

Runnymede Borough CouncilEnglefield Green CommitteeTuesday, 9 April 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors T Gates (Chair), A King (Deputy Chair), A Berardi, E Kettle, N Prescott, N Bromilow and R McGregor-Johnson.

Members of the Committee absent: None

#### 43 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### 44 **Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence received.

#### 45 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 46 **Management and Maintenance of the Green**

The Committee was updated on management and maintenance of the Green.

The Committee was advised that with regard to the Englefield Green Management Plan, due to long term sickness within the Green Space team, there was no progress to report. It was reported that it was now unlikely that the Management Plan would be available until the end of this year.

The work approved at the last Committee meeting (ground maintenance of the Green, scarifying, removing arisings and top dressing) had been completed. It was noted that some arisings remained and Officers would arrange for these to be collected by the grounds maintenance team.

With regard to replacement of the fallen wooden posts. The Corporate Head of Environmental Services had contacted the Crown Estates Office. The Office confirmed they were happy for the failed posts to be replaced but their preferred material was wood. The Committee recalled that composite posts had initially been installed around the Green to prevent traveller incursions and composite posts were already held in stock from previous procurement. Composite posts were much stronger, didn't rot and the composite posts already in situ had been a resounding success.

Officers were therefore asked to go back to the Crown Estate informing them that there were already a large number of composite posts insitu on the Green (noting these were initially installed to prevent traveller incursions). Officers to seek the consent of the Crown Estate for the existing failed wooden posts to be replaced with the composite posts previously procured by the Council and held in readiness for installation. Officers were also asked to seek consent for replacement of wooden posts with composite posts rather than replacement on a like for like basis, going forward.

The first grass cut had now taken place. This work included strimming the banks and removal of leaves. It was noted that ideally given the recent re-seeding of the Green the mow would have been delayed. Officers reported however that the mow had taken place following a request for the Green to be mowed prior to the Easter bank holiday weekend in preparation for Easter events. It was noted that unfortunately the team had mowed the edge of the location where the wildflowers were planted. Officers were asked to ensure this area was left in future to ensure the longevity of the recent wildflower planting.

Officers were asked if local residents could source their own 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors to undertake work on the Green (i.e. contractors sourced by Committee members but whose appointment was subject to the approval of Council Officers and would be supervised by the Committee Members). Officers advised the Committee that they thought this unlikely and would speak to the Council's legal team to see if this was permissible. Officers confirmed that with agreement from officers volunteers could help with maintenance work on the green.

With regard to matrix matting Officers would arrange to meet with members of the Committee on the Green to confirm where the matrix paving needed to be installed. Consent from the Crown Estate would then be needed prior to installation.

Some concerns were raised regarding weeds remaining on the Green, noting that last year's organic weed killer treatment appeared to have been more successful than this year's treatment.

Officers explained that the treatment agreed by members at the January Englefield Green Committee meeting did not include weed treatment.

A memory bench had now been installed on the site of the empty plinth. The full cost to be covered by the donor. Officers would contact the finance team to ensure full payment had been received.

With regard to the financial statement included in the report it was noted that with regard to the wildflower planting, £2000 was approved by the Englefield Green Committee in October 2022 not October 2023 as stated. Overseeding was approved at the October 2023 Committee meeting, but this expenditure was superseded by the lawn treatment approved at the Committee meetings in January and February 2024. As noted above the broken bench was to be funded by donation.

#### 47 **Englefield Green Maintenance Fund**

Under Standing Order 27.4 (d) the Committee had requested Officers provided a comprehensive list of all expenditures and interest paid since the disbursement of the Englefield Green Maintenance Reserve.

The Committee received the requested information which set out the spend history of the reserve along with anticipated probable outturn for the Financial Year 2023/24 and an estimate for the financial year 2024/25 based on the Committee's prior decisions.

It was noted that the £2,440 listed for Englefield Green Cricket Club works would be credited following confirmation from the Corporate Head of Finance in July 2023.

#### 48 **Replacement Play Area**

The Committee was advised that in recent months the Council's Open Spaces and Community Development Manager had been working on realising the play area programme as approved by the Community Services Committee and the Corporate Management Committee in September and October 2023 respectively.

This work started with a series of ward briefings in Summer 2023 where feedback and comments were sought around the condition of play areas within the wards as well as a priority list of replacements.

The ward briefings for Englefield Green focused primarily on the play area on the Green itself, which was showing signs of deterioration and had several health and safety issues.

A project was put forward through the Englefield Green S106 Major Fund Scheme and was approved by Officers and Members. The fund was from a S106 payment connected to a planning application which was approved by the Council in 2018, relating to the development of the Runnymede Campus, at Coopers Hill Lane, Englefield Green.

Within its Green Spaces and Housing areas, Runnymede Borough Council currently provides and maintains 42 play areas. The Council is committed to providing well-designed, exciting, and accessible play areas for the enjoyment of users/residents.

A budget of £80,000 was proposed to completely replace the play equipment on Englefield Green. The specifications were drawn up between Open Space Development, Green Spaces and Procurement. The project went out as one lot amongst ten others in a large programme of works.

One bid for the Englefield Green Lot (Lot 5) had been received and totalled £35,898.42. The reason for the lower amount was due to economies of scale within the programme. Due to the aesthetics of the Green itself, the specification for the play area material was stipulated to be timber. Officers felt this would be a significant improvement to the current metal equipment on site.

Costs directly associated with the new play area were envisaged to be through the S106 funds available to the Council. This had been approved by a group of Members and Officers but there was a suggestion that alternative funds (Englefield Green Earmarked Reserves) could be used.

The Committee were all in agreement that the play area needed updating. The health and safety of children was a priority. It was noted that previous resistance from local residents for improvements to the play area included an extension, whereby the proposal for current consideration was replacement of play equipment within the existing footprint. It was noted that the ground surface would also be replaced.

The S106 money received was for use in Englefield Green only, thereby if members used ringfenced funds to progress the play area the S106 monies would be used for other projects in Englefield Green.

The Committee discussed both options in detail, with differing opinions being voiced on which funding to use. After consideration the Committee

Resolved that:

The procurement of replacement equipment for the play area be approved

The replacement equipment be paid for with the Englefield Green Ringfenced fund and not from Section 106 monies

## 49 **Event Applications**

The Committee considered various event applications received by the Council for the hire of Englefield Green.

Whilst the Committee was supportive of events being held on the Green, it was felt the number of events needed to be proportionate and too many heavy vehicles would undoubtedly cause damage to the Green.

It was also noted that being in mind the grass seed recently applied needed time to 'bed in' it would be sensible to leave some time before heavy vehicles accessed the Green to give the seed the best chance to establish.

Officers were asked if the fees received from events went into the Englefield Green Earmarked reserves as to date the fees were not shown within the financial statements. Officers would obtain this information on fees received and if possible would circulate to Members of the Committee. Officers would also ensure where possible that fees were included in all future financial statements of the Earmarked reserve budget.

The Committee was reassured that after initial approval by the Englefield Green Committee all events were then discussed at the Safety Advisory Group which had representatives from various groups which included: police, health, fire, community safety and highways. It was a well-managed process.

The Committee reviewed each application individually and agreed as follows:

Resolved that:

The application for use of the Green by Beach's Funfair from 17 – 19 May be refused

The application for use of the Green by Circus Fantasia from 12 – 16 May be refused

The application for use of the Green by EGVRA for the Village Fair on 22 June be approved

The application for use of the Green by Beach's Funfair from 16 – 23 September be approved

The application for use of the Green by Horton's Vintage Fairground from 21 – 22 September be refused

The application for use of the Green by EGVRA for an Easter Egg Hunt on 12 April be approved.

## 50 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no exempt or confidential items in the agenda.

(The meeting ended at 9.18 pm.)

Chair