

Freedom of Information request received 29.03.15

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request a copy of a report provided by Councillor Sarah Sullivan to Committee members at the Playing Fields meeting of 15.03.16.

Saturday 30th January 2016 – MPF goal posts notes on meeting in MPF attended by Gill Ness-Collins, Gary, Sarah, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] (Chandler Way resident) and [REDACTED] (Cricket Club groundsman).

Chandlers Way. Gill Ness-Collins stated she regretted the removal of the goal posts from Chandlers Way and agreed with [REDACTED] it was as he described a 'knee jerk' reaction. Gill explained that SPC removed the posts as a result of a resident threatening to sue the Council having been hit whilst in their garden by a football coming over their fence and for noise nuisance (including swearing). I pointed out that although Gill regretted their removal, the reason SPC did not simply put the posts back in Chandlers Way was because the Council acknowledged the problem of footballs coming over fences and of noise - and these same problems will apply if permanent posts are installed the MPF. If Chandlers Way residents can sue then so can anybody affected by permanent posts installed in the MPF. It is unfair for users of the Bowls Club and residents surrounding the MPF to suffer in the same way as Chandlers Way residents as a consequence of the complaint from Chandlers Way. The top of the field is very quiet for the vast majority of the time (apart from for short spells when training and matches take place and on a Friday evening). Gary mentioned that SPC has to be mindful that many ordinary household insurance policies now include cover for noise nuisance. Residents surrounding the whole of the MPF and the Bowls club could complain about balls coming over but my particular concern was for users of the children's fenced play area hit by balls as the height of the play area fence is so much lower than the fences at Chandlers Way.

Fence height lower at MPF play area. I mentioned that because the height of the MPF play area fence is vastly lower, the chances of being hit by a ball while in the children's area is far greater than that of being in a garden at Chandlers Way protected by a higher fence. And with a higher volume of visitors to the fenced play area than would reasonably be expected in a private garden, again the chances of somebody being hit by a ball is more likely. Also the fenced area is too small for groups of parents to congregate within it, so they do so outside of the fenced area, away from the cricket square part of the MPF. Parents gather (often with blankets and pop up solar tents) where they can keep an eye on their children. Parents want to be able to watch their children as they move between the fenced play equipment, tarmac strip, kids 'den' in adjacent to Rublees Hedgerow, and the large Cherry Tree by the orchard notice board. Gill suggested that parents can go the orchard area for quiet but I said Mums and Dads could not supervise their children playing in the fenced play area from the orchard area.

Permanent or mobile posts

Mobile post. [REDACTED] was of the opinion that mobile posts would be moved to 'wrong places' on MPF and would be vandalised. Gary said for at least the past 3 summers, mobile posts have been successfully used in different positions on the MPF and by various groups of youths. And the mobile posts were apparently not vandalised because they were seen being used on and off throughout the Summer undamaged. [REDACTED] insisted that mobile posts would be placed 'anywhere on the MPF' but I explained from past experience youths thoughtfully placed their mobile posts (and chose where most suitable on the day to site them). Anyway in the event that mobile posts were placed in the 'wrong place' youths could be asked to move them somewhere else within the MPF, something which would be easy for them to do. [REDACTED] suspected it was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who arranged the mobile posts, with the posts organised by parents for under 6 & 7's. However Gary said the mobile posts he saw were used by different groups of all ages (and stored sometimes in gardens backing onto MPF, or brought along in a wheelie bin). If goal posts on the MPF were mobile I suggested there would be less complaints of noise from residents because people would tolerate a short period of disturbance knowing it would cease when the posts were moved elsewhere on the field.

Permanent posts. Gill asked [REDACTED] about the full size goal posts we could see on view nearby the Cricket Club and he explained that these were left out all winter, then stored at the football club. Gill, Gary and I noticed the permanent posts are actually on wheels so are indeed mobile. These permanent posts have nets but nobody mentioned them having been vandalised, despite being left out on the MPF all football season. There is no logic that mobile goal posts left on the MPF for the youths to play unorganised games will get vandalised when these permanent posts left out all season do not get. The permanent goal posts are more vulnerable to intentional damage as they have nets.

Maintenance of ground. Gill and I agreed that with permanent goal posts and all year round of the ground, the immediate area would suffer. We discussed that during wet spells the ground would become a quagmire and when dry the grass worn away. Gill queried who would repair damage and explained SPC have no money for maintenance around permanent posts. Gary mentioned the position of the mobile posts could be rotated around not just the MPF but perhaps around the whole town. Sometimes as already seen at Abbey Road open space or in Fletchers Croft. This would result in the ground becoming less worn than from permanent use in one location.

Costs. I mentioned a resident ([REDACTED]) had donated £100 towards mobile posts.

French Drain Gary and I mentioned dependant on the conditions of the MPF the drain is visible as a long diagonal dip in the ground and a potential hazard.

[REDACTED] accused me being a protagonists 'I will make it quite clear to ALL and at the next meeting YOU are the protagonists' and of being 'ridiculous'. He gave me his opinion that 'you do not want kids up on the MPF'. I calmly told Gill at one point that I would leave the meeting but at her request remained..

I mentioned Gary and I live adjacent to MPF, it was an informal meeting and our register of interests show our address.

Bullet points The reasons for removing the posts from Chandlers Way will still exist in the MPF - and the council can be sued for the same reasons. The permanent goal posts currently stored beside the Cricket Club are actually moveable as they are on wheels and these 'organised