

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO DLT

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	1st December 2014
3.	Title:	Petition – East Dene Park, Park Road, East Dene, Rotherham
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

An E-Petition has been received from residents of East Dene, Rotherham raising concerns about the levels of anti-social behaviour and vandalism in East Dene Park, Park Road, East Dene Rotherham. The petition was signed by two people.

The petition is attached as Appendix 1.

The petition was acknowledged and a discussion has taken place with the lead petitioner in respect of the issues raised and the action that will be taken to address those issues.

6. Recommendations

- **That the Cabinet Member for Safe & Attractive Neighbourhoods notes the action taken in response to the petition.**
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7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

The East Dene Children's Play Area, known locally as 'The Walk' is a public recreational area situated between Park Road and Chestnut Avenue. The site is totally surrounded by houses with the rear gardens ending at the boundary to the area.

The area consists of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and a play area consisting of children's play apparatus including, slides, swings and roundabout mounted on a 'safety surface'. The children's play area is surrounded by metal fence panels approximately one metre high, however a number of these panels have had to be removed due to vandalism resulting in them being 'pushed' out of their fixing brackets.

The actual site is the responsibility of Housing & Neighbourhood Services whilst the play equipment is maintained by Environment & Development Services (EDS).

Since September 2013 to October 2014 the Police have recorded six complaints in respect of the play area including litter and drug paraphernalia, drug use, assault, and a 'domestic/family' incident.

Checks made with EDS have ascertained the following:

- A large amount of glass has been removed on pretty much every inspection of the play area (every 2- 3weeks for a visual inspection, every quarter for an operational inspection) for the past 2 years.
- The majority of the metal fencing panels that surround the play area have been damaged and have been removed as a result of vandalism (around 20 panels of bow top metal fencing). The panels have been retained and could be replaced however the 'weak link' is the quality of the brackets that attach the panels to the metal posts.
- 6 swing seats in the play area have been replaced over the last 2 years, most of which was due to vandalism.
- Currently there is a swing seat missing but this is a maintenance issue rather than due to vandalism.

In general the majority of the play equipment is in a reasonable state of repair as is the safety surface.

7.2 Previous Interventions

As long ago as 2008, the Rotherham South Area Assembly established a Task & Finish Group to address issues on and around the play area. The group included Elected Members, Police, Council and local residents. Some of the activity commissioned and actioned through the group included:

- Area Assembly secured Housing Market Renewal (HMR) funding to install CCTV covering the play area. This was installed in 2008 and remains in place today.

- Area Assembly secured EDS support to upgrade lighting & later allocated some devolved budget to install lighting for the MUGA.
- Area Assembly/Streetpride devolved budget paid for bollards to prevent vehicles congregating on and around the area.
- The Area Assembly & Community Sports secured external funding for sports coaches to deliver provision in The Walk during the summer months.
- Green Spaces provided funding for the prompt removal of graffiti and the repair of damaged play equipment.

7.3 Action taken and proposed response to the petition

- A site visit has been carried out and contact has been made with the petitioners by the councils Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour Manager.
- Contact has been made with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team, who is already aware of the ASB issues on site. They will ensure that the area is made subject of regular high profile patrols.
- On Wed 29th October officers from the SNT, Housing, Area Assembly & Community Organisers conducted a door to door survey of the 50 properties backing onto The Walk.
 - 31 properties provided a response
 - 13 properties had no issues
 - Of the other 18, the main issues were as follows
 - Glass smashed - particularly around the swings
 - General noise – seems to be bigger problem in summer
 - Drug use – people smelling cannabis
- Partners have committed to writing to every property to reaffirm our ongoing commitment to the area as well as updates in respect of CCTV & tidying up. Housing's current Service Level Agreement with Streetpride means that The Walk is litter picked on a weekly basis. In the first instance there will be an evaluation of the adequacy & effectiveness of existing provision
- The content of the petition has been discussed at the Safer Neighbourhood Team Briefing and will remain on its agenda to allow the situation to be monitored.
- Regular contact will be maintained with the petitioners by the councils Crime & ASB Manager to update them of the action being taken
- Arrangements are in place for additional cleaning visits to be made – particularly focussed on the removal of any broken glass.
- A request has been made for the South Yorkshire Police CCTV 'Technical Officer' to carry out a full evaluation of the installed CCTV camera on site and make any necessary recommendations in respect of its effectiveness and what, if any, improvements could be made.
- The Walk CCTV was excluded from the renewal of the '3G' free airtime in Aug '14 because of a fault on the 3G modem. Remote viewing was

not considered necessary at this location due to the low number of reports. The recorded images should still be downloadable onsite via Wi-Fi, & the Wi-Fi connection was working fine when previously tested.

- The Area Assembly team are working with St James Community Group who are keen to litter pick The Walk. There may be an application for a £250 grant from Rother Fed to support this.
- A number of joint Test Purchase Operations are to take place to combat the sale of alcohol to youths in the locality.
- Arrangements have been made for the removed metal fencing panels to be re-fitted around the children's play area using a more appropriate and robust fixing system. This repair will be funded through the Housing & Neighbourhoods Repairs and Maintenance budget.

8. Finance

The estimated cost of the repair/replacement of the fence panels is £800.00 and will be funded through the Housing & Neighbourhoods Repairs and Maintenance budget.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no risks or uncertainties associated with this project.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

- Ensuring care and protection is available to those that need it the most.
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities. People feel safe and happy where they live.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The Petition received from East Dene residents is attached as Appendix 1 below.

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E-Petition – East Dene Park (The Walk) East Dene, Rotherham.

We the undersigned petition the council to Save East Dene Park from anti- social behaviour and vandalism.

'More often than not when you take your children to this park there are groups of young men swearing and smoking weed while sat on the children's equipment, on several occasions I have had to take my child away because they don't move which is very upsetting'

'Broken glass all over the child's play area making it unsafe, 1 swing missing, several fence panels missing and obscene graffiti and litter'

Please make this park a safe and pleasant place to take our children.

2 people signed this E-Petition.