

# STOCKLEY COUNTRY PARK - PETITION TO THE COUNCIL

<b>Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Councillor Jonathan Bianco
<b>Cabinet Portfolio(s)</b>	Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services
<b>Officer Contact(s)</b>	Stuart Hunt, Residents Services
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix 1 - Stockley Park is not fit for purpose - Petition Appendix 2 - Maintenance Schedule

## 1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

<b>Summary</b>	This report concerns a petition received requesting that the Council considers taking back direct control of Stockley Country Park and Kingston Lane Playing Fields.
<b>Putting our Residents First</b>	This report provides an overview of the current arrangements for the management of Stockley Country park and Kingston Lane Playing Fields and the steps taken in addressing the petitioners' concerns.
<b>Financial Cost</b>	No direct financial cost or implications resulting from considering the raised petition at this early stage of consideration.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	Yiewsley

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Meeting with Petitioners, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services:**

- 1. Notes the petition received;**
- 2. Instructs officers to continue to work with the operators Stockley Park Golf to ensure that the level of maintenance is in line with country parks maintained and managed by the Council directly;**
- 3. Instructs officers to continue to work with external agencies to prevent and manage anti-social behaviour.**

## Reasons for recommendations

A paper petition was received by Democratic Services in October 2017 containing 102 valid signatures stating “Stockley Park is not fit for purpose! We, the residents of Hillingdon, demand that Hillingdon Council investigate and take action, as a matter of urgency, and resume direct control if required.” The Council’s procedures enable such petitions to be heard by the relevant Cabinet Member.

## Background

The petition outlines issues raised:

- Car Park gates, locking and unlocking
- Rubbish not removed in a timely manner
- Rubbish not picked up prior to mowing operations
- The dog bins are regularly overflowing
- Disabled access is very poor
- The gravel paths are poorly maintained
- The grass paths are not mown regularly
- The water level in the lake by Horton Road is low
- Young people on Motorbikes and Scooters are gaining access to the park

The issues raised by the petitioners have been taken up with the operators of Stockley Park and a schedule of potential breaches sent to Stockley Park Golf Club in July 2018. The summary of annual frequencies is attached as Appendix 2. Improvements to the standard of maintenance have been made and officers will continue to work with the operator to make further improvements to the general standards.

The operator has also worked with the Community Pay Back Team to undertake litter collection and is looking to restart this scheme.

The car parks are locked by the team at Stockley Park and officers are working with the residents to provide a log of when the gates are left unlocked in order to continue dialogue with the Stockley management team to find a solution to effective locking and unlocking. The car parks do face significant challenges through traveller incursions and users' anti-social behaviour. The car parks have been locked at times with Hillingdon’s agreement to ensure that they remain secure.

The Council’s specialist waste contractor undertakes the emptying of the dog waste bins; it is accepted that problems with access to the site have sometimes delayed collection but the Council is working to ensure that the bins are emptied at a schedule to ensure they are not overflowing. The bins are subject to park users using them for non dog waste which does affect the capacity.

The path network is mainly of a gravel construction and requires maintenance to provide a standard of level access. The operator is aware of the requirements and will continue to top up the paths when the condition deteriorates.

Young people using motorbikes and scooters on sites continue to be a problem across all parks and open spaces. A multi agency meeting was held in March 2018 to try and address the problems at Stockley. This meeting included The Police, The Golf Course Operator, The Council's Anti Social Behaviour team and Green Spaces Team. The outcome of this meeting was a number of recommendations, one of which was to install some physical barriers to prevent motorbikes accessing the site. These physical measures were installed during the summer of 2018 and have resulted in some reductions to the amount of bikes entering the site. Unfortunately, due to the site maintaining full public access including access for people with limited mobility it is almost impossible to exclude all access by motorbikes. Officers will continue to work with the operator and other agencies to restrict access and take enforcement action if appropriate.

Other improvements have also been undertaken at the Kingston Lane Playing fields site including the installation of a new playground and gym. These enhancements have proved popular with local residents and officers will continue to work with the operator to make appropriate enhancements across the site.

The operator is currently discussing with the Council's Planning team the finer details of a planning submission for improvements to the Country Park and its playing pitches. The application will be lodged by the operator rather than the Council. Once the application is validated (the term 'validated' is when the Council receives a complete application with the right fees, plans, reports and completed forms) public consultation will occur on the application. The council's planning team will ensure that there is extensive public consultation.

The planning application process will enable public representations/opinions to be put forward, to be considered and, if applicable, revisions to be obtained to the application. If the application is recommended for approval, conditions can be imposed which address material planning issues raised through the public consultation process. The application will go to a planning committee meeting, where anyone who has lodged a petition in support or objection to the planning application will have public speaking rights. The Council strongly advises that the planning application process provides an additional route to enable a discussion into the issues raised by petitioners.

A complaint about the country park was referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman; the summary decision is as follows:

### **The Ombudsman's decision**

Summary: Mr B complains the Council failed to ensure the country park and playing fields near his home are adequately maintained. The Ombudsman will discontinue this investigation. This is because the Council is in continuing legal talks with the tenant responsible for maintenance. The Council intends to hold a petition hearing to address residents' concerns once these talks finish.

### **Alternative options considered / risk management**

None at this stage.

## **Policy Overview Committee comments**

None at this stage.

## **3. INFORMATION**

### **Financial Implications**

There are no finance implications at this stage.

## **4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

### **What will be the effect of the recommendations?**

The Council will continue to work with the Golf Course Operator to ensure that the country park and playing fields are maintained to a standard suitable for a country park.

### **Consultation Carried Out or Required**

Once the Council has received petitions, the Petition Hearing is the appropriate democratic process by which views of the residents can be considered.

The Planning application process also offers local residents the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed developments.

## **5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

Corporate Finance has reviewed the report and confirms that there are no financial implications arising from the recommendations.

### **Legal**

The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report this stage.

Should there be a decision that further measures/actions are to be considered then the relevant statutory provisions will need to be identified and considered at that time.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL.