club also has access to their own funds along with potential grants from the RFU which could support any development.

### Bowls

Dave Cross (PWBC member) provided the following information:

There are 100+ members. The club house and changing rooms has recently been expanded to cater for this. The quality has grown, recently winning the top TW league. No plans to expand further at this current time However with Paddock Wood set to almost double in size, then it would not be unreasonable to assume that demand for our facilities could double in that period. That growth could not be accommodated within our current grounds. We would need to have a much bigger clubhouse and an increase to the size of the green to be able to

cater for the demand, whether this be on Putlands grounds or developed in a new Sports hub.

### Tennis

Zane Cheeseman (Hot Shotz Tennis director) provided the following information: Provide a range of different groups. From 3/4 year old groups, 14 year old groups & disability groups. The 2 courts are filled and used. 2 courts are enough for coaching but in order to create a club 4 (minimum) – 6 courts are ideally needed. For example, another site run by Hot Shotz Tennis has 5 courts and has a club of 600 members.

The current courts are not flood lit so affect winter playing. The adjacent community centre is used as an alternative during this but are prebooked most of the time which means the club cannot always play.

### Skatepark

Cllr C Williams explained Town Council were looking into obtaining funds for creating a new skatepark area, after local resident requests. This was put on hold after the Local Plan released suggestions on a new skate park on a different site.

Cllr Jeremy Thompson asked if Putlands would be the best site for this, would it cause further flooding seeing as the pitches are already in such a poor condition? Is there enough of a want for this to happen? Needs in depth planning and detail pulled together to decide on this. And ideally not in an area affected from flooding. If the site is to stay on Putlands would the addition of further equipment be better than completely redeveloping the site?

Cllr C Williams confirmed there has been a group of youth involved in this for some time and requested this. The Local Plan had originally mentioned the skate park but the most recent supporting documents do not appear to mention it. This needs to be clarified and discussed further.

### Athletics Club

Tony Batchelder & Richard Harris (Athletics club chairman) provided the following information:

Nearly up to 300 members (will be by the end of the year). Members range from 8 years old to 80 years old so is very age inclusive. The track is currently a 2-4-6 lane track with the layout available to create a full 6 lane in the future. This is something the club would like to develop. The club has been very successful and the wear and tear from use is beginning to show.

The most recent documents suggesting a new 6 lane athletics track based in Mascalls would not be wanted. The current track took a lot of work to get it where it is, it seems unnecessary to start again when it is far more cost effective to add onto the current site which already has a degree of drainage and groundwork

completed. It is concerning the sports hub is not feasible but a brand new athletics site is.

There would also be a huge concern around access to the site via Mascalls School. Communication is currently very poor. The price of hiring sites in Mascalls is also a huge expense as pricing is extremely high.

The preferred option would be to develop the Putlands site and building supporting what is already there.

### General

All the clubs explained the communication and access with Putlands is extremely poor. It was confirmed TWBC renewed the contract with Fusion until 2027.

Cllr Pamela Wilkinson explained 106 funds will be obtained to update Putlands in the future as it is clearly not working as a current site.

## **3. Football**

John Hall (PWFC chairman) provided the following information:

Currently 200 members.

The club is now having to turn new members away. We are not able to offer a girls or disability groups due to the current state of the site. The club house is too small to provide different sex matches (lack of changing rooms). The pitches are often flooded causing damage and matches to be postponed and cancelled. We are sending locals to other clubs. The club is always working towards a promotion, but the site issues do not support this.

The most recent developments in Paddock Wood did not provide further sports grounds or development of current grounds.

When discussing 106 funding for the new development that will be coming to Queen Street/Mile Oak Road (adjacent to Elm Tree football pitches), to renovate the current pitches, drainage and club house would be in the millions. Why are these funds not put into a new sports hub as set out via our Neighbourhood Plan. A sports hub would benefit all clubs and sports in and near to the Town.

The proposed Eastlands site partly sits in flood zones which is why it was also not an option. But a lot of the current playing fields also sit in flooding zones. If a new site was built and drainage started before the playing fields went down, the flooding issues on pitches would be less. It is also concerning how a sports hub would not be feasible but pockets of residential development is suitable.

A 3G pitch is needed in the town. Access to the Mascalls one is extremely difficult due to poor communication as well as being extremely costly (around £480 for 1 match. This does not include any set up or support).

Most sports will benefit from 3G pitches.

It feels Paddock Wood is last on the list for any infrastructure. It is Paddock Woods turn next. The town is in desperate need for updated sports facilities and infrastructure after the last lot of development, let alone another proposed 3000 homes.

#### **4. Peter Danby**

Propose a Centre of Excellence for Sports. This teams up well with the wanted Sports Hub. I believe Sports brings everyone together and binds all people. My suggestion is creating an organisation, with representatives from all sports clubs to work together.

Example is with cricket. Representatives from surrounding cricket clubs build a centre. Request perhaps 2-3 outdoor nets as well as some indoor. This allows locals to start using these sites in Paddock Wood. Then bring in coaches from the original surrounding clubs to run these sites (offer transport etc). from this the interest in the sports begins and a club can eventually be started.

Essentially it is creating a Paddock Wood Sports Council. 1<sup>st</sup> stage is starting the discussion like I am in this meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> stage is engagement. 3<sup>rd</sup> stage is structure and 4<sup>th</sup> stage is completing the club. 5<sup>th</sup> stage would then be maintaining and growth.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Cllr C Williams concludes. As mentioned from all the clubs, the booking system with the school is very poor. Vivify booking system is based in Manchester. It causes communication issues, high pricing and the maintenance on the grounds is poor. There are 4 tennis courts not used or utilised.

Between the concerns around Putlands and Mascalls it is clear a hub would be far better as this will be run and dealt with by the Sports clubs themselves, clearly expressed in this meeting.

There is clear lack of support and space for our current sports teams let alone the potential to develop on the missing clubs to the Town such as netball, hockey, cricket, climbing walls, skate parks etc.

Cllr C Williams and Deputy Clerk are awaiting a confirmed date from planning offices to take this information from the Sports clubs and discuss options. Borough Council can approve moving 106 funds to different areas, this may be required to develop for the needed growth. Something that will be raised at the meeting.

Cllr C Williams thanks all those who attended.

Meeting ended at 6:30pm