

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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meeting date: 24 AUGUST 2021  
title: USE OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES  
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR COMMUNITY SERVICES  
principal author: MARK BEVERIDGE, HEAD OF CULTURAL SERVICES

### 1 PURPOSE

1.1 The Council has carried out a small survey of residents who live around a piece of public open space in Wilpshire, which currently has a No Ball Games Sign in the middle, some residents would like it removed and others would prefer it stayed. This report seeks a view from Committee.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives - To help make people's lives healthier and safer.
- Corporate Priorities - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley.
- Other Considerations – None

### 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The area of public open space sits within a private residential estate in Wilpshire, the cul-de-sac is called Woodcrest. The sign was erected some years ago apparently to deter young people from playing ball games on the green space, not just from the surrounding houses but from other properties on adjoining roads. The issues of safety and damage were the main reasons it is understood why the sign was put up originally.

2.2 Recently a request was received from a resident asking for the sign to be removed. The sign itself is advisory only, it has no legal standing, though it has served to deter ball games, though the space itself is used for play purposes by younger children.

2.3 To gauge the feelings of the residents a letter was sent to the properties which surround the green space. Twenty-four properties were consulted, 17 were returned.

### 3 ISSUES

3.1 The unique nature of the green space makes Woodcrest unusual for a residential area, being a cul-de-sac with a substantial area of green space within it. Therefore, it is understandable that there would be a difference of opinion from those who would be most affected by removing the sign.

3.2 The green space itself is despite the sign, still available for the residents to use and the Council cut the grass, so it is public open space available to all to use in a sensible way.

3.3 From the results of the residents' feedback, there are clear differences of opinion. Seventeen responses were received and the residents are split 10 for removal and 7 against.

3.4 The green space has crown with a slope off it on three side where it is not level with the road which runs around it. Some of the respondents referred to this as a concern if children run to retrieve a ball.

#### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications.

- Resources – The Council own the land and cut the grass; this would continue irrespective of the sign being in situ.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The land is owned by the Council, it was previously leased to the local Parish Council and that lease is no longer in place. Any accidents on the land would as with any other public open space, present a potential liability to the Council which our insurers would consider on a case-by-case basis.
- Political – None in the context of this report.
- Reputation – This is a contentious issue with no easier answer which will satisfy all the residents of the area. However, public safety and nuisance are also enforceable by the Council under separate powers and these need to be considered in the decision-making process.
- Equality & Diversity – People use the green space now and it seems from the responses received to be policed by residents around the cul-de-sac.

#### 5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Decide which option should be taken:

- a. The sign remains and allow the green space to be used for recreation, just not ball games.
- b. The sign is removed and any form of recreation including ball games allowed on the green space.

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Head of Cultural and Leisure Services

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Director of Community Services

#### BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

For further information please ask for Mark Beveridge 01200 425111