WERRINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

WERRINGTON SPORTS GROUND WORKING GROUP

MINUTES

MONDAY 8TH JUNE 2026

WERRINGTON METHODIST CHURCH

In attendance:

Cllr K Griffiths, Cllr T Latala , Cllr S Hill, Cllr B Hughes, Cllr D Shaw and Cllr K Whitehurst

the clerk Gemma Keiher-Knapper and one member of public.

1. Introduction

The Clerk opened the meeting by outlining the purpose of the Working Group Meeting, which was to hear the views of Werrington residents and current hirers regarding the sports ground and to discuss the future of Werrington Sports Ground.

It was noted that, despite all residents and current hirers having been informed of the meeting, attendance was limited to one resident, and no current hirers were present.

2. Aim of the Working Group

The Clerk informed those present that the purpose of the Working Group was to consult with Werrington residents and current hirers to gather their views and opinions, which would assist in developing a future plan for Werrington Sports Ground.

3. Brief History of the Sports Ground

Background to the Purchase and Development of Werrington Sports Ground

For the benefit of transparency, and for those members who were not present at the time of the original purchase, Cllr K Griffiths provided a brief history of how Werrington Parish Council came to acquire Werrington Sports Ground.

Cllr Griffiths explained that discussions regarding the potential purchase took place around 2016, when Cllr B Hughes, Cllr S Hill and Cllr D Shaw were serving members of the Parish Council.

When the Sports Ground became available for sale, the Parish Council considered the opportunity and reviewed the financial implications of the purchase. At that time, there was no formal business plan in place; however, there was evidence of interest from several sports teams wishing to hire the facility. Cllr B Day, in his capacity as both Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Staffordshire County Council representative, requested a detailed financial breakdown and business plan. Cllr K Griffiths, despite having only recently joined the Parish Council, was tasked with preparing this information.

Following consideration of the proposal, the Parish Council voted to proceed with the purchase of the Sports Ground. The motion was carried with one vote against and one abstention. A Public Works Loan was subsequently secured to fund the purchase of the Sports Ground and additional works at Meigh Road Playing Fields.

A member of the public also a former councillor at the time commented that the facility had originally been purchased with the intention of providing sporting opportunities for the young people of Werrington, noting that a public footpath links the village to the site.

Cllr Griffiths further advised that concerns had always existed regarding the geography and geology of the site. It was also discovered during the purchase process that the Rugby Club and Football Club, which had previously owned the ground, had an outstanding Football Association grant. The FA sought to impose conditions on Werrington Parish Council in relation to this grant; however, these conditions were not accepted.

Mr Curzon acted on behalf of Werrington Parish Council during the purchase process through Leadbeater and Kay Solicitors. However, it was noted that the associated files can no longer be located.

Drainage issues were considered at the time of purchase, and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council had ring-fenced funding available to improve drainage on the site, subject to obtaining permission from neighbouring landowners. Cllr Griffiths subsequently left the Parish Council, and the drainage project did not proceed at that time.

In 2019, Werrington Parish Council appointed a part-time Clerk (now the Clerk) to manage the Sports Ground. During this period, Wasps FC were offered a reduced hire fee but chose to relocate to Werrington Primary School. More recently, the car boot sales, which had previously been held at the site, also ceased operating there.

The Clerk noted that significant improvements have been made to the Sports Ground between 2019 and 2026. The facility is now fully compliant with relevant requirements and operates under formal booking policies and procedures. Improvements completed during this period include:

- Removal of the mound to increase parking capacity.
- Installation of perimeter fencing and gates.
- Construction of a drainage ditch, with runoff directed across neighbouring land into a natural watercourse.
- Replacement of fascias, soffits, the front entrance door and fire exit door.
- Internal redecoration works.
- Successful grant applications for portable floodlights and football goals.
- Securing grant funding for pitch maintenance over a seven-year period.

The Clerk also reported that, for the first time, a cricket club is now using the site and that Werrington Primary School has also made use of the pitches, demonstrating increased community use of the facility.

4. Current income and expenditure 2025-26

The Clerk presented a financial summary for the Sports Ground for the 2025/26 financial year.

Income received during 2025/26 comprised £6,457.91 from pitch hire, £7,466.00 from the FA Pitch Maintenance Grant, and £120.00 from kitchen hire, giving a **total income of £14,043.91.**

Expenditure for 2025/26 totalled £25,050.48 and included: Public Works Loan Board repayments of £7,622.32, grounds maintenance of £10,032.75, safety inspections of £1,027.05, equipment and supplies of £11.00, utilities and waste disposal of £1,752.65, building maintenance of £4,022.33 (including a new fire exit and replacement fascias and soffits), miscellaneous costs of £365.04, and cleaning costs of £214.34.

This resulted in a net expenditure of £11,006.57, representing approximately 9.5% of the Parish Council precept. It was noted that Public Works Loan Board repayments accounted for £7,622.32 of this figure. Excluding loan repayments, the operating cost of the Sports Ground for 2025/26 was £3,384.25.

Cllr K Griffiths reiterated that the loan was not used solely for the purchase of the Sports Ground.

Members discussed a number of matters relating to the Sports Ground, including concerns that some residents did not directly benefit from the facility, the previous Clerk's reluctance to administer VAT-related matters, a perceived lack of effective marketing of the site, and whether operating such a facility was an appropriate function for a Parish Council. It was also noted that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council had supported the purchase as it would contribute towards the district's provision of sports facilities.

5. Current hirers and current hirers comments

Unfortunately, no current hirers attended.

The Clerk informed the meeting that the current hirers are:

- The Red Cow
- The Bell Ringer
- Blurton Wanderers
- Malt House Marvels
- SMU Girls
- E Hickman juniors
- Longton Fly Ball
- Ashcombe Cricket

6. Residents comments.

The member of public (former councillor) questioned what happened to WASPs request for long term lease. Cllr K Griffiths responded that at the time it was thought to be taken away from residents of Werrington and that it was right to give operating it as a Parish Council a proper go first which is what has been done.

7. Discussion about the future of the Sports Ground

A discussion was held regarding the future of Werrington Sports Ground. Various options were considered by Members, including the sale of the facility with a covenant requiring its continued use for sporting purposes, the granting of a long-term lease, and the continued operation of the facility by the Parish Council with improved professional marketing.

Cllr K Whitehurst and the Clerk advised that all available options should be fully researched before any decision is made. The options identified for further consideration were:

• Granting a long-term lease
• Sale of the facility
• Development of a business plan to assess and improve the commercial viability of the facility

It was agreed that the future of Werrington Sports Ground would be included as an agenda item for the July meeting of the Parish Council to allow further discussion and

consideration. Councillors would be invited to volunteer to investigate the various options over the summer period and report their findings to the Council in September.

It was further agreed that the findings should be shared with the residents of Werrington as part of a consultation process before any final decision is taken.

8. Action Points for next meeting.

It was agreed that the future of Werrington Sports Ground would be included as an agenda item for the July meeting of the Full Parish Council. Councillors would be invited to volunteer to undertake further research into the options identified and report their findings back to the Council for consideration.

9. Any questions/any other business

The member of public (former Councillor) advised the meeting that he believes there was a 30 year covenant on the land now 20 years, there was apparently a business and plan the residents of Warrington were consulted on the purchase of the Sports Ground at the time.

Meeting Closed at 1900hrs