

**Proposal to allow the Tennis Club further time to spend their grant.  
Report from Cllr. Johnson for 28 July 2020 Farnsfield Parish Council meeting**

FPC resolved at the 23 June 2020 meeting to delegate three members of council to meet with Tennis Club officials to request the return of the £10k grant and this was done at a meeting on 8 July 2020. The option for council to consider allowing more time for completion of the works to extend the tennis clubhouse remains. Our resolution was to send a delegation to make the request and this has been done.

The Tennis Club's response to the request to return the funds is "*We accepted the money in good faith, given to be spent on improvement to the clubhouse to provide a better facility for the growing village community. As this money has been earmarked for this project, we feel we have a duty to our membership to progress this without further delay. We accepted the money in good faith, given to be spent on improvement to the clubhouse to provide a better facility for the growing village community. As this money has been earmarked for this project, we feel we have a duty to our membership to progress this without further delay*".

I support the Tennis Club request as I would support any group in this situation and I regret that Council has skipped the opportunity to consider allowing more time and has jumped to requesting a return of the fund straight away.

Although agenda'd the request from Farnsfield Tennis Club to allow more time for the completion of the clubhouse extension works was not considered at the 23 June meeting as the decision to request a return of the funding was moved to the beginning of the meeting so negating any discussion on allowing more time for completion of the works. There is no legal justification for pursuing the option of a return of the funding that has been explained to me and I urge councillors to take the sensible and pragmatic decision to allow the Tennis Club to retain the grant and complete the works. This option is in the best interests of Council.

The grant was made from s106 contributions which have a spend by date of September 2020. Although this has not been raised as a reason for the Tennis Club to repay the grant and the grant may well be spent by the Tennis Club before September, it is worth councillors noting that the September deadline can be extended on application to Newark and Sherwood District Council as the actual date for spend is March 2021.

To pursue a retrieval of the funds on the basis of the grant application form being completed incorrectly or on the basis that there has been a delay in the completion of the works when the Council has contributed to those delays is not in the interests of the Council or the community.

The fact that the club did not complete an application form correctly by ticking freehold rather than leasehold when the Council are themselves the freeholder can hardly be considered a deliberate attempt to mislead. Similarly for the club not to have anticipated that they were in the conservation area and would need planning permission should not be considered a major error. Aside from this it is clear that the grant was not given on the back of this application. The 2017 application was rejected in favour of a scheme to combine the bowls and tennis clubhouses and free up parking space as shown in Council minutes. This scheme did not progress and this is when the Council itself suggested that a grant of £10,000 be awarded (£5,000 for 2017-18 and £5000 for 2018-19). The tennis club should not be penalised for this decision of council and for the council paying the funds in advance of the work being completed.

Councillors should know that the Tennis Club has invested over £170,000 of its own funds into developing and maintaining their facilities since 1987 for the benefit of the community. They have even funded equipment at Lady Goodwin's playground. The Tennis Club have frequently contributed to community events by providing mini tennis. I mention it not because I'm suggesting turning a blind eye to wrongdoing but because there has been no wrongdoing and the Tennis Club along with many other groups are our partners and should be treated as such in a spirit of collaboration and not confrontation.