

Address by Roger Parry, Summertown Stars AFC

Request to provide Facilities at Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground from September 2016

Summertown Stars is one of the largest youth football clubs in Oxfordshire. We have over 500 playing members and over 50 teams. As well as the club's overall growth, of particular note has been the strong development of girls' football – we now have 10 girls' teams and nearly 100 girls playing each week.

We have had a very successful partnership with Oxford City Council over many years. The essence of the partnership is that the Council provides pitches and facilities – which we pay for as we use - and we provide the football – i.e. we recruit the players, provide the coaching and organise the training and matches. In common with other youth football clubs we are a non-profit organisation, and all the work is undertaken entirely by volunteers – we do not have any paid staff.

One of the strands of our partnership is the development of Cutteslowe Bottom Pavilion. It is a £750k project and because Summertown Stars has achieved the highest level of quality assurance with the Football Association – Community Charter Standard – some £600k of external funding has been raised from Sport England and Football Foundation. This has meant that the Council's contribution is £150k or 20% of the project total.

Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground is a very important resource for the club. It has 6 football pitches and each weekend it is used by 22 of our teams comprising 50 girls and 180 boys between the ages of 5 to 13, and their parents. Overall about 40% of our footballing activity happens at Five Mile Drive.

The old pavilion was condemned a few years ago and its demolition is imminent. We are grateful that the Council has put a welfare unit in place but it has been made clear that this is only available until May 2016.

From September 2016 when our new season starts, there will be no facilities at all at Five Mile Drive.

This is an unacceptable situation and is out of step with our partnership with the Council to date. That is why we have created a petition – and to date we have had very strong levels of support with over 500 signatures.

In the petition we are calling on the Council to provide a basic pavilion at Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground from September 2016 comprising toilets, a small kitchen area, and equipment storage facilities.

As one of the parents who signed our petition said: 'at a time when young people are being encouraged to participate in sport for many reasons including physical and mental health and overall well-being, it is unthinkable that there will be no facilities on this site'

At Summertown Stars we are playing our part in organising youth football. We respectfully ask the Council to play their part and to provide decent facilities at Five Mile Drive.

Thank you very much.

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