

7. FOOTBALL GOALPOSTS (DAL)
(Ref: Minutes of Englefield Green Committee, October 2002, page 594, para 324)

1. At its meeting in February 2002 the Committee resolved that an informal 'kickabout' area be established on the Green for a trial period. When this was reviewed in October 2002 the Committee agreed that the 'kickabout' area should be removed and replaced with two separate and smaller goals, one at the southern end of the Green, which would be removed in the autumn, and one at the northern end which would remain in place for 12 months. It was further resolved that these trial arrangements should be reviewed at this meeting.
2. Since this Committee's last meeting the Council has received three letters objecting to the football goalposts located on the Green. Officers report seeing the goals being used by young people on a number of occasions during their site inspections. The grass below each goal is worn and this would indicate that both are being used.
3. The Honorary Wardens have on occasion reported the Green being used by larger groups of older people for football and volleyball at weekends. Although there is no reason to deter the use of the Green by groups for informal recreational activities, organised official team games are not permitted without the Council's consent, which has not been sought in these cases. Following consultation with Officers, Honorary Wardens have made the situation clear to the relevant teams and these unauthorised activities have ceased.

THE COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO:

review the provision of the football goalposts on the Green and instruct Officers as to how it wishes to proceed.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None stated.

FOOTBALL GOALPOSTS

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The Committee gave consideration to the future of the childrens' football goalposts on the Green following a twelve-month trial period.

Members recalled that junior sized goalposts had initially been erected on the Green in order to provide an informal childrens' 'kickabout' area at Easter 2002. These had subsequently been replaced, on an experimental basis, with two separate and smaller goals, one at the southern end of the Green for the summer months only, and one at a more discrete location at the northern end, which was to remain in place all year round.

The Committee was of the view that the experiment had been a worthwhile exercise and the objective, to create a positive recreational outlet for children's energies in a safe and secure environment, was laudable. However, the posts did not appear to have been widely used by the young children for whom they had been intended. The post at the northern end of the Green had been rarely used while the post at the southern end had principally been utilised by older children. There had also been occasions when large groups of adults had used the posts for organised team games, although this unauthorised practice had now ceased following the intervention of the Honorary Wardens. The overall effect, however, had been to discourage usage by young children, who had reverted to more traditional and improvised forms of 'kickabouts'.

Members emphasised that the use of the Green for informal sporting and recreational purposes, particularly by children, was welcomed. As had been proved, however, goalposts were not necessary for informal 'kickabouts'. There was also concern that the posts altered the character of the Green, detracting from its open aspect and visual amenity. The presence of the posts was considered to have encouraged people to loiter in the vicinity and to have attracted vandalism. Having regard for representations from residents, both for and against the goalposts, and the views of a representative from the Englefield Green Village Residents Association, the Committee was now of the view that the trial with the posts should be discontinued. In order to encourage alternative provision for young children in the area, it was agreed that the Leisure and Environment Committee should be asked to consider improvements to the sporting facilities at the Kings Lane site. It was noted that the Kings Lane facilities were presently more suitable for older children and there would be a need to provide a suitably secure play environment for children of a younger age.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the experiment with the goal posts on the Green be discontinued; and**
- ii) the Leisure and Environment Committee be asked to consider improvements to the sporting facilities at Kings Lane, with particular emphasis on the needs of young children and the provision of an appropriate, secure environment.**