

WTF122  
FOR DECISION  
WARD(S): WINCHESTER TOWN

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

26<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2008

NORTH WALLS RECREATION GROUND: SPECIAL EVENTS POLICY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CULTURAL SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report considers the findings of a survey issued last winter to residents living around the North Walls Recreation Ground. The survey aimed to identify key issues arising from the use of the recreation ground for special events, which have been growing in scale, range and frequency over recent years. The report sets out a draft events policy for North Walls, which seeks to minimise the identified disruption arising from events and to maximise enjoyment for residents and participants alike.

It also details the costs to Winchester City Council of allowing such events to take place at North Walls, and seeks Member guidance on the desirability of recuperating these costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That Members are asked to consider the draft policy attached at Appendix 1 and, subject to final amendments being made by officers in consultation with

the Chair of Town Forum, to endorse it;

- 2 That Members consider the costs of events at North Walls to the City Council and indicate whether they think the Council should continue to absorb these; start to recharge all event-related costs to organisers, or absorb costs only for certain, pre-defined types of event.

## WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

26<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2008

### NORTH WALLS RECREATION GROUND: SPECIAL EVENTS POLICY

#### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CULTURAL SERVICES

##### DETAIL:

##### 1 Introduction

1.1 North Walls Recreation Ground is used for an increasing number and range of special events throughout the year. These include

Race for Life	Fun fair
10K Run	Rugby tournaments
Circus	Motor shows
Bonfire	Hot air balloon launches
Hat Fair camp site	

1.2 Following three complaints to the Council during the summer of 2007, officers co-ordinated a detailed survey of residents living near the recreation ground last autumn. The questionnaire was designed to identify key issues arising from the growing events programme, in order that an events policy could be drawn up for North Walls as a basis for:

- a) consistent treatment of events;
- b) minimising the negative impacts of events, and
- c) maximising enjoyment of events by both local resident and participants.

1.3 As a result of staffing changes and shortages in the sports and recreation service, detailed analysis of the survey findings has not been possible until now. However, the findings have already helped to inform officer decisions about events bookings during 2008 and there were no complaints from the public during the summer season.

1.4 Officers have now completed analysis of the survey, the full results of which are available at [www.winchester.gov.uk/documents/sports/riverpark/nwconsultationresults.pdf](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/documents/sports/riverpark/nwconsultationresults.pdf) The results form the basis of a new events policy for North Walls, attached at Appendix 1 for Member comment and endorsement.

1.5 This report summarises the key actions to be taken in support of the new policy, and also considers the impact of the events programme in terms of costs to the City Council which are currently not recovered from event organisers.

## 2 Methodology

- 2.1 1821 households in a 680 metre radius of North Walls Recreation Ground were surveyed, the radius being based on the locations of the three complaints received by the City Council in summer 2007.
- 2.2 Each household was given the opportunity to complete a detailed questionnaire which sought both positive and negative feedback on a range of issues relating to events at North Walls Recreation Ground. The data gathered included feedback on event enjoyment and concerns regarding traffic, car parking, noise, light pollution, anti social behaviour, litter and scheduling (days of week, time and the gap between events).
- 2.3 The survey, which was issued in the form of an on-line questionnaire, was also available by phone or in person through the customer service centre. It took place in November/December 2007 and generated a response rate of 4.4%, equating to 81 completed questionnaires. Whilst this is not a scientifically accurate sample, it provided a useful indicator of local feeling.

## 3 Main Findings of the Survey

- 3.1 A summary of the main findings are as follows:

### 3.1.1 Enjoyment

- a) the events that were enjoyed most were the bonfire (95%); Race for Life (67%); 10K Run (63%), and rugby tournament (63%);
- b) the events (or hirings) that were least enjoyed were the Hat Fair camp site (54%); fun fair (31%), and circus (27%);
- c) 69% were not aware of the motor show which last took place in the late 90s.

### 3.1.2 Main Concerns

- a) 55% of respondents had no concerns with any of the events;
- b) 25% of respondents had slight concerns with regard to the circus, bonfire and fun fair;
- c) issues causing most concern to residents (ie 20% and over) were:
  - traffic or car parking: Race for Life (24%/24%); 10K Race (28%/26%); bonfire (16%/20%); rugby tournament (23/33%); motor show (23/22%).
  - anti social behaviour: Hat Fair camp site (20%)
  - litter: Hat Fair camp site (24%).

### 3.1.3 Scheduling

The following concerns regarding scheduling of events were an issue:

- a) 20% of respondents were keen not to have the circus, fun fair or bonfire on Sundays;
- b) 18% were supportive of not having events at North Walls on Mondays;

- c) 65% supported the idea of limiting the duration of events as follows. Preferred limits were five days for the circus, the Hat Fair camp site and the fun fair, and two days for the motor show.

#### 4 Other Issues

- 4.1 *Noise*: outside the consultation, a complaint was received in 2007 about noise from public address systems. Officers have responded to this by including guidelines on reducing noise through correct setting up and management of PAs in the terms and conditions issued to each hirer with the booking agreement.
- 4.2 *Bridges*: following a structural engineers' assessment of the white bridge at North Walls Recreation Ground in May 2008 a weight restriction has been imposed for the bridge. This effectively prevents the fun fair and circus vehicles from accessing the area known as 'Devil's Island'. Therefore these events will not be able to be future programmes until such time as there is funding available to strengthen the bridge. As these two events were among the three least enjoyed by local residents, such work is not considered a priority at the current time.

#### 5 Conclusions

- 5.1 A comprehensive set of notes for event organisers was compiled by a cross-departmental team of officers two years ago, known as the special events group. These are supplied as part of a pack for organisers (and will soon be available on the web) to provide professional advice on the planning and safe management of a special event.
- 5.2 Despite some concern prompted by a small number of complaints received during 2007, officers do not believe that the issues identified by the survey are of major significance. They have, however, prompted officers to:
- a) review and amend the terms and conditions issued to event organisers hiring North Walls Recreation Ground, and
  - b) produce a draft special events policy for North Walls to ensure a consistent approach to bookings in the future.
- 5.3 Moreover, officers will continue to work closely with Hat Fair to address and manage litter and anti social behaviour concerns associated with the campsite. They will also work proactively with organisers of the Race for Life, 10K Run, motor show and rugby tournament to minimise the disruption of these events caused by traffic and car parking.
- 5.4 Members are therefore asked to consider the draft policy attached at Appendix 1 and, subject to final amendments being made by officers in consultation with the Chair of Town Forum, to endorse it.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

### 6 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 The programme of events at North Walls supports the Safe and Strong Communities priority of the Corporate Strategy by promoting health and wellbeing, and by promoting an inclusive society. It also contributes to the Economic Prosperity priority by generating expenditure at shops, eateries and visitor accommodation in the District.

### 7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 Whilst special events at North Walls are generally managed by external organisations, there is often a cost to the Council arising from the management or reinstatement of the recreation ground. The amounts are not generally large, and some are collected by means of an event deposit. However, where events are organised on behalf of the local community (eg the bonfire celebrations) or in aid of charity (eg the 10k Run) there is a long-standing assumption that these costs should be met by the Council as part of its in-kind contribution to community life.
- 7.2 The table at Appendix 2 below shows the cost of some of the regular events to the Council (excluding officer time), and the actual charge made to the event organiser. Events which are organised in aid of charity have not traditionally been charged for the hire of the recreation ground. A returnable deposit is required from hirers of the recreation ground (2008/09: £624 + VAT) to cover any reinstatement required to the grounds and/or damage to Council property. It should be noted that in the case of the bonfire night event, the deposit is likely to cover only about one third of the actual costs of reinstatement.
- 7.3 Most of the sums that are not recovered are relatively small and can be accommodated by the grounds maintenance or waste management budgets.
- 7.4 Members are asked to indicate whether the continued subsidy of events in this way is acceptable to the Town Forum, or whether they would prefer to see:
- a) all the 'real' costs of event management passed on to organisers, and
  - b) any financial assistance provided through the Council's formal grants process.
- 7.5 Members are also asked to consider whether, should the subsidy be acceptable in general terms, the North Walls charging arrangements should reflect the criteria of other community grants, ie:

"Activities subject to an application for a grant must be for the benefit of residents in the Winchester District. Ideally organisations / groups should also be based in the Winchester District."

It could, be argued that all events at North Walls are by their nature designed for participation by local residents. The draft policy makes reference to this subsidy at paragraph 5.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

- a) Full analysis of questionnaire results  
<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/documents/sports/riverpark/nwconsultationresults.pdf>
- b) Standard terms and conditions for hiring North Walls Recreation Ground, available from the sports and recreation service.
- c) Special events procedure: guidance notes for event management, available from the sports and recreation service.

#### APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – North Walls Recreation Ground Special Events Policy (Draft)

Appendix 2 – Event Costs to Winchester City Council

## **Appendix 1: North Walls Recreation Ground Special Events Policy (Draft)**

### **Special Events Policy (Draft)**

#### **North Walls Recreation Ground, Winchester**

This policy sets out a number of principles to be taken into consideration by officers when assessing an application for the hire of North Walls Recreation Ground as a venue for a special event.

It is not designed to reproduce the responsibilities of the event organiser in relation to such a hiring, which are detailed in the comprehensive North Walls Hire Terms and Conditions. However, these Terms and Conditions may be varied in order to ensure that an event meets the requirements of this policy document.

Practical advice for event organisers throughout the Winchester District can be found in the published Special Events Guidance Notes at

<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/documents/sports/riverpark/nwconsultationresults.pdf>

A) Events at North Walls will:

- 1 whenever possible, be separated by a minimum two week period;
- 2 be limited to a maximum of five consecutive days, other than the Hat Fair camp site;
- 3 be allowed only where the traffic generated does not exceed the recommended weight restrictions for the bridges;

B) Event organisers at North Walls will:

- 4 demonstrate in writing (eg through the event management plan) how they will minimize negative impacts on local residents, including those arising specifically from:
  - i. litter
  - ii. anti social behaviour
  - iii. disruption through increased traffic and event parking
  - iv. noise from public address systems
- 5 meet all costs – other than officer time – incurred by the City Council in setting up, managing or reinstating the grounds. Events raising money for local charities or organized by not-for-profit groups principally as a community celebration are exempt from reinstatement charges.

*Approved November 2008*



**Appendix 2: Event Costs to Winchester City Council**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Charges to hirer</b>	<b>Unrecovered cost to WCC</b>
<b>Race for Life</b>	a) Set up/ take down £120  b) Rubbish collection £75  c) Road closure £130	None	a) Set up/take down £120  b) Rubbish collection £75  c) Road closure £130  <b>Total: £325</b>
<b>10K Race</b>	a) Set up/ take down £120	None	Set up/take down £120  <b>Total: £120</b>
<b>Bonfire</b>	a) Reinstatement estimate £2000  b) Rubbish collection £50  c) Road closures £600	Deposit retained by WCC: £624 net	a) Reinstatement (not covered by deposit) £1376  b) Rubbish collection £50  c) Road closures £600  <b>Total: £2,026</b>
<b>Hat Fair Campsite</b>	Rubbish collection £55	None	Rubbish collection £55  <b>Total: £55</b>