

Shirley Sports Field funding – A proposal

A Parish Council is entitled to spend money on “maintaining Public Spaces”.

Shirley Sports Field (“The Field”) is owned by the Osmaston Estate. Use of The Field was granted to the village by the Estate in around 1945.

The Parish Council was originally charged with the maintenance of The Field but delegated that authority to Shirley Sports & Social Association (“The Association”) in 2002.

The Field is widely used. The Association supports Ashbourne Aztecs junior football teams. The Field is also used very frequently by dog walkers and children from the local area.

Currently, Shirley PC kindly makes a voluntary donation to The Association for the maintenance of public toilets on The Field.

The Association has used various means to raise funds, including the “100 Club”, but is finding it harder each year to sell the required number of tickets.

I propose that the Parish Council adds an amount to the Precept for the maintenance of The Field (a “Public Space”), so that every resident pays for the privilege of having this wonderful resource on their doorstep.

The numbers:

The 100 Club raises around £1,500pa of its target £2,000 (Target is 100 tickets at £20ea; achievement is typically 75 tickets or less). The 100 Club consistently gives away £500pa in prizes.

The 100 Club therefore raises £1,000pa in profits for the use of the Association. This typically pays only for the Public Liability Insurance, leaving nothing for maintenance or development.

Currently, households that choose to support The Association pay £20 per 100 Club ticket. Several households buy more than one ticket. Many pay nothing at all, but still benefit from use of the field.

There are roughly 150 households in Shirley. To raise the same net £1,000 would require a precept of around £7 per household.

Setting the additional precept to £20 per household (the price of a 100 Club ticket) would raise £3,000pa for The Association and would transform its finances.

The proposed solution spreads the cost of field maintenance more fairly across the village population. It also releases the 100 Club idea to be re-used by, for example, the Parish Council or the Church.

The potential complaint that “I don’t use the field, so why should I pay” is no different to the complaint that “I have no children, so why should I pay for schools”.

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Next steps:

We ask for a two-part decision:

Part 1 – Should SPC do this, in principle?

Part 2 – If so, what amount should we set in the Precept next year (2026)?

Suggestion: The amount should lie between £7 and £20 per household, and the final decision on the exact amount should be taken when SPC meets to discuss its 2026 precept.