

RG playing fields proposal.

Currently the biggest challenge that Alvechurch Parish Council face is to continue to provide a high level of service whilst balancing the pressure it is faced with to keep its annual precept to an acceptable level. The burden of the ever-increasing cost of the maintenance and upkeep of our playing fields at Hopwood, Rowney Green and the Wiggin makes this a very difficult task.

The obvious solution to this challenge is to either increase our income from sources other than the precept, or to reduce our expenditure/overheads.

In relation to Rowney Green playing field/pavilion, the cost to APC is Circa £11,750 per year (9% of our precept) which covers business rates, insurance maintenance costs etc.

A roughly breakdown is as follows:

Annual Budget for Rowney Green Playing Fields	
Rowney Green Pavilion	750
Rowney Green Pavilion Buisness Rates	1,500
Rowney Green Electricity	500
Rowney Green Water	150
Rowney Green Playing Field	4,500
Rowney Green Tennis Courts	500
Maintenance of Play Areas	500
Additional Play Equipment	0
Dog Bins/Signs	750
Yearly Budget for tree inspection and work	Approx 1,000
ROSPA inspection of play equipment	100
Clerk/Assistant Clerk Time (booking, fees, organising maintenance, dealing with complaints etc.)	Approx 1,000
Insurance	Approx 500
Total	£11,750

NOTE: The figures shown in red are not usually shown separately but they do add to RG expenditure and would provide a further saving to APC if another way of working was adopted.

Attempts are currently being made to try and reduce the aforementioned costs by increasing the hiring of the facility, however; In order to make Rowney Green playing fields a suitable facility for hire APC have applied for a £10,000 grant to convert some of the playing fields into a parking area and to add drainage to the field in areas that get too wet to play on during the winter.

If the grant application is successful and the resulting attempt to resolve the drainage is also successful, it will be much easier for APC to hire the facility out.

Sundays is the main day for hire when most sporting games are played with the additional possibility of mid-week training. Taking junior football teams as a benchmark as this has always been the most popular user of our facilities, there will be only enough parking for a single game, only 2 games could be played on any Sunday with 10am and 12pm kick off.

Charging £500 per team, we could hope to generate an income of £2,000 per year, with a total of 4 teams, 2 playing alternative weekends.

Taking into account the additional costs involved in the hiring of the facilities which include:

- Pavilion cleaning
- Pavilion heating
- Pavilion lighting
- Pavilion water
- Extra grass cutting to keep the grass short enough for FA requirements
- Pitch lining
- Repair to facilities and pitch caused by extra use
- Additional time needed for Clerk and Assistant Clerk to deal with bookings, invoicing, arranging cleaning and dealing with complaints.

The net income gained from pitch hire would be significantly less than £2000, leaving the cost of Rowney Green playing fields well in excess of £10,000.

As there is currently no requirement shown by sporting groups within the parish to use Rowney Green playing fields, outside teams are being approached to see if they would be interested in hiring the facilities. The overall gain in this respect is purely financial, however there is another option.

It should be noted that the disruption and inconvenience to local residents with 50 cars traveling up the already overcrowded Newbourne Hill and back out again each Sunday will always be a problem to these residents and consequently to APC.

I would therefore like to propose that APC consider leasing the whole area (playing field and pavilion) to the Rowney Green Village Hall Trust, with the Trust then taking on all maintenance and running costs as listed above.

The trust would encourage volunteers to help deal with maintenance and improvements which would reduce their running costs and encourage community spirit.

The result of this would:

- Save the Parish Council circa £11,750 per year (more than it could possibly gain from hiring the facilities).
- APC would retain ownership of the playing fields and therefore remain asset rich.
- Playing fields would remain as a public park/open space.
- Playing fields would be maintained to at least as high standard as they are now by the Trust
- Footpath Group would be free to use pavilion for storage as they do now (by arrangement with the Trust).
- Time taken up by our clerk and assistant clerk to deal with cleaning, maintenance, complaints, etc. would be freed up to deal with other APC tasks.

Obviously, there will be one off costs to cover legal fees and the Clerks time estimated to be £2,000-£3,000.

This type of arrangement has been adopted by Wythall Parish Council and I believe works well.

Cllr T Wallis – YSR Committee Chairman