

Runnymede Borough Council

Englefield Green Committee

Tuesday, 16 January 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors T Gates (Chair), A King (Deputy Chair), A Berardi and E Kettle, and co-opted residents' representative, Mr R McGregor-Johnson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor N Prescott and co-opted residents' representative, Mr N Bromilow.

In attendance: Councillor S Jenkins.

28 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 October 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

29 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Bromilow.

30 **Declarations of interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

31 **Englefield Green Management Plan Update**

The Committee noted progress with the creation of a site specific management plan for Englefield Green.

Officers advised that a borough wide template was being tailored to suit Englefield Green. It was based on CABE Space Management Plan Guidance and using the criteria for Green Flag Awards, although Officers cautioned that it was not intended to enter the Green Flag Award scheme.

The Committee was pleased with progress made to date and approved the stated aims for the management plan. These included action plans, management targets, formal budget setting using the earmarked reserves and securing additional financial resources where identified, engagement with stakeholders and a communications plan.

The following sections would be populated as the plan was developed:

- About the Site
- Strategy and Policy
- A 'Welcoming Place'
- Health, Safety and Security
- Maintenance and Cleanliness
- Marketing and Communication

Officers confirmed that having a site plan would be integral to the successful operation of the plan. The designated areas would be identified. For example the location of the wildflower meadow and the regime for its maintenance. All aspects of the plan would be agreed with the stakeholders so that important elements such as having appropriate

signage which followed the design code of the Englefield Green Neighbourhood Plan were borne in mind for example.

The Committee was keen to use volunteers to assist with various aspects of the plan. An established group which had recently received funding from the Council was mentioned and Officers were receptive to this suggestion. Officers were asked to submit an update on community involvement, specifically work with volunteers to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee in April 2024.

Officers confirmed that they would submit an update on progress with the Management Plan to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee in April 2024. It was also noted that an Equality Impact Screening Assessment would be completed as part of the process and a plan for engagement with stakeholders.

Officers were thanked for their report which was duly noted.

32 **Robotic Lawnmower**

The Committee was asked to consider an idea which had been put forward in accordance with Standing Order 27.4d via one of the residents' representatives on behalf of a third interested party.

The request was to consider the use of automated lawnmowers on Englefield Green which it had been suggested might assist with keeping the Green looking neat and tidy without recourse to limited staffing resources. An automated lawnmower could be pre-programmed for routes and schedules and then released to operate without supervision.

The Committee noted the typical retail price of an automated lawnmower was currently in the region of between £3,000 and £6,000.

Officers had conducted research which indicated that automated lawnmowers were usually used for secure, enclosed, private sites such as residential gardens, and golf courses and that putting them out on The Green which was an unenclosed, public open space, could run the risk of vandalism and quite possibly theft. In addition, there was little evidence of them being widely used in public spaces.

The Committee agreed with this line of thought and considered that this risk outweighed the potential benefits of producing lower carbon emissions and/or reliance on fossil fuels.

Resolved that –

The suggested use of automated mowers on Englefield Green be rejected based on the vulnerability to interference by the public in this location

33 **Replacement Bollards**

The Committee was asked to approve approaching the Crown Estate for permission to replace 2 bollards that were damaged on The Green. The bollards were in place to protect the area in a way that maintained the natural look and feel of the site without being too intrusive.

During the discussion it was considered sensible to widen the request to the Crown Estate to authorise the Council to replace bollards as and when necessary, rather than seeking permission on each occasion that a need for replacement was identified.

The Committee agreed that a 'blanket permission' would save time and reduce the risk of damage to The Green. It was also in alignment with the Council's obligation to promote

access for legitimate users while maintaining The Green's 'open and unenclosed' status. It was noted that bollards were replaced on a like for like basis so as not to require any additional breaking of the surface of the land.

Officers were asked to identify any other damaged bollards, and where necessary, report to the Committee for approval, to arrange for their replacement.

Resolved that –

- i) Blanket consent from the Crown Estate be sought to replace bollards as and when necessary on a like for like basis; and**
- ii) 2 bollards identified as in immediate need of replacement, at a cost of £350, be approved**

34 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved that –

the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during discussion of the following reports under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the reports in question would be likely to involve disclosure exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

35 **Cricket Net**

The Committee received an exempt report under paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 which sought approval of a request from the Englefield Green Cricket Club to introduce temporary portable practice nets.

Members were advised that the club wanted to use a practice net to assist the Club's training sessions according to a proposed timetable which comprised a mixture of junior and senior training and warm up/pre-match sessions.

The Committee was satisfied that the proposal would enhance the sporting facilities and be beneficial to the club and its supporters which was also a positive in terms of equalities by encouraging girls and juniors to participate. However, given the inevitability of additional wear and tear, even with the net being rotated and only limited use, the Committee agreed that the licence to the club should include responsibility for the additional maintenance that would be required to keep the area in good condition. This would be monitored regularly by the Council's Green Spaces Team.

The Committee noted the legal and risk implications set out in the report. Therefore, Officers would, if instructed by the responsible officers on the renewal of the Cricket Club licence, submit a report to a future meeting to cover legal constraints on leasing the Cricket Pavilion.

Resolved that –

The proposal to use a cricket net for the enjoyment of the cricket club and their spectators, to be actioned by a written licence, setting out the conditions of use and storage, be approved

36 Urgent business - update on maintenance options for The Green

The Committee received an exempt report under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 which sought approval of measures to improve maintenance of The Green. The Chair had agreed to the matter being considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions set out in accordance with Section 100B (4) of the aforementioned Act.

Since publication of the agenda, Officers had received some quotations for 5 options to undertake works on The Green for fertiliser and weed control, and the application of topsoil and re-seeding as requested at a previous meeting of the Committee.

The need for urgency was that the works, if approved, would need to commence in early March before the next scheduled meeting of the Committee in April 2024.

Members considered 5 options; three of which were discounted, on the basis that the Committee did not support the use of artificial herbicides or fertilisers and did not consider that although The Green required some intervention, it was not in need of anything more than spot treatment of the worst areas only. This left one viable and affordable option which the Committee was content for Officers to pursue at the cost set out in the report.

Resolved that –

A supplementary estimate in the sum reported, be approved, to be funded from the Englefield Green reserves, in order to instigate work under Option 4 of the tabled report for maintenance (scarify, remove arisings, seed and top dress) in identified areas of The Green at Englefield Green.

(The meeting ended at 8.28 pm.)

Chair