

REPORT OF: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MANAGER

TO: WEST CRAVEN COMMITTEE

DATE: 6 September 2016

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Sough Park – Carnegie Field (Fields in Trust Deed of Dedication)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide information on the above Fields in Trust (FIT) initiative, the background to how we have arrived at this point and to gain approval from members for the whole of Sough Park to be put forward by the Borough of Pendle for FIT status due to it being a lost Carnegie Field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That members approve Sough Park being put forward by the Borough of Pendle for FIT status in view of it being identified as a lost Carnegie Field.

That the Committee recommend that this report go to the Executive with a view to them approving Sough Park's application for FIT status.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

To enable Sough Park to be recognised as a lost Carnegie Field and ensure that it is protected as a public recreational space in perpetuity.

ISSUE

1. In late 2015, Pendle Council received an email from Fields in Trust (FIT) identifying Sough Park in Earby as a historic Carnegie Field. Earby Town Council (with the assistance of the Local History Society) had previously submitted information to FIT with a view to getting the Park protected. From the information provided, FIT were able to verify Sough Park as the Earby Carnegie Field that was previously lost to them.
2. Subsequently, Earby Town Council was informed of this unexpected news. As you can imagine, they were very happy about this and obviously keen to take this forward and as such discussed the possibility of pursuing FIT/Carnegie field status at a Town Council meeting in February 2016. It was resolved:

That the clerk contact Pendle Borough Council to seek the immediate registering of Sough Park and the recreational facilities with the Carnegie Trust and that it also enter in to a deed of dedication with Fields in Trust.

3. Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. During the period 1927 to 1935, the Carnegie UK Trust donated £200,000 (over £10 million in today's money) to create, protect and improve playing fields across the UK. Sough Park, through Earby Urban District Council, received some of this grant funding towards the improvement of the existing play area thus becoming a Carnegie Field.
4. Although one of the conditions of the original grant for Sough Park was that the playing field remains for public recreation in perpetuity, there was no mention of that in the conveyance. Much has changed over the years and FIT has made improvements to how they protect recreational land. This is now achieved by entering in to a Deed of Dedication with the landowner to protect the land for public recreational use in perpetuity. The deed of dedication gets registered with the land registry. There is flexibility built in to this and it doesn't change the ownership of the land. If protection was forthcoming, Pendle Council would still hold on to all local management issues and FIT are basically a custodian to uphold the terms of the agreement.
5. FIT, the operating name of the National Playing Fields Association, has been the leading independent charity campaigning to protect and improve playing fields, play space, recreation grounds, nature reserves and other open spaces since its formation in 1925. They have the long standing support of the Royal Family and currently protect over 2,500 public recreational spaces through legally binding agreements.
6. Pendle already has two green spaces previously protected by FIT under different protection programmes, e.g. King George V Playing Field in Colne (under the King George V Playing Field Programme) and Holt House Playing Fields in Colne (under the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee).
7. The Park as we know it now starts on the edge of Colne Road and then takes in the war memorial, Football changing rooms, bowling green and associated pavilion before the bridge takes you across New Cut beck to the play area, Skate Park, tennis courts and playing field. A plan detailing the boundary of the Park (and the facilities within) that will be put forward for dedication is provided in Appendix 1.
8. This was not always the case. The front section was the original Park and was officially opened as a Memorial Park in 1924. The Park was managed by Earby Urban District Council. It wasn't until 1936 that the Park was extended through the purchase of a parcel of land across New Cut beck (the back section of the Park that includes the playing field). As such, a new access bridge had to be built across the stream. The new section of the Park was recognised as the 'Holme' Playing Fields.
9. In 1935, a new play area was opened. The equipment and surfacing costing circa £150 was funded in equal shares between Earby UDC and Earby Children's Recreational Fund Committee.
10. In 1937, further play area improvements to the existing play area were made with grants secured from the Carnegie UK Trust and the West Riding Playing Fields Association. The Memorial Park and the 'Holme' playing fields have continued to be used as a recreational amenity for the town and are now generally known as Sough Park.

11. From the documents provided by FIT, it looks like the Carnegie Trust provided retrospective funding for the play area in the Memorial Park side of the land and as such it is this that is recognised as the lost Carnegie Field. In the information it states that, 'the UDC are negotiating for the purchase of an adjoining 5 acres of land for team games.' This would infer that they are talking about 'Holme' playing fields here which is in accordance with the detail provided in 8.
12. Irrespective of the above, FIT is recommending that the whole of Sough Park be put forward as the lost Carnegie Field and that a deed of dedication to protect the land is put in place by Pendle Borough Council and FIT.
13. Earby Town Council is keen to see this happen in the short term with Pendle Council Officers supportive of their wishes. To enable Neighbourhood Services Officers to proceed with the application process, we need approval and authorisation from members via a Committee decision.
14. Members should be aware that in terms of ward boundaries, the Memorial Park bit of Sough Park comes under Kelbrook & Sough Parish Council with the 'Holme' playing fields part under Earby Town Council. This is not a problem in itself as Kelbrook & Sough Parish Council are wholly supportive of the project.

It should also be noted, in view of the transfer of services work that is currently ongoing between Pendle Council and the Town/Parish Councils, that if Sough Park does eventually transfer to Earby Town Council/Kelbrook & Sough Parish Council then new deeds of dedication would have to be completed.

15. In brief, the benefits of Sough Park being recognised as a Carnegie Field and protected as a FIT site are:
 - Making an express and recognisable commitment to local people to safeguard land, facilities and opportunities for sport, play and recreation both now and forever
 - Protecting public access to outdoor space
 - Providing reassurance to potential investors regarding viability and sustainability
 - Ensuring that in the case of sale proceeds are reapplied to replacement facilities, with a priority on new outdoor facilities
 - Raising awareness of the importance of such facilities in the context of quality of life, health, the environment and amenity
 - Greater opportunity to access FIT related grant funding and other external funding streams.
16. If approval is forthcoming from members, a report will be taken to the 15 September 2016 Executive for them to authorise.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: By gaining FIT status for Sough Park, the Council will be positively contributing to the following corporate strategic objective:

Objective 3 – Ensuring a clean, healthier, safer and cohesive Pendle.

The protection of recreational space also ties in with recommendations outlined in the recently produced Playing Pitch Strategy for Pendle where it advises that the Council should protect playing field and green space sites in the long term to ensure that there are the requisite number of good quality public recreational space for the residents of Pendle.

The safeguarding of existing public green field sites and providing access to outdoor space is vital for communities and plays an important role in providing a place for both physical activity and relaxation (Public Health & Well-being agenda)

Financial: None although it should be noted that although there is no specific funding allocated to Carnegie Fields, protected sites have a better chance of securing FIT related grant funding and other external funding streams.

Legal: Sites that acquire Fields in Trust status will be protected in perpetuity.

A deed of dedication will have to be agreed between the Council and FIT for the site.

All aspects of management and maintenance are determined locally. FIT's role is custodial and advisory and they will ensure that the fact of protection of the site is in the public domain.

Risk Management: None

Health and Safety: None

Sustainability: By acquiring Fields in Trust status for Sough Park, the site will be protected as a public recreational space in perpetuity, thus long term sustainability will be achieved.

Community Safety: The safeguarding of existing recreational sites for ever will ensure that there is adequate outdoor space for local people to access for sport, play and recreational purposes. Diversionary activities can be provided on these sites and will be a contributing factor to addressing anti-social behaviour and community cohesion.

Equality and Diversity: None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Sough Park Boundary Detail.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None