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**PLAY AREA IN CHORLEYWOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 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, Cllr Barbara Dickens, Doug King (replacement for David Walker), Bob Sutherland, Myfanwy Ronchetti.

***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.***

**15/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

David Walker explained that Doug King was present as part of a handover as he was likely to be leaving the Advisory Group in the New Year.

The Chairman Cllr Barbara Green explained that the agenda had not been issued in advance but copies were available at the meeting.

**15/20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd November agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman of the Advisory Group Barbara Green.

## **15/21 MATTERS ARISING**

SW raised the question of the running costs of the Play Area following the debate that had taken place at the last meeting. CWS advised that it was his understanding that TRDC would meet the capital and revenue costs and asked the Clerk for her views. YM advised that the Parish Council would not take on the revenue but had never had anything in writing from TRDC that they would be covering them either. MT suggested that it would be like any other lease with the leaser responsible for the capital and revenue costs. It was agreed that the Clerk would send a letter to TRDC requesting confirmation that they will be covering the revenue costs as well as the capital. SW suggested that this letter should also seek confirmation that if one of the sites on the Common is chosen that TRDC would also cover the Public Inquiry costs and BG confirmed that this should be included. In response to who at TRDC the letter should be addressed, CWS advised that it should be addressed to both Chris Hope and Geoff Muggeridge as they would cover different aspects of the expenditure. MT advised that if was to get to that stage then usually the applicant would pay the cost which in this case would be TRDC.

BG then focused the group on the issues table that she had issued, apologizing that due to problems with her PC there was an error on the Natural Surveillance marking. She asked the group if they wanted to revisit the decision of ranking all the sites as one for this issue. DH pointed out that everyone had agreed to this ranking at the last meeting so why revisit again. BG agreed that if everyone was happy the ranking would stay as agreed.

## **15/22 WEIGHTING**

BG referred everyone to the weighting paper that she had issued at the last meeting with the request that everyone look at it and email her with any issues. She advised that a number of people had responded and asked whether the Group could agree to the weightings as per the paper. DW suggested that the group need to agree the mathematical formulae and how it was achieved.

BG outlined her view of the weightings and suggested that the weighting needed to be agreed before it was applied and therefore it should be agreed at this point. DW expressed the wish to raise concerns on a couple of items:

1. Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) and Disruption to Residents - If both were to be weighted at 2 each they would score 4 out of the 27 points available which might be felt to be too high. MT was in agreement with DW quoting that the evidence from other play areas in TRDC is that ASB reduces and therefore the weighting on this was too high. He went on to say that even if ASB was to take place it would not take place when the children were playing. MH asked for a definition of ASB referring the group back to the last meeting where BG had agreed to provide a list of the Definitions of the categories. ML asked whether anyone had any evidence of ASB at the sites under consideration. MT suggested that it was insulting to the residents of Chorleywood to suggest that Chorleywood was

worse than the rest of the District. MH replied that he was not suggesting this, he was just trying to understand the definition of ASB. CWS asked whether there was any knowledge of ASB at any of the sites. Was it a major problems or was it at a low level and therefore it was irrelevant. He did not think that Chorleywood suffers a major ASB problem. BG said the point was not whether we have it but about the weighting and the current double score. It was suggested that both be given a 1 rather than a 2. MH advised the group that he was aware that there had been a drug problem at Site 15 to which BG suggested that the group did not want to go there. YM confirmed that there had been no drug paraphernalia this year at that site. ***(Secretaries note: the Rangers report any evidence of ASB on the Common and this is then passed onto the Police who generally increase their patrols in that area where possible)*** AP suggested that a play area may potentially become a meeting place for local residents.

The scoring of each category (*as opposed to each item*) was then reviewed. A vote was then taken to change the weighting on the following individual items to:

- 1 for Anti-Social Behaviour
- 1 for Natural Surveillance and
- 2 for Impact on Residents

This was carried with all in favour bar one abstention.

DW asked what the item Natural features/special environmental factors meant which created some discussion. MH suggested that the weighting for this was left until the group looked at what was behind the issues when it could then be understood better.

CWS raised the item Accessibility for users and quoted two extracts from the TRDC document on Play Area criteria relating to this. ST suggested that in terms of proximity to population, if the play area was not within walking distance it defeated the objective. BG asked the group what they felt about the proximity weighting. SW suggested that Chorleywood was a well spread out village and therefore wherever it is will be a long walk for some. BG said that this was site specific and asked the group whether this issue was so important that it should be given a greater weighting. DW stated that he was inclined to agree with ST but from experience of having lived in Chorleywood for 30 years people do get in their cars. It was stated that there is mitigation on some of the sites for parking.

MH asked whether TRDC use weighting criteria. CWS replied that he had checked this point specifically at TRDC and the emphatic answer was no. ST stated that she felt strongly that if this issue was not prioritized then the group is misrepresenting the community. Whether others agreed or disagreed, whether people do or do not walk, there are plenty of families who would walk if it was within walking distance. MT stated that there was no intention at any of the sites to increase the parking. YM pointed out that parking in Chorleywood was an issue hence why the Parish Council had to introduce parking schemes in

various areas. BG focused the group back on the question in hand and stated that parking was not the issue being talked about. ML quoted from the Play England Document used when the Play area had previously been considered which in summary supported the weighting being raised. BG then took a vote on increasing the weighting from 2 to 3 for proximity to main areas of population which was carried with 6 in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions.

MH stated that it had been confirmed by TRDC that the area in greatest need for a play area was the eastern side of Chorleywood West which indicated the best site was CWHE asking whether the ranking of this site as a 4 would help TRDC in their funding. BG confirmed that the weighting/ranking was in terms of proximity to residents population. ST spoke about the physical catchment areas and the physical buildings around CWHE were the House, Public buildings or spaces with no children. MT stated that the group had been through this. CWHE had never been in Chorleywood West under the old or new boundaries. BG stated that this had been gone through many times and asked the group whether they wanted to change the ratings on Proximity to main areas of population. She stated that the idea was that the play area should be serving the widest area possible and asked for a show of hands as to whether this criterion should be revisited. After some further debate a vote was taken on whether everyone was still happy with the rankings and this was carried by a majority with 1 against and 1 abstention.

The weightings were then agreed with a caveat to revisit the 'loss of amenity' and 'Natural features/special environmental factors' items when these were better understood through discussion.

The group then moved on to discuss the next item on the Issues table.

## **15/23 ISSUES TABLE**

**IMPACT ON FLORA:** MT raised the disturbance caused by the Flood relief scheme to site 13 in the past. YM disagreed and offered to provide the maps which showed what areas had been affected which had not touched Area 13. BG quoted an extract from the CMS report (4.6.2) with MH also quoting from the CMS report (4.8.8). BG gave a view on the possible ranking of the sites which MH challenged with specific detail on plant species and the section of the wildlife act that they were protected under, further mentioning the 2014 Red List. DH asked what point was being made. MH replied that some plants were more important than others. He stated that this had not come out of the CMS report but might have come out of a supplementary reports if one had been done by the Ranger. MH then gave further detail on species on the Red List that were present on Site 15 and 13 and that CWHE had no Red List species. ML asked what had the group paid for if these reports did not contain the information. YM suggested that this was where the Officers would come in to inform the Councillors. The question was raised whether if Red Data List species were present at a given site whether planning permission was likely at these sites.

ML stated that a supplementary report had been produced by the Ranger. YM stated that the Supplementary report that had been produced was specifically on the TRDC report. BG asked that if this Red List was so crucial why it was not mentioned in the CMS report. DW asked whether it would change the ranking and there was further debate on the merits of the individual sites being given a particular ranking. BG stated that she was not aware that there was such a thing as the Red List and asked MH why he had not raised the fact that it was not included earlier. MH replied that he was giving his view on the implications of the information given and gave his ranking on the basis of the Red List. CWS tried to summarise the debate offering the following rankings as a summary of the discussion:

Grove Wood 2

Site 13 3

Site 15 4

CWHE Estate 1

This was agreed with 6 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.

The subject of mitigation was then discussed with CWS suggesting that these issues would be covered under Planning.

**IMAPCT ON FAUNA:** It was stated that bats were present at all sites and noted that all the sites had been chosen to avoid the Great Crested Newt exclusion zones. Suggestions of ranking were invited from the group with differing views being put forward. DH raised the issue of Grovewood suggesting that if the area was disturbed the fauna would have nowhere to go as it was surrounded by housing, at all other sites they had somewhere they could move to. This was debated further. MH came back to the Great Crested Newt (GCN) and the CMS report. He stated that the GCN was the most valued outlining the statements in the CMS report about GCNs and the potential presence or otherwise at each site. ST raised the ecological report that TRDC had done previously which YM clarified had been about slow worms not GCNs. She further suggested that mitigation was possible. MH then went on to discuss bats again with reference to the CMS report and stated that grasslands were described as foraging habitats for bats, this would then include Sites 13 and 15 and the CWHE. He then moved on to reptiles and the statements from the CMS report. MT raised that a reptile survey had been done. It was again clarified by YM that it not been a reptile survey but a slow worm survey. MT suggested that this was not what his officers had told him. He suggested a ranking of 1 for all four sites. BG stated that she felt that this was avoiding the issue which MT took exception to. She then asked the group therefore whether they agreed and there were 'no's from around the table. BG then tried to summarise the debate stating that a valid point had been made by DH suggesting that the smaller the area the more impact would be. YM had stated that it is possible to mitigate for the GCN. AP suggested that the group was going round in circles debating this item. Further debate took place on the different rankings suggested by different members of the Group around the table with it being noted that the GCN was a protected species but that the sites had been chosen as outside the specified boundaries of the GCN. DH pointed out several times that Grovewood was different than the other sites. There was then further debate on

bats. MT then suggested a different ranking taking into account the point raised by DH of 2,1,1,1, which was agreed by a show of hands.

**IMPACT ON TREES:** Again rankings from members round the table were sought. Discussion covered the possible movement of sites in mitigation. Specifically for CWHE it was suggested that the impact on trees could be mitigated by moving the site to the other side of the Tennis Courts. Debate then followed about moving a given site a few feet but not any larger distance.

Based on the discussion CWS proposed the rankings of 4,2,1,3 which were agreed.

At this point ML asked what time BG intended the meeting to run till as she had to go at 9pm. BG advised that she felt the group needed to try to complete this work that night and sought the group's opinion on what time the meeting should finish. There was a general consensus to continue so ML asked that Myfanwy Ronchetti take her place when she had to leave.

**IMPACT ON RESIDENTS:** A suggestion of the possible ranking was debated, nearly agreed, debated further then agreed as 4,1,3,2

**LOSS OF AMENITY:** BG advised that she had put this in thinking that there would be some specific loss of amenity not accounted for under the other criteria but that maybe it was not needed. CWS suggested that this topic was often subjective. MT stated that he felt the item should not be included as it (*providing a play area*) was not a loss but a gain in amenity. After further brief debate it was agreed to take this item out.

**NATURAL FEATURES/SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:** BG explained her thinking behind the inclusion of this item. DW felt all the sites were comparable. ST asked what would make a play area more attractive than the learning in a natural environment. YM made the point that Site 15 was unimproved grassland. BG felt that this point had been covered under Impact on Flora. MT suggested that it be taken out. MH prompted further debate on possible special environmental factors of:

Local Nature reserve status -CWHE, Sites 13 and 15 (i.e. the Common)  
Local Wildlife site designation - CWHE, Sites 13 and 15 (i.e. the Common)  
Designated Ancient Woodland – Grove wood  
Priority habitat – CWHE (none), site 13 (2), Site 15 (2), Grovewood (none).

BG stated that she felt that what MH was saying was valid in picking up these designations. ST asked whether these would not get picked up under Planning/Legal. BG stated that they should be picked up somewhere. CWS asked for confirmation that the Common was designated a Local Nature Reserve which was confirmed by YM who added that it had other designations and was also in Higher Level Stewardship. ML felt that these should be a comment not a ranking. BG

suggested that the item be taken out and the information added against the sites somewhere in the report. It was finally agreed that the item was taken out.

**PLANNING & LEGAL:** MT stated that these items were part of the process when it goes for planning permission. BG asked whether the group should be picking up that some of the sites would take up more time and money than others. CWS suggested that if it was TRDC applying then that workload would fall on TRDC. YM suggested that as most of the information was in the Parish Office the workload would fall to the Parish to communicate with the District. CWS suggested that the letter to TRDC confirming the costs coverage agreed earlier in the meeting may need to include this element. BG asked whether these planning considerations were something that needed to be taken into account. DW felt that they ought to be part of the commentary but they could not be ranked. YM raised the point that when the recommendation went to Full Council, as part of her responsibilities as an officer of the Parish Council she would need to make an independent report to Councillors and the legal side would be covered in that report. CWS stated that he felt that the impact of how the Council discusses its budget was not for the committee. BG asked whether it should be taken out. MH felt strongly that it should be ranked. BG stated that she sort of agreed in that there should be some indication of how difficult a particular site might be. MT said that the report from YM was correct but asked whether it was a ranking issue or something to note, suggested that the most difficult site might also be the most suitable. DW felt that it was something that should be done. DH stated that the terms of the group were to recommend a site not the implications of a site. YM further explained that the report that she would be doing as Clerk would cover legal, financial and staffing implications, the same as any other report produced for Councillors. BG suggested that the item be left out which MH strongly disagreed with as the group had been specifically asked to cover this area. DW was concerned that if it was ranked, the weighting of it could be a deal breaker. CWS asked for clarification as to whether the group had been instructed by the Terms of Reference to cover it or not. YM read from the Terms of Reference which confirmed that it was included.

ST made a statement that the purpose of all this was about the children. Families did not care whether the implication was for the District or the Parish, indeed many would not know the difference. She felt that the group should not be considering Parish or District work load implications. There was further debate about the inclusion or exclusion of the item. CWS said that the Terms of Reference did not say that the item had to be ranked but that it had to be considered. After some further comments BG then asked for a show of hands on whether the item should be deleted but put in as a separate item and not therefore ranked. This was agreed with 7 voting in favour.

**GROUND CONDITIONS:** CWS advised that he could only think of one site where these had been an issue. He further advised that any consent to build anything would have a construction management plan. MH suggested a ranking of 1 for all sites which was agreed with the addition that the report might need to include mitigations.

This completed the discussion and rankings on all the items listed with the deletions as recorded. No other items were agreed to be changed or deleted.

BG stated that the group now needed to go away with the rankings and the weightings and work out the results. CWS stated that this should be done by BG and circulated to all members of the group. The addition of a draft number on any re-issue of the table was requested.

## **15/24 RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL**

BG advised that the start time of the next meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> December had been set for 10am but as ST's substitute had to leave a 11.45 could this be brought forward to 9.30am. AP felt strongly that she had reorganized her day around a 10am start and objected strongly to this being changed. The meeting start time stayed at 10am and the point of the meeting would be to come up with the recommendation. ST asked what dates the group was working towards. BG advised that at the Full Council meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> December, it had been decided that there would be a Public Forum on the 19<sup>th</sup> January. ST asked for the reasoning behind this date. BG explained that an Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council had been called for the 23<sup>rd</sup> February to facilitate the reporting of the decision of Full council on the recommendation to be put before it at that meeting, to TRDC in time for the meeting of the Leisure Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> March. MT stated that following conversations that he had had with key members at TRDC, they were quite happy to have an Extra Ordinary meeting and therefore working to the 16<sup>th</sup> March was not essential. BG asked whether the money for the play area would be protected and MT replied that he needed to be at the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February in order to ensure that the money was protected. He further stated that he had not heard that there was any inclination to remove the allocation. BG stated that the 19<sup>th</sup> January did not give much time to prepare, publicise the meeting and she wanted to do a proper job. SW asked whether responses had been received from the Authors of the reports as to their availability for the 19<sup>th</sup> as had been requested at Full Council. YM stated that CMS and the Police had confirmed their availability, TRDC were not available on the 19<sup>th</sup> but also did not feel that attendance was necessary given the work that had been done to date. MT then stated that he had detected impatience in their response and that it was therefore very important that he was at the TRDC Budget meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to defend the play area provision allocation. There was then further debate on the dates and the need to push for a date. YM clarified to the Group that the Public Forum would be that, Councillors would not be sitting at the table answering questions. ST suggested that this was therefore setting BG up. MT raised the need to get a strong independent Chairman. BG felt that she was being pushed into this date and there was a lot of preparation to do. It was noted that assistance had been offered.

At this point CWS asked if he could leave as he had a meeting the following day for which he had just been given some last minute information and he therefore needed

to prepare for the meeting. Before he went BG asked whether CWS could assure the group that if the dates were moved and the TRDC meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> March was not met this was acceptable to TRDC. CWS replied that he did not know what MT had agreed and therefore could not give such assurances.

BG made a request to consider holding the Public Forum on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and Full Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> March (moving Open Spaces that was due to be held on that night). ST asked why the meetings had to be on a Tuesday night. YM replied that all Council meetings were held on Tuesday. Both ST and MT stated that this was one of the most important decisions that the Council would make. YM advised that it was down to the Council to decide the date of the meeting. BG stated that a date had to be agreed that every Councillor could attend. ST emphasized that it was really important that every single Councillor was available on the date chosen.

BG requested that the Chairman of the Council reconsider the dates of the proposed meetings as she felt she had agreed the dates under duress. She felt that the public needed to be given enough time to be made aware of the meeting. She asked that the Public Forum be delayed to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb and that another date be looked for as soon as possible after this for the Full Council meeting. YM advised that suitable dates would not only depend on Councillor's availability but also on the availability of the Hall. She further advised that the Chairman would have to call an Extra Ordinary Full Council meeting to change the dates. ***(Secretary's note: This has now been called for the 15<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm).***

#### **15/25 TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December at the Parish Council Offices starting at 10am.

#### **15/26 CLOSURE**

The Meeting, having commenced at 7 pm closed at 9.57pm

These minutes have been checked and signed by the Chairman

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

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

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