

 <b>EXECUTIVE</b> <b>2nd December 2015</b>		<b>Agenda Item No. 6</b>
<b>Title</b>	Racing Club Warwick, St Mary's Lands, Warwick	
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<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	Aylesford, Warwick	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	Executive Meeting 3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2015, min 41 Full Council 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2014, min 50 Executive meeting 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2014, min 56 Executive meeting 16 <sup>th</sup> April 2014, min 189 Executive meeting 11 <sup>th</sup> September 2013, min 55 Executive meeting 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2013, min 13 Executive meeting 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2012, min 107	
<b>Background Papers</b>	See above reports plus Submitted Version of Local Plan 2015; SML Management Plan 2006; SML Regeneration Masterplan 2004; and SML Strategy 1998	

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>		No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>		No
<b>Key Decision?</b>		No
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>		No
<b>Equality &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>		No
<b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Chief Executive	20.11.15	Author
CMT	20.11.15	Author, Bill Hunt, Andy Jones
Section 151 Officer	20.11.15	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	20.11.15	Andy Jones
Heads of Service	20.11.15	Tracy Darke, Rose Winship, Robert Hoof, Richard Hall, Andy Thompson
Legal Services	20.11.15	Barry Jukes
Portfolio Holder(s)	20.11.15	Councillors Mobbs, Whiting, Gallagher and Cross
<b>Consultation &amp; Community Engagement</b>		
Consultation with the Committee of Racing Club Warwick (RCW)		
<b>Final Decision?</b>		Yes

## **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks support for the business plan for the revitalisation of Racing Club Warwick Football Club (RCW) and some funding to support it, to enable a variety of community benefits to be delivered.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Executive notes the progress made in implementing its decisions in respect of the proposals for Racing Club Warwick (RCW) since its 3<sup>rd</sup> September meeting.
- 2.2 That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, Heads of Finance, Culture and Development in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Finance, Culture and Development Portfolio Holders to sign off agreement to and support for RCW's Business Plan, a draft of which is attached at Appendix 2 to this report.
- 2.3 That the Council agree to vire £5,000 from the previously agreed £20,000 as contingency funding for the demolition works previously agreed and to make a number of minor internal alterations to enable the demolition works to proceed.
- 2.4 That the Council agree to vire £15,000 from the previously agreed £20,000 and to add a further £35,000 to that previously agreed allowing the Council to offer match funding of £50,000 to a bid to the Football Association for £100,000 to make a number of necessary improvements to the football facilities of the ground as described in the attached business plan.
- 2.5 The £35,000 to be funded from the Contingency Budget and its release being subject to the F.A. grant being won and received; and, a grant offer letter being agreed requiring the setting up of a Project Board to oversee the project's implementation, Council representation (a Councillor and an Officer) on the Project Board and to the Council receiving a formal financial and performance report annually.
- 2.6 That the Executive notes that (i) none of the monies in Recommendation 2.4 will be released to RCW and (ii) the works referred to in Recommendation 2.3 will not be commenced, until the Council has received satisfactory evidence of the good governance of RCW including the appointment of new Trustees and that all necessary grant agreements have been completed with the new Trustees and that their approval has been given to the carrying out of the works.
- 2.7 That authority to grant landlord's consent for all the works to the RCW ground (including to the clubhouse and the MUGA) subject to being granted planning permission if needed, changes to its lease be delegated to the Chief Executive, Head of Finance, Head of Development and Head of Culture in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Finance, Development and Culture Portfolio Holders.

## **3 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015, the Executive considered a report on St Mary's Lands and amongst 9 recommendations, in respect of the Racing Club Warwick (RCW) football club, it resolved the following:

"2.2 That the Executive welcomes the letter received from Racing Club Warwick Football Club (RCWFC) attached at Appendix 3 and delegates to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to draft and send a positive response.

2.3 That the Executive agrees to RCWFC's request for emergency funding of £20,000, as set out in Appendix 3, to be funded from the Contingency budget subject to completion of a grant agreement letter and paying of invoices as per the Council's RUCIS arrangements.

2.4 That the Executive agrees to authorise and fund the removal of a number of derelict and potentially dangerous buildings, making good the ground and to properly secure the area by way of new fencing, as per the Plans at Appendix 4, at an estimated cost of £55,000, funded from the Contingency Budget. The authorisation to proceed is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and subject to them being satisfied on confirmation of changes in RCWFC's Trustees.

2.5 That subject to the prior submission of, and, agreement to a sound and credible business plan; and, confirmation of changes to Trustees, the Executive agrees in principle to consideration of providing match funding for a programme of necessary works including:

- replacement dug outs;
- replacement floodlights;
- putting in place new changing rooms; and,
- fees, project resource and an overall contingency provision.

2.6 That the Executive in addition agrees that the Council should:

- Assist with raising funds from other sources (e.g. Football Association, King Henry VIII Charitable Trust, etc.) towards the costs;
- Agree that its property staff manage the building works and contracts, if required in connection with 2.5 but for which financial provision will be needed;
- Agree to give landlord's consent to the necessary alterations referred to 2.5 above and elsewhere in this report subject to the prior submission of appropriate details;
- Agree to seek all appropriate statutory consents, including planning permissions, for the works described in this report where the club requires such help.
- Agree to licence the land shown as area "X" on the plan attached at Appendix 4 for a nominal fee of £1 to RCWFC on an annual basis to allow the club to use it for "children's sporting activities", the club to be responsible for any works or alterations needed (and cost thereof) to make the land appropriate for such use.

2.7 That the Executive asks officers to investigate the causes of the poor drainage to the pitches in the centre of SML and to work up and cost a scheme that would make the pitches playable in order that members can then consider whether a proposal should be considered for inclusion within its capital programme for next financial year (2016/17)."

3.2 The rationale for these decisions is set out in a partial excerpt of the September report, is attached in Appendix 1 as background.

3.3 The decision at 2.2 above has been carried out. Decision 2.3 above has not been able to be actioned because RCW's Trustees have delayed signing the

grant offer letter. The Club's Committee has now instructed a local Solicitor to deal with the removal from office of the existing Trustees and the appointment of new Trustees. This change will satisfy a wider requirement of the Council to secure the good governance of RCW. The Council will need appropriate evidence that these changes have been properly effected before any monies can be drawn down from the Council.

- 3.4 The statutory requirements to carry out Decision 2.4 have been completed, tenders have now been received and the successful tender will take all of the budgeted amount of £55,000. However, good project governance suggests that a contingency sum be provided for and there is also a need to fund some minor internal alterations within one of retained buildings which will enable the relocation of the referee's changing room from one of the buildings to be demolished. To allow for these eventualities it is suggested that a contingency sum of £5,000 is allowed and that this be vired from the £20,000 allowed in Decision 2.3 and which has not as yet been allocated owing to the delays explained in the preceding paragraph and will now mean that they cannot go ahead with Council funding.. These works will be project managed by Council staff. If there is any funding left over from the £5,000 then it ought to be retained for the scheme as that was its original intention. As referred to in the preceding paragraph, the Council is awaiting evidence of the appointment of new trustees. Until this is received, the proposed works will not be commenced as the formal approval to the works is required on behalf of RCW.
- 3.5 In progressing Decisions 2.5 and 2.6 a considerable amount of work has been carried out on developing the business plan, working up and costing the projects to revitalise the Club's premises and on identifying the grants which may enable the works to be funded. A draft Business Plan is attached at Appendix 2 along with a schedule of project costs and funding sources. The draft Business Plan has already undergone a number of iterations and is still being progressed. As will be explained in subsequent paragraph there is now some urgency for funding purposes that this needs a formal sign off by the Council and so it is suggested that rather than delay consideration that instead this be given final sign off under delegated authority by the Chief Executive, Heads of Finance, Culture and Development in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the respective portfolio holders. The views of the Executive and of both of the Scrutiny Committees as an input will be welcomed.
- 3.6 Since a new Committee took over the running of RCW earlier this year, it has raised funds through a variety of means to resolve both bad debts and revenue losses totalling circa £10,000. Having resolved the immediate financial issues the Committee has now put together a package of proposals that require capital investment which if successful will enable the Club to operate on a more sustainable financial basis and enhance the local sporting and community offering. The proposals are as follows:
1. Essential improvements to the Club Ground and its facilities - £150,000 to be funded by a bid to the Football Association (F.A.) for £100,000 and match funding of £50,000, sought from this Council.
  2. Improvements to the clubhouse estimated to cost £50,000 for which the Club can bid for £10,000 from the F.A. but needing match funding of £40,000. The sources of this match funding have not yet been established.
  3. Creation of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) estimated to cost £220,000 for which a number of bids to a variety of sources have been identified for which no Council funding is sought, only permission to use and additional area of land and include it within the current lease.

- 3.7 The Club also proposes to change the use of part of its existing building for use as a children's nursery, for which no funding is sought. The Club also anticipates working with the Council to secure improvements to the grass pitches in the centre of the racecourse area which are not within the current lease with the Club and currently are managed directly by the Council for wider community use. All of these improvements will allow the Club to provide a range of sporting and community opportunities for the local community and generate a significant increase in its revenue streams.
- 3.8 If successful this package will amount to an investment of £420,000 in Council owned property on top of the £60,000 that the proposed demolition and associated works will cost, totalling £480,000. If the recommendations of this report are agreed, the Council's overall contribution would amount to only £110,000, a ratio of more than 1 to 3 from other funding sources.
- 3.9 Item 1 of the Business Plan proposals, as set out above, would secure the future of RCW as a football club by enabling the necessary improvements to be made for the ground to meet F.A. approval. The FA Ground Inspection is scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and RCW will need to clearly identify the improvements needed and the match funding support is in place to avoid the risk of the Club not being able to play on the ground, or being fined, demoted or worse - folding completely. A Business Plan, a funding application to the Football Stadium Improvement Fund (FSIF) and a commitment to match funding will go a long way to the Club receiving a positive report. A funding and planning application have been submitted and a commitment now by the Council to the necessary match funding is therefore essential. A commitment needs to be made before the F.A. determines the funding application in January 2016.
- 3.10 Item 2 of the proposals will bring the clubhouse in to a state where it can better function as a community facility as well as enabling the Club to develop further revenue streams to help its financial sustainability.
- 3.11 Item 3 of the Business plan proposals involves establishing a third size MUGA on land adjoining the Club's ground which the Council owns but is not leased to anyone. This will, if it can be put in place, provide a very strong addition to local sporting facilities and be one that can also help the Club to grow its revenue streams even further. The details of this proposal will need to be developed as there are a number of practical and planning issues that will need consideration.
- 3.12 Overall the proposals would enable RCW to deliver the following wider community benefits:
- Enable local deficiencies in the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy to be partly resolved;
  - Enhance local community and sporting facilities in a relatively deprived part of the District (Forbes Estate) which has no community facility serving it directly;
  - Create more hours of play for all parts of the community and especially for young people;
  - Create more opportunities for volunteering;
  - Lead to an overall beneficial impact on the economy, health and well-being, anti-social behaviour and community cohesion of the local community.

- 3.13 In order to address the match funding requirement of £50,000, it is suggested that the Council can take two actions. Firstly, it could vire £15,000 of the £20,000 sum previously allocated by the Council. Secondly, the Council could agree a further contributing amount of £35,000. Such a sum could come from the Council's Contingency Budget.
- 3.14 RCW is proposing that the project is overseen by a Project Board on which it also proposes to include the Council representatives and to deliver an annual performance report to the Council. Both are sensible steps to allow the Council involvement and oversight but without getting involved in the day to day running of RCW or compromising its independence. These steps ought to be conditions of approval if the Executive agrees the recommendations in this report. It is also suggested that the annual performance report should include RCW's annual accounts.
- 3.15 It is suggested that subject to the Executive being supportive of the Business Plan and agreeing to make a match grant funding, that other matters necessary to implement the proposals, such as granting landlord's consent, amending the lease to allow it to cover the proposed clubhouse improvements and the MUGA area, subject to planning permission being granted, be delegated to the same officers and members of the Executive as set out in Paragraph 3.5 above. Plan 1 attached illustrates the probable area for the MUGA as hatched. Clearly a number of detailed issues will need to be addressed to enable the MUGA to proceed and any change to the lease to accommodate should be preceded by a closer examination of all the practical issues at the planning application stage.
- 3.16 Work on implementing Decision 2.7 is underway. The two pitches in the centre of the racecourse have been inspected by the Institute of Groundsmen as has RCW's main pitch. The Council's green space team are preparing and costing proposals to rectify the underlying issues that have affected their use adversely. As indicated earlier the pitches are within the Council's direct control and whilst they have been used by the Club they are also used by other teams, though both have been hindered by the drainage issues.

#### **4. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

##### **4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)**

- 4.1.1 The FFF Programme is designed to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Warwick District and to that end it contains a number of significant projects. St Mary's Lands is one of the Council's key projects in the FFF Programme. Therefore this report can be seen as the way forward for implementing one of the Council's key projects.
- 4.1.2 The FFF Programme has 3 strands and the impact of this report's proposals in relation to each of them is as set out below:

Maintain or Improve Services – the proposals, especially for RCW will allow the existing facilities and services to continue to be operated and indeed they will be enhanced.

Engaged and Empowered Staff – the proposals will be helpful in engagement terms as they will involve a range of staff across the Council and to

empowerment since they will be helping to deliver schemes of direct benefit to the local community.

Achieve and maintain a sustainable balanced budget – the proposals may help the Council in addressing its financial revenue situation via making better use of its physical assets.

#### 4.2 Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

4.2.1 The Council has approved a Sustainable Community Strategy for Warwick District (SCS) which has Prosperity as one of its five key themes. Under this theme Priorities relevant to St Mary's Lands are:

- Ensuring effective promotion of the district to attract growth;
- Making better use of public assets to increase financial rewards;
- Incentivising growth of existing businesses and attracting inward investment.

To do this the Council has committed itself, among other things, to:

- Using public land/assets to stimulate growth;
- Ensuring a co-ordinated approach to inward investment.

4.2.2 The proposals relating to RCW are relevant to the SCS in respect of its Health and Well Being theme since both organisations' activities encourage people to participate in sporting and cultural activities, especially for younger and older people. Moreover, the SCS seeks to aid those areas of social and economic deprivation in the District to improve them to the level of the District overall. The Forbes Estate is part of one such area of deprivation.

4.2.3 The already agreed proposals for the removal of derelict and potentially dangerous buildings (and making good the ground and fencing it off) is relevant to the Council's Community Safety theme of the SCS since it will remove a source of community safety nuisance (drug taking in the porta cabin) and secure the club's boundary (it has had 4 break-ins lately).

#### 4.3 Local Plan

4.3.1 The Council has also agreed a strategy statement "The future and sustainable prosperity for Warwick District" which amongst other things seeks to:

- Support the growth of the local economy; and
- Maintain and promote thriving town centres.

4.3.2 The Council has determined that a spatial masterplan should be developed for St Mary's Lands via public consultation as it recognised that it is an essential community amenity that needs to receive the necessary investment to enable its attractions and operations to prosper.

4.3.3 The Local Plan - Publication Draft has a specific proposed policy for St Mary's Lands as follows:

*"3.142 The Council will therefore work with the operators of the Racecourse to bring forward a Masterplan for the area which;*

- *ensures the ongoing vitality and viability of the Racecourse;*

- *protects and enhances the significance of the Listed Building and Conservation Area and their setting;*
- *retains the land for public recreation;*
- *protects and enhances biodiversity within the Racecourse as well as links to the open countryside and other areas; and*
- *restricts uses to those associated with visitor accommodation, recreation, leisure and horse racing”*

4.3.4 This requirement picks up the non-Local Plan overall strategy for SML adopted in 1998 and the regeneration master plan agreed in 2004 which both are proposed to be reviewed as per recommendation 2.1. The RCW proposals will need to fit in with the overall work now being done to prepare a master plan for St Mary’s Lands – including greater community access and use.

#### 4.4 The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy

4.4.1 The Strategy highlights the need to support community football pyramid teams such as RCW with adjustments to facility provision where required. This is underpinned by a priority across the district to retain the number of grass pitches, improve the quality of these pitches, and provide more mini and junior pitches to meet demand now and in the future.

4.4.2 A sub area pitch audit of this part of Warwick has been undertaken (as part of the District Playing Pitch Strategy) which is attached within the Business Plan at Appendix 2. This is in respect of establishing a case for a new Multi-Use Games Area as part of the RCWFC proposals for increasing the community football and sports facility at St Mary’s Lands.

4.4.3 The points arising from that audit are that given the existing sports facility provision in Warwick West, the District Playing Pitch Strategy identifies the following issues relevant to this area:

1. Opportunities should be investigated on whether the astro pitch at Aylesford could be more available for hockey (in addition to football use).
2. All weather pitch at Aylesford School is not certified for match play.
3. Warwick Sports Club continue to seek a cricket pitch for their 3<sup>rd</sup> team (in addition to their provision at Hampton Road).
4. Quality of Council owned grass pitches needs to be improved (the St Marys Lands pitches were not identified as a priority site within the PPS).
5. Shortage across the district of mini and junior grass pitches for football.
6. The Strategy looks to support community football clubs - including Racing Club Warwick.
7. Central Ajax FC pitches need improvement to drainage; limited spare capacity at this site for additional use of pitches.

4.4.4 The conclusions drawn from the above that are relevant to RCW are that:

- a) RCW is identified as a community club that has a key role to play in football provision in the district and this sub area.
- b) Shortage of mini and junior pitches across the district is relevant in this sub area. The 2 St Marys Lands pitches (WDC owned and managed) are now being used for junior mini training and matches only – although drainage issues



render the pitches unplayable for periods during the winter. This could be formalised in the future.

c) Additional training area/mini football for Warwick West could be addressed within the RCW plans for a MUGA. It should be noted however that the FA would not contribute funding for any all-weather surface smaller than a full size.

d) RCW intend to work with FA to improve the playing surface of their main pitch.

## **5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

5.1 In September 2015, the Council agreed to contribute £75,000 to Racing Club Warwick, funded from the Contingency Budget. £20,000 of this was for emergency funding, and £55,000 for various building works.

5.2 The proposed additional £35,000 contribution from the Council to Racing Club Warwick will bring the total recently agreed to £110,000. This additional £35,000 can be financed from the Contingency Budget where there is currently an unallocated balance of £122,500.

5.3 Members will be aware of the financial pressure that the Council is experiencing generally and of the outstanding issue around funding for maintenance and improvement of its assets and will want to consider this wider context in making its decisions. As detailed in the Budget report elsewhere on the Executive agenda, the Council needs to ensure that significant savings are made if it is to continue to provide the same levels of service. In addition, further sums need to be secured to ensure the Council is able to invest in its own assets for the future provision of services. The Council has flexibility to choose how it uses its reserves, which may be towards the continued provision of its own services, or alternate schemes such as this.

5.4 However, in respect of this report's recommendation there is a wider reputational risk to the Council if the Club receives no backing at a time when its ground conditions may not meet the F.A.'s requirements that is on Council owned land. In respect of the recommendations of this report, they represent an opportunity to attract significant sums as an investment into Council owned premises from other sources which it would be unlikely to be able to access on its own.

## **6 RISKS**

6.1 The table below intends to summarise the high level risks and mitigations relating to the proposals set out in this report. It is clear that there are a number of significant risks which if realised will have a very significant and adverse impact on the local community.

Risks	Mitigations
1. That the Council and RCW cannot agree an action plan or timetable for the improvement works before the FA Inspection, leading to relegation or some other punishment for the Club.	1. A Business Plan has been submitted as evidence of ambition, intent and match funding.
2. That the project management of the works to RCW ground are not sufficient leading to cost over runs and/or poor	1. Proper project management resource and tendering processes overseen by the Project Board and

quality/ineffective work.	administered by the Council, including project plan and joint project team meetings will be in place. 2. Proper Contingency sums are allowed for.
3. Planning permission or other statutory consents are not forthcoming for the works involved in the FSIF bid meaning the Club cannot meet FA requirements leading to relegation or other punishment for the Club.	1. Pre application advice has been sought to ensure that the planning applications conform to requirements.
4. Planning permission or other statutory consents are not forthcoming for the other proposals within the Club's Business Plan meaning that the Club is not able to generate the revenue it predicts and so cannot be assured of financial sustainability nor of delivery of the anticipated sporting and community benefits.	1. Pre application advice will be sought to ensure that any applications conform to planning requirements.
5. RCW cannot receive a FSIF grant for the works necessary to meet the F.A. requirements leading to relegation or other punishment for the Club.	1. Council Officers have assisted RCW in making the grant application for FSIF funds. 2. The Council approves but does not release its funds until the FSIF grant application is awarded.
6. RCW cannot raise the funds, or not in time, to undertake the other proposals within its business plan meaning that the Club is not able to generate the revenue it predicts and so cannot be assured of financial sustainability nor of delivery of the anticipated sporting and community benefits.	1. Some works could be deferred (though this is difficult). 2. The Council could consider forward funding against expected grant aid. 3. The Council will assist the Club to make grant applications where that is possible.
7. RCW's ongoing Governance including its business plan monitoring is not sufficient to help it to continue to run the Club properly and it fails meaning investment could be wasted or the liability for its ongoing continuation falls to the Council.	1. Council Officers will provide ongoing support and advice to RCW's officials. 2. Joint Project Board in place, meeting and reporting at regular intervals. 3. A change of Trustees is being put in place.

## **7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 The Council could decide not to support the Business Plan nor to offer any match funding or only a smaller proportion than is sought. The consequences of which runs the risk of reputational damage to the Council by placing RCW in jeopardy for their continued operation. This would also have far more risk and financial consequence to the Council as the loss of RCW would mean that the Council would have to take on the responsibility, and cost, for the property without at this time having any clear alternative plan of action for them. It

would also lead to significant reductions in current and future community sports provision in the Warwick West area.

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## Appendix 1      **BACKGROUND**

Set out below is an extract from the 3<sup>rd</sup> September report on St Mary's Lands relating specifically to the RCW element to provide some background to the present report.

### **"3.7 Racing Club Warwick Football Club (RCWFC)**

- 3.7.1 Under the terms of its 1992 lease, RCWFC had the right to renew for a further 21 years. This right has been exercised and a new Lease was completed in June 2014. The only issue that remains outstanding is the amount of rent to be paid. This matter has been discussed by the representatives of RCWFC and Warwick District Council and is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.
- 3.7.2 The report to the Executive in October 2014 stated that RCWFC had developed its own proposals for consultation. These were as follows:
1. An all-weather pitch is created;
  2. New changing-rooms, showering facilities and other functional rooms are created;
  3. The Clubhouse is improved to offer an attractive function room for the local community.
- 3.7.3 The then representatives of RCWFC had worked very constructively on the previous Stakeholder Group which led to a decision that to help RCWFC achieve its ambitions, the Council's officers should provide the necessary support to assist with any funding bids. This came to an unfortunate end in March 2015 when a proposed report seeking a way forward had to be withdrawn because of a clear difference of views with the then RCWFC Chairman.
- 3.7.4 The back drop to that situation is that for a considerable period of time (since 2009) relations between RCWFC and the Council had not been amicable and no progress on any of the matters had been made other than (more recently) on the lease issue.
- 3.7.5 However, after the events in March this year, a dialogue re-opened with newer members of the RCWFC's Committee and in July the Leader of the Council received a letter from the new Chairman of RCWFC who is leading what is effectively a new Committee. New Trustees are planned at the time of writing this report. This letter, attached at Appendix 3, seeks a new and better relationship with the Council, putting aside old differences, including removing threats of legal action, which have stymied relations for many years. This positive approach deserves recognition and an appropriate positive response from the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive (**Recommendation 2.2**).
- 3.7.6 The letter also sets out the wide range of community activities RCWFC now runs and wishes to expand. However, it also makes it clear that RCWFC needs considerable help to develop its community hub work, especially with young people, and its sporting activities. This is against a backdrop of poor facilities and very limited revenue finance available. Its accounts for the last financial year have been shared with Council officers.
- 3.7.7 This new positive approach from RCWFC has led to several meetings with officers, offers of advice, re-establishment of relationships with the Birmingham County FA and constructive discussions about what is needed to help take

RCWFC forward on a more sustainable basis. RCWFC is also widening its engagement with other organisations and, for example, is discussing charity matches with UNICEF and Warwick Castle.

3.7.8 As a matter of urgency a range of minor works are needed to keep RCWFC operational in the short term for which they have asked for £20,000. It is suggested that as a gesture of support that the Council agrees to this request to be funded from the Contingency budget which has £215,000 available **(Recommendation 2.3)**.

3.7.9 A matter arose when officers met with the new officials of the club concerning a number of outbuildings. There is a large porta cabin on site, formerly owned and used by the boxing club (no longer in existence). The porta cabin is not RCWFC's responsibility but is clearly being impacted by its derelict state and by its risk as a community safety nuisance and hazard. It is proposed therefore that as the freeholder of the land upon which it stands that the Council removes the building; makes good the ground (levelling and tarmac) and fences the area off to protect the area from further nuisance. As it would do this it makes sense and achieves economy to remove some other derelict buildings on site at the same time. The existing building layout, and as proposed after removal, are shown on the plan at Appendix 4. Prices from contractors indicate a cost of £55,000. This work will require a prior approval notification, already actioned, as the buildings are in a Conservation Area and to ensure there is no risk legally, the prior agreement of RCWFC's Trustees. This work may also be funded from the Council's Contingency Budget **(Recommendation 2.4)**

3.7.10 Discussions with officers and site visits have highlighted a number of critical issues with RCWFC's facilities which could have a serious impact on its future. One formal complaint from a match official about the state of its facilities has already been received this season and a Football Association Inspection is due shortly. Should RCWFC fail its inspection then this could lead at worst case to relegation for next season or immediately. The impact of this upon a F.A. Charter Standard Community club is that it would need to focus on raising the standard of the senior team to the detriment of its work with its youth teams and the wider community. This would undermine the approach that it is presently trying to develop as a community and sporting hub for the local community. At very worst case it may lead to the club folding and the Council then having to take responsibility directly for maintaining the ground. In such a scenario that Council would no doubt be liable for investing to upgrade the facilities since the rent level is so low that a rent reduction incentive in exchange for capital investment is not a viable proposition.

3.7.11 The condition of the sporting facilities is clearly poor and without immediate investment the continued operation of the club is at risk. Left as it is, the ground would reflect poorly - as much on the Council as on the previous administration of RCWFC. Essentially, a number of things need to be put right and quickly:

- Replacing the main stand, dug outs and turnstiles – which do not confirm to FA requirements
- Replacing the flood lights – which are no longer technically repairable
- Replacing the changing rooms

Planning permissions and perhaps other statutory consents will be required and therefore some fee cost, a project resource, as well as a contingency will be needed. Costs are estimated to be in the region of £250,000.

3.7.12 However, RCWFC will be able to apply for grant aid to a number of bodies. The various eligible funds should be investigated and then the Council can consider how much may be needed to help with match funding. **(Recommendation 2.5)**. For example, RCWFC has in effect a pre-allocation from the Football Association under its Stadium Improvement Facility Fund of up to £100,000 but for which match funding of at least 30% is required. It is suggested that such match funding be considered also in the context of a sound and credible business plan.

3.7.14 Alongside the ground improvements, this RCWFC has altered and updated its constitution; it is looking to appoint new Trustees; and, it wants to develop a sound and credible business plan to put itself on a more sustainable financial basis so that it can more effectively operate as a local sporting and community hub. The lease it now has enables it to consider the use of the former Cadets building and in this respect they want to apply for planning permission for a children's nursery which they hope to sub-let to generate a financial return.

3.7.15 As well as making a financial contribution, the Council can also aid RCWFC by **(Recommendation 2.7)**:

- Assist with raising funds from other sources (e.g. Football Association, King Henry VIII Charitable Trust, etc.) towards the costs;
- Agree that its property staff manage the building works and contracts, if required in connection with 2.5 but for which financial provision will be needed;
- Agree to give landlord's consent to the necessary alterations referred to 2.5 above and elsewhere in this report subject to the prior submission of appropriate details;
- Agree to seek all appropriate statutory consents, including planning permissions, for the works described in this report where the club requires such help.
- Agree to licence the land shown as area "X" on the plan attached at Appendix 4 for a nominal fee of £1 to RCWFC on an annual basis to allow the club to use it for "children's sporting activities", the club to be responsible for any works or alterations needed (and cost thereof) to make the land appropriate for such use.

### 3.8 **Playing Pitches on SML**

There are two council owned pitches in the centre of SML that experience poor drainage/ground conditions which limits their use by the community. They are often rented by RCWFC or other clubs but only when playable. The condition of these pitches has now made them unusable for adult play. Consequently this season the pitches are being used solely for junior play. The drainage and turf conditions need to be improved through a change in the maintenance schedule and specified remedial work. More detailed work needs to be undertaken to establish the cost and what works specifically are needed. It is proposed that officers undertake this work with a view to a proposal being put forward for consideration by members for inclusion in 2016/17 financial year's capital programme. **(Recommendation 2. 7)"**