

**Statement from Hastings Borough Council, Facilities Development Officer re Site Reference LRA2 Harrow Lane Playing Fields (discussed at Matter 5, Focus Area 1)**

My name is Aaron Woods, I am the Facilities Development Officer at Hastings Borough Council. I am responsible for the operational management of all outdoor sports facilities managed by Hastings Borough Council.

The last time that Harrow Lane was in use as a formal sports venue was the 2010-11 football season (i.e. up until May 2011) and there was 1 senior football pitch, 1 junior football pitch and 3 mini pitches marked out.

The site has previously been used by Junior Club Tackleway Youth, Hastings Hawks Youth, Hastings United Youth, Spartan Youth and the men's East Sussex Sunday Football League. In 2010 JC Tackleway left the site in order to be based at Tackleway's own ground on Barley Lane, they are still based there today.

In 2010 Hastings Hawks folded as a team and were absorbed into Hastings United Youth. In 2011 Hastings United Youth were based at both Harrow Lane and Sandhurst Rec but had use of Sandhurst Rec as the sole football hirer and consolidated most of their teams within the town including those from Harrow Lane at the site as their preferred home, they are still based there today.

In 2011 Spartan Youth were relocated back to Bexhill Road Rec where they had previously been based prior to their use of Harrow Lane, they are still based at that site today.

In 2010 The ESSFL underwent a restructure and stopped using Harrow Lane due to lack of demand, the ESSFL then ceased to operate as a league in 2011.

In 2011 when Harrow Lane was taken out of use as a formal sports site 2 junior pitches were added to the provision at Bexhill Road and 2 mini pitches were added to the provision of Sandhurst Rec. There was no need to add any further pitches at other sites due to reduced demand for pitches overall. Changing provision at Bexhill Road and Sandhurst is ample and the pavilions have been maintained to a good standard, so it was not a problem to accommodate additional users.

Harrow Lane faced many problems as a formal sports site in that the changing facilities at the site had reached the end of their lifespan, to replace them with suitable modern facilities was not financially viable. The changing rooms were small porta cabin style units with no shower provision and limited space, this reduced the maximum potential use of the venue and meant that many users were unable to access changing facilities as they were already in use. The site is on a slight slope which meant that users were often playing uphill/downhill during games, this problem would have required substantial ground works to correct which was not feasible. The site also only has natural drainage which means that it was often waterlogged during the winter, further reducing its ability to accommodate use.

The facilities were not ideal and with a declining client base the opportunity was taken to focus spending on refurbishment of more popular facilities elsewhere in the Borough. In addition a junior pitch was brought back into use at The Firs, the disused football ground on Elphinstone Road. Following appraisal of all facilities the Harrow Lane site was declared as being surplus to requirements and identified for disposal. This has not led to any deficit in facilities within the Borough from a leisure perspective.