



Walsall Area Partnerships

Brownhills, Pelsall, Rushall - Shelfield Area Partnership Spring Close / High Heath Park Update Report to Area Panel

27 April 2017

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the area panel with an update on progress towards changes to the garage block and associated park access, located in Spring Close, and the adjacent High Heath Park.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 The Area panel at its last meeting heard from Spring Close Neighbourhood and Community Group who had recently completed a consultation with local residents regarding proposed improvements to the pathways within High Heath park and the night time security of the garage area, these were i) the creation of a pathway from Spring Close garages and ii) the installation of a gate which would be open during day light hours. This consultation had also gone out to partners within the area to ensure a solution could be found which addressed the needs of the community and that was designed in the safest possible manner.
- 2.2 During the community consultation the feedback received was positive and supported i) the creation of a pathway from Spring Close garages and ii) the installation of a gate which would be open during day light hours.
- 2.3 During the partner consultation the scheme was considered and a number of risks identified. The risks raised by partners related to the safety of the individual(s) who would be opening and closing the access gate, and a further meeting with the Spring Close Neighbourhood and Community Group was agreed to finalise the consultation process.
- 2.4 As part of the meeting with Spring Close Neighbourhood and Community Group and partners it was agreed that each party would be given the opportunity to put forward their thoughts around the scheme, with questions and issues raised following each parties allocated agenda slot. The meeting minutes are found at appendix 1.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1** The Spring Close Neighbourhood and Community Group accepted the risks explained to them as part of the meeting described in section 2.4 above, it was agreed that the locking and unlocking of the gate would need to be done so under a disclaimer agreement. This would be referred to as the '*High Heath Park / Spring Close Lock Agreement*'. The draft agreement would be provided at the next meeting of the Spring Close Neighbourhood and Community Group at its meeting on 10, May 2017. Following the signing of the lock agreement the clean and green team would instigate delivery of the project.
- 3.2** Residents to persevere in taking down times/dates/descriptions/car registration where safe to do so and report to police via the 101 service. Diary sheets could be provided via Karen Bateman to assist in recording information.
- 3.3** Green space officers to suggest to the Friends of High Heath Park that the Spring Close Neighbourhood and Community Group are invited to future meetings and include the scheme in the wider development of the Park.

Walsall Area Partnerships

Local Focus Meeting; Spring Close / High Heath Access Consultation

DRAFT MINUTES of meeting Wednesday 19th April 2017 @ 7pm

Autumn Close Community Room

Persons present:

Laura Terry – Area Manager, Walsall Council – Chaired the meeting

Michael McDonough – Chair, SCNCG, 4 Spring Close

Andrew Moulton – Secretary, SCNCG, 11 Spring Close

Councillor Richard Worrall – Ward Councillor

Scott Baker – 6 Spring Close

Lisa Wiggin – 8 Spring Close

Hannah Morgan – 1 Spring Close

Ken Snape – 15 Harrison Road

Judi – 7 Spring Close

Mich – 7 Spring Close

Karen Bateman – Victims of Crime Officer, Walsall Council

Clive Morris – Strategic Development Officer, Walsall Council

Anne Smith – Community Liaison Manager, Walsall Council

Apologies:

Councillor Rattigan – Ward Councillor

Christine Chapman – 9 Harrison Road

Sharon Evans – 2 Spring Close

Mr. A.W. and Mrs. A.J. Caine – 11 Harrison Road

Laura Terry – Opened the meeting and provided some back ground to the scheme.

Laura Terry – Asked a general question to the group

“For what purpose to you require a gate and or a fence?”

Michael McDonough - Because of the drug trafficking. The barrier has stopped the cars coming into the garage area. We are still having people enter the garages and walkers from the park are taking the drugs and smoking them in the corner. The pathway is an essential part of the park.

Andrew Moulton – Local Councillors said that they wanted to retain access to the park for dog walkers and other park users.

Clive Morris - Discussed the results of the Spring Close and Harrison Road consultation. This was carried out at the end of January with the help of the Spring Close Group using a format provided by Clean and Green Service – this was a door to door survey. Clive explained that out of 36 households contacted 35 were in favour of the scheme – 1 was not available.

Comments received included: About time....Needed by all....Should have been done years ago...Need for the community....Good idea...Needs doing.

Comment received from former Chair of Friends of High Heath Park - we need this walkway to get to the Park.

Andrew Moulton – presented letters of support from nos. 2 Spring Close, 9 Harrison Road and 11 & 13 Harrison Road.

Laura Terry – Explained the importance of 101 and reporting as there had been a low number of calls reported to the Police by residents.

Michael McDonough – said ‘it was difficult to step into the lion’s den’, when the switchboard are asking for the colour, make and numbers of occupants of cars and have been promised on numerous occasions that a patrol car would attend and have never received one.

Andrew Moulton – Residents feel there is no point in calling as they have had no response.

Laura Terry – Emphasised the importance and the reasons for using 101 to report incidents and this would evidence any problems for the Police to base their patrols.

There was a general discussion around previous camera deployment within Spring Close.

Karen Bateman – Explained that she does not rely on cameras as they are not a dependable source of intelligence but do have value as a temporary deterrent.

Also that from a security perspective Karen has been asked to advise as part of the consultation process and it is my opinion that closure would be the safest option.

Michael McDonough – replied that residents had been parking their cars in the pitch black with ‘druggies’ in the corner for years, therefore there would be no increased risk.

Karen Bateman – recommended installing a static fence across the whole space (between the garage area and the park).

A general discussion regarding the usage of the opening, feedback from users (schools children, dog walkers, elderly people and disabled users) suggests the vast majority would prefer an

opening/gate to access the park from the garage area as it had been there for over 20 years.

A discussion around displacing the problems to other entrances of the park, i.e. Broadway and Windsor Grove.

Karen Bateman – agreed that other entrances would have to be looked at.

Anne Smith – raised concerned that by putting bow top fence/gate across the opening would not stop the problem of the drug dealers/users using this area.

A general discussion around the different options: completely fencing the opening or installing fencing and a gate.

Andrew Moulton – raised concerns that if the opening was completely fenced then there would be a strong possibility that people would climb the fence and fall onto the garages and cause damage. Craig Jewkes from WHG had previously said 'if there was any damage to the garages WHG would make residents vacate them'. Additionally this would lead to more parking on the street.

Karen Bateman – Explained that she was not against the scheme, but wanted the opportunity to ensure the group were aware of the risks involved.

Laura Terry – she was happy that a way forward had been agreed; however a robust disclaimer would need to be put in place.

Anne Smith – handed out a draft copy of 'High Heath Park/Spring Close Lock Agreement'. It would be the responsibility each individual to risk assess each situation, Walsall Council couldn't take on the liability.

Karen Bateman – informed the group that this was only a draft with some ideas and had not yet received partner input.

A general discussion around the key agreement and the need for a risk assessment to be carried out with everyone concerns in mind.

Laura Terry – commented that the scheme would be S106 funded so it was no longer a race against the clock.

Mitch - asked for confirmation about the availability of the S106 funding.

Laura Terry – confirmed that the S106 funding is ring fenced for the scheme.

Judi – is a garage holder and in light of the risks only wished to operate the barrier not the gate.

Laura Terry – understood Judi's concerns and said the gate would come under a separate agreement; it was up to the group who it put forward.

Clive Morris – added it was important to limit the number of key code holders.

Karen Bateman – referred to wider issues around the park, e.g. kids playing truant, people lurking in the bushes, excrement etc. so the Spring Close scheme isn't the be all and end all, it needs a proactive and comprehensive approach.

The next entrance to be assessed with the Rights of Way officer - one suggestion is to close off the alley.

Indiscriminate cutting back of hedges could leave properties vulnerable.

Summary of actions:

1. Council officers to work on the legal terminology of the 'High Heath Park/Spring Close Lock Agreement' and bring revised Draft Agreement to the Spring Close Neighbourhood And Community Group meeting on Wednesday 10th May.

Action: AS

2. Residents to persevere in taking down times/dates/descriptions/car registration and report to 101.

Action: Spring Close NCG

3. Green space officers to suggest to the Friends of High Heath Park that the Spring Close Neighbourhood and Community Group are invited to future meetings and include the scheme in the wider development of the Park.

Action: AS

4. Clean and Green to take copies of letters of support, scan and return.

Action: CM

5. Clean and Green to supply Draft minutes to Laura Terry by Monday 24th April.

Action: CM/AS

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.



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