

Kings Head Meadow Community Engagement Activity

An Options Paper

October 2016

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1.0 Introduction and Background:

On Friday 12th August, Wymondham Town Council (WTC) accepted an offer from Norfolk County Council to help facilitate a process to seek the views of members of the community in Wymondham regarding the future of the Wymondham Playground at King's Head Meadow (KHM) which was installed in August / September 2014.

The starting point for resolving the current difficulties was based on the following principles:

- The need for a good quality, fully accessible playground in the Town Centre – which offers safe access on foot, access for parents and children with special needs or disabilities, as well as meeting the needs of children for play
- The need to find a location for the site which avoids the current conflict between the needs of those living next to it and those of the wider community who use the facility.

It was also agreed to delay removing any equipment at the current site while the discussions take place.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) officers have offered the opportunity for all groups – including residents, children, young people, businesses and individuals - to share their views, and to identify any common ground and the possibilities of a way forward that works for everyone in the town.

NCC have listened to as many voices as that want to be involved in the process and acknowledge each viewpoint as equally deserving as the other.

NCC's role in supporting this process is not as a decision maker on the chosen action to be taken by Wymondham Town Council, but to provide a clear communication space for people from across the town to come forward and participate in the process and to identify any potential solutions to the current unrest. The ultimate decision making authority lies with Wymondham Town Council.

This reports aims to set out clear options for Wymondham Town Council to consider, alongside interested parties from the community, including young people and is based on the responses given by those who have been involved in the process. Any possible common ground that has been identified during this process will be shared in this report for consideration.

In order to share this report with the wide range of interested parties, NCC have identified a dedicated space to share the final report as part of NCC Consultation Hub which can be accessed from the following link

<https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/childrens-services/king-s-head-meadow-play-area/>

The report will also be made available via Wymondham Town Council website and in addition will be sent to individuals or groups by email or by post on request.

2.0 National guidance and research:

Play England state:

“Play is an essential part of every child’s life and is vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

When children are asked about what they think is important in their lives, playing and friends is usually at the top of the list.

Having time and space to play gives children the opportunity to meet and socialise with their friends, keeps them physically active, and gives the freedom to choose what they want to do.

Research shows that play has many benefits for children, families and the wider community, as well as improving health and quality of life. Recent research suggests that children’s access to good play provision can:

- *increase their self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-respect*
- *improve and maintain their physical and mental health*
- *give them the opportunity to mix with other children*
- *allow them to increase their confidence through developing new skills*
- *promote their imagination, independence and creativity*
- *offer opportunities for children of all abilities and backgrounds to play together*
- *provide opportunities for developing social skills and learning*
- *build resilience through risk taking and challenge, problem solving, and dealing with new and novel situations*
- *provide opportunities to learn about their environment and the wider community*

Evidence is also available that outlines wider benefits of play provision for families and communities, suggesting that:

- *parents can feel more secure knowing that their children are happy, safe and enjoying themselves*
- *families benefit from healthier, happier children*
- *buildings and facilities used by play services are frequently seen as a focal point for communities*
- *it offers opportunities for social interaction for the wider community and supports the development of a greater sense of community spirit, promoting social cohesion*
- *public outside spaces have an important role in the everyday lives of children and young people, especially as a place for meeting friends*
- *parks and other green spaces are popular with adults taking young children out to play and for older children and young people to spend time together*

Community Cohesion: An Action Guide (LGA, 2004) states:

“Promoting community cohesion involves addressing fractures, removing barriers and encouraging positive interaction between groups. Community cohesion is closely linked to integration as it aims to build communities where people feel confident that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others, particularly people from different racial backgrounds or people of a different faith.

Whatever your local circumstances, building cohesion between communities is a necessary step towards improving people’s quality of life and their opportunity to achieve their potential. Viewed from outside, a cohesive community is one in which people will want to live and invest.

In communities where there is a lack of cohesion, tensions can arise which may lead to conflict. While the majority of your work should be preventative and focussed on building community cohesion, you will also need to make sure that you are monitoring and responding to any rises in tension. Early intervention can make a real difference in preventing potential incidents of public disturbance and disorder. Conflict resolution does not just prevent problems, it also helps develop stronger relationships between those involved and so contributes to the positive development of community cohesion.

As a far-reaching agenda, community cohesion should be mainstreamed within the delivery of all local services – this means that you should consider the community cohesion consequences of all your key decisions and encourage your partners to do the same. Make sure that where other organisations, including those in the private sector, are responsible for delivery, you encourage them to adopt cohesion principles. This will include services such as education, health, employment, environment and policing”

3.0 The engagement process:

Various opportunities and methods of engagement have been offered as part of this process to ensure a fair and equitable opportunity for community members to engage with NCC officers.

Ensuring clear lines of communication between NCC and individuals in Wymondham has been fundamental in operating a fair and transparent process. Updates on progress throughout have been shared with Wymondham Town Clerk for publication onto Town Council website.

Letters were hand-delivered to properties in immediate proximity to the Kings Head Meadow playground to encourage engagement from such residents.

A dedicated email address: cs.wymondhamplaygroundconsultation@norfolk.gov.uk was set up and made live from 17th August for any interested parties to make have a direct communication with NCC officers.

38 individuals used email as the forum to provide comment including supplying supporting documentation such as letters, community petition, photographs, drawings etc.

Some individuals sent more than one email over the period of activity which is not counted more than once in the overall figure for emails.

Individual interviews were offered in order to speak with members of the community in a confidential space to share their views. These sessions took place on Friday 19th August 2016, 2:30pm at Central Hall Wymondham and Tuesday 30th August 2016, 6:30pm at Wymondham Town Football Club.

In addition to the community interviews, the offer was made for any individuals who were not able to attend these events to request a separate discussion with NCC officers. Two individuals took up this offer to meet with the member of the NCC team.

7 written letters were received as part of this process. Some information received by post had also been sent by email so is not included into the overall figure for letters.

In order to effectively engage with young people from the local community, activities have taken place during break times and after school at Browick Primary, Ashleigh Primary, Robert Kett Primary School, Wymondham High School and Wymondham College. Detached Outreach Workers also visited the park one evening to speak with young people one evening

“Engaging with children and young people is essential to building cohesive communities because they are the future of your community. By encouraging in them a sense of belonging, ownership and responsibility for their local area, you are making a sustainable investment in community cohesion. Young people can be powerful catalysts for change” Community Cohesion: An Action Guide (LGA, 2004)

4.0 The Young Person's voice:

123 boys and 126 girls, 249 individuals in total were seen as part of this process. Those involved were between the ages of 6 -17years.

The encouraging message from the young people's activities is that without a doubt, working towards a solution to this situation must actively involve young people from the Town.

Another clear message from the young people was that in many cases, adult members of the community have behaved badly during this process and things need to change. The work with young people on this matter going forward can be a key ingredient in making this change a reality.

Some comments from young people are as follows:

In response to 'How can you help?'

"We want to be on the Council when we are older"

"Young people part of town, not just adults so want to be part of solution"

"Come to school and talk or let us know what's happening"

"Young people are affected so need to be asked"

"Vote for different ideas and equipment"

"Face to face questions in school, getting opinion is really good"

"Young people have their say"

Comments made by many young people show that many are keen to be actively involved in decision making process within the Town and are keen to work with adults to dispel the negative myths about young people.

Comments made by young people demonstrates a balanced view to the situation for all those affected and a willingness to find a solution that works for all.

When asked 'What have you heard about KHM?'

"It's true that at night it is not nice or fair on them"

"We don't like it to be removed. Government spent a lot of money to provide it for us"

"They keep breaking the rules at KHM - ignoring the signs of 'under 12s', 'daylight hours', 'be respectful to other users and local residents'"

"Teenagers would still hang out there with no equipment"

"You should not disturb their lives like that (residents)"

"The park is good, it is the only park with disabled access"

"That the adults also need to respect the fact that it's not every youth who creates trouble for the citizens who live around Kings Head Park"

"I don't think taking it down is a good choice. Storage is even worse. Lots of people use it"

"Should move, teenagers make noise during night, we use it a lot. If it moves the noise will go with it"

"If they say the park is to be closed because of few people who make noise, this will not be fair on good guys"

Young people have valued being involved in this process and were keen to give as many as possible solutions to the current community unrest. There are some possible common ground suggestions made by young people that need further exploration and consideration.

When asked 'What would you change?'

"There isn't any signs on the metal fence saying about any age limits"

"I think we should keep it and the police/adults could keep an eye on it"

"Move to other side at park"

"Monitor poor behaviour - police and the council"

"Provide more lighting"

"More equipment for teenagers away from KHM"

"Add more bins"

"Add seating close to the football pitch"

"Don't put close to houses"

"I would move the green one that is more for 10 years and older - I agree with that and think it's what they should do"

"I think it should stay where it is but with a tall barrier of metal or a wood fence and with big trees"

"Do education but make it positive"

"Raise fence"

"Add CCTV"

"Set opening times for the park to prevent disturbances at night"



“I agree with the idea about swapping the football area with the park”

“Add a shelter to keep 'them' away from people's houses and a toilet”

“Would like a proper shelter with actual seats, toilets, café, food, drink, shop”

Many of these ideas should form the basis of consideration on how Wymondham Town Council moves forward. The enlightening engagement from young people in the town should be celebrated and should be a key feature of how the Town moves forward together

Professionals with experience and expertise in working with young people could be involved to support this.

5.0 Emerging themes from other engagement activities:

From the various activities that have taken place throughout the process, it is clear that the community of Wymondham is passionately committed to being involved in the development of their local facilities. People have willingly come forward to be involved in the process using many of the formats made available to them.

At the two community events:

58 individuals were seen, of which 38 (66%) were female 20 (34%) were male

43 (74%) of individuals have children, 11 (19%) do not (4 individuals preferred not to say)

7 (12%) of individuals have a disability, 42 (72%) do not (9 individuals preferred not to say)

Ages of individuals who took part was as follows:

Under 18	7 (12%)
18-24	1(2%)
25-34	4(7%)
35-44	6(10%)
45-54	9(16%)
55-64	13(22%)
65-74	7(12%)
75-84	6(10%)
Prefer not to say	5(9%)

Some emerging themes from the various responses at the community events, by email, in writing and from supporting documentation can be summarised below:

Theme: Site legacy

- The KHM has a legacy as a place to meet, enjoy and share family time together
- The KHM has been a long standing community space including play equipment for many years
- The KHM is a popular place used regularly by many members of the community

Theme: Playground design

- Some aspects of chosen design of playground are negatively impacting individuals. Specifically;
 - The use of the residents fences as a boundary to site
 - The height of some pieces of equipment
 - The noise created by some pieces of equipment
- Decision making organisations must work alongside specialist agencies and take note of professional guidance when making decisions on playground design

- Children and young people of all ages should have local access to play space close to amenities.

Theme: Communication and Community Engagement

- Open and honest two way communication between those responsible for making decisions and members of the community is fundamental in moving forward
- It is important that involvement in the decision making process is fair, open and transparent
- The importance of actively engaging the community including young people when planning and developing projects that have community interest.
- Compromises are possible, if people agree to work together.
- Not all teenagers are anti-social in their chosen leisure time, and should be respected as active and equal members of the community
- There is a wealth of interest from the community to get together on developing a meaningful compromise and to be continually involved in the process

Theme: Youth Provision

- There is a need for good quality youth and play provision in the town of Wymondham that takes account of a wide range of ages and abilities.
- There is evidence of intergenerational support for the play ground
- All young people should have safe places to meet with their peers and enjoy their leisure time
- Young people want age appropriate facilities in the town

Theme: Community Safety

- Individuals and their families deserve the right to be able to enjoy their home and feel safe within their local community.
- Concerns about noise, disturbance, anti-social behaviour etc. have led to significant fear, lack of enjoyment and engagement in community activities
- Concerns about noise / disturbance need to be substantiated and addressed by statutory agencies as appropriate
- The quality of life for some individuals is being significantly and adversely affected by the current circumstances
- Young people need a place that is safe to meet with their peers to enjoy an active leisure time without fear of intimidation or verbal abuse

Theme: Inclusion

- Accessibility for disabled users is important; for children, young people and the members of their family or wider support network
- The location of community play space should be close to amenities such as toilets, car parks.
- KHM Playground is a flagship site for its accessibility for people with additional needs and disabilities

6.0 Options for consideration:

It is without doubt there is not one single solution that will resolve all the concerns and anxieties from the community including young people that surround this project. In any community engagement activity where there is conflict, each interested party must be willing to compromise in order to move forward.

NCC's involvement in this process has not only given more time to Wymondham Town Council to consider the next best course of action, it has also presented ways in which they should go about this with some important principles in mind.

Some options for consideration are:

1. Retain equipment in its current location though seek other improvements to the site i.e.

Things to consider:

- Other environmental / adaptation options to reduce impact for local residents such as extended boundary, planting, fencing
- Locking the site during certain times with neighbourhood key holders
- Adopting a neighbourhood patrol, CCTV of the site during certain times alongside police presence, community engagement officers, and youth workers etc.
- Work with the community, including young people to agree what this option entails

2. Remove particular items of equipment to elsewhere on the existing KHM site

Things to consider:

- Relocating items of equipment closer to football club or Central Hall side of the site in collaboration with Wymondham Town Football Club regarding space availability
- Work with the community, including young people to agree which items will be retained at current site and which will be relocated

3. Remove particular items of equipment to an alternative site in Wymondham Town.

Things to consider:

- Identify an alternative site for particular items equipment to be installed within an accessible distance from the town
- Ensure all items of equipment are kept within Wymondham Town and reinstalled immediately
- Work with the community, including young people to agree which items will be retained and which will be relocated

Wymondham Town Council should commit to finding a new solution based on the community views including young people expressed during this process. They should build on the work started by NCC whilst safeguarding the rights of those living close to Kings Head Meadow.

The fundamentals that underpin Wymondham Town Council and the community, including young people moving forward should include:

- Actively involve young people
- Involve those from interested parties within the wider community
- Work collaboratively, fairly and taking account of the differing views
- Respect each other and provide safe space for all to engage equally
- Be open and honest in your communication and the next steps
- Access support from the professionals and statutory agencies that can assist as required

If you would like this report in large print, audio, Braille, an alternative format or in a different language please contact Amy Brooke on 01603 533933 and we will do our best to help.