Town Council Statement Regarding the Proposed Sale of the Cricket Field, Station Road, Burgh le Marsh, 23rd October 2026.

Burgh le Marsh Town Council is aware of local concerns regarding the proposed sale of the former cricket field on Station Road and wishes to provide residents with an update on the Council's position and the actions it has taken.

Background

In 1978, the Town Council provided a grant of £500 to assist Burgh le Marsh Cricket Club with the purchase of the cricket field. The Council retains archive minutes relating to the grant and purchase. However, the Council does not hold any conveyance documents, Cricket Club constitution, or other legal documentation that would provide the Council with ownership rights or a legal claim over the land.
Among the historic records is a letter from the Cricket Club indicating that, should the land ever be sold, the Town Council would have the opportunity to purchase it at market value less the £500 grant. However, legal advice received by the Council has indicated that this letter is not considered a legally binding agreement.
The Cricket Club ceased operating in 2016.

Asset of Community Value

In 2017, the site was successfully registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). While this status recognises the importance of the field to the local community, it does not prevent the owners from selling the land, nor does it give the Council or community an automatic right to purchase it.
The ACV designation does, however, provide a period of time for community organisations to prepare and submit a bid should the owners decide to dispose of the land.

Legal Advice Obtained by the Council

In February 2021, following notification that the landowners and trustees wished to dispose of the site, the Town Council sought specialist legal advice from Counsel regarding any potential rights the Council may have over the land.
Counsel advised that whilst the Town Council may have an arguable right of pre-emption, any successful acquisition would still need to be made at full market value. Furthermore, pursuing any legal challenge would carry significant financial risk.
At that time, the estimated cost of litigation was between £50,000 and £100,000, with the possibility of the Council being liable for the other party's legal costs should any action prove unsuccessful. Importantly, even a successful legal challenge would not reduce the market value of the land.
The Council was also informed that representatives of the Cricket Club disputed the validity of the historic letter and stated they were unaware of any such agreement.

Why the Council Cannot Prevent the Sale

The Town Council does not own the land and has no legal powers that would enable it to prevent the owners or trustees from selling the site.
The Council therefore cannot stop the sale from proceeding should the owners decide to sell.

Why the Council Is Not Purchasing the Field

The Council has carefully considered whether it would be appropriate to purchase the field. Any acquisition would need to be funded through public money.
Based on the current guide price of approximately £200,000, purchasing the land would place a substantial burden on the Council's finances. A 200,000 increase to the precept budget would mean

an increase in the Town Council precept of around 80%, in monetary terms this is an annual increase of approx.£240 per household.
The Council does not hold reserves sufficient to purchase the land outright. Any acquisition would therefore be likely to require borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). Such borrowing would commit the Council and local taxpayers to loan repayments over many years, creating a long-term financial obligation that future councils and residents would continue to bear.
Councillors have a duty to consider whether such expenditure would represent a fair, proportionate and responsible use of taxpayers' money, particularly when balanced against the number of residents who would directly benefit from the site and the absence of any identified future use beyond retaining the land as open green space.
The Council must also consider the ongoing costs associated with ownership and maintenance of the land, in addition to any borrowing costs.
For these reasons, the Council does not believe that purchasing the entire site would be an appropriate or financially responsible use of public funds at this time.

Future Community Benefits

The Town Council has met with current representatives of the Cricket Club regarding any proposed sale. The Council welcomes the indication that, in accordance with the sale documentation, the trustees intend to consult the Council regarding the distribution of any sale proceeds.
The Council understands that the trustees wish the proceeds to be used for the benefit of local sport, recreation, health and community wellbeing within the local area.
The Town Council remains hopeful that it will have the opportunity to contribute to discussions on how these funds may best benefit residents. In particular, regarding the potential for cricket provision alongside existing sporting facilities at the Marsh Lane Football Field.

Allotments and Community Space

The Council are intending to bid for a small parcel of the cricket field site, through a donation and as a gesture of goodwill to the community of Burgh le Marsh from the trustees or any future purchaser, for use as community allotments. The Council appreciates that this opportunity will depend upon the final sale arrangement, including whether the site is sold in separate plots, as indicated within the sales particulars, or as a single parcel of land. Nevertheless, the Council remains committed to exploring options that could secure a lasting community benefit from the site for current and future residents.

Conclusion

The Town Council appreciates that many residents value the former cricket field and would wish to see it remain available for community use.
However, the Council must act within its legal powers and in a financially responsible manner on behalf of all local taxpayers.
Whilst the Council cannot prevent the sale of the land and does not consider the purchase of the entire site to be financially viable, it remains committed to seeking positive community outcomes, including involvement in discussions regarding the use of any sale proceeds and exploring opportunities to secure a parcel of the land for future community allotment.

Burgh le Marsh Town Council.