

Part I

Item No: 9

Main author: Carol Rigby

Executive Member: Bernard Sarson

Panshanger Ward

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 MARCH 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

MONEY HOLE LANE CAR PARK: REQUEST FOR AUTOMATIC SECURITY BARRIER

1 Executive Summary

1.1 At the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2009, Mr T K Choo submitted a petition on behalf of the Friends of Money Hole Lane requesting the installation of an automatic security barrier at Money Hole Lane entrance. The petition had been signed by 161 residents.

1.2 This report is to inform Members of operational and financial implications of installing a barrier, the views of the Panshanger Youth Football Club who lease the pavilion on the site and Finesse Leisure who manage the site on behalf of WHBC.

1.3 Regardless of cost, we are not convinced that a barrier would solve the problem as misuse of the pressure pads would still allow vehicles to enter the car park. There are also concerns that a kerb-type barrier would introduce an unexpected hazard to the environment.

2 Financial Implication(s)

2.1 The Friends Group have obtained a quote from APT to install a kerb-type barrier

for £12,000 - £14,000 with a maintenance contract £500 - £900 per annum. This is subject to a site survey and does not include the commissioning of an electricity supply which could be an additional £3,000 - £8,000. Plus ongoing electricity charges. This type of barrier could not be funded from the Community Chest budget as there are ongoing revenue implications.

2.2 The use of sleeping policemen / road humps would prevent the car park from

being used as a race track but would not prevent cars being on site at night. The humps would cost approximately £1,000 each to install with very little maintenance required.

2.3 To excavate out roots, make good and resurface the car park has been estimated at £23,989.

2.4 To excavate out roots and shrub beds, make good, form new central path and resurface car park has been estimated at £46,382

2.5 To excavate out roots and shrub beds, make good, resurface car park with barriers around lamp posts has been estimated at £55,000

2.6 White-lining would cost an additional £750 per day

2.7 No budget has been designated in 2010-11 for either capital or revenue funding associated with any of these options.

3 Recommendation(s)

3.1 Introduce temporary (maximum 3 months) CCTV cameras to monitor issues in the car park.

3.2 Subject to evidence, seek approval for the installation of road humps and resurface the car park as part of the budget process for 2011-12.

4 Background

4.1 The Money Hole Lane Playing Fields site is managed by Finesse Leisure on behalf of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

4.2 On 14 October 2009 the Friends of Money Hole Lane circulated an email to indicate a "wish-list" of things they wanted the Council or Finesse to include within the budgets for Money Hole Lane from 2011-12 and beyond. This was their ranking:

- 1 all weather/3G tennis and multi-purpose courts enclosed with flood lights (like KGV)
- 2 public toilet facilities (opened during park hours)
- =3 bowls
- =3 dog agility area
- =4 picnic area
- =4 adult fitness area
- =4 more car parking, better access road for emergency vehicles
- =5 Splashland facility
- =5 security gate for Wyton Park entrance

4.3 It is interesting to note that the issue of an automatic barrier did not feature prominently on the list.

4.4 In terms of the future development of Moneyhole Lane, it was emphasised to the representatives of the Friends Group at the meeting that the above list was unrealistic, especially in the current economic climate and the Friends Group were offered the opportunity to work with Finesse in order to develop a realistic and achievable Management Plan for the future of Moneyhole Lane. That offer has been made to the Friends Group on several subsequent occasions but to date it remains an opportunity that they do not seem willing to take.

4.5 In respect of the alleged problems with car related antisocial behaviour we were concerned to learn at the meeting that the Police had no record of any such incidents other than one call they received in August 2009.

We explained to the Friends Group that it was important to work closely with the Police regarding such matters and we explained how, by working together, the KGV Friends Group and the local Police have virtually eliminated similar problems at KGV Playing Fields. The Friends Group suggested that local residents weren't reporting such matters to the Police because they felt that nothing would be done about it - and also because they found it difficult to quickly find the correct telephone number to call when such activities were happening. As a result, Finesse prepared a large number of individual information cards that local residents could easily use in future. The card contains the number to call and the questions to ask when speaking to the Police, including getting a reported crime reference number. These cards were subsequently distributed to local residents by the Friends Group.

4.6 At the meeting on 16th November the Moneyhole Lane Friends Group suggested that they would like to see a barrier placed at the entrance to the park which would be automatically raised and lowered at certain times of the day. The type of barrier that they specified was the automatic rising kerb type which would prevent vehicles from entering but still allow vehicles to leave the park. Finesse did express several practical concerns regarding this, including where it would be located (it would probably have to be at the entrance before vehicles turn into the park otherwise there could be problems with vehicles reversing back onto the road or alternatively driving onto the grass to get around the barrier), whether or not this would present a hazard to other residents (i.e. passing pedestrians, visitors with pushchairs, cyclists etc) and what the arrangements would be when the barrier inevitably breaks down at 9am one Sunday morning when all the football teams were arriving.

4.7 Finesse also questioned:

- How the barrier would be powered and who would pay for this?
- Who would be responsible for maintaining the barrier and the associated costs?
- How would the emergency services access the site when the barrier was in the raised position?

4.8 The Friends of Money Hole Lane provided a quote from APT giving a cost of £12,000 - £14,000 for installation with a maintenance contract of £500 - £900 per annum; please note the best cover only ensures a call out time of less than 8 hours. Therefore as the maintenance contract does not provide 24 hour cover, we would need to identify a way to overcome this problem. The quote is to provide an automatic rising kerb barrier with a swipe card entry which would not be appropriate for this site. A timer to lower and raise the kerb at pre set times would be more suitable, with a pressure pad which would lower the kerb to allow cars to leave the car park at any time. This is subject to a full site survey and does not include the commissioning of a power supply. This cost will depend on its size, if single phase we could liaise with the football club to run a sub metered supply from the pavilion. If 3 phase is required this would cost approximately £5,000 - £8,000 subject to survey and the nearest supply. Ongoing electricity charges would apply.

5 Policy Implication(s)

5.1 None

6 Risk Assessment

6.1 Any barrier would need to be carefully positioned to avoid it becoming a hazard to other users of the site; consideration must be given to wheelchair users, visitors with pushchairs and cyclists.

6.2 The barrier would also need to allow access for emergency vehicles.

7 Explanation

7.1 Money Hole Lane Playing Fields covers an area of 41 acres and includes the pavilion, football pitches, off pitch training area and two play areas.

Access to the allotments is also via the car park.

7.2 The Chairman of the Panshanger Youth Football Club, which is based at Money Hole Lane and uses the pavilion and football pitches on a regular basis, is not aware of the issues reported by the Friends Group. However, as long as the club have access to the site until 10pm every day they would not object to the installation of a barrier, although he thought it was not the most effective use of Council funds.

7.3 The Council's Corporate Property team report that the rising kerb type barrier is more robust than most but can still be subject to vandalism and with careful use of the pressure pads from inside the car park it may allow vehicles to enter.

7.4 The Friends Group have kept a log of anti-social behaviour incidents since early November 2009 until the end of February 2010. It is noted that 15 of the 22 car related incidents were cars racing in the car park, please see Appendix A for full details.

7.5 The Welwyn Hatfield Community Safety Team have consulted with the local police who tell us:

7.6 Problems at Moneyhole playing fields were as follows:

7.7 Until early 2009 Moneyhole playing fields was a popular place for young people to gather on Friday evenings in large groups of which some were drinking, and causing a nuisance on leaving at about 2200-2300.

7.8 Action: Since the introduction of the Policing Pledge (to respond to what local people thought mattered most), Moneyhole has been one of the three priorities for Panshanger ward. Police patrols increased, bags were searched and alcohol seized under Operation Swallow. A Problem-oriented Partnership group was set up, and the "Child UK" organisation was commissioned to pilot positive activities during early 2009. By the summer school holidays very few young people were gathering and even fewer drinking. Child UK did not have an "exit strategy" for future funding, and the intended involvement of local people did not appear to be enough to sustain the work, but nonetheless over time calls to the neighbourhood police team about young drinkers have since decreased to none at present.

Basketball with kids proved successful. No youths there at present with other venues being used, or the new generation are going elsewhere.

7.9 Community Information Day was conducted in September 2009 with a positive reaction from nearby residents adjoining the park stating that anti-social behaviour has gone down, recognition of local officers was good and residents liked the way the area was policed.

7.10 Residents described problems with calling 0845 3300222. The Constabulary's control room managers contacted Mr Choo. A notice was posted in the playing fields to identify officers and promote the non-emergency number. A local resident who finds it hard to hear was given a text number. Calls to the police are rare, usually about speed of cars or cars in the area making noise. A traffic survey was conducted in the area with no speeding cars at the times stated by residents. Reports from residents give no details. Officers do attend but vehicles have always gone. Vehicles have been stopped and searched in the area, words of advice given but no offences evident.

7.11 The Friends Group have also requested that we look at removing the shrub beds and resurfacing the car park to increase the number of parking places, please see 2.3 – 2.6 for estimated costs.

8 Equality and Diversity

8.1 Any barrier installed would need to be DDA compliant.

Name of author Carol Rigby

Title Head of Leisure and Community Services

Date 4 March 2010

Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

Appendix A Log of anti-social behaviour incidents provided by the Friends Group