

Update on Increased Security Measures at Old Dean Recreation Ground

Summary

On 17th November 2020 The Executive received a petition requesting that the council consider improved security measures at Old Dean Recreation Ground to resist vandalism to the newly installed play area and existing pavilion as well as support the reduction in anti-social behaviour in this area. The suggested measures were: repair of existing and installation of additional lighting, installation of an alarm system for the pavilion and the installation of CCTV. Members considered the petition and agreed to support its aim and it was agreed that a report would be brought to the February 2021 Executive meeting, addressing each of the points raised by the petitioner. It was also agreed to look at options for the pavilion to be brought back into use as a community or commercial space once repaired. Although significant progress has been made to identify options for each of these measures, officers are not in a position to provide detailed options for CCTV, as they require site visits from providers which has been a challenge to facilitate during the pandemic. In agreement with stakeholders, options for CCTV will be brought to a future Executive meeting to be considered separately.

Portfolio – Places & Strategy

Date Portfolio Holder signed off report: 26 January 2021

Wards Affected

Old Dean

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that

- (i) the progress on this project in terms of works already instigated be noted;
- (ii) the implementation of the individual schemes be delegated to the Executive head of Business after consultation with the Places and Strategy Portfolio Holder.
- (iii) a further report will be brought to a future meeting of the Executive to consider CCTV options.

The Executive is advised to RECOMMEND to Council that the Capital Programme from 2021/22 be increased by £14,000 for the cost of the additional lighting around the new play area (which would be subject to planning consent and environmental impact assessments).

1. Resource Implications

- 1.1 In July 2020 a new £210,000 play/recreation facility was officially opened by the Mayor at Old Dean Recreation Ground funded from planning infrastructure monies with additional contributions from Accent

Housing, Eikon Charity and the Old Dean Community Group. Since opening, this new facility has suffered from vandalism.

- 1.2 The pavilion building has been in situ for many years and was used regularly to facilitate sport on the recreation ground, predominantly as a changing facility for sports teams. Over the years this usage has declined and the building has become increasingly susceptible to unlawful entry and vandalism which has happened on numerous occasions. The most recent incident of vandalism has required extensive structural repair costing circa £44,000. The cost of this work, which has already been carried out, is covered by the council's insurers who have indicated that unless further measures are taken to protect the building it may be deemed uninsurable in the future.
- 1.3 It is calculated that over the past three years the officer time spent on dealing with issues relating to vandalism has cost the council circa £16,000 plus circa £12,000 in equipment repair and replacement costs.
- 1.4 The cost of installing a monitored alarm system for the pavilion, including annual subscription, is relatively low (circa £1,000 plus £160 pa maintenance) which has already been installed and will be incorporated into the council's existing security contract and funding within existing budgets.
- 1.5 The existing council owned lighting at the site that was out of action due to vandalism has already been repaired with more robust LED options and funded from existing budgets.
- 1.6 The proposal for additional lighting consists of six LED lamp post heads on 4m lamp posts around the perimeter of the play area, sports court and bike track controlled by a combination of photo cell and time switch. The cost of this work will require additional capital funding and will be subject to planning consent and an environmental impact assessment.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 On 17th November 2020 the Executive receive a presentation from Mr Trefor Hogg, chairman of the Old Dean Community Group (ODCOG), on a petition submitted concerning Old Dean Recreation Ground.
- 2.2 The petition asked the Council to invest in better lighting that was able to resist vandalism and invest in CCTV to protect the playground area at Old Dean Recreation Ground so that the asset remained fully usable by the community. The petition had been available for signing on the Council's website between 9 July and 9 October 2020 and had received 520 signatures.
 - 2.2.1 Mr Hogg presented the petition, highlighting the recent investment to the play area. Members were informed about vandalism and deliberate damage to the play equipment, along with other anti-social behaviour

at the site. He asked the Executive to consider the following measures to help address these issues:

- Install lighting that worked and was robust, in order to make the footpaths safer and to deter misuse of the area at night
- Install an alarm system in the pavilion
- Install CCTV recording

2.3 Members considered the petition and agreed to support its aim. It was agreed that a report would be brought to an Executive meeting within the next 3 months, addressing each of the points raised by the petitioner. It was also agreed to look at reports that the pavilion was not currently in use as part of this work.

2.4 At the request of the Executive officers from the Business Team began researching options that would address each of the three issues raised by the petition.

2.5 In advance of this report being published a virtual key stakeholder meeting was held on 14 January 2021 between council officers, the Places & Strategy Portfolio Holder, Old Dean Ward Members and Mr Hogg to discuss the proposed options. At this meeting the various options were discussed and agreement was met on the proposals for additional lighting and a security system for the pavilion.

2.6 Although significant progress has been made to identify options for CCTV, no detailed proposal has yet been put forward as this requires further site visits from providers which has been a challenge to facilitate during the pandemic. In agreement with the key stakeholders options for CCTV will be brought to a future Executive meeting to be considered separately.

2.7 The total cost for the implementation of additional lighting will be circa £14,000 which will need to be added to the capital programme for 2021/22

2.8 This capital outlay will provide a good level of protection to council assets which will reduce revenue maintenance costs and officer hours used to address damage and vandalism (see 1.3).

2.9 The additional lighting should also act as a deterrent to some of the anti-social behaviour taking place in that area and provide a safer and more welcoming environment for the wider community, particularly in the early evenings. Although it is important to note that levels of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage associated with the Old Dean Recreation Ground are comparable to other similar sized recreation grounds in other parts of the borough.

3. Options

3.1 The options before the Executive are as follows:

- (i) To note progress on this project in terms of works already instigated;
- (ii) To AGREE the implementation of the individual schemes be delegated to the Executive head of Business after consultation with the Business and Finance Portfolio Holders.
- (iii) To PROPOSE an amendment to the recommendations
- (iv) To NOT AGREE the programme of additional security measures to be implemented
- (v) To RECOMMEND to Council that the Capital Programme from 2021/22 be increased by £14,000 for the cost the additional lighting around the new play area (subject to planning consent and environmental impact assessments).

3.2 The Executive is advised to agree options (i), (ii) and (v).

4. Corporate Objectives And Key Priorities

4.1 The proposals contained in this report support the Council's key objectives:

Place – continued focus on our vision to make Surrey Heath an even better place to live. Clean, green and safe. Where people enjoy and contribute to a high quality of life and a sustainable future.

People – to build and encourage communities where people can live happily and healthily in an environment that the Community is proud to be part of.

5. Legal Issues

5.1 Any additional lighting installed around the recreation ground will be subject to planning consent and an environmental impact assessment.

6. Sustainability

6.1 It is envisaged that capital work on the identified sites will reduce the likelihood of vandalism and anti-social behaviour thus reducing associated revenue costs.

6.2 New and replacement lighting will use modern and efficient LED technology.

7. Risk Management

7.1 The implementation of these proposed measures will reduce the risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

8. Equalities Impact

8.1 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken.

9. Consultation

9.1 This report is in response to a petition initiated by the Chair of ODCOG and received over 500 signatures. Further consultation with key stakeholders was held on 14 January 2021.

9.2 If agreed then further consultation will be required to seek local residents' views on additional lighting and as part of the required planning application.

10. PR And Marketing

10.1 If agreed the proposed measure should be welcomed by the local community and benefit from PR.

11. Officer Comments

11.1 The levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour associated with the Old Dean Recreation ground are on a par with other similar sized parks across the borough. However, as highlighted in the petition, the community has recently benefited from the installation of a new leisure and play facility that needs to be protected and maintained for future generations. Similarly, the pavilion has the potential to be brought back into use as a viable community asset but only if it is protected from vandalism.

Annexes	None
Background Papers	None
Author/Contact Details	Daniel Harrison – Executive Head of Business Daniel.harrison@surreyheath.gov.uk
Head of Service	Daniel Harrison - Executive Head of Business