

Runnymede Borough Council

ENGLEFIELD GREEN COMMITTEE

1 November 2016 at 7.00 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors Miss M N Heath (Chairman), N M King, M T Kusneraitis, N H Prescott and Miss J K Sohi

Residents' Representatives: Mr N Band

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor P I Roberts and Mr A Panter (Vice-Chairman),

292. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 June 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

293. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor P I Roberts and Mr A Panter (Vice-Chairman)

294. REQUEST FROM ENGLEFIELD GREEN CRICKET CLUB – ADDITIONAL STRIP

The Committee was asked to consider a request from Englefield Green Cricket Club to cut an additional strip on the Green.

Members were advised that in 2014 Englefield Green Cricket Club decided to start up a junior section with the aim of providing cricket for local boys and girls. By the beginning of the 2016 season the Club had achieved Clubmark status – a quality mark that ensured sports clubs had the proper procedures and processes in place. By June 2016 the Club registered over 60 juniors with an average of 40 attending sessions on Friday evenings and Sunday mornings.

An important element of Clubmark was that juniors were offered competitive cricket. During the last season the club entered two sides (Under 8's and Under 10's) into a local league playing cricket on Sunday mornings. When the fixtures were agreed it became apparent that there were a few occasions when two games had to be played at the same time on the Green. The Cricket Club had alerted Runnymede Borough Council Officers to this and permission was given for the Club to cut an additional strip so that the Under 8's playing with a soft ball could play at the same time as the Under 10's using a hard ball on the square. The additional strip was simply created by cutting the grass shorter. There was no marking or rolling of the area.

Runnymede Borough Council had received a formal complaint about the additional strip so therefore suggested the Club made a formal request to the Englefield Green Committee.

An additional strip would also pave the way for the introduction of another age group in future years. The Club was also making particular efforts to encourage girls and this year entered a girls team on behalf of Runnymede Borough Council in the Surrey Youth Games.

The Council had indicated they would support running a girls' team again in the 2017 Surrey Youth Games.

The Committee was supportive in formalising this arrangement. Members commented on the great success the club had achieved with the youth section and were keen to see this continue. The Committee therefore

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Cricket Club be authorised to cut an additional strip on the Green which could be used up to 6 occasions in 2017; and**
- ii) a report be brought back to the Committee in November 2017 for the Committee to review the arrangement**

295. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE GREEN

At the last meeting Officers were asked to seek advice from the Council's legal team on a proposal to write, on behalf of the Committee, to occupiers of properties adjacent to the Green advising them of the need for consent before undertaking certain works around the Green, particularly tree work. Officers had sought advice from the Council's legal team and the advice received was this would be outside the remit of the Committee and an alternative approach such as asking the EGVRA or the Villager to include an article in future publications was preferred. Members were advised that the remit of the Englefield Green Committee related to the Green only and Officers would send a site plan out to all Members for information.

Following concern expressed by Members at the last meeting about grass clippings being left on the Green and subsequently washed into the drains, Officers had provided the Chairman and Vice-Chairman with costed options to address this problem. The cost of removing clippings from across the whole Green proved to be prohibitive and it was agreed to trial an alternative approach. This involved increasing the frequency of cutting on the main Green from fortnightly to weekly but not collecting the clippings (more frequent cuts would reduce the clippings produced each time), but collecting the clippings from the verges and 'outlying' areas only. This should address the specific concerns and improve the overall look of the Green at an affordable additional cost of £1,580 a year. This change was implemented quite late in the grass cutting session and although an improvement had already been seen it was difficult to ascertain the full impact.

Officers were advised that some grass clippings had been left in the road and the contractors would be contacted regarding this. Officers recommended that the trial continued into the 2017 season and it would be reviewed again at the meeting of the Committee in June 2017. Members concurred with this approach.

The removal of lower branches from the small but prominent Oak tree at the junction of St Jude's Road and Barley Mow Road, which was discussed at the last meeting, was completed recently. Other tree works had been commissioned including lightly trimming a tree on St Jude's Road, near the top of Middle Hill, which was blocking light from a street lamp and other works in the woodlands for safety reasons.

Priorities for future expenditure

The Committee was advised of the details of the actions agreed at the last meeting using the additional funds available for the management, maintenance and enhancement of the Green.

1. Annual clearance of fallen leaves from ditches around the Green would be incorporated into the regular grounds maintenance operations at a cost of approximately £135 per occasion
2. Vertidrainage operations at a cost of £1,506.35 to improve the drainage across the surface of the Green would be undertaken. This would be a trial and the impact of the work would be reported back to the Committee in November 2017.
3. Scarifying the Green with a rotorake to rake out the thatch on the Green at a cost of £1,797.00. This would also be undertaken on a trial basis and the impact of the work would be reported back to the Committee in November 2017.
4. Officers had produced a draft woodland management plan. Members were asked to consider this and contact Officers in due course with any comments or amendments. Members suggested a site visit was held in June next year prior to the meeting. Following this, proposed work and costings could be considered, in liaison with the Crown Estate's Chief Forester.
5. The woodland paths and horse routes had been inspected in mid-October and found to be in good order with firm, dry surfaces. There was no need therefore to allocate any of the funds to this area at the present time. It may be necessary to repair/improve small areas along the horse routes from time to time, but this would be managed as part of the ongoing maintenance regime.

The Committee was asked to consider the other possible uses of the funds:

6. Replace the vehicle barrier. The Committee agreed that the vehicle barrier would be inspected at the site visit in June 2017. The Committee would then ascertain if it required replacing.
7. Support the cricket club with pavilion repairs. The Committee agreed that the Cricket Club pavilion would be inspected at the site visit in June 2017.
8. Introduce parking prevention measures to the unofficial lay-bys in Castle Hill Road. The Committee requested Officers to obtain prices for parking prevention measures for the unofficial lay-bys in Castle Hill Road and report them back to the next Committee meeting in February 2017.

The possibility of replacing equipment in the children's play area had also been discussed at the last meeting. Officers circulated to Members a letter received from a barrister acting on behalf of the Friends of Englefield Green detailing their concerns regarding the Committee considering replacing the current play equipment. The letter asks Officers of the Council to respond detailing how the Committee and the Council as lessee, proposed to undertake the work lawfully without offending the provisions of s.12 of the Inclosure Act 1857.

The Committee had to date made no decisions on replacement of the play equipment. It was noted that the Council undertook a regime of monthly and annual inspections for all its

play areas, neither of which had identified any safety problems with the condition of the play equipment on the Green.

Members of the Committee, however, wished to meet with members of the Friends of Englefield Green to discuss their views on the Green, the play equipment and general maintenance and the Chairman of the Committee would contact them in due course to try and facilitate this.

The Committee was presented with a summary of the location and condition of the benches on the Green. Whilst it was noted there was a concentration of benches in some areas of the Green it was not considered viable to move the benches.

Officers reported that the log benches on the summary would be removed in due course as they were rotting naturally. Members, however, requested that Officers deferred any decision on replacing them until the woodland plan was finalised. The remaining benches on the Green would be replaced, as and when required, by benches in the style of bench 15 on the summary to provide a more consistent approach.

RESOLVED that -

- i) replacement of the log benches be deferred until the woodland plan was finalised; and**
- ii) remaining benches would be replaced when needed by benches in the style of 15**

296. EVENTS ON THE GREEN

It was noted that Carters Steam Fair had used the Green again over the weekend of 1 and 2 October. There was some rain during their stay and, even though track matting was deployed, some wear resulted to the Green close to the vehicle entrance, but this was expected to recover naturally. There was also some damage to the cricket square caused by pedestrians walking and standing on it, while it was wet, to view the firework display. This damage was being repaired by the Cricket Club and the cost would be recouped from Carters deposit.

297. CHANGE TO COMMENCEMENT TIME OF FUTURE ENGLEFIELD GREEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

The Committee considered a change to the start time of future Englefield Green Committee meetings. At present, meetings of this Committee commenced at 7pm. All other Council meetings had a start time of 7.30pm. Several Members of the Committee found it difficult commuting home in time for a 7pm start so would prefer a later start time.

RESOLVED that –

future meetings of the Englefield Green Committee would commence at 7.30pm

298. CRICKET SQUARE – ROPES AND PINS

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following matter under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the matter in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Committee was advised that the Council had received a letter before action from lawyers acting on behalf of a local resident advising that if the practice of roping off part of the Green was not discontinued then an application for an injunction would be made requiring the Council to remove the rope and pins.

The lawfulness of the rope and pins that protect the cricket square became an issue in 2012 when advice was received that the Scheme of Management 1955, which permitted areas of the Green to be set aside for organised sport, was invalid.

Under the terms of the Licence Agreement dated 27 November 2014 with the Englefield Green Cricket Club, the Council had an obligation to take such reasonable measures to protect the square which comply with the requirements of any statutes and legislation relating to town and village greens. Provided that if no such measures were capable of compliance then the Council should not be in breach of this undertaking. Thus, it is within the Council's immediate power to remove the ropes and pins. However, the Council still had an obligation to take reasonable measures to protect the cricket square

Officers had sought advice from Counsel and the Committee considered Counsel's opinion on this matter. Taking account of Counsel's advice, it was

RESOLVED that -

- i) the rope and supporting pins arrangement around the cricket square be removed;**
- ii) the claimant's solicitors be advised;**
- iii) Officers reconsider what other lawful and practical measures can be used to protect the cricket square;**
- iv) Officers report back to the next meeting on options to regularise the various activities and structures on the Green; and**
- v) Officers consult with the Crown Estate**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.22pm)