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**PLAY AREA IN CHORLEYWOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 3<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2015**

**MEMBERSHIP & ATTENDANCE**

- Chairman: \* Cllr Barbara Green (BG)
- Members: \* Cllr Alison Preedy (AP)  
\* Cllr Martin Trevett (MT)  
\* Cllr Steve Watkins (SW) (Vice Chairman)  
\* Michael Hyde (MH) - Friends of the Common  
\* Maria Larkin (ML) – Chorleywood Residents Association  
\* David Walker (DW) - Friends of the Chorleywood House Estate  
Cllr Chris Lloyd - TRDC  
\* Substitute Cllr Chris Whately-Smith (CWS) - TRDC  
\* Simone Tyson (ST) - Chorleywood Mums  
\* David Hiddleston (DH) – Friends of Grovewood
- \*Denotes members present

Officers in Attendance: Clerk to the Council Yvonne Merritt  
Deputy Clerk Claire James

Also in attendance: Alison Rubens, Cllr Tony Edwards & Sarah Goldberg

***Secretaries Note: Due to the nature of the meeting, these notes are more of a verbatim report than is usual for minutes of a committee meeting. It has been done this way to properly record all the views expressed and statements made and to give all Councillors the background to the debate and how decisions were reached.***

**15/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies for absence from Chris Lloyd (substitute Chris Whately-Smith present).

The Chairman Cllr Barbara Green explained that no agenda had been issued for this meeting as it was basically a continuation of the last meeting filling in the issues table.

**15/14 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Cllr Barbara Green referred all attendees to the email that she had received from Charlotte Gomes of TRDC and circulated to all containing the clarification that it was the eastern part of West Chorleywood that TRDC felt was not catered for in Play area terms. Concerns were raised by AP and SW that this was now very specific and a change from original brief. There was debate about the ward boundaries (SW) and what the recommendation from the group would be. BG stated that attendees may or may not want to accept it but it was what had been said and we have to accept it and move on.

MH pointed out that the minutes referred to the report from Chorleywood House Estate being included with the minute as Appendix 1 but it had not been. It was agreed that this report would be sent out to all. DW reminded the group that the report was not written as a formal report but as a spoken one.

DH pointed out a missing word towards the end of Page 3 of the minutes and it was agreed that the sentence should read:

(DW) suggested that the group should recognize the shortcomings as not one **solution** would fit all but move forward with meaningful discussions

MH raised a question under Minute 15/09 Document check requesting a copy of the letter that had been received by Grovewood from three District Councillors. DH undertook to distribute this to all the group.

MH requested a report from the Rangers on the CMS report. BG stated that the Group had already received a report from the Rangers. The Clerk advised that the report referred to had been a supplementary report to correct some misinformation within the Three Rivers officers report and was not a Rangers report and that it had been requested to be withdrawn as it was viewed to be a vested interest report. BG stated that it had been finally accepted as a report and stated that she did not want a further Ranger's report. MH stated that there were issues that would be valuable to have the views of the Ranger on. BG asked for a vote of who wanted an additional report and the request was turned down with a vote of five votes against, four for and one abstention.

BG asked the Clerk for a copy of the written confirmation of the A404 crossing going ahead. The Clerk advised that she had given the information verbally. BG said that was not the point. The Clerk advised that the information had gone to Full Council and was therefore in the public domain. BG asked that the written confirmation be circulated to the entire Group.

The minutes were then agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman of the Advisory Group Barbara Green

### **15/15 MATTERS ARISING**

MH sought clarification of what was meant by the statement by MT that "It will happen even without the approval of the Parish Council." MT advised that the comment was that the District Council would be likely to go ahead obviously on their own land if the Parish Council did not agree to it being on their land.

MH then referred to an email of the 29<sup>th</sup> September that had been sent to SW and asked for assurances from BG that all reports would be considered fairly and with an open mind. There was a suspicion that bias was creeping in. There had been the suggestion from BG that Chorleywood House Estate was not relevant due to the Chorleywood East/West debate. BG asked MH to clarify his question. She further stated that she had never given any opinion on the relevance of any

of the sites confirming that there are four sites under consideration. Further clarification was sought with some further debate from other group members. BG stated that the group now had clarification and needed to move on. She felt that MH's comments were no longer matters arising to issues that go beyond the minutes to emails sent etc.

## 15/16 ISSUES TABLE

BG advised that everyone should have received a revised table that should make it a little easier to go through. She asked that everyone go through the completed part to check if there had been any omissions. DH reminded the Group that it had taken two hours to get this far and the group should not be changing it. MH stated that this was an admirable wish but as it would be a public document it needed to be correct and reflect the best estimates.

**PARKING:** The comment for Chorleywood House under Parking was questioned. ST advised that she had made this comment and it was what she and her family saw every weekend throughout the football season. The Clerk advised that she had spoken to the football club and clarified that the Football season ran from September through to May, outside these times, although they may be some ad hoc training, the pitches were reseeded and therefore football would not be desirable. It had further been stated that many of the children that played football went on to play cricket during the summer. AP further clarified the statement to say that even during the football season it was only during Saturday and Sunday mornings. DW asked whether this changed the rating given. DH stated that the group was just regurgitating what it took two hours to get to which was a pointless exercise. It was suggested that CWHE stayed at 1 but sites 13 and 15 should move to 2. It was also suggested that the comment for the Station car park under Site 15 have 'at a cost' added as charges were still made at a weekend.

ML asked for clarification on the parking at CWHE – how were spaces reserved for hearses. It was noted that this was only on weekdays and currently if the entrance to the cemetery was impeded, people were asked to move.

BG suggested that the group voted on the need to change the scoring. ST advised that she had not had the chance to go through this as this meeting had been brought forward.

BG felt that the group needed to carry on and not get bogged down. She stated that at the final meeting the document can be reviewed and fine tuning done then and asked if the group agreed with this. There were general murmurs of ascent.

BG then went on to say that before the group resumed going through the table, there was something else she wanted to table. She advised that she had been persuaded by others to go down the ranking route but there was a need to now consider weighting on the basis that some issues were more crucial than other. She then circulated a document to all attendees on her suggestions for weighting factors. She made specific mention of the 6 checklist items used by TRDC and the fact that the group had then added in other factors. AP asked if that was what TRDC did and was advised not. The Clerk asked what ground conditions meant. It was clarified to mean accessibility for construction vehicles, the installation of equipment, and possible ground excavation. There ensued some debate about the cost implications of this. SW suggested that if a report was going to be presented to Full Council then such costs would need to be included. MT advised that the final decision rested with the Leisure Committee at TRDC. BG stated that these cost would not be out of the Parish Budget and MT suggested that the District would come back to the Parish. CWS advised that there was a budget, there would be tenders and negotiation would follow. It was a red herring to discuss it now. He further stated that it was not your (ie parish) budget, TRDC have budgeted for the play area. It would be up to officers to make an

application for extra from the capital budget if necessary. He re-iterated this by saying “Not your problem” and “Cost not your issue”. He also made the point that there was a difference between Revenue and Capital budgets and suggested that the revenue costs were the Parish Council’s. This was firmly denied by a number round the table and CWS conceded that therefore both the capital and revenue costs were being met by TRDC.

BG then asked for a vote on who thought that Ground Conditions should be included. The vote was carried with six in favour and four against.

With reference to the weighting table BG acknowledged that this had only been presented to the group that day and that people had not therefore had time to consider it. She suggested that it was agreed in principle but that it was taken away for attendees to discuss within their groups.

MT made the point that none of the group were experts and that much of it would be about what the group thought. BG suggested that it was to help the ranking exercise. ML stated that clearly some issues were more important than others and that therefore weighting should be made. DH referred the group back to MH’s Comment that it is a public document and ranking was necessary with weighting. ST stated that she supported the use of weighting. DW stated that in principle weighting was a good idea and advised that he used to do it as part of his job, but he was concerned that anything could be proved by altering the weighting. He suggested that the group continue as they had been so far and then apply the weighting at the end. BG felt that the only problem with doing it at the end was that people would start arguing as they would see a site getting more points. MH stated that he agreed with both DH and BG but felt it was better to leave weightings until the end. There was a suggestion to complete the list as there may be a deal breaker further down the line. BG sought consensus. ST asked what TRDC do. CWS replied that TRDC had never done anything as complicated and had never done a weighting exercise. BG clarified that Officers did weighting exercises which was confirmed. ML stated that she was more interested in facts. BG stated that it was the job of the group to make recommendations. The Group had the expert reports and it was the job of the group to sift the information and put it into an accessible format. She felt that in order for it to be credible the group had to weight the issues. Otherwise all the issues are equal and asked if this was what the group wanted. She asked that the group take the paper away, have a look through and at the next meeting it can be agreed or not.

The Group then focused back on the table;

**Safety and Security – Security from Horses:** BG stated that the permissive horse track went close to Site 13 but horses may not be an issue for all sites. DH advised that there were plenty of horses in Grovewood. In terms of site 13 it was suggested that mitigation could be that the horse track could be moved or bunding of the play area could be undertaken. The Clerk advised that the concern was about the safety of the horses (and their riders) as well as the safety of the children. CWS asked for clarification of how close the horse track was to site 13 and it was confirmed to be about 5m. It was agreed that the issue should be changed to Safety **from/for** horses. It was stated that the horse track could not be moved at Site 13. DW suggested a one sentence definition of what was meant on all points so that it was not revisited at the next meeting. BG offered to do this and email to the entire group.

MH asked whether this was specific to Site 13 as there is the horse track there. DH stated that it applied to Grovewood as well. There was discussion about the actual location of Site 13 and BG stated that she was not prepared to make any changes to the site locations but that it may be possible to relocate the horse track. The Clerk advised that it would be difficult to relocate the horse track at that point as there was Stewardship land on one side and the golf course on the other, stressing that this

was fact. ST asked whether these conditions occur anywhere on the Common. The Clerk advised that the access point to the Horse track was at Shepherds Bridge so there was already a people and horses issue there, however if there was a play area at this location there would be additional people in an already narrow location. ST suggested that it could be assumed that horse riders would not take a nervous horse to this area but it was felt that this could not be assumed. BG suggested that as mitigation signage may help and that moving the horse track should be looked at. The Clerk reiterated that there was nowhere else for it to go. Discussion moved on to the other areas and DH advised that Grovewood was near stables and any play area would be within one meter of the road where the horses are. It was understood that no horses were allowed in CWHE and that Site 15 should not have any horses by law. Comments and rankings were then agreed and recorded on the table.

**Overhanging Branches:** CWS stated that most play schemes had trees planted and therefore in time had overhanging branches. He felt this was part of the management of the site. BG asked if the group wanted to keep the item, it had been raised as a concern at the time of the site visits. Most of the sites had management plans in place to manage the trees. The Clerk also advised that she had been made aware that there was a Woodland Management Plan for CWHE that would thin out most of the trees with major tree work over the next 18 months and looked to CWS to confirm this. ML asked for a copy of this and the group was advised that it was on the TRDC website. Comments and rankings were then agreed and recorded on the table.

**Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):** BG reminded the group of the Police report that had been produced. DH felt that in reality all sites would have some aspect of anti-social behavior. BG stated that antisocial behavior in Grovewood would be more of an issue due to the impact on nearby residents. It was stated that there was no evidence from other play area in TRDC that there was an increase in ASB. CWS stated that in his experience a bigger problem was with people and litter. AP suggested that there were two ways of looking at it – Daytime and Evening. The Clerk advised that youths did gather on the Common but locations changed. AP asked that given there was some potential of ASB on the Common, would a play area exacerbate it, it was possible but could not be determined. BG suggested that the group were supposed to be using the expert's reports so these should be used. The evidence from TRDC was that in reality ASB is reduced. Comments and rankings were then agreed and recorded on the table.

**Dog Fouling:** The Clerk suggested that this should include animal fouling. BG stated that she would like to keep this to dog fouling. ST raised the subject of fencing and natural barriers and the possible costs of these. However as the consideration of costs had been discounted earlier it was suggested that it could not be raised under this issue. CWS responded to a specific question about fencing that his personal preference was to fence play areas but pointed out that this went against the Government view that play areas should be open. ST stated that she had seen play areas on Commons with self-closing gates etc. The Clerk reminded the group that the Common cannot have fencing – this had been proven as part of the Grazing project. Dog Control Orders were also discussed as mitigation although as the orders had not yet been agreed the ranking should be made on the situation as it is at the moment. It was also suggested that areas do get self-policed. Comments and rankings were then agreed and recorded on the table.

**Natural Surveillance:** It was felt that most children would be supervised during normal play time. ST stated that each of the groups under this heading would have different levels of surveillance and that therefore she had ranked each of them and had then come up with an overall ranking. CWS suggested that once built the play area would be busy and that therefore there would be natural surveillance once it was in use and he therefore did not rank any of the categories very highly. MT suggested that at any one time there would be parents present. It was agreed therefore to rank all of the sites as 1.

This had completed the table to a natural break point at the end of a category and as the finish time for the meeting was fast approaching BG advised that she wanted to stop at this point and raise something else. She stated that they had been trying to agree a Full Council Extra ordinary meeting but were struggling with a date. An idea put forward from the Vice Chair of the Council had been the suggestion that the Council should consider, prior to the decision making meeting which had all the usual constraints of such a meeting, a public meeting/forum at which information boards could be put up, reports given to the public etc. BG stated that she would be happy to do a PowerPoint presentation and that it would be possible for the public to speak. She felt that it would be good PR for the Council and that it would be valuable for Councillors to attend. The Clerk advised that it was down to the Council to decide such a meeting. BG stated that the 23<sup>rd</sup> February was the next Tuesday available for the Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council. She asked for the Groups views on the idea of the Public Forum. MT stated that it was a good idea in principle but that it would need to be tightly run as there were strong feelings on all sides. There were various interest groups and there would be a need to ensure that all information being brought forward was factual. BG suggested that an independent chairman be brought in for the meeting and a couple of options were discussed. ML suggested if members of the group had the remit to go to their own members, it would be useful to have all the reports on the website. With that in place and all the information out there she queried what the forum would achieve and asked how it would be publicised. The Clerk advised that it would be through the normal routes and would ask everyone present to also publicise the meeting. It was stated that it was about being transparent and allowing people to have their say. ST stated that last time the frustrations had been at people not being able to take part. The deadline of the TRDC Leisure Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> March was raised and BG stated that if the forum was on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February the Extra Ordinary meeting could take place on the 8<sup>th</sup> march (she was happy to move the Open Spaces Committee meeting on that night to facilitate this.) This then begged the question whether this gave enough time if the EGM was on the 8<sup>th</sup> to meet the TRDC meeting date of the 16<sup>th</sup> March. The Clerk explained that there would need to be an Officers report to Full council. MT felt that this would be useful as there were a lot of people out there who did not understand what was going on. ML felt that a forum would have to be documented and every Councillor had to be present. The Clerk suggested that Councillors would be able to make a more informed decision. BG asked if in principle people would be happy with this arrangement. It was agreed that the Group should present the report rather than allowing interest groups to present.

BG closed the debate by asking everyone to take away the weighting sheets and consider the next meetings. She also agreed that she would get the one line definitions of the issues out.

#### **15/04 TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting had been previously agreed for December 9<sup>th</sup> at 7.30 It was requested that this meeting now started at 7pm. It was also agreed that a date needed to be put into the diary for January and possible dates would be emailed by BG.

#### **15/05 CLOSURE**

The Meeting, having commenced at 12.30 pm closed at 3pm

These minutes have been checked and signed by the Chairman

Signed .....Via Email ..... Date .....12.11.15.....

These minutes were agreed as a true and correct record at the Advisory Committee meeting and signed by the Chairman.

Signed..... Date.....