

3rd July 2014

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Policing & Equalities)

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director – People

Ward(s) affected:

Whoberley

Title:

Response to petition calling for the installation of security fencing to open land at the rear of numbers 2-66, Brookside Avenue

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

A petition containing 11 signatories, from 6 households, was submitted on 25th March 2014 by Councillor Singh.

The petition requests the installation of security fencing to land at the rear of properties numbered 2–66 Brookside Avenue, in the Whoberley Ward.

The land is an open stretch of green space measuring approximately 900 metres and is owned by the City Council; managed by the Parks Service in the Place Directorate.

The petitioners would like this land to be secured in order to prevent crime and nuisance behaviour impacting on their properties.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member is requested to:-

1. Consider the information provided by Officers in determining whether fencing is appropriate in this location.
2. Endorse actions taken to date by Officers and request that the area continues to be monitored.
3. Request Police to continue to patrol the area responding to any issues raised or identified and to exercise their powers to obtain identities and disperse groups of individuals that are likely to cause nuisance or offending behaviour.

4. Request Community Development Officers to work with the community in tackling local issues including litter and environmental issues, and to assist residents in seeking funding that would contribute to security improvements.
5. Request Officers to provide a report back on progress against recommendations 1 – 4 inclusive in October 2014.

List of Appendices included:

Petition Text – Appendix 1

Map of location – Appendix 2

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Response to petition calling for the installation of security fencing to open land at the rear of numbers 2-66, Brookside Avenue

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 A petition containing 11 signatories from 6 households was submitted on 25th March 2014, by Councillor Singh. The petition requests the installation of a security barrier/fencing to land at the rear of properties number 2–66 Brookside Avenue. A copy of the petition text is attached at Appendix 1 of the report.
- 1.2 The properties and an alleyway running along the rear of the properties are privately owned. The alleyway provides vehicle access for the individual properties identified in the petition. Beyond this is situated a linear open space with a brook running through it, which is owned by Coventry City Council.
- 1.3 The lead petitioner advises that local residents are concerned that the openness of the properties backing onto the entry way and green space could provide opportunities for crime and nuisance behaviour. In order to prevent this they feel that the installation of security fencing between the rear of their properties and the Council owned land would be beneficial.
- 1.4 Police records indicate 2 incidents of reported crime taking place between March 2013 and March 2014 including a burglary and theft from an out building in the rear garden of the premises.
- 1.5 City Council systems indicate 1 recorded incident of noise nuisance associated with a residential premise. However, there were 7 reports of environmental nuisance including fly-tipping, litter and dog fouling.
- 1.6 West Midlands Police have patrolled the area and will continue to do so and a street briefing will be held by the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team mid-July to coincide with children breaking up for the school summer holidays.
- 1.7 Advice in relation to securing individual properties has been offered to the residents; this includes the offer of undertaking individual crime surveys, registration of electrical goods via the “immobilise initiative”, target hardening products i.e. window alarms, shed alarms, anti-vandal paint, window stickers, and personal attack alarms.
- 1.8 Residents will be supported by the Community Development Service to explore the possibility of applying for local community funding which will enable them to install additional security measures to their properties.
- 1.9 The Youth Service Detached Response Team has visited a number of sites in the locality and have engaged with the young people they have encountered. They are signposting the young people to activities and premises in the area to further enhance what is on offer. The team will also be in the area every Wednesday night consulting with the young people on the activities they would be interested in and in devising a Summer programme that will be funded by “Sportivate”. Residents have been made aware of this, some of which have volunteered to help with the organisation and delivery of the Summer programme. The Youth Service has visited the site on a number of occasions and is monitoring the behaviour of young people. They have also committed to attending the Local Residents Group to keep them updated with the progress and work of the team with young people in the area.

- 1.10 St Christopher's Primary School, which borders the other side of the green space, reports 1 incident of anti-social behaviour during the Summer of 2013. Community Development Team Officers will work with the school to ensure pupils understand the importance of considerate behaviour in their school and also organise litter picks for the local community.
- 1.11 The Parks Service has explored the possibility of installing fencing on the boundary of the open space, however to install fencing to an area of land of this size requires significant resource and financial investment. Extensive consultation with all other residents along the 36 properties that would be affected would also be required. Additionally as access to this land can also be gained from the main road and via the school even if fencing were to be installed. Fencing off open space areas to the rear of homes can also have a negative impact on the pro-social use of the land and residents' enjoyment in general. It could also restrict access to garages to the rear of such homes as this would minimise the space with which to manoeuvre cars.
- 1.12 Officer from the City Council Street Scene and Green Spaces have installed a fire retardant bin to the area and is review the number of bins provided in this location.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Under-reporting of issues as they occur has been considered and therefore contact details and methods of reporting have been re-issued to all residents.
- 2.2 This situation is similar to a number of other areas across the City, i.e. where private housing is located adjacent to an unfenced area of open space. Officers would not advise that a fence is erected in such locations as this can negatively impact on the residents' use and enjoyment of such areas, which allows ease of access from their homes to the open space for dog walking, recreational use and vehicular access to rear garages etc.
- 2.3 In relation to this specific location, the area of open space to the rear of the petitioners' homes is only a small section of what is a much larger open space (approximately 900m in length), with many other homes that back onto it. The cost to fence just one section/boundary could amount to as much as £26,000 depending on the ground work involved. As there is no clear evidence that any unauthorised access to rear of the private homes is a significant issue or via the open space itself (due to other means of access onto this land) it is considered that the provision of fencing would not be cost effective nor a sustainable solution to preventing such issues. Fencing, if installed by the residents themselves would limit the space with which vehicle users have with which to manoeuvre their cars in the entryway.
- 2.4 In relation to access to rear garages, the lack of a solid boundary onto the open space allows residents to drive across the edge of the land when garaging their vehicle. This presents another issue, which if garage access is to be maintained, any fencing would have to be erected, not on the council's legal boundary, but some way into the open space. In this circumstance, the open space land would be lost and a formal process to take this out of open space use would have to be undertaken. This would involve residents having to purchase the open space and obtain planning permission, for Change of Use, for the area no longer to be classified as open space. At present no land valuations have been sought however, advertising, planning and legal costs are likely to be in the region of £1,500, these costs would be borne by the applicants.

- 2.5 A self-help gating scheme advice pack has been forwarded to the lead petitioner for consideration by the Residents' Group and they will be assisted by Officers should they wish to pursue this.
- 2.6 The Police Community Engagement Officer has supported local residents to become a formal Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
- 2.7 The Safeguarding Children Licensing Officer has visited the area and the premises in the locality serving alcohol. All had up-to-date records and advised that they are vigilant to proxy sales and utilise the age verification scheme 'Challenge 25'. Advice was given to continue with their current procedures and continue to pass information to staff, especially around the prevention of proxy sales.
- 2.8 Trading Standards Officers have carried out 'Test Purchase' Operations previously and confirmed that premises operating in the area are compliant with the law on underage sales. Each concern raised in relation to this issue is considered on an individual basis and the team will take appropriate action as required.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Police and Council Officers have engaged with the residents and are in regular contact with them to understand the issues and to work with local people to address them.
- 3.2 Residents are encouraged to report incidences as they occur to the relevant organisation. Contact details have been issued in order to encourage regular reporting of incidents for monitoring and response purposes.
- 3.3 A Youth Service representative has committed to attending the Residents' Group regularly to update on action taken.
- 3.4 Youth provision in the area includes the Council's Detached Response Team, they will be in the area every Wednesday evening, Coventry Blaze will be delivering a Doorstep Sports Club at Whoberley Youth Centre every Friday evening and there is open access youth provision at Whoberley Youth Centre on Mondays and Thursdays. A Senior Youth Worker will be visiting the secondary schools before the Summer break to promote activities at Whoberley Youth Centre and to inform young people of the Sportivate programme that will be running over the summer holidays. The Youth Worker will visit the 3 Secondary Schools in the area.

4 Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Officers will continue to work with local residents to support them in implementing the measures outlined in the report and the Local Safer Neighbourhood Group will continue to monitor incidents of crime and nuisance in the area at each monthly meeting.

5 Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.3 Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

5.4 Legal implications

In the event that a decision were to be taken to install fencing to what appears to be private properties, consideration would need to be given to the existence of any restrictions within the deeds of those properties. Breach of any such restrictions might leave the residents themselves open to challenge.

6 Other implications

None

6.3 How will this contribute to the Council Plan?

Crime and Disorder

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour through partnership working is central to the delivery of the Community Safety Plan and Strategic Assessment 2014/15.

Supporting local people to do more for themselves and their local community is central to the City Council's principles and Council Plan.

6.4 How is risk being managed?

1. The Community Safety Officer continues to monitor crime and disorder levels in the area.
2. Police and Council Officers continue to incorporate the area in their patrol strategies and work schedule and will monitor behaviour of individuals.

6.5 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.6 Equalities / EIA

N/A

6.7 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

N/A

6.8 Implications for partner organisations?

N/A

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Members: Councillor Townshend	Cabinet Member (Policing & Equalities)		20.6.2014	20.6.2014

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Appendices