

## **LABURNUM GROVE PLAYSPACE**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report seeks Members' views in response to a proposal received from Hockley Parish Council prior to their taking ownership of the playspace.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. During a review of Council land assets, the option of disposing of the above playspace was considered. Strong representations for the area to remain as a playspace were received from the local community following a public consultation exercise.
- 2.2. Following discussions with Hockley Parish Council in which they agreed in principle to take ownership of the site, it was resolved at a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 7 December 2000 to transfer the land on a 125-year lease at a peppercorn rent.
- 2.3. Negotiations have taken place with the Parish Council and a request has been received for this Council to assist in providing remedies in order to alleviate the nuisance to neighbouring residents prior to the transfer taking place.

### **3 REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE**

- 3.1 In order to alleviate noise issues, the Parish has suggested a scheme of buffer strip planting in order to provide a noise barrier. In addition, they have suggested moving the hard play surface away from the boundary of one of the neighbouring properties.
- 3.2 Officers of the Council have assisted the Parish in developing outline estimates of the types of works that are being proposed. The proposals and estimated costs are:-

	£
Relocate hard play area	15,000
Buffer strip planting	1,500
Chestnut fencing	<u>2,500</u>
Total Cost	<u>19,000</u>

- 3.3 The Parish Council has funds of £6,000 available and is requesting the District Council to meet the balance of £13,000.

---

3.4 In addition to the above, the Parish requests that:-

- Council officers prepare the detailed scheme and estimate for written agreement by Rochford District Council and Hockley Parish Council including all costs and timescales.
- Appoint contractors and manage the contract
- Manage the works through to satisfactory completion to the original plan for signoff by Hockley Parish Council. The Parish will provide some assistance through the implementation process.
- Make arrangements for the closure and locking of the site at sunset each day. Opening can be performed in conjunction with local residents/youth. Funding of associated costs subject to discussion/agreement between Hockley Parish Council and Rochford District Council.
- Make provision for ongoing site maintenance such as grass cutting, basketball rings and playground equipment. To be funded by the Parish Council.
- Amend the lease at paragraph 11 page 6 to insert "To use its best endeavours" at the beginning of that clause which will then go on to read ". . . . . not to do anything on the demised land . . . . .".

3.5. In agreeing to take over the site, the Parish will continue to maintain the site and enhance it in future years. Subject to funding, the Parish plans to provide play equipment such as swings and slides in a safe environment similar to that currently provided at Plumberow Mount.

#### **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. There would be officer time involved in designing and implementing the scheme. This could be met from within existing resources, but would have to be programmed in taking account of Council priorities.
- 4.2. At present there is no budget provision for the estimated contribution of £13,000 mentioned at paragraph 3.3. above. If Members considered that this was in effect a community safety issue, then it could be funded from that provision.
- 4.3. From previous information supplied by Serviceteam, the cost of locking the area each evening would be in the region of £9,800 per annum. If Serviceteam were able to engage an operative prepared to carry out this task, it is unlikely they would agree to the person attempting to evict youths from the area prior to lockup. There is no budgetary provision for this cost.

- 
- 4.4. There would be a small annual saving in that the maintenance cost for the area, currently in the region of £500 per annum, would be borne by the Parish Council.
- 4.5. There would also be further future savings in that there would be no need to provide for equipment maintenance and replacement.
- 4.6. As may be seen from the above, there are practical difficulties in being able to undertake the activities requested by the Parish, particularly in respect of locking the area each evening. These issues will need to be taken into consideration when determining the most appropriate way forward for this playspace.

## **5 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The playspace is situated within Hockley.

## **6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The playspace has been the subject of numerous complaints from residents whose properties abut the playspace.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That Members consider the request and recommend what action be taken in response to the request. (CD(F&ES))

Roger Crofts

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

---

For further information please contact Roger Crofts on:-

Tel:- 01702 546366 Extn. 3006  
E-Mail:- roger.crofts@rochford.gov.uk