

Council Report: Assessment of Disrepair and Usage at The Polegrove Recreation Ground, Bexhill-on-Sea

1. Introduction

The Polegrove Recreation Ground, located on Brockley Road in Bexhill-on-Sea, serves as a central hub for various community activities, including football, cricket, and bowls. This report evaluates the current state of disrepair at The Polegrove, examines its usage, and provides recommendations for the Town Council to assist the groups with CIL Funds that remain unallocated for 2024/25.

2. Current Usage

- **Football:** The Polegrove hosts one senior football pitch, one junior pitch, and one mini pitch. Facilities include changing rooms and showers, managed by Bexhill United Football Club. The ground is home to Bexhill United and Bexhill Town Youth.
- **Cricket:** The site features one grass wicket and one artificial wicket. Facilities are managed by Bexhill Cricket Club.
- **Bowls:** The Polegrove includes outdoor bowls greens, pavilions, and associated facilities. In July 2024, Rother District Council announced intentions to lease these facilities to Bexhill Bowling Club and Polegrove Bowls Club.
- **Community Events:** The ground hosts events such as the Bexhill Horse Show, Bexhill Carnival, and Bexhill 100.

3. Assessment of Disrepair

As of the latest available information, there are no specific reports detailing disrepair at The Polegrove Recreation Ground. Rother District Council has been asked to provide the condition surveys of all facilities as part of the devolution of parks and open spaces requests previously made. However, the absence of documented issues does not preclude the existence of maintenance needs. Regular inspections are essential to identify and address potential concerns promptly.

Town Council officers have visited each club at The Polegrove and conducted a full inspection of the facilities. During these visits, they assessed the condition of buildings, playing surfaces, and supporting infrastructure. Their findings identified several urgent areas requiring immediate attention, including structural weaknesses in pavilions, deteriorating roofing, plumbing issues in changing rooms, and inadequate drainage on the playing fields. The inspections also highlighted accessibility concerns that need to be addressed to ensure inclusivity for all users. These findings will inform the next steps in determining repair priorities and potential funding solutions.

4. Recommendations

1. That the Town Council ringfences £15,000 of the unallocated CIL funds for 2024/25 £31,033 towards the essential repairs required at the Polegrove facilities.

2. Instruct the Town Clerk to liaise with each club to carry out the essential repairs required to make safe and secure the facilities for the new season
3. To consider allocating the remaining CIL funds for future infrastructure repairs at the Polegrove once the condition surveys are received from Rother District Council.

Conclusion

The Polegrove Recreation Ground is a vital asset for Bexhill-on-Sea, supporting a range of sports and community events. While the Town Council is negotiating the transfer of parks and open spaces, Rother District Council has already devolved all maintenance and repair responsibilities to the volunteer-run sports clubs. Proactive maintenance and stakeholder engagement are essential to preserving the facility's functionality and safety. Implementing the recommendations outlined above will help maintain The Polegrove as a cherished community resource and ensure that the Town Council remains on top of safety and maintenance issues ahead of full devolution.