

PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR CHORLEYWOOD:

Presentation by Mr Chris Hope, Head of Leisure, TRDC, at CWPC Open Spaces Committee meeting on 3 July 2012

(Notes by GH, present as a FoCC representative on the Play Area Advisory Committee)

Mr Hope brought a set of drawings which had been prepared as ideas to start the consultation process. They showed equipment designed mainly to be climbed on, including poles, ladders, walkways and ropes; maximum height (estimated) about 15 feet. *[These Notes do not attempt to describe those drawings in any detail: everyone is strongly encouraged to look at them when made generally available, and to respond to TRDC's consultation.]* The District has allocated £95,000 in its capital programme for play equipment in Chorleywood (including design fees), and the drawings show the sort of equipment which that money could provide. The equipment in the drawings would be suitable for children aged 5-6 to 12-13 years. Sustainability is an important consideration, including the sensitive use of materials appropriate to the location selected; the main material used is wood, and the ropes included in the designs are made from natural materials. The preliminary designs do not fence the equipment off; it is appreciated that this means questions of dog-fouling would have to be addressed. The final design will be “bespoke” not “off-the-peg”. The District has not taken any decision on where to put the equipment; the project will only succeed if the community accepts the location and the equipment. RoSPA will be asked to assess the safety aspects of the proposals.

The intention was to start the consultation with a display at Village Day *[this has been overtaken by events]* and to follow up with a questionnaire and specific consultations through newsletters and with the local schools and Community Groups, including further consultation on more detailed proposals when formulated in the light of initial community reactions – the process would be a fairly long one, but getting it right is absolutely essential.

The District is aware of the legal and environmental issues involved in any proposal to put such equipment either on the Common or on the Chorleywood House Estate; planning permission will be necessary, and for that purpose there will have to be Environmental Impact Assessments.

There would be a budget for ongoing maintenance; the equipment would need to be checked frequently, but the construction is fairly robust and fairly vandal-proof – and experience elsewhere in the District is that equipment which the community as a whole like and accept tends not to be heavily vandalised. The equipment would come with a one-year warranty, but in fact the likely life of the main timber elements would be of the order of 25 years; total maintenance costs would probably be less than those of “traditional” *[metal and plastic]* play equipment. The preliminary drawings did not include bark or any other introduced surface; if the facility were on the Common, any such surface would raise issues

with Local Nature Reserve status and might have adverse funding consequences.

Three Rivers would be responsible for maintenance, and for insuring against the risks of faulty equipment and public liability; it is suggested that if the eventual decision is to put the facility on Parish Council land, the relevant area should be leased to the District. (There is a similar arrangement for the Cricket Pavilion.) Contact details for the relevant Three Rivers department would be displayed.

Defra authorisation under Commons Act 2006 section 38 would be required if the facility was to be put on Chorleywood Common [*even without fencing, it would be a “structure”*], and if there had to be a public enquiry, the cost would have to be met from somewhere.

*Apologies for the delay in preparing and circulating these Notes. I do not know whether, following the postponement of Village Day, any consultation has yet been started by any other means; I will circulate anything which I may get on that – and **please** will anyone else who obtains, or already has, any details of consultations, make the information as widely known as possible?*

GH.