

Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

8 March 2021

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities - Councillor AS Khan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Street Scene and Regulatory Services

Ward(s) affected:

Woodlands

Title: Response to a petition requesting the Council improve defences on the Brookstray to prevent unauthorised access by travellers

Is this a key decision? : No

Executive Summary:

This report responds to a petition containing 484 signatures which was submitted to Coventry City Council in August 2020. The petition is supported by Councillor Ridley a Woodlands Ward Councillor and requests that the Council improve defences on the Brookstray preventing unauthorised access onto the site by travellers.

The petition reads:

“We the undersigned petition the Council to make it harder for travellers to access the Brookstray. Travellers recently accessed the Brookstray in Mount Nod, Coventry. Although swift action moved them on quickly. It’s the second time in recent years that this has happened in the Woodlands Ward area”.

The petition goes further to state “We the undersigned believe the site is vulnerable to further incursions and call on the Council to review the vulnerability of the site and install appropriate measures to make sure this doesn’t happen again”.

The Brookstray is the collective name given to the various green spaces that run alongside the Guphill Brook, broadly speaking from Allesley Old Road to Sutton Avenue / Goldthorne Close.

During the latter part of last year there were a number of incidents of unauthorised incursion on a number of sites off the Brookstray. In response extensive works were undertaken to bolster the defences in an attempt to prevent further incidents at a cost of approximately £13,153.00.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities is recommended to:

1. Consider the content of the petition and note the concerns of the petitioners
2. Note the extensive works undertaken to secure sites along the Brookstray.
3. Note that the cost of undertaking the defence works have been estimated at approximately £13,153.
4. Endorse and support Officers to continue to maintain and implement defences on public open space subject to traveller incursions within existing resources.
5. Note that Council officers will continue to investigate how the unregistered land at Sutton Avenue could be better secured.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A : Location map of Brookstray Open Space Sites

Other useful background papers:

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 a petition requesting the Council to improve the defences on the Brookstray to prevent unauthorised access by travellers.**

1. Context (or background)

The Guphill Brookstray is the collective name given to the various green spaces that run alongside the Guphill Brook, broadly speaking from Allesley Old Road to Sutton Avenue / Goldthorne Close.

During the latter part of last year there were a number of incidents of unauthorised access by travellers on the following sites off the Brookstray

- Sutton Avenue / Unicorn Lane
- Alderminster Road
- Farcroft Ave (Stonebury Ave)
- Buckingham Rise (outside of Woodlands ward)

Following reports, the Council was also made aware of attempts being made by travellers trying to gain access to Eastern Green Recreation Ground.

In response to these incidents and in an attempt to make it more difficult to gain unauthorised access the Council has carried out extensive works to secure sites along the Brookstray since receipt of the petition at a cost of approximately £13,153. This has included the following:

- **Land off Alderminster Road & Land off Nod Rise.**

- Bollards & gate installed at Dunchurch Highway
- Bund created at Shottery Close.
- Bollards & gate installed at Nod Rise (bollards on both sides)
- Bund created at Nod Rise
- Bollards installed at Honeybourne Close
- Bollards installed at Pebworth Close
- Bollards installed at Cantlow Close
- Bollards installed at Aynho Close (two entrances)
- Bollards installed at Beausale Croft
- Gate & bollards installed at Alderminster Road (bollards on both sides)
- Bund created at Alderminster Road
- Bollards installed at Hardwick Close

New bunds were installed where practical as this could be achieved at minimal cost by diverting staff from other work.

Bollards were also installed to secure land off Buckingham Rise – which is outside of Woodlands ward.

- **Land off Farcroft Ave & Stonebury Ave**

- Bollards and gate installed to prevent unauthorised vehicular access off Farcroft Avenue and bollards also installed at the end of the cul-de-sac in Stonebury Avenue (between 198 and 200 Stonebury Avenue).

- **Eastern Green Recreation Ground**

- New lockbox welded to existing gate on Church Lane.

- **Private land**

Officers are still looking into the ownership of the open space at Sutton Avenue and its future security against unauthorised encampments. Unfortunately, the land is not registered and the owner is proving difficult to identify. As the City Council has maintained the land for over 12 years we are now putting together a case for adverse possession and ownership.

We are also looking into the future management of other privately owned land space alongside the Guphill Brook.

The Flood Risk Team and the Parks Service team are working together on an external funding bid to Severn Trent Water's community fund (and/or other grants) to improve the Guphill Brookstray. Works being considered include repairs to the unadopted footpath, riverbank stabilisation and providing natural play and other recreational opportunities alongside the stream.

Officers will continue to monitor the defences at the Brookstray and respond to any future incursions as effectively as possible within the resources available.

It is important to note that unfortunately it is not possible to completely protect open space from determined effort to gain unauthorised access

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The option not to maintain and implement defences restricting unauthorised access to Council owned public open space has been considered however this has been rejected.
- 2.2 The option to continue to implement and maintain traveller defences on sites subject to unauthorised incursions within existing budgetary resources is recommended.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

No consultation has taken place on this issue

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 To be agreed subject to approval of a recommendation within this report

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Customer Services

5.1 Financial implications

Incursion defence work has been undertaken along the Brookstray at a cost of £13,153. As there are no specific resources allocated for costs associated with Traveller Incursions, this requires funding to be switched from other essential services.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications for this report.

6. Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?

Parks and green spaces are highly valued by the citizens of Coventry and contribute greatly to improving the quality of life to those that live and work in the City, helps address health inequalities and provides valuable wildlife habitats.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through the existing Place directorate risk profile.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Continued maintenance of the site will be delivered using existing resources.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)No equality impact assessments have been undertaken.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

No direct impact

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

Report author(s):

Name and job title: Graham Hood, Head of Streetpride and Greenspace

Directorate: Place

Tel and email contact: 0247683 2194 graham.hood@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/approver name	Title	Service Area	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				

Cath Crosby	Lead Accountant - Business Partnering	Financial Management	04.02.2021	05.02.2021
Gill Carter	Team Leader, Legal Services	Law and Governance	04.02.2021	10.02.2021
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	04.02.2021	05.02.2021
Mark Yates	Parks Service Manager,	Street Pride and Green spaces	04.02.2021	05.02.2021
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and Members)				
Andrew Walster	Director (Streetscene and Regulatory Services)	-	15.02.21	18.02.21
Councillor Abdul Khan	Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities		25.02.21	25.02.21

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