

**Briefing Note for the Shadow Executive**  
**Community Sports Stadium – 30/4/08**

The Shadow Executive asked for information covering the following issues:

- 1) The background and need for change of location for York City Football Club.
- 2) All options including sites that have been identified as potential relocation sites, identifying clearly these, which are under consideration, these which have been rejected together with the reasons why, additional sites that may be considered suitable.
- 3) Details of all meetings within the past 12 months between Officers and / or Council Members representing the Council with the Football Club and any other interested parties. Summaries and the purpose of those meeting to be identified.
- 4) Details of the implications of moving to a community stadium, including the current location of the Rugby Club and other sporting activities currently taking place at the Huntington Stadium.
- 5) The financial implications to the City of York in relation to each and every option that it is considered feasible to be pursued.

## **1. Background And Need For The Change Of Location For The York City Football Club.**

The present ground is not in a particularly good state of repair. It has relatively poor access. It has very limited opportunities to generate commercial income on match days due to lack of catering outlets, space and executive facilities. As a potential community asset the current ground is not used for the vast majority of days in the year.

In addition to the above the pitch has had problems in the past leading to postponements and the ground does not represent a modern, attractive family environment.

However the overriding reasons for a move are in my view financial. It is no secret that the Club is losing money on an annual basis and has been financially supported for the last 3-4 years by the McGill family via JM Packaging. It is difficult to see how the Club could survive in its present location on a full time playing basis, without significant annual revenue funding from a 'benefactor'.

## **2. Site Options**

It's is of course the Football Club's responsibility to identify potential sites, access their suitability and do designs and seek planning permission. The Club have been doing this, but as you would expect no site within the City comes without some problems that need to be considered and resolved. To my knowledge some level of consideration has been given to seven potential sites. These are owned by a variety of freeholders and leaseholders and I do not have permission from the freeholders and leaseholder to disclose the sites. Two site options are obvious and these are Huntington Stadium and redeveloping Bootham Crescent. Neither of these would be favoured options and may well not be feasible.

The types of issues that need to be considered for any site are capital cost, ongoing revenue costs and income generation, access, transport, local residents, design, sustainability, location etc.

### **3. Details of Meeting**

Not all Officers keep diaries going back 12 months and not all meetings are planned, many happening in an ad hoc way at business or social events. The Officers involved with meetings have principally been Bill Woolley and myself (Simon Wiles). Other Officers involved have been Charlie Croft and both the former and current Chief Executive.

Bill Woolley and I have either separately or together met representative of the Rugby Club, the Football Club, landowners, leaseholders, developers / builders on a significant number of occasions. No minutes have been kept of any of these meetings as they were mainly fact finding and exploratory.

Bill Woolley has diary dates of meetings on 11/10/2007, 18/12/2007, 04/03/2008, 01/04/2008 and 11/04/2008.

I have records of meetings on 07/11/2007, 19/11/2007, 26/11/2007, 13/12/2007, 04/03/2008, 01/04/2008 and 11/04/2008.

It is certain that there have been more meetings than this. Whilst I can't answer for Members meetings, Cllr Steve Galloway has confirmed that he has had several informal meetings and discussions and he was present at least 2 of the meetings listed above, but has not been present at most of them.

The purpose of all the meetings has been to identify options and the best route forward for the provision of facilities for professional sports such as Football and Rugby within the City. The intention is to bring a report before a cross party committee within the next week or two setting out all the issues and the role that each party needs to play in bringing about a successful solution.

#### **4. Implications Of Moving To A New Stadium**

It is my opinion that it is desirable to have a new stadium shared by the Rugby League and the Football Club. This is both desirable for asset / community use reasons and financial reasons.

The Rugby Club has a number of drawbacks at the existing ground and these include no access to bar or catering income, inadequate disabled facilities, other operational problems and a lease which only runs until 2012.

Rugby League and Football how have complementary seasons, which would allow year round use of the joint Stadium together with other community uses. There are numerous issues to resolve relating to Stadium management, income from advertising, scheduling, training facilities etc, but in principle a joint stadium makes considerable sense. One of the main issues is that two sets of assets currently owned by the Football Club and the Council / leaseholders could be combined into one with consequent savings on repairs, running costs and improved income generation. More detail is currently being worked on for the forthcoming report.

## **5. The Financial Implications To The Council**

In reality it is unlikely that more than one or two feasible options will be identified. Once they are all implications will be identified before Councillors are formally asked to back a scheme.

The issues to be addressed include not only the capital costs of the Stadium, but future running costs and the revenue issues that face the Football Club before they can move to a new Stadium.

I am working to certain financial parameters in identifying what support the Council could potentially give to a new Stadium scheme in terms of capital, revenue and project support. In doing this work I am only identifying options that involve use of resources that have not been generated from Council Taxpayers and the use of Huntington Stadium or part of it's asset value.