

Statement from North Hinksey Parish Council, 9th May 2019:

Current position regarding negotiations with the 4th Oxford Scouts for their continued use of facilities at Louie Memorial Playing Fields beyond July 2020

Background:

The 4th Oxford Scout Group have had their headquarters at the current scout hut on Louie Memorial Playing Fields since 1973. North Hinksey Parish Council (NHPC) owns and maintains the Louie Memorial Playing Fields for public benefit. The 4th Oxford Scouts own and maintain the scout hut, on land that is leased by NHPC to the Scouts on a peppercorn rent basis. The current lease will expire on 1st July 2020.

In 2013 discussions between the Louie Memorial Pavilion Trustees, the 4th Oxford Scouts and NHPC took place in which the principle of a new shared-use building to replace the two current buildings was agreed. Discussions lapsed in 2014 and recommenced in 2017, when NHPC collaborated with the Scouts and other user groups to specify core requirements for new shared-use facilities. This co-designed specification was the basis for developing a planning application that is currently under consideration with Vale of White Horse District Council (planning reference P19/V0696/FUL).

In April 2018 a Working Group was established by NHPC's Recreation & Amenities Committee. Its purpose was to formalise terms for a new legal agreement with the 4th Oxford Scouts beyond July 2020. At the Working Group's establishment it was understood that the new legal agreement would ensure the Scouts' priority access to the new shared-use facilities. Through the Working Group process from May to December 2018, concerns about the shared-use facilities were raised by Scouts representatives. Amendments to the draft plans were made in response to the issues raised. Following a Working Group meeting on 12th November, NHPC representatives outlined their position on the discussions to date in a 'Statement of intent' letter dated 23rd November 2018.

In December 2018 the 4th Oxford Scouts representatives called on full Council to reject the draft plans for a shared-use building in favour of a new proposal that retained the current scout hut. Council voted by a margin of 9 to 1 to proceed with the plans for the shared-use building, on the basis that:

- 1) new shared facilities would best support all community users of the Louie Memorial Playing Fields including the 4th Oxford Scouts, and
- 2) retention of the scout hut did not appear to be environmentally beneficial or financially viable.

North Hinksey Parish Council CONFIRMS its current position regarding ongoing negotiations with the 4th Oxford Scouts towards a new legal agreement:

- NHPC recognises the value of scouting to young people in our community and intends to reach a new legal agreement with the 4th Oxford Scouts. This will guarantee the Scouts' continuous presence at Louie Memorial Playing Fields beyond the end of the current lease in 2020.
- NHPC is committed to providing high-quality facilities that will enable the 4th Oxford Scouts to thrive now and in the future. NHPC supports the current plans for shared facilities that have been designed around the Scouts' stated requirements. NHPC nonetheless remains open to amending the current plans for further improvements to the shared facilities.
- NHPC intends that the costs to the Scouts for priority access to the new shared-use facilities will be affordable, comparable to the costs otherwise incurrable for running costs, maintenance and longer-term upkeep of the current scout hut.
- NHPC will not require the 4th Oxford Scouts to reduce their current programme (one of each section of Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, and an associated District Explorers section). NHPC expects the 4th Oxford Scouts to have Trustee representation on the management committee for the new shared facilities, through which they would work collaboratively with other community stakeholders in planning future expansion.