

Meeting: Policy Development and Decision Group (Joint Operations Team)

Date: 18 January 2017

Wards Affected: St Marychurch Ward

Report Title: King George V Memorial Playing Field – Fields in Trust

Is the decision a key decision? No

When does the decision need to be implemented? n/a

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1. Proposal and Introduction

- 1.1 A Notice of Motion asking the Mayor to instruct officers to investigate the logistics and process to undertake a Deed of Dedication with the Fields in Trust to protect the King George V Playing Fields, Watcombe was presented to Full Council on 27 October 2016. The full motion is set out below:

“This Council notes the following extract taken from Torquay Council minutes and extracts from the local press of the time - from 1936-7. At that time land was purchased with funds from the Department of Health amounting to £19,000. At the time that the King George V (KGV) Foundation was set up, the Council decided to set aside 2 of the purchased acres specifically as part of the memorial.

Extract from Council meeting 6 October 1936:

6. Subject to Minute no 2580 (King George Memorial Fund Playing Fields, Watcombe) being amended to read as follows:-

NATIONAL TORQUAY MEMORIAL TO HIS LATE
MAJESTY KING GEORGE V
PROVISION OF PLAYING FIELDS AT WATCOMBE

The Mayor stated that out of the sum subscribed locally to the National Memorial to His Late Majesty King George V Fund, an amount of £500 is available for a Torquay National Memorial which he desired should take the form of Playing Fields for young children as

well as for organised games. His Worship, therefore, suggested the setting aside of the two fields adjoining Easterfield Lane, numbered 162 and 163 on the Ordnance Map (consisting of about 12 ½ acres and forming part of the land at Watcombe now being acquired by the Corporation) in addition to the erection of a pair of ornamental iron gates at the entrance to such playing fields as per design now submitted.

Resolved – (1) That the proposal of the Mayor be adopted and that the two fields in question be allocated and dedicated for ever as playing fields for young children and organised games, as a Torquay National Memorial to his late Majesty King George V., it being understood that the sum above referred to will be expended in purchasing and erecting the gates and in laying out the grounds as playing fields.

(2) That the design of the gates is approved.

Research has also found newspaper articles, with pictures, covering the dedication of the gates at the entrance to the KGV memorial playing fields, plus the tree planting.

The article goes on to mention that £660 was raised from residents of Torquay, £100 of which was sent to the Mansion House in London so that Torquay might contribute towards the National Memorial in London.

Extract from Torquay Times, Friday, 8 October 1937

“Col. Ward then handed over a cheque for the amount to Mr Johns. The Town Clerk in exchange, gave Col. Ward a receipt and undertaking containing the terms under which the Corporation accept the donation”.

The Mayoress then formally unveiled the tablet. The Mayor’s Chaplain followed with the dedication. The party then entered the playing fields for other formal ceremonies. Mrs Ward and Mrs E Field (Vice-Chairman of the Parks Committee) each planted a fir tree.

This Council notes that these memorial fields were never registered as such with the national body.

This motion asks the Mayor to instruct officers to investigate the logistics and process to undertake a Deed of Dedication with the Fields in Trust to protect the King George V Playing Fields from development which will achieve the same level of protection as if they had originally been registered in 1936. That upon investigation the findings be reported to Council on 8 December 2016.”

- 1.2 The Mayor referred the matter to the Policy Development and Decision Group (Joint Operations Team) for consideration with public consultation (to include Torbay Sports Council and Torquay Golf Club).
- 1.3 The Notice of Motion set out that in 1936 land was purchased adjoining Easterfield Lane with funds from the Department of Health amounting to £19,000. At the time the King George V (KGV) Foundation was set up, the Council decided to set aside two of the purchased acres specifically as part of the Torquay National Memorial to his late Majesty King George V. It was the intention the land was to be adopted and that the two fields in question be allocated and dedicated for ever as playing fields for young children and organised games.

- 1.4 The land in question is not currently protected by the Fields in Trust charity and was therefore never properly “allocated and dedicated for ever as playing fields for young children and organised games”.
- 1.5 The Notice of Motion asked the Mayor to instruct officers to investigate the logistics and process to undertake a Deed of Dedication with the Fields in Trust to protect the King George V Playing Fields from development which would achieve the same level of protection as if they had originally been registered in 1936.

2. Reason for Proposal

- 2.1 On 25 February 2016 the Council approved the Corporate Asset Management Plan for 2015 ~ 2019. The Corporate Asset Management Plan sets out a number of ‘Asset Management Principles’ that ensures the Council will manage its assets strategically, look to continuously maintain and improve assets, release value and minimise cost and provide accurate data for informed decision making.
- 2.2 The Corporate Asset Management Plan is explicit and states that due to the current financial challenges facing the Council that unless there is specific approval at Full Council to the contrary, the Council will not restrict or reduce the current or future value of its assets through the use of contractual restrictions, covenants or peppercorn rents.
- 2.3 Placing a Deed of Dedication on King George V Playing Fields, Watcombe with Fields in Trust would therefore be contrary to the Council’s Policy Framework. i.e. the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2015 ~ 2019.
- 2.4 It is important that the Council retains an asset base that, as far as possible, is unfettered and unencumbered, so that more choices are available with maximum flexibility preserved. It is highly unlikely that the decision made by the Council in 1936/37 would have been made today, especially in light of the Council’s existing asset management policy and its ongoing budgetary pressures.

3. Recommendation / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the Council should not, at this time, pursue a Deed of Dedication with the Fields in Trust to protect the King George V Playing Fields from development as it would be contrary to existing Council policy (namely the Corporate Asset Management Plan) by restricting and/or reducing the current or future value of the asset.

Appendices

None

Background Documents

Corporate Asset Management Plan 2015 – 2019.