

Following a review of the lease for Highfield Park, as per Cllr Jennifer McGee's concerns, the Clerk wrote to Andrew Robson at Northumberland Estates.

Dear Andrew

I am writing regarding the lease for the above area of land, which is leased by Prudhoe Town Council from Northumberland Estates for the purpose of providing a play area, skate park and recreational space. The lease is dated 12th November 2001 and is for a term of 25 years.

The play areas were renewed in 2015 at a cost of £80,000, with £33,368 received from 106 housing developer funding. At this time, the then Clerk, wrote regarding an extension of the lease, which was refused.

I am writing again to ask if the lease can be extended beyond November 2026. The Council has identified that the current skate park needs to be replaced, repairs are on-going and the skate park is no longer meeting the needs of the young people of the town. We have started the process of setting up a user group to look at replacing the skate park with a more up-to-date concrete arena; this comes at a considerable cost.

You will appreciate that the Council would not wish to invest in the skate park if the lease will not be extended beyond November 2026 and also that we would be unlikely to attract any funders if this was case.

This is a live issue and one that I hope you can respond promptly on. Thank you in advance.

*Kind regards, Sarah Eden
Town Clerk*

Dear Sarah,

I have been forwarded your email of the 21st November 2019 which relates to the above site and lease with the Northumberland Estates.

We have discussed your request for a lease extension in order to attract funding to deal with the works to the skate park. The Estate would be prepared to extend the lease for a further ten-year period this would extend the lease until 2036. This would be on the basis that the lease remained out with the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act which your current agreement is.

I will need to seek legal advice to confirm whether any additional paperwork is required. If new agreements are required or new sworn statements, we would require the Town Council to meet the legal costs of dealing with this.

The current rent review provisions are that the next review is in 2021 and five yearly thereafter.

If the Town Council was interested in progressing with a 10-year lease extension I would be grateful if you would confirm and I will seek clarification as to whether any additional paperwork is required.

Yours sincerely
Julia Robson
Estate Surveyor

At the turn of the financial year this would give the Council a further 16-years on the lease. Funders will look for sufficient leasehold interest in the land so ensure their investment is in the public interest.

National Lottery, including Sport England Grants state the following:

The relevant grant term required varies depending upon the size of the grant sought. It is as follows:

- a. £20,000 to £50,000 – Seven years
- b. £50,001 to £99,999 – Ten years
- c. £100,000 and over – Fifteen years

If applying next year, we would only just make the requirements for the higher level of funding.

It is also worth questioning why Northumberland Estates would only consider a 10-year extension.

If Northumberland Estates would reconsider and extend the lease by 20-years that would give a 26-year remaining term which would certainly be acceptable to most funders.

Further Note: We have x12 parental consent forms returned. The Clerk will write to each with an update and advise further communication in the New Year.