

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

CABINET

14 JUNE, 2007

REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO LEADER: ENVIRONMENT

HOWARD CRESCENT PLAY AREA

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Members of previous public consultation regarding the refurbishment of Howard Crescent Play Area.
- 1.2 To agree a programme of works following the outcome of the public consultation.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members note the outcome of the consultation detailed in section 2 of this report.
- 2.2 That based on the outcome of the consultation Members agree to option 1 as detailed in section 2 of this report.
- 2.3 The estimated cost of these works would be in the region of £15,000 and in agreeing 2.2, Cabinet recommend to Council inclusion of the scheme in the Capital Programme for 2007-08 to 2009-10.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Local residents have expressed concerns over the use of the local play area in Howard Crescent because of children playing football and lack of parking adjacent to their homes.
- 3.2 Continual problems of parked vehicles in Howard Crescent have resulted in HGV (delivery and refuse collection) vehicles having restricted access. This has also led to the vehicles overriding kerb lines causing damage to adjacent grass verges. Therefore, any proposed scheme could also allow for road widening to allow greater access, subject to the possible relocation of 2 telegraph poles.
- 3.3 The outcome of Policy Planning Guidance 17 (PPG17) Open Space Assessment indicates that of the three Wards in Hednesford (Hednesford North, Hednesford South and Hednesford Green Heath), only two wards (Hednesford North and Hednesford Green Heath) have play area facilities. The removal of Howard Crescent would reduce the total number of play areas from four to three for over 4000 children (0-18 years old) in those three Wards.

- 3.4 Council consultation through its Forums/Citizens Panel has indicated that 72% of the young people surveyed would like to see more provision of play areas for teenagers and 80% do not think that there is not enough provision for young people in their local areas.

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Section 1

Background

The play area was provided in the early 1970s, last being refurbished in 1996 to provide an area for local children to play within the locality of Howard Crescent. This formed part of the Council's commitment to meeting the National Playing Fields Association 6 Acre Standard, although the Ward is still deficient in play areas and public open space provision.

Furthermore the National Play Fields Association Standards which the Council adopted in 1996 requires an equipped play area (400m<sup>2</sup>) 5 minutes from home. The closest play area to Howard Crescent is Hednesford Park which is 15 minutes away and requires youngsters to cross a main road.

Due to complaints from local residents in Howard Crescent regarding improper use of the play area and vandalism, and that the play area was in the play area refurbishment programme, a public consultation exercise was carried out. The consultation was to seek local residents' comments on the scheme proposals. The key finding of this consultation (66 responses) was:

- 31 responses wanted play area closed
- 35 responses wanted play area open
- 31 responses did not want the play area improved
- 32 responses wanted the play are improved

The primary respondents were from Howard Crescent, Shaftsbury Drive and Whitefield Drive.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

On 2 September, 2004, Cabinet received a report from the Head of Leisure Services and agreed to undertake further consultation with local residents on the following 3 options:

Option 1

The play area be permanently closed and all items of play equipment, tarmac surface and dog proof fencing is removed. The area would then be reinstated to a grassed area with tree and shrub planting to break up the area in size so as to avoid the playing of ball games on the area.

Option 2

The play area is refurbished providing a new wet pour surface and some new play equipment, similar to the existing equipment.

Option 3

The play equipment be removed from the area and the play equipment footprint be tarmaced so to create an area suitable for ball games e.g. provide two goals and basketball hoops within the existing fenced boundary. This would help to address the deficiency in youth facilities in Hednesford and provide diversionary activities for youngsters.

The outcome of the above consultation undertaken in November 2004 was as follows:-

54 responses received

- 44 voted for Option 1
- 5 voted for Option 2
- 5 voted for Option 3

No consultation was undertaken with the Youth Service or youths local to the area.

In 2005, the play equipment was removed on the grounds of Health and Safety.

### Section 3

#### Contributions to CHASE

Culture is defined as a 'way of life' and ranges from arts, sports, street scene, heritage, tourism, parks open spaces and countryside. Culture is sustained and developed through the provision of opportunity for expression/participation in developing and challenging communities. This could be providing physical or mental skills which help to promote self esteem and creatively such as time spent on a countryside volunteer programme or a more structured and organised event such as a park event. Culture has a common goal in that it is experienced through shared value lifestyles and leisure choices that often shape all areas of public realm and social life.

Health – access to well maintained, good quality green space can have a positive impact on both mental health e.g., the ability to concentrate and physical health e.g., healing capacity and physical activity. Studies have also shown that there is a link between environmental quality and population health so there is a clear need to ensure green spaces are accessible and of high quality to lead to improved community health.

Accessibility – parks, open spaces and countryside play an important role in the quality of people's lives and it is important that all users can access such sites. There is a clear linkage between public open space, free at point of entry and the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Social Inclusion – green spaces provide important spaces for people to meet, either informally or formally with others in their local community. Play, in particular has a vital role in developing the physical and social skills of children and young people. Imaginative play and the provision for exploration with friends can help to develop children's potential for achievement by society if a socially inclusive approach to design, layout and maintenance is required. It is important not to under estimate the role that green space and green space projects can play in community cohesion as they tend to address barriers within and between communities.

Community Safety – research has shown that certain groups have greater concern over safety when using street scene facilities. In particular, parks and open spaces contribute to social cohesion which can, in turn, contribute to increased safety. Although community safety research is relatively limited it is known that the quality of green space is often linked to the community's perceptions of it.

Environment, economic regeneration and employment – improving the quality of green spaces can help to attract inward investment and create training/ employment opportunities. Research has indicated that good quality green space is an important factor for businesses looking to locate/relocate. Existing green space or new green space established as an integral part of regeneration also contributes to the reduction in environmental risks such as flooding, noise and airborne pollutants. Green spaces management provides jobs directly and indirectly through maintenance and community based volunteer programmes which can lead to skills development and employment.

**Section 4**

**Section 17 Implications**

Any new design or removal of play area would be discussed with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer.

**Section 5**

**Human Rights Act Implications**

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

**Section 6**

**Data Protection Act Implications**

There are no identified implications in respect of the Data Protection Act arising from this report.

**Section 7**

**Risk Management Implications**

Any removal of local play facilities which causes youngsters to travel further to play areas and cross roads can lead to higher risks for health and safety.

**Section 8**

**Legal Implications**

Legal implications are referred to throughout the report.

**Section 9**

**Financial Implications**

As there is no budget for this work a supplementary capital estimate would be required from Council to fund the scheme.

Capital bids are normally considered as part of the Delivering Change Process whereby all revenue and capital policy options are considered against each other to determine priorities. The facility does, however, exist to grant a supplementary estimate in exceptional cases.

Experience of undertaking such landscape treatments at other areas would suggest that the removal of the play area completely and treatment of the whole area to prevent ball games would be in the region of £15,000.

The General Fund Capital Programme 2006-07 and Resources 2007-08 to 2009-10 report to Cabinet on 22 March identified estimated uncommitted capital resources as at 31 March, 2010 of £266,540.

**Section 10**

**Human Resource Implications**

There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.

**Section 11**

**Conclusions**

Based on the outcomes of the most recent survey referred to in Section 2 of this report, the majority of local residents have indicated a preference for Option 1, which was that the play area be permanently closed and all items of play equipment, tarmac surface and dog proof fencing is removed. The area would then be reinstated to a grassed area with tree and shrub planting to break up the area in size so as to avoid the playing of ball games on the area. The scheme could also address HGV access problems by allowing for road widening.

**Background Papers**

Cabinet Report 2 September, 2004

Environment Select Committee Report on PPG17 – Open Space Key Findings

Environmental Services Business Plan 2006-08