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## CLEMENTS HALL – EXTENSION TO BRIDLE WAY

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on whether to approve the development of an extension to the existing bridle way within the boundary of Clements Hall.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 There have been problems over the last few years with some horse riders riding across the sports pitches in Clements Hall. In wet weather particularly this has caused damage to the pitches, which has had to be rectified to make the pitches safe for playing. It must be emphasised that this applies to only a very small proportion of riders. Appendix A shows the existing path and bridle way network around Clements Hall. Appendix B shows the existing footpath within Clements Hall affected by the proposal.
- 2.2 In dealing with the problem of small motorcycles entering Clements Hall from Hawkwell Park Drive, Park Gardens, and Sweyne Avenue barriers have been erected that allow pedestrian and wheelchair access only. This has been successful in dealing with this anti-social behaviour.
- 2.3 An initial letter from a resident was received on 16 July 2007 complaining about the installation of the barriers at the various entry points to the recreation ground and their obstruction to horses.
- 2.4 In August 2007 a letter was sent to Hawkwell Parish Council from the British Horse Society objecting to the installation of the barriers, as they prevented access to Clements Hall Recreation Ground by horse riders. This was subsequently forwarded to Rochford District Council and has been subject of discussion at the Central Area Committee with the involvement of Ward Councillors.
- 2.5 Horseriding in Clements Hall Recreation Ground is not permitted other than on a bridle way.
- 2.6 A public meeting was held on 22 October 2007, which was attended by a Ward Councillor, local horse riders, Essex County Council Rights of Way officers, Rochford District Council officers and other interested parties. The reason for installation of the barriers was explained to those present and, although the reasoning was accepted, the meeting wanted to find a way to allow continuation of the bridle way through the recreation ground and into Spencers Park to form a complete bridle way circular route around Clements Hall. The Essex County Council Rights of Way officer suggested that Essex County Council might contribute to the costs involved.
- 2.7 Officers agreed at the meeting to investigate the options for creating the extension within the recreation ground. These final options will need to be discussed with the horse riding community before works will be implemented.

- 2.8 No surveys have been undertaken to determine the potential usage of this bridle way, but it is considered to be low currently.

### **3 OPTIONS FOR THE EXTENSION**

- 3.1 To allow for an extension of the bridle way within the recreation ground there are a number of safety issues that arise that have to be dealt with. These include pedestrians being separated from horses and disabled access being maintained. Also, it is imperative that access for the small motorcycles is still prevented.
- 3.2 Two options have been developed for the proposal, each has its own drawbacks and both are relatively expensive if they are to respond to all the issues mentioned in paragraph 2.10.
- 3.3 Option A - Option A involves removal of the high conifer hedge between the recreation ground and the houses built on the small access road behind. An additional metre of space is then created that allows construction of the new bridle way. Although this hedge is planted on Rochford District Council land, it was originally planned in order to provide some protection for the houses behind. It would require consultation with the owners of these houses to seek their views, but it is likely that they would object to the hedge removal. This option has been costed at £30,000. A plan of Option A is provided as Appendix C.
- 3.4 Option B - Option B involves leaving the conifer hedge, but moving the kerbline to the rear car park of the Leisure Centre in order to create the additional space. This would lose 3 parking spaces to the rear car park but, as these spaces are rarely this is not considered to be a problem. The same pattern is then adopted as in Option A. This option is costed at £36,000. A plan of Option B is provided as Appendix D.
- 3.5 Both these options would provide an equally good solution to the provision of the new bridle way.

### **4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no substantial risks arising from the construction of this bridle way extension. However, Option A could present a risk to the Council's reputation if the hedge were to be removed.

### **5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 It is essential that adequate safeguards are built into this construction to maintain the access restrictions to the recreation ground that already exist.

### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 This project is not currently part of any budgetary planning. There may be a contribution from Essex County Council or the British Horse Society, but no

confirmation has been sought as yet. Should Members wish to secure Council funding for this project, this matter would need to be referred to the Executive Board.

**7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The bridle way, once constructed and adopted, will create public rights over the Council's recreation ground.

**8 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Hawkwell Parish Council is allowing this extension to link into Spencers Park, where there is an existing bridle way.

**9 RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To decide whether the preparation for construction of a new bridle way in this location to a final proposal, including an assessment of potential funding opportunities, should be progressed.

Albert Bugeja

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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