A Statement from the Trustees of CRUFC

Following on from recent coverage in the Chronicle on the Leisure Centre redevelopment, the Trustees of Congleton Rugby Club (which is a registered charity) want to clarify the current situation with regard to Leisure Centre and ongoing discussions with Cheshire East Council:

Current situation:

· Congleton RUFC have been in discussions with Cheshire East over the last few years on the impact of the Leisure Centre development and the use of Hankinsons Field

· The rugby club have been using Hankinsons Field since the 1950’s and have previously had a long term license to use it

· That license expired and the Council served notice to evict the Rugby Club from using the pitch. In parallel, discussions have taken place with Cheshire East on alternative solutions for the Rugby Clubs location and pitch usage

· Fortunately, due to a change in the redevelopment plans for the Leisure Centre, the impact on Hankinsons Field wasn’t as large as expected, and we have got the option to continue to use the pitch

· However, the impact of the planning application does reduce both the training and floodlight area at the rear of the leisure centre, and Mini & Junior pitches by the skate park. The current plans do not adequately replace the lost playing space, and result in a reduced provision of playing pitches. This has prompted the objections from the RFU and Sport England, as it contravenes policy that they apply

· Discussions with Cheshire East over Congleton RUFC being given long term security on using Hankinsons Field via a license or lease have not been successful. The longest license that has been offered is 5 years, which does not give the rugby club any form of security or ability to try and attract funding to improve and maintain the existing facilities

The clubs view on the Leisure Centre development:

· Congleton RUFC is fully supportive of investing and enhancing the sporting facilities in the town. As the town’s population grows, we need to be able to be able to offer sporting opportunities on a par with neighbouring towns, e.g. Sandbach and Macclesfield

· Unfortunately the current proposals from Cheshire East are to improve the Leisure centre to the detriment of other sports

Proposed way forward:

· Congleton RUFC propose that Cheshire East look strategically at sports provision in Congleton, rather than on a transactional basis looking at one development at a time e.g. the Leisure centre

· With the town’s population growing due to the Congleton by pass and associated housing development, Cheshire East should be looking to fully utilise the towns assets

· The sports facilities at Back Lane have been under used and under invested in over many years

· Allowing the rugby club to relocate to Back Lane would remove the issues of developing the Leisure Centre, enable the facilities to be enhanced at Back Lane and improve the experience that the rugby and local football clubs have to endure

· The rugby club is willing to lead the build and funding of a community pavilion at Back Lane, which will provide a centre that the local community can use throughout the week for various leisure pursuits

· This proposal has been made to Cheshire East many times over recent years, but through a combination of false promises from politicians and bureaucracy from various council departments it has not gained traction

· Through a combination of political will and application of common sense, we should be looking to engineer an outcome which provides a step change in sports provision in the Congleton which will benefit the whole community

 Congleton RUFC Trustees