

Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date: 5th March 2026

Report Author: Andrew Briggs – Head of Ops

Subject: Long term partnership proposal – Southbrook Recreation Ground

1. Purpose of Report

To present the ambitions of Ferndale Rodbourne YCFC for Southbrook Recreation Ground and to seek direction from Members on whether to progress discussions regarding a long term partnership arrangement, potential lease arrangement, and future investment plans.

2. Background

Ferndale Rodbourne YCFC is a community football club providing football provision from Under 4s through to adult teams, supporting youth development, grassroots participation, and community engagement within the parish.

The club currently uses Southbrook Recreation Ground under shared use arrangements alongside Swindon Storm American Football Club.

The club has expressed a desire to:

- Establish Southbrook as its long term venue.
- Invest financially in facility improvements
- Support wider community use of the site
- Work with the Parish Council to secure external funding

The club's ambitions align with wider national and local priorities including participation growth, women and girls' football development, and improved community sporting infrastructure.

3. Current Site Overview

Southbrook Recreation Ground provides:

- Sports pitches
- Changing pavilion
- Informal parking and recreational space

The pavilion is a single storey sports changing facility with team changing areas, showers, office space and storage areas

3.1 Building Condition

A planned maintenance inspection in 2021 identified a number of ongoing maintenance requirements including:

- Roof repairs and drainage improvements
- Internal damage from water ingress
- Emergency lighting and fire safety improvements
- Repair works to changing areas and services

Estimated maintenance works were previously identified at approximately £20k

**Some of these works are included within Capital works programme*

4. Club Vision and Development Proposals

Ferndale Rodbourne YCFC wish to work with the Parish Council to deliver a phased programme of improvements to Southbrook.

Car Park Improvements

- Upgrade parking provision
- Improve accessibility and site management
- Enhance safety for users and visitors

Building Refurbishment

- Internal improvements to changing and community spaces
- Improve energy efficiency and functionality

External Modular Changing Pavilions

- Additional changing provision
- Dedicated women's and girls' facilities
- Support FA pathway requirements
- Enable participation growth

Community Hub / Clubhouse Development

- Reconfigure main pavilion to function as:
 - Community space
 - Clubhouse
 - Venue for local activities

Pitch Reconfiguration

- Rotation of main pitch layout
- Creation of additional small sided pitches
- Increased capacity for youth football

Future Aspirational Development

- Long term ambition for an all weather pitch (subject to feasibility, funding and planning).

5. Strategic Benefits

The proposal may deliver:

- Increased grassroots participation
- Women and girls' football provision
- Enhanced youth pathways
- Community engagement space
- Improved facility sustainability
- External funding opportunities
- Reduced long-term maintenance burden for the Council (subject to structure)

6. Funding and Partnership

The club has indicated willingness to:

- Contribute capital funding
- Seek external grants
- Work with partner clubs
- Support match funding requirements

Key funding bodies:

- Football Foundation
- Wiltshire FA
- Sport England

typically require:

- Security of tenure
- Long term commitment
- Partnership arrangements
- Clear development plans

Council support in principle is therefore necessary before funding applications can progress.

7. Lease and Liability

A formal arrangement would need to address:

- Length of lease
- Repair and maintenance responsibilities
- Building liabilities
- Site management arrangements
- Shared use agreements
- Insurance and compliance obligations
- Asset protection for the Council

These matters would require further detailed negotiation.

8. Risks

Members should note:

- Financial implications and long-term asset management
- Shared use with Swindon Storm
- Planning requirements for development
- Ongoing maintenance responsibilities
- Community access safeguards
- Future funding dependencies

9. Next Steps

If Members support further exploration, officers would:

- Engage with the club to develop detailed proposals
- Explore lease structure options
- Undertake feasibility work
- Identify funding
- Develop outline costs and phasing
- Report back to Committee.

10. Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. **NOTE** the ambitions of Ferndale Rodbourne YCFC.
2. **APPROVE** Officers to pursue further discussions regarding a long term partnership and lease arrangement at Southbrook Recreation Ground.