

PARISH COUNCIL of DENMEAD



The Old School, School Lane, Denmead,
Waterlooville, Hampshire, PO7 6LU

Tel: (023) 9224 7947 Fax: (023) 9224 7943

Date: 13 February 2018

Your ref:
Our ref:

Dear Resident

A number of residents have expressed concerns regarding the fence at Heath Field. The Parish Council acknowledges these but would like to explain some facts that have been omitted from the information being shared currently.

The Parish Council has a statutory duty to ensure that assets are used or disposed of.

About 18 months ago, it was brought to our attention that the field was under used and, on investigation, found that the gate was being locked by the Memorial Hall which restricted access. In addition, there was a sign on the front of the Memorial Hall advising that the field and car park were for use of hall hirers only.

The Parish Office wrote to the Memorial Hall asking that the sign be removed and that the gate be left open.

The sign remained in place and was only removed a couple of months ago, similarly with the padlock on the gate.

The Neighbourhood Plan did indeed consider the site, including the Memorial Hall, in exchange for a new hall on Kidmere. This was one site along with many others around Denmead. I can advise you that the Neighbourhood Plan will begin to be revised in the near future, alongside Winchester's Local Plan part 1. This is a regulatory duty and we will be set new numbers for further housing within Denmead. Not a happy prospect we know, but a centrally set Government figure that all authorities share. Once again, we will have to go through a rigorous process and consider all available land.

The Heath Field working party was set up to consider all potential uses for the field, some options have been to use it for sports facilities, a burial ground, a community orchard, and yes, disposal and building either affordable or retirement homes. There is no preferred option despite the rumours. The working party exists in order to provide a report to Council. All Council meetings are held in Public with agendas published on our website and also posted on notice boards in the centre of the village on the Friday before the meeting on a Wednesday. Minutes of meetings are also posted on our website. At each meeting there is a Public session for members of the Parish to speak should they wish to do so. In addition, the Parish Clerk is most diligent in ensuring that replies are given to letters, although we appreciate that often letters are referred to the appropriate committee for discussion (again in Public) and a decision on a response.

Mr Tony Daniells, Clerk to the Council

website: www.denmeadparishcouncil.co.uk
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The Parish Council made the decision to remove the deteriorating fence to ensure that the area is available and easily accessible to people that wish to use it.

Following representations about the possibility of youngsters running into the car park from the field, the Parish Council reconsidered and decided to replace the fence with a knee rail.

Questions were raised about dog fouling in a Public session at a council meeting. The discussion that ensued included the issue of dogs in Ashling Park (where no dogs are supposed to go but frequently do) and also that cats can't be excluded, neither can foxes so there is, in fact, little difference. In any case, there is nothing the Council can legally do to enforce 'No Dogs Allowed' signs.

We are, of course, aware that the Memorial Hall is hired out to a Pre-School which operates on a commercial basis.

The situation is that the Parish Council incurs expense in maintaining the area whilst few residents benefit from it, although the commercial business does.

In addition to this, there is a commercial business that operates another pre-school and the Parish Council charges for use of the facilities so there is an inequity currently.

The Parish Council has agreed that the pre-school could erect temporary fencing to ensure a safe play area for the children, and this was initially welcomed by the business. This is also what the business that operates from The Pavilion does.

The area is not a designated play area, there is no play equipment there currently, and therefore the Parish Council has no requirement to undertake a risk assessment. This has also been made clear at a Council meeting where the issue was raised.

In terms of viability of the hall, for over 40 years the hall did not have the use of a car park or field. It was only when the land was purchased to build new Parish Council offices (which never came to fruition) that the facilities existed.

So, in summary, the fence is being removed to encourage use of the field. The pre-school already agreed that a temporary fence was a solution that they were agreeable to. As it stands currently, the facility is underused, and as explained previously, Financial Regulations state that if it isn't used, we must dispose of it. We have been surprised by the number of people that live directly in the vicinity who thought they were not allowed to use it so anticipate that, with it being opened up, the use will now increase.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Paula Langford-Smith
Chairman, Denmead Parish Council

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