

Swanage Town and Herston Football Club – To consider proposed agreement and financial contribution in respect of demolition of former sports hall

Background

The Council is working closely with Swanage and Herston Football Club and Day's Park Community Sports Trust CIO to deliver and operate improved facilities at Day's Park to encourage community engagement in physical activity and assist in the growth of football as a community sport. This includes work to deliver an artificial sports pitch and a community sports facility, including a new indoor sports hall, to benefit both local residents and visitors to the town. This is in accordance with the Council's priority to encourage health and wellbeing.

The initial focus of this partnership was the delivery of the community sports facility at Day's Park. Discussion on the condition of the existing facilities at Day's Park have been longstanding. Minute No.94 of the Council meeting held on 14th December 2020, records that a recently commissioned condition survey regarding the Football Club buildings at Days Park had led the Council and the Club to conclude that the Sports Hall could not reopen for public use after the pandemic. Representatives of both organisations had agreed that demolition of the Hall in order to facilitate future redevelopment proposals was likely to be the best option.

A key milestone in delivery of the partnership's objectives was the achievement of planning permission, granted on 19th March 2025, for the demolition of existing club house/sports hall and the erection of a new community facility.

Concurrently with this, discussions between the Town Council, the Football Club and the Football Foundation commenced, following Swanage having been identified as the most suitable location for a new 3G pitch within Purbeck. This resulted in the Club being eligible for a substantial grant under the Football Foundation's Artificial Grass Pitch Framework 2024–28, to install an artificial playing surface on the main pitch. As a result of ongoing discussions between the Council, Football Club, CIO and the Football Foundation the latter indicated it was willing to consider an application for up to 70% of the estimated £1.2m project cost to deliver a new 3G pitch.

Whilst achieving funding towards the 3G pitch would represent a significant investment in Swanage there remains a sizeable shortfall. Therefore, the Town Council resolved to make a budget allocation of £100,000 in its capital programme towards this project, out of the existing total allocation of £180,500 towards the improvement of facilities at Day's Park. See Minute No. 230 of the Council meeting held on 28th April 2025.

At the Council meeting held on 15th September 2025 (see Minute No. 83 (d)) it was resolved to act as joint applicants to the Football Foundation under the Artificial Grass Pitch funding programme and to sign up to the relevant legal agreements. At the same meeting, and in the context of the fundraising required to deliver the 3G pitch, it was recognised that the project to deliver the Community Sports Facility was likely to be at least 3-5 years in the future. It was, therefore, resolved to instruct appropriate professional advice in respect of the condition of the Football Club buildings and, if necessary, bring recommendations forward to a future Council meeting.

The Town Council also resolved to commission a draft tenancy at will to regularise the Club's occupation of the football ground at Day's Park at the meeting held on 26th January 2026 (see Minute No. 176 (b)). That work is yet to be finalised.

Demolition Proposals

The Council commissioned suitably qualified professionals in September 2025 to undertake an asbestos reinspection survey and a structural survey inspection. This was further to a previous condition survey commissioned by the Council in 2021 and updated in 2023.

Two structural condition surveys were undertaken in October and November 2025, the former relating to all structures with the Football Club's demise and the latter relating to the sports hall structure. This included a commentary on the suitability of the clubhouse building were the sports hall to be removed, and steps that would be required to achieve this (in terms of structural design considerations). The asbestos reinspection survey was also undertaken in October 2025.

In order to support the Football Club in addressing the matters raised within the condition surveys and the asbestos reinspection survey the Council, as part of the budget setting process for 2026/27, allocated the sum of £60,000 as a grant within the Council's significant one-off revenue budget. This was offset by a reduction of £60,000 in the allocation for the Club within the Council's capital programme. This allocation, specifically linked with supporting the club to demolish the Sports Hall, addresses a number of the issues raised in the surveys and serves to enact the planning permission granted on 19th March 2025 by facilitating the demolition of the existing sports hall.

To regularise arrangements between all parties, (the Council, the Football Club and the CIO) a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is in development to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each organisation. Draft Schedule 2, relates to the demolition of the sports hall and sets out the Football Club's responsibility for:

- Managing the demolition of the sports hall/club house, ensuring that the work is carried out in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements including but not limited to:
 - Health & Safety Regulations (including CDM regs).
 - Planning and Building Regulations requirements and notices.
 - Ecological advice regarding protected species.
 - Services isolations and capping off to industry legal standard.
 - Legal removal and disposal of hazardous materials.
 - General waste disposal to industry requirements.
- Implementing suitably designed structural and weatherproofing remedials to the rear of that structure to enable the club house to be retained.
- Appointing appropriate professional advice in respect of the proposed works in order to develop a safe, competent and approved demolition method, ensuring works meet the appropriate British Standard.
- Ensuring that demolition works comply with planning application P/FUL/2024/05922.
- Making an application to the Council for any grant funding required to undertake the demolition works.

The MoU sets out the Council's responsibilities as landlord for:

- Ensuring that the Club as occupier of the premises takes the necessary steps to ensure that the work is carried out in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Considering any funding application made by the Club to part-fund the demolition project.

The Club has acknowledged that neither the training pitch nor the main pitch will be available for the duration of the works and provided a copy of their latest accounts and current bank balance. This demonstrates that the Club has total funds available of less than £25,000.

The Club has obtained a number of compliant quotations in respect of the costs of removing the asbestos sheeting, thereby demonstrating a commitment to value for money, and has requested that the Town Council contribute the cost of these works. Together with scaffolding and VAT these are estimated to cost between £40,000 and £45,000, i.e. within the budget allocation of £60,000. The remaining work of demolishing the sports hall, including the walls and steel structure, will be arranged and funded by the Football Club.

The timeline for this project is influenced by the Council's stipulation, as landlord, that the structure be removed prior to Autumn 2026 and the timing of the football season, therefore the Football Club's preferred window to undertake the demolition works is mid-May to mid-August 2026. The work being funded by the Council will form a first phase to be undertaken in May and June.

If the Town Council confirms its agreement to fund these works up to £45,000 that will leave an allocation of £15,000 within the 2026/27 revenue budget and £120,000 in the capital programme, £100,000 of which has been allocated to the 3G pitch project.

Decision required

To consider providing a grant to Swanage and Herston Football Club of up to £45,000 towards the costs associated with the demolition of the Sports Hall, the release of funds to be conditional upon written confirmation of the following:

- The final contract sum for the removal of the sheeting, supported by submission of a copy of the contractor's invoice;
- That the Club will complete the demolition of the remaining sports hall structure prior to the start of the 2026/27 playing season;
- That the Club has complied with all conditions of the planning application requiring action prior to the commencement of demolition works;
- That the Club will fulfil the obligations set out in the draft Memorandum of Understanding in connection with the demolition of the sports hall.

Martin Ayres, Town Clerk, and Gail Percival, Assets and Compliance Manager
April 2026