

COMMITTEE: NORTH LUTON AREA

DATE: 19TH SEPTEMBER 2007

SUBJECT: LEAGRAVE PARK –
ACCESS FROM PARK VIEW CLOSE

REPORT BY: HEAD OF STREET SERVICES

CONTACT OFFICER: BARRY TIMMS 01582 546702

IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	COMMUNITY SAFETY	✓
EQUALITIES	ENVIRONMENT	
FINANCIAL	✓	CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING	OTHER	

WARDS AFFECTED: SUNDON PARK

PURPOSE

1. To consider a petition received from the residents of Park View Close requesting the access into Leagrave Park be closed to reduce the problems they are experiencing with nuisance youths.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. NORTH LUTON AREA COMMITTEE is recommended to:
 - (i) Agree to the installation of a gate at the point entry/exit to the park and for the residents to be given permission to lock/unlock at times to be agreed with the Parks and Cemeteries Manager.
 - (ii) Agree the installation of a temporary sign at the entrance Park View Close warning pedestrians of the closure times.

- (iii) **Reserve the right to reverse the decision, in the event of a large adverse public reaction, in consultation with Councillor Worthing the Member responsible for environmental issues.**
- (iv) **Instruct the Marsh Farm Community Wardens to include patrols in this area and to provide the residents with their contact details.**

BACKGROUND

3. A petition has been received from 11 residents of Park View Close requesting the following action.

'Due to the many incidents involving the entrance/exit to Leagrave park situated in Park View Close, Sundon Park, Luton. We the undersigned residents should like this exit/entrance considered for closure (as per Sutton Gardens). We understand from 'Highways' department that this is not a 'right of way'. We feel that for the majority of the community, the benefit of closure would outweigh any inconvenience encountered.'

REPORT

4. A copy of the full petition will be circulated to Members at the meeting.
5. A site plan showing the site of the problem is attached at Appendix A.
6. The Parks and Cemeteries Manager met with the signatory of the petition on the 24th August 2007 to establish the exact details of the problem. Gemma Widdowfield the Area Community Safety Co-ordinator was also in attendance and is fully aware of the many problems that the area is facing.
7. It was brought to our attention the problems include motorbikes being driven at high speed into/out of the park, the playing football in the middle of the road, under age drinking etc.
8. It must be understood that the Parks section is not an enforcement agency and these types of problems must be forwarded to the Police for them to take action.
9. This report deals with actions that the council can take in terms of the physical improvements to try and give relief to some of these problems that are causing high levels of stress to the residents.
10. The access into the park has been established over many years and would be extremely difficult to try and close as it is an established right of way.

11. Should this access be closed, this may help to resolve this issue, but it would deny easy access to the majority of law abiding residents wishing to use the park facilities and lead to many more complaints.
12. In the course of the meeting one suggestion was raised that may help to relieve the problems. The suggestion is to provide a gate at the point of access and for residents to lock/unlock at agreed times with the Parks and Cemeteries Manager.
13. To make sure that people are aware of the night time closure a temporary sign to be erected at the top of the Close to avoid people arriving at the locked gate and becoming frustrated .
14. If large numbers of complaints are received regarding restricting access then in consultation with Councillor Worthing the gap is returned to normal.
15. Recently introduced in Marsh Farm is a Park Wardens scheme that includes patrolling Legrave Park. At least daily visits are made to the park all year. Their hours of work reflect the changing daylight and in summer they patrol until 8.00pm. This is not an enforcement agency but to approach and meet with the public and it would be possible to include this Close in their patrols.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

16. Members can accept the recommendations or vary as required. Also give consideration to the installation of CCTV cameras but this would be at a high cost.

COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

17. The Parks and Cemeteries Manager has contacted Sgt. Frank Griffin and he reports that they have been called to 10 incidents this year mainly for rowdy behaviour.
 - The first call was timed at 15.49 and the latest being 22.34 and the venue varied between the park and in the close.
18. Clearly closing the gate would not help with the problem during the day but may help relieve some of the problems late at night.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

19. These costs of the works are estimated as £1,500 and this can be met within existing budgets. This has been agreed with the Chief Accountant, on 3rd September 2007.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. The proposals have legal implications as they involve restricting free access to the Park at all times. However, the proposals enable the popularity of restricting access to be tested and the measures reversed, if they are objected to. Therefore the legal risks are being managed. This has been agreed with Viv Mercer in Legal Services on 31st August 2007.

APPENDIX

21. Appendix A – site plan

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

There are no background papers relating to this report.

APPENDIX A

