

Meeting about progress on Eastwood Park, held on 27th November 2017

Present:

Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Jennifer McGee, Mike Jeffrey NCC, Geoff Cant NCC Active Northumberland, County Cllr Gordon Stewart, Cllr Russ Greig, Cllr Angie Scott

Apologies:

Duncan Graham (Prudhoe Youth Club FC) and Cllr George McCreedy

There was no formal agenda for the meeting which was scheduled to bring stakeholders together to discuss future plans and progress with the remainder of the site now that the playground equipment has been installed.

Play Area (now located at the south of the park)

Cllr Gerry Price advised that following some initial excitement and low level disturbance the play area was being well used. Cllr Gordon Stewart advised that a security camera has been installed.

Mike Jeffrey confirmed that there are still some things to finish; painting the internal fence and finishing the external perimeter fence. The grass beneath the zip-wire needs to be seeded and this will have to wait till the warmer weather, as will the painting. New litters bins will be put in.

Cllr Jennifer McGee enquired about additional seating and picnic benches. Mike Jeffrey confirmed that funding for the scheme was £95,000 and so far £80,000 has been spent, leaving £15,000 to agree what to do next.

Cllr Russ Greig stated that picnic benches could be situated elsewhere in the park, not just within the play area. Cllr Angie Scott agreed that many people enjoy using the open space.

Cricket Pavilion

Duncan Graham provided, in advance, full details of the plans that PYCFC have in for the pavilion which it is hoped funding can be sourced for creating modern changing and kitchen areas, as well as a function and viewing area. The plans included an extension and refurbishment.

Geoff Cant welcomed the prospect of PYCFC having the pavilion transferred to them as they would be able to invest in and maintain it; as a charity they have access to funding and they have a large team of volunteers as well as Duncan who is very driven.

Mike Jeffrey confirmed that the plan would be to either lease the pavilion to PYCFC on a long-term lease or transfer the asset.

Following feedback from Duncan Graham it was confirmed that the intention of PYCFC it that the pavilion will be available to community to use for functions, etc.

Bowls Pavilion

Mike Jeffrey described that at the moment the quandary is whether to look for expressions of interest in the building now or to bring the building to an acceptable standard before doing so, the clear factor in that is that it would cost to bring the building to a usable state. Mike Jeffrey confirmed that they were not at the point of going out to tender for this.

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Following questions from Cllr Russ Greig, Mike Jeffrey confirmed that NCC would not be looking to make a profit from the use of the bowls pavilion but would want it to cover its costs. Cllr Russ Greig commented that this would be ideal for the 'Men's Sheds Association' and he was looking to get one established in Prudhoe.

It was discussed that what had seemed like the most obvious choice for this building, i.e. refreshments, may not work due to the seasonal nature of visitors and the lack of parking.

Old Play Area (located at the North of the park)

It was agreed that the old play equipment would be removed and the metal fencing would be retained for the moment. The fencing could possibly be used at the small toddler play area at Castlefields that was removed by developers, if this is reinstated.

Dog Zone

Mike Jeffrey made clear that it would be very difficult to ban dogs from Eastwood Park completely and to do so would require a By-Law. Presently, in Northumberland dogs are banned from gated play areas but not parks and there is no enforcement available even if signs are put up.

Cllr Gerry Price asked what the experience of elsewhere in the County was and whether it would be advantageous to have signs asking the public to keep dogs on leads. Mike Jeffrey said that in his experience the public would visit areas like Eastwood Park specifically to let dogs off lead to run around and that it would be better to focus on their behavior, ensuring they pick up after dogs. The use of bag dispensers and enforcement officers was discussed.

The dog agility zone that was suggested for the area of the old play equipment was discussed. The administrator stated that she felt this had been considered at a time when it was believed that dogs could be banned from the rest of the park, and as this is not the case the idea is less feasible.

Cllr Russ Greig stated that it was nonsensical to spend time discussing a dog exercise area when only 30% of those questioned had favored it and they should be focusing on what was preferred, i.e. picnic tables, more seating and a multi-use games area.

Skate Park

Cllr Russ Greig stated that the meeting should acknowledge that there is currently a petition for a skate park at Eastwood Park. Cllr Jennifer McGee advised that previously when this was discussed there was opposition from nearby residents.

Mike Jeffrey conveyed that if a skate park was placed on the furthest area of hard standing that it would be well away from housing.

It was discussed that the skate park at Highfield was nearing the end of its life and there could be a possibility of questioning whether Highfield or Eastwood was the best location. Mike Jeffrey advised that from a cost point of view the newer style concrete skate parks that are installed would cost the same at whichever location, approx £80,000 with minimal maintenance costs.

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Cllr Gordon Stewart stated that he has encouraged the resident who started the petition to start a club and to generate interest.

Car Park

Mike Jeffrey confirmed that although the car park complete, it was agreed to wait until after the winter for the grass to become established. There are issue with the pedestrian and vehicle entrance which are being looked into.

Hard Surfaces (south east corner)

Geoff Cant described that the fencing in this area is retrievable. Mike Jeffrey stated that a full resurface would cost £20,000 whereas a thin skim would come in at approximately £6,000. It would not cost a lot of money to remark the tennis court and get the area in a suitable condition to use found a number of games.

Mike Jeffrey stated that it would be very easy to put this area back to a MUGA and Tennis Court and the only issue would be floodlights, adding that NCC may continue to make some capital investment in parks but this is not fully laid out yet.

Geoff Cant described that it is far easier for clubs and groups of volunteers to get funding to take things forward, which is why PYCFC the interest of PYCFC is such a positive step but there seemed to be a lack of volunteers clubs in Prudhoe. The cessation of Prudhoe Cricket Club was discussed. The administration mentioned a recent trend for basketball and whether this could be pursued, Geoff Cant agreed that the area would be suitable but a club would need to take it forward as they were concentrating on getting PCHS facilities fully utilised.

Cllr Gerry Price commented that there was a lot of potential. Geoff Cant advised that Kath Keadie looked after Sports Development in the area and where there is interest they can access funding for coaching. It was agreed to send a list of sports clubs, including dance, to Geoff Cant.

The Environment

Cllr Russ Greig suggested celebrating the heritage of Eastwood Park which was previously owned by the Miners and gifted to the town. Cllr Russ Greig said he would like to see a memorial of some kind to West Wylam Colliery and all those who lost their lives and also some planting to make the open space more enjoyable for all.

It was discussed that volunteers groups may be interested in looking after presentation beds once established.

Summary Points

- Restore the hard surface
- Reinstate lines for tennis court and other sports
- Research potential for memorial for those who died in West Wylam Colliery (possibly move the Miners Tub)
- Look into an easy maintenance/low cost but suitably attractive planting scheme.
- Make the purchase of picnic table and additional seating a priority
- Promote the initiation of new sports clubs in Prudhoe