

LEICESTER FOREST EAST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting on Friday 15th December 2023, held in the Reg Neal Room of the Parish Hall, Kings Drive, Leicester Forest East, commencing at 6.00pm.

Present: R. Darlison (Chair) P. Kitchen (Vice-Chair) D. Di Palma
C. Wells

Four members of the public on behalf of Epworth Forest Football Club (Known collectively as 'Epworth' in these minutes)

Mrs H. E. Mann – Clerk to the Parish Council

EM 23.1 To receive apologies for absence

Resolution: Cllrs Bozzoni and Dawes sent their apologies which the Council duly accepted.

EM 23.2 To receive disclosures of interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct

None.

EM 23.3 To discuss price increases for football pitches for 2024-2025 Council decision –

The Council began by thanking the representatives from Epworth Football club for attending the meeting. It was explained that an email has been sent to Epworth on 06.10.2023 explaining the pitch hire price increases for 2024-2025 but it took almost two months for Epworth to reply to this email.

Epworth explained that the Council do not provide pitches, *per se*, it provides fields which Epworth then line mark and add goals to make them into pitches. Also, it took Epworth a while to respond to the email detailing the price increase as they, too, are run by Committee and it took a while for the Committee to issue a response. Epworth stated they were unhappy with the 450% price increase. Additionally, Epworth stated that there was a feeling that the Parish Council do not want Epworth to remain playing on the fields, the Council strongly refuted this.

It was stated that football clubs are struggling to find suitable places to play football. Money is tight for all clubs and any cost increases for clubs have to be passed on to players (via subs). Epworth are a not-for-profit club so every penny made goes back into the club. Epworth have the cheapest subs in the league as we want local girls to play football; some players are not charged fees if they are eligible under the club's hardship fund.

There was further discussion on the amounts Epworth players are charged and how much Epworth pay for hire of other venues.

The Council explained that there had not been a pitch hire price increase for several years and the Parish Council must ensure it is charging a fair price for hire to ensure LFE residents are getting best value for money when, for example, the cost of mowing the grass has risen significantly. This is why the hall hire prices have not risen by the same percentage as the pitch hire fees, they have risen steadily over the years but the Parish Council cannot afford to subsidise Epworth any longer (support was given by the Parish Council to Epworth over the years to the team as it was struggling).

Resolution: The Council resolved to increase the total amount paid by Epworth Football club for playing on the playing fields and use of facilities by 25% in 2024-2025 to £1,093.75 and then a further 75% of the original £875.00 in 2025-2026 to £1,750.00 but to have a meeting with Epworth and Leicester United in 2025 (before the 2025-2026 season) to discuss pricing for 2026-2027 and beyond. This will mean the price that Leicester United pay will also increase by 25% 2024-2025 (from current price of £150.00) to £187.50 and by 75% 2025-2026 to £300.00.

Clerk to:

- *Make Assistant Clerk aware of the pitch hire increases over the coming two years for invoicing and budgetary purposes.*
- *Make Leicester United aware of price increases for 2024-2025 and 2025-2026.*
- *Add to plan of work Council must have meeting with Epworth (and invite Leicester United) in 2025 (before the 2025-2026 season) to discuss pricing for 2026-2027 and beyond.*

EM 23.4

To discuss issue of football goal pins being left on the football pitch and repeatedly causing damage to equipment

The Council asked if one person at Epworth can be responsible for all goal pins to ensure that no more are left on the pitches (to date, six have been found and two have damaged the grounds maintenance contractor's mower). Epworth explained they have tried several different methods to control the goal pins to no avail. However, Epworth stated they would spray paint the goal pins different colours and count the pins out and back in to ensure none were left on the pitches, this has not been done and a sixth goal pin has been found on the pitches this week. This could cause serious damage to the grounds maintenance contractor's mower.

Going forward, Epworth stated they would spray paint all goal pins to ensure they are tacked and all goal pins will be counted out and counted back. Additionally, Epworth are going to try attaching the pins, with chains, to the end of the goals.

Epworth asked when the mowing takes place so it can send someone to double check all goal pins have been removed. The Clerk explained mowing takes place either Tuesday or Wednesday so Monday would be the best day to check.

The Council expressed its concerns over Epworth's posts on social media. Epworth agreed to retract the statements it had put on social media and to issue a new one.

Epworth asked that their point of contact be changed from one individual club member to another, the Council agreed to this.

The Clerk explained that for the Council to consider changing any decision has not made, that items must be listed on a Council agenda. As the December Council agenda has already been published it cannot, by law, be changed. Therefore, the earliest the Council can discuss changing this decision on banning Epworth if another goal pin is found is January.

Clerk to:

- *Add to January Council meeting to consider changing resolution to ban Epworth from playing on the playing fields (and use of the facilities) if another goal pin is found.*
- *Change the Epworth club contact and send all correspondence to them instead of current contact.*

EM 23.5

To discuss issue of waterlogged football pitches

Epworth questioned why there had been a change from the club deciding if the pitches were too waterlogged to play on to the Council making that decision. The Council explained that it had received complaints from residents saying the pitches have been damaged by being played on whilst waterlogged. Epworth explained it is in Epworth's best interests not to play on the pitches when they are waterlogged because if they do, they will be damaged for a long time and future games could be jeopardised. Also, Epworth's focus is on the safety of its players so playing on a waterlogged touch would not happen as a player is more likely to injure themselves.

Resolution: The Council decided that Epworth and Leicester United are permitted to decide for themselves whether a pitch is too waterlogged to play on.

Clerk to inform Leicester United that they can now decide on whether a pitch is too waterlogged to play on.

EM 23.6

To discuss other football issues:

Issues (a) to (c) were mentioned in a post on Facebook which is why they were added to the agenda.

(a) To discuss issue with toilets

No issue.

(b) To discuss issue with car parking

The car parking situation is much better now.

(c) To discuss pitch marking

This issue is now sorted.

Clerk to add to every Parks Committee agenda every month to discuss any issues Epworth have raised.

Epworth stated that they would like to invite a representative from the Council to attend their prize giving evening on 15th June 2015, the Council stated.

The meeting closed at 7.11pm.