

HORTON COUNTRY PARK - LITTLE ACRES

Head of Service/Contact:	Mark Shephard, Head of Property and Regeneration
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	Annex 1 – Site Plan
Other available papers (not attached):	Little Acres Field reported to Strategy and Resources Committee on 24 June 2015

Report summary

This report considers a proposal by the Girl Guides to widen their existing lease user clause to allow third party use by other not for profit community groups.

Recommendation (s)

- (1) The Head of Property and Regeneration, in consultation with the Chief Legal Officer, be authorised to conclude terms to amend the restrictive user clause to allow third party use by other not for profit community groups.**

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 This proposal supports the Council's four year Corporate Plan specifically focusing on the Key Priority of "Supporting our Community" by promoting healthy and active lifestyles for all ages.

2 Background

- 2.1 Little Acres Campsite comprises a grassed field of approximately 1.8 acres (0.73 hectares) located in Horton Country Park. The Girl Guides have occupied the Council owned land since 1996 under a succession of short leases and licences. A site plan is attached at **Annex 1**.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 24 June 2015, Strategy and Resources Committee approved the granting of a new 25 year lease to the Girl Guides to facilitate the development of a timber lodge and store. The new lodge

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(approximately 110 sq m / 1,200 sq ft) comprises kitchen, toilets, shower facilities, a first aid room and an equipment store.

- 2.3 Full Planning Permission for the proposed development was granted on 24 May 2012 (ref: 12/00052) and Planning Conditions discharged on 12 May 2015 (ref: 15/00038).
- 2.4 The completed lease restricted the use of the site to the Girl Guides only with occasional use by the Scouts.

3 Horton Country Park Objectives

- 3.1 Horton Country Park is primarily used for recreational and educational purposes with an emphasis on balancing nature conservation with community health and wellbeing.
- 3.2 The Park's objectives for Recreation, Education, Historical and Cultural Value are set out in Clause 2.6.2 of the approved Horton Country Park Management Plan 2017 – 2127 as follows:-
 - *To manage/improve public access and recreational use of the Country Park and to provide facilities for members of the public to enjoy in a way that does not conflict with the nature conservation objectives.*
 - *To promote educational and research use in a way that is consistent with maintaining the nature conservation value.*
 - *To maintain and enhance the cultural, historical and landscape value of the Country Park, including features associated with the former psychiatric hospitals.*
 - *To promote and encourage an understanding and respect for the wildlife, landscape and historical value of the Country Park.*
 - *To promote a greater understanding of the archaeology of the Country Park – e.g. Pond Wood.*
 - *To control inappropriate use of the site.*
- 3.3 Positive contact with nature is important for human health. It can create well-being, prevent public health problems and promote an active lifestyle. Parks and protected areas contribute to individual and community health and well-being, and to wider aspects of economic health and growth.

4 Proposal

- 4.1 While the lodge is currently under construction, the Girl Guides are pursuing all available grant funding opportunities to support the cost of construction.

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- 4.2 The Girl Guides have enquired whether the Council would consider a relaxation of the restrictive user clause to enable the lodge to benefit the well-being of the wider community.
- 4.3 To ensure a balance is maintained between nature conservation and any inappropriate use of the land, the Guides have proposed extending the user clause to include only non-commercial, not for profit community groups:-
- Schools
 - Church groups
 - Youth clubs
 - Youth and adult special needs groups
 - Cultural, recreational and artistic groups
- 4.4 If agreed, this would allow the site and lodge to be used by all ages and social groups for the benefit of furthering their mental and physical wellbeing.
- 4.5 Experience of the natural environment by young people can be life changing in terms of gaining confidence and acquiring skills to enhance job opportunities.
- 4.6 For older residents, the number of people with dementia is growing rapidly. Spending time in the outdoors can bring a range of benefits to people living with dementia and their carers.
- 4.7 One in four adults will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives. Outdoor activity and contact with nature can help sleep patterns, reduce stress, improve mood and self-esteem, provide meaningful social contact.
- 4.8 It is proposed that if agreed by Committee, Officers be authorised to agree terms to amend the restrictive nature of the current user clause to allow third party use by community groups.

5 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 5.1 If agreed by Committee, the use will continue to be limited to non-commercial, not for profit community use with no financial implications arising.

5.2 *Chief Finance Officer's comments:* None for the purposes of this report.

6 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

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6.1 The Council is the freehold owner of the land and it is leased to the Girl Guides by way of a 25 year lease at a rent of £1,350 pa. The lease currently restricts the use of the site to the Girl Guides and Scouts only.

6.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

7 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

7.1 None for the purposes of this report.

8 Partnerships

8.1 None for the purposes of this report.

9 Risk Assessment

9.1 Without a relaxation of the existing user clause, opportunities for the wider community to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of the site and lodge will be lost.

10 Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1 It is recommended that terms be concluded to amend the restricted lease user clause to allow third party use by other not for profit community groups.

Ward(s) affected: Stamford Ward;