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**ACCESS TO GROVE NURSERY GROUP VIA GROVE WOODS.**

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 A formal request has been received by the Leisure and Client Services Section from the Grove Nursery Group, for permission to construct a short, surfaced footpath in Grove Woods from an existing route, to give the group access to their site.

**2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This nursery group is a registered charity that has been based at its present site adjacent to Grove Primary School for a number of years. Suitable access to the nursery has until now been through the school grounds with most parents walking to the nursery. For those that drive parking is normally within Grove Road.
- 2.2 A recent request from the education authority and OFSTED is that the play group sessions are a minimum of 2.5 hours. This would then entitle all four-year-olds in the group an equal opportunity to apply for the Government "nursery voucher scheme", providing free nursery education.
- 2.3 Unfortunately this desired change in hours has caused a conflict between the nursery and the school. The school is now not happy with the access situation, stating the new access times cause disturbance to its classes and compromises security for the site and its pupils.
- 2.4 Grove Nursery Group have suggested that they create an alternative access outside the school grounds, using the adjacent Rochford District Council owned Grove Woods, and the circular path that runs through it.

**3. ROUTE AND SPECIFICATION**

- 3.1 Council Officers met with representatives from the nursery, on site, to discuss their possible proposals and routes.
- 3.2 Following lengthy discussion the most appropriate route for the surfaced access is highlighted on the attached map (Appendix A). Officers are happy that this is the most viable option.
- 3.3 This route follows part of the existing circular way-marked walk through the woods which is currently un-surfaced, with a short new "spur" of about forty metres from this existing path to the nursery's boundary fence.

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- 3.4 The section of the existing route required is un-surfaced and rutted, unsuitable for a high level of usage. The nursery is willing to pay for all the necessary works to surface this section of path to a specification similar to the other surfaced routes on the site. It would also pay for the construction and surfacing of the required extra path to its boundary fence, the bridge like construction across the shallow ditch at the access point to the woods, and any required road signage. The nursery is only open during normal school hours and there is no need for any lighting.
- 3.5 The nursery group has contacted the Council's Engineers seeking advice as to the access point in relation to the highway and the construction of the bridge.
- 3.6 The project if agreed would have to be completed during the winter to reduce the environmental implications highlighted below.

#### **4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There will be a small loss of ground flora/fauna where the new spur path is constructed. Erosion either side of the un-surfaced route will be reduced once this section is surfaced. Woodland visitors will not damage ground flora when trying to avoid wet areas when a year round suitable surface is produced.
- 4.2 Tree roots would be protected through a no dig construction.

#### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 About four days Officer time in co-ordination/advice.
- 5.2 The actual costs of materials, site preparation and path construction will be met by the Nursery Group.
- 5.3 The cutting of the vegetation ,once a year, each side of the new spur will require half a days work , as part of the overall maintenance of the Wood.
- 5.4 The spur may require a top dressing of stone in about thirty years. This would cost about £350 for materials and labour.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The provision of access to the Nursery which is being afforded via this route requires consent and should be the matter of a licence detailing matters of maintenance and extent of use.

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**7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- i) That subject to the Grove Nursery Group providing the necessary funding permission be given for the construction of the required new spur access providing the necessary surfacing works, bridge constructions and highways approvals are completed first.
- ii) That the Head of Legal Services should grant a licence on such terms and conditions as considered appropriate.

Roger Crofts

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**Background Papers:**

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