

Runnymede Borough Council

ENGLEFIELD GREEN COMMITTEE

25 February 2004 at 7.00 p.m.

Members of the Committee present : Councillors H.W.V. Meares, (Chairman), J.E. Haas, Miss M.N. Heath, Mrs C.Y. Jones, N. Thewlis and K.J.T. Walmsley

Residents' Representatives: Mr A.E. Panter (Vice-Chairman) and Mrs. M.E.J. Bairstow

Members of the Committee absent: None

718. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2003 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

719. DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS

(Ref: Minutes of Englefield Green Committee, November 2003, page 1071, para. 529)

The Committee reviewed the functions exercisable by Officers in respect of the management and maintenance of the Green to consider whether the delegation arrangements should be more specifically limited.

The Crown Lease stipulated that the management and control of the Green and the exercise and performance of all the Council's powers and duties as lessees was to be vested in the Englefield Green Committee. There was, however, nothing in the lease to prevent the delegation of some or all of these functions to Officers in order that they could deal efficiently with the day to day management of the Green. The general powers contained in the Scheme of Delegation had effect.

These arrangements and their predecessors had worked satisfactorily for many years, with Officers being careful to refer to Committee issues which were considered to be significant or of political or public interest. However, following discussion at the previous meeting concerning the approval by Officers of a request for the installation of a memorial bench on the Green, it was considered that the limits of delegation in respect of the Committee's functions should now be specifically defined in order to avoid doubt and assist Officers in the discharge of their duties.

The Committee therefore agreed that the following routine management and maintenance functions would most appropriately be dealt with at Officer level;

- Grounds maintenance issues (such as grass cutting, litter clearance and road repairs)
- Replacement of existing furniture and fittings (Bins, signage, benches, etc.)
- The erection of new small scale signage
- Play equipment maintenance
- Tree and woodland management
- Routine maintenance and repairs

Decisions on all other matters within the remit of the Crown Lease, including the addition or removal of new features, changes affecting the layout or pattern of use of the Green and events and organised activities were to be reserved to the Committee. In instances where a decision could not reasonably be delayed until the next meeting, Officers were already empowered, by virtue of the Council's Standing Orders, to take the necessary action with the agreement of the Chairman or, in his or her absence, the Vice-Chairman.

Members noted that the proposed arrangements effectively recognised existing practice and did not entail any extension of Officer powers. Officers would continue to refer to the Committee those matters which were within their powers but considered to be of political or public interest. The appropriate amendment to the Scheme of Delegation could be made at the next annual review of the Council's Constitution, which was due to take place prior to the commencement of the 2004/05 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that -

the Corporate Management Committee be requested to limit the powers delegated to Officers as set out above in the draft Constitution for the 2004/05 Municipal Year.

720. KINGS LANE/SUMMER PLAY FACILITIES ON THE GREEN

(Ref: Minutes of Englefield Green Committee, November 2003, page 1069, para 525)

Members gave further consideration to the provision of a junior size football goalpost on the Green.

At its previous meeting the Committee had decided that the experiment with a goalpost at the southern end of the Green in the summer months and the northern end all year round should be discontinued. It had been suggested at the time that play facilities for young children might be provided at the Kings Lane open space by way of an alternative. Members now noted, however, that Kings Lane was unlikely to be a suitable location for this purpose. Not only was it remote and hidden but most of the site was leased to the Egham Rugby Union Club. The small area which remained available for Council use had recently been developed with play equipment specifically targeted at teenagers.

The Committee agreed that the most appropriate solution would be the erection of a small junior sized goalpost on the Green, suitable specifically for children aged between 5 - 11, for the duration of the six week school summer holiday period each year. It was felt that the more limited temporary nature of the arrangement was likely to overcome concerns expressed during the experimental period regarding the loss of visual amenity and the open aspect of the Green. If the post was small enough it would also prevent the problem of misuse by older children and adults which had been reported previously. The post would be located towards the southern end of the Green, at a safe distance from the roads and cricket square. Officers would monitor the usage and report back to the Committee either if it appeared that there was the potential to also erect the goalpost during the Easter holidays or the facility was abused.

RESOLVED that -

- i) one junior sized football goalpost suitable for children aged between 5 - 11 be erected on the Green for the duration of the six week school summer holiday each year; and**
- ii) Officers be instructed to keep the usage of the goalpost under review, and report to Committee if it appears that there is the potential to also erect the post during the Easter holidays or alternatively that the goalpost is underused/misused.**

721. TRAVELLER INCURSION PROTECTION MEASURES
(Ref: Minutes of Englefield Green Committee, February 2003, page 1085, para 651).

Members noted that there was a need to improve pedestrian access onto the Green over the re-formed ditches created to deter traveller and other vehicular incursions. It was therefore agreed that two small footbridges should be constructed from recycled railway sleepers and coated with chicken wire to provide an anti-slip surface. The design had been used successfully elsewhere in the Borough. One of the bridges was to be situated between the cricket pitch and the lay-by and the other on the St Judes Road side, opposite the top of Middle Hill.

RESOLVED that -

subject to the approval of the Crown Estate, footbridges be installed at the locations indicated at Appendix 'A'.

722. EVENTS ON THE GREEN

Members noted that J. Beach and Sons and Carters Steam Fair were due to utilise the Green for their usual funfairs between 17 - 23 May and 14 - 15 August respectively. Subject to these events passing off to the satisfaction of Officers, it was agreed that the existing three year licences for the annual use of the Green could be renewed with both operators for the period up to and including 2007. A requirement for a daily litter pick by the operators was, however, to be incorporated into the conditions of use. Meanwhile, the Englefield Green Village Residents Association had been granted permission to use the Green for its Village Fair on 19 June.

RESOLVED that -

the Valuer to the Council be instructed to negotiate and conclude terms with J Beach and Sons and Carters Steam Fair for the annual use of the Green for funfairs for a further three year period, subject to the 2004 events being staged to the satisfaction of the Director of Administration and Leisure.

723. INTERPRETATION BOARD

The Committee inspected a final draft of the new Englefield Green interpretation board and gave consideration both to its location and the most appropriate style of housing.

Members noted that the board could be displayed on either upright or pedestal housing. On balance, the Committee favoured the pedestal style because it was likely to be less visually obtrusive and would be consistent with the type used elsewhere in the locality by the National Trust. As pedestal housings were sometimes vulnerable to accidental damage, Officers were instructed to order as robust a model as possible. It was agreed that the board should be located at a prominent access point at the southern end of the Green, near the Barley Mow Public House. The orientation of the map on the board would be rotated to fit the location.

The Committee also took the opportunity to suggest a number of minor alterations to the proposed text contained on the draft display. Officers were asked to include references to the last duel in England, which had been fought in the vicinity, and the Crown Lease. Copies of the plan would be made available for purchase at the Civic Offices for a nominal sum.

RESOLVED that -

the interpretation board be erected on a robust pedestal housing in a style consistent with those used locally by the National Trust at a prominent access point at the southern end of the Green, near the Barley Mow Public House.

724. HONORARY WARDEN'S REPORT

The Committee considered a suggestion from Mr P Winkworth, one of the Honorary Wardens, that signage be erected both to deter cycling on the Green and remind drivers of the presence of parking bays behind the play area. Members emphasised the need to avoid a visually intrusive proliferation of signage but felt that there was scope for the existing public convenience signs to be modified to also indicate the location of the parking bays. 'No cycling' signage could be erected on the brick parapet at the access point onto the Green opposite the end of Northcroft Road.

The Committee also concurred with concerns expressed regarding the condition of the grass on the Green. The widespread presence of moss indicated drainage difficulties caused by the compaction of the soil. Subject to there being sufficient budgetary provision, Officers would undertake works to relieve the compaction by the end of March. It was noted that a mechanical solution was likely to be effective but it might be necessary to also apply a chemical treatment.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the existing public convenience signage be modified to also indicate the location of the parking bays behind the play area; and**
- ii) 'no cycling' signage be installed on the brick parapet at the access point onto the Green opposite the end of Northcroft Road.**

725. ENGLEFIELD GREEN PAVILION

The Committee noted that Officers had so far been unable to commit the resources required to substantially progress negotiations in respect of the surrender of the lease of the Englefield Green Pavilion and the grant of a new lease to the trustees of the cricket club. It was, however, intended to bring a full report to the next meeting of the Committee. The cricket club was understood to be making arrangements for the repair and refurbishment of the Pavilion in the meantime.

726. TELECOMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATION

The Committee gave consideration to a request for a telecommunications facility to be located on the grass triangle of land at Coopers Hill Lane.

Members noted that Orange Personal Communications Services Ltd. had approached the Crown Estate for permission to install a telegraph pole type structure of 6 - 8m in height as part of its mobile telephone network. A cabinet at the base, to house the controls, would measure 1.25m wide, 0.65m deep and 1.25m high. A planning application was likely to be submitted shortly although there was a strong presumption in planning terms against the erection of telecommunications apparatus in the area around the Green because of the impact on a sensitive and historically important part of the Green Belt and the Englefield Green Conservation Area. Two other applications had recently been refused planning consent.

Members were, nevertheless, mindful of the need to consider the issue from the standpoint of the Council's role as tenant of the Crown Lands and not as the Planning Authority. The Committee was of the view that the grass triangle was an inappropriate location because any such facility at that point would be visually obtrusive. It was, however, recognised that the demand from operators for telecommunications masting in the vicinity was likely to grow. If a mast was located on privately owned land the Council would have no control - other than through the planning process - over its siting and appearance, nor would the income generated benefit the locality.

In view of the sensitive nature of the area it was therefore felt that the interests of the Green and local residents would be best served if the Council sought to proactively manage the process. This might best be achieved by entering into negotiations for a suitably disguised facility to be installed in the woodland, thereby minimising the visual impact and ensuring that the facility was located some distance from residential properties. It also presented the opportunity to secure a long term income stream which could be utilised to enhance the Green, particularly if a number of operators were invited to enter into a competitive bidding process. Officers were asked to investigate the feasibility of this approach and report their findings back to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Crown Estate be informed that the installation of a telecommunications facility on the grass triangle of land at Coopers Hill Lane is considered to be inappropriate; and**
- ii) the Director of Administration and Leisure be instructed to investigate the feasibility of inviting operators to bid for the siting, subject to the grant of all consents, of an appropriately disguised telecommunications installation in the woodland area of the Green.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.34 p.m.)