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Coventry City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities held at 10.00 am on Tuesday, 18 June 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor A S Khan (Cabinet Member)
Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor R Brown (Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee)
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor C Miks

Employees (by
Directorate):

Place G Carter, G Hood, M Salmon, A Walster

Apologies: Councillor A Andrews

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. Petition - Objection to the proposals to hold a Fun Fair on Stoke Green

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) that responded to petitions received objecting to the siting of a fun fair on Stoke Green Park in June 2019.

Pursuant to Part 3e, Paragraph 19, of the City Council's Constitution, Councillor R Brown, the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee had been invited to attend the meeting for this matter to agree the need for urgency such that call-in arrangements would not apply. The reason for urgency being the Funfair operator intended to be on site at Stoke Green Park on the 24th June 19 to start setting up and it was important to give the operator adequate notice to make the necessary preparations in time for the proposed event. Councillor Brown attended the meeting and agreed that the matter was urgent and that call-in arrangements would not apply due to the timescales involved. Dependant on the Cabinet Member decision, this would enable the operator to make the necessary preparations and to hold the event at Stoke Green Park on the dates proposed or would provide sufficient notice to the operator if approval wasn't granted.

A petition, bearing 70 signatures, with a further 38 signatures handed in at the meeting providing a total of 108 signatures, had been submitted by two residents of the Stoke Ward of the City and supported by Councillor J McNicholas, a Lower Stoke Ward Councillor, attended the meeting for consideration of the matter and spoke on behalf of the petitioners.

The petition read:

“Proposed fun fair to be held in Stoke Green Park. Objections: Conservation area, newly planted trees, old trees an existing safety issue not adequately fenced off against crowds, 9.30 cut off not for young children, parking already an issue, heavy vehicles churning up grass, littering already a problem. We feel a fun fair would exacerbate the stated existing problems and that there are far more suitable sites within the city”

A further petition, bearing 190 e-signatures, had been submitted by a resident of the Stoke Ward of the City, who was invited to the meeting for consideration of the matter and to speak on behalf of the petitioners but was unable to attend.

The petition read:

“We call on Coventry City Council to stop the Fun Fair being held in Stoke Green Park from 27th – 30th June. We strongly object to it because of the problems it will bring with noise, litter, parking, damage to the park and the newly planted trees which have been purchased by residents as well as the nearby play area. We are also concerned about pollution of the environment from the generators used for the fun fair.

Councillor McNicholas indicated that in addition to these petitions, he was aware that a further online petition has also been generated via another Website, bearing approximately 300 signatures, also opposing the siting of the Funfair as Stoke Green Park.

The report indicated that reductions in the budgets set aside for the management and maintenance of the city’s parks and open spaces had increased emphasis on maximising the income generating potential from parks and open spaces and reliance on the securing of external funding.

As part of the Park Service Commercialisation Project, the Operator, Tommy Wilson Funfairs, had been asked to explore using additional sites in Coventry and Stoke Green Park had been identified as a suitable site.

It was proposed that a Tommy Wilson Funfair be held at the Park from 24th June 2019 to noon on 1st July 2019, this included time for setting up and leaving the site with operating hours restricted, and operational guidelines applied to control noise levels. Site access changes would be made to minimise any potential traffic flow issues and the operator would be required to remove any litter etc. generated by the event.

It was not anticipated that the event would result in any parking issues occurring in the surrounding area to Stoke Green Park, as had been indicated when holding similar funfairs in other locations. Parking arrangements had not been put in place for any event held at Stoke Green Park, including the Bands in Parks Event, and this had not caused any issues.

Mr Barker, a petition organiser, spoke in support of the petitioners outlining the local residents' concerns regarding the four-day event which they felt would damage the Park, a conservation area, and facilities including the Tick Tock children's play area and the Green Man. Mr Barker referred to the lack of parking in the area that would be exacerbated by such an event, and the noise and anti-social behaviour that the Funfair would attract. He indicated that residents felt that the funfair was ill-considered and inappropriate for the park, it would be highly intrusive and cause massive inconvenience and upheaval to people, as well as causing damage. The Stoke Park Residents Group, together with the Gosford Park Residents Association, had undertaken a great deal of work to raise around £160,000 for the local area and they wanted to protect the Park. They had not been consulted on the proposal and had consultation taken place they could have helped to come up with an alternative event to generate income which would be appropriate to the size and location of the park. Mr Barker tabled photographs of issues associated with parking issues at an Edgewick Park event, as an example of the congestion and damage that could occur.

Ms Gill, another petition organiser, acknowledged that the Local Authority were looking to maximise income from parks and referred to the anticipated amount that would be raised from the event. She provided details of financial matters associated with the event and compared the expected £500 fee to the possible negative outcomes that the Funfair would create.

A representative of Pattison College with responsibility for safeguarding referred to the need to ensure the safety of the children attending the College. She referred to the small road between the College and Stoke Green Park that was already congested with parked cars that made attending and leaving the College difficult and which would be further exacerbated by vehicles associated with the Funfair. This would be a particular issue on the Saturday when the College held dance lessons for children and there were many parents dropping off and collecting children throughout the morning. Childrens safety and wellbeing was of paramount importance and this would be at risk for a total of 8 days if the Funfair proposals were agreed.

Councillor McNicholas referred to the achievements of residents through their hard work and fundraising for the area. He confirmed that the Community wanted to work with the City Council to consider events that would maximise the use of Stoke Green Park and raise revenue whilst being appropriate for the venue. He felt that the Funfair was not appropriate for this location. Highlighting local residents' commitment to their area, he referred to the success of Stoke Boulevard, which had been recognised nationally and was being used as a case study for the rest of the country. Councillor McNicholas also referred to the expected revenue that would be generated for the Authority from the Funfair and requested that other ways of raising these funds be explored. In summing up, he asked that the Cabinet Member consider the local residents' case, agree to work together with the local community on suitable events for Stoke Green Park that

would generate revenue for the Authority, and reconsider the siting of the Funfair to a more appropriate location.

Councillor Khan referred to an email he had received from a local resident, which he read out at the meeting, that supported the Funfair proposals. He further referred to a telephone call he had received from a local MP supporting the residents' opposition to the proposals. In considering all the information he had been presented with, both supporting and objecting, including the submission and presenting of petitions, Elected Member representations, photographs, comments on Facebook, comments on other social media and digital public sites, representation from a local MP and emails, Councillor Khan decided that the siting of the Funfair on Stoke Green Park be approved. Tommy Wilson Fairs had a good reputation and had worked well with the City Council previously without any issues and there was no evidence to support any problems. He felt that Funfairs were an example of the diversity of the City providing a much-loved event for many families and children.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1) Notes that that budgetary reduction has increased the emphasis on the Parks Service to generate and maximise income from its parks and greenspaces.**
- 2) Agrees that Tommy Wilsons Funfair be allowed to take place at Stoke Green Park from 24th June 2019, to enable set up, to leaving the site by noon on 1st July 2019.**

4. Outstanding Issues

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) that listed an outstanding issue that would be submitted to a future meeting and summarised the current position in respect of the item.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities notes that a report relating to the outstanding issue listed would be submitted to the Cabinet Member at his October 2019 meeting.

5. Any Other Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.20 am)