

Playspace Sub-Committee – 21 February 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Playspace Sub-Committee** held on **21 February 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr D G Stansby (Chairman)

Cllr T Livings
Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R A Amner and Mrs J R Lumley.

SUBSTITUTE

Cllr C J Lumley

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
D Timson	- Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
C Milton-White	- Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs T Livings, C J Lumley and D G Stansby each declared a personal interest in the discussions around playspaces in general by virtue of being Members of a Town/Parish Council.

13 SUTTON COURT PLAYSPLACE, ROCHFORD

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) to which was attached the report of the Chief Executive which had been previously presented to the Community Services Committee on 1 February 2005.

Members of that Committee had agreed that the Playspace Sub-Committee be asked to look specifically at the issues emerging at

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Sutton Court and to devise a plan of action, with a view to developing a working template which could be applied District-wide, including consideration in detail of the resource implications.

Members were provided with a scale plan drawing of the Sutton Court playspace.

Members were reminded that the Sutton Court Playspace is a well-established playspace with a range of facilities, but a history of problems emerging from time to time. A teen shelter had been erected a few years ago in response to the natural gathering of youths in the area and this had helped the situation. However, recently there had been a resurgence of problems in and around the playspace.

During discussion of the current issues, the following points were noted:-

- A consistent policy was needed throughout the District that could be applied to all playspaces.
- There would be costs involved if the locking and unlocking of playspaces was formalized.
- The Council would always be in a difficult position when local residents often hold opposing views on the issue of whether to retain a particular playspace facility.
- Relying on voluntary support to lock and unlock a playspace can lead to problems should the volunteers not be available, for example, due to sickness or holidays.
- Problems that occur at playspaces tend to fluctuate dependant upon the time of year or the particular generation of young people who live in the vicinity at any one time.
- The Conway Avenue playspace at Great Wakering is currently locked and unlocked by volunteers. Opening times of playspaces needs to be dependent on the age-group of those whom it serves.
- Health and Safety advice is that volunteers should not challenge or confront anyone who is causing a problem when they arrive at a playspace. If this is the case, the advice is to walk away and leave it locked/unlocked.
- The Chairman had received a letter from a local resident volunteering to be involved in the locking and unlocking of the Sutton Court Playspace. Officers would liaise with the resident and the local Ward Councillors to provide a managed short-term solution.
- Serviceteam, the Council's Grounds Maintenance contractor, could be called upon to underpin this short-term remedy on an interim basis.
- The Sutton Court playspace has not been given to the National Playing Fields' Association but is owned and managed by the District Council.

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- This is 1 of 27 playspaces within the District; apart from the previously mentioned playspace at Great Wakering, there are currently no major problems regularly occurring at any of the others.
- Relocation of this playspace to land at the end of Sutton Court Drive is not possible whilst the land is retained as green belt and in private ownership.
- Investigations relating to land on the other side of the Brook had not been carried out and would certainly require secure fencing being provided to the boundary.
- Those with an intimate knowledge of the locality of individual playspaces, such as local residents and the appropriate Town/Parish Council should be involved in the discussions to determine a common policy, which could be put in place should the need arise.
- One option for consideration would be to invite the appropriate Town/Parish Council to contribute 50% of the costs involved in locking/unlocking a playspace, should this become necessary.
- The Police do have this site on their list for regular patrols, but should be invited to take part in discussions around the formulation of a district-wide policy.
- The views of the youth of the district should also be considered; this could be achieved by inviting the District's representatives from the Essex Youth Assembly to attend the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- The Parish Liaison Sub-Committee would be considering in more detail later in the week the possible transfer of playspaces to Town/Parish Councils.

On a Motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr C J Lumley it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That a further meeting of the Playspace Sub-Committee be convened to continue the discussions to recommend a District-wide working template to address issues such as those currently being experienced in and around the Sutton Court Playspace, Rochford.
- (2) That this meeting be held in an evening at a venue within close proximity of the Sutton Court Playspace so that a site visit could be conducted after the meeting, should this be considered appropriate.
- (3) That invitees to the meeting be as follows:-
 - A representative from Rochford Parish Council

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- A representative from the Rayleigh Division of Essex Police
- A representative from the Essex Youth Service, together with the District's representatives on the Young Essex Assembly.

The meeting commenced at 10 am and closed at 10.55 am.