

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
OFFICER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL- THE PADDOCKS

Date: 24 September 2026

Purpose of Report

To consider the future management and permitted use of The Paddocks following correspondence received from the original developer and transferor of the land, and to determine an appropriate framework for considering future requests for community use whilst ensuring compliance with the Section 106 Agreement and transfer covenants.

Background

Members will recall that complaints were received in July 2026 regarding an event held at The Paddocks. Concerns related primarily to the use of amplified music, a BBQ and inflatable equipment on Council-owned land.

Signage was erected advising that fires, BBQs, amplified music and bouncy castles are not permitted without prior approval from Chigwell Parish Council.

After the installation of the signage, correspondence was received from the original developer and transferor of the land, who provided further information regarding the intended use of The Paddocks and the provisions contained within the original transfer documentation.

Land Transfer and Section 106 Requirements

The Paddocks was transferred to Chigwell Parish Council in 2019 as part of a residential development, together with a maintenance contribution of £50,000.

Members' attention is drawn to Schedule 2 of the transfer documentation, which states:

"The Parish Council shall neither use nor permit to be used the Public Open Space other than as an amenity area for the use of the public without the prior written consent of the transferor or its successor in title."

The transferor has advised that discussions with the former Parish Clerk regarding reduced grass-cutting and tree planting were intended to enhance biodiversity, support wildlife and reduce long-term maintenance costs. It is their view that these measures were not intended to redesignate the land as a nature reserve or restrict its use as a public amenity area.

Current Position

The Council currently manages The Paddocks using a reduced grass-cutting regime and biodiversity measures intended to support wildlife and environmental objectives.

However, the recent correspondence raises the question of whether the description of the site as a "nature habitat" on Council signage accurately reflects the land's legal designation.

Based on the transfer documentation available, officers consider there is a distinction between:

- The legal use of the land as a public amenity area; and
- The Council's chosen management approach, which seeks to encourage biodiversity and wildlife.

These two objectives are not necessarily incompatible. A public amenity space may be managed in an environmentally sensitive manner whilst remaining available for public enjoyment.

Nevertheless, members may wish to review whether the current signage accurately reflects the legal status and intended use of the land.

Community Use Applications

The transferor has requested that future gatherings and community activities be considered through the Council's Community Use Application process rather than being prohibited outright.

Officers consider that a formal application process would provide an appropriate and transparent mechanism for assessing requests whilst enabling the Council to retain control over activities taking place on its land.

When considering applications, the Council may wish to have regard to:

- Community benefit and local engagement.
- Health and safety considerations.
- Public liability insurance requirements.
- Environmental and biodiversity impacts.
- Noise levels and proximity to residential properties.
- Duration, frequency and timing of events.
- Potential nuisance to neighbouring residents.
- Compliance with any conditions contained within the transfer documentation.

Members should note that while the recent event was reportedly left clean and free from litter, at least one complaint was received regarding amplified music and the management of the site.

Risks

Legal Risk

There is a potential risk that future decisions could conflict with the transfer covenant if activities are permitted that extend beyond the use of the land as a public amenity area.

The Council should therefore ensure that any permissions granted are consistent with the provisions of the transfer and Section 106 Agreement. If there is any uncertainty regarding interpretation, legal advice should be sought before establishing a long-term policy position.

Reputational Risk

An outright prohibition on community use may be perceived as inconsistent with the intended purpose of the land as a public amenity area. Conversely, permitting activities without appropriate controls may result in complaints from neighbouring residents.

Environmental Risk

Increased use of the site may impact biodiversity and habitat enhancements if activities are not appropriately managed.

Residential Amenity Risk

Events involving amplified music, BBQs or large gatherings have the potential to generate noise and disturbance for nearby residents.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Any future events requiring Council resources, maintenance works or additional supervision would be considered separately through the Community Use Application process.

Officer Comment

Officers consider that The Paddocks should continue to be managed as a public amenity area in accordance with the transfer documentation, whilst also supporting biodiversity and environmental enhancement wherever practicable.

The current issue is not whether community use should be permitted, but rather how such use should be appropriately managed.

A Community Use Application process would allow requests to be assessed consistently, transparently and on their individual merits, whilst enabling the Council to impose any reasonable conditions necessary to protect residents, safeguard the environment and comply with its legal obligations.

Recommendation

Council is requested to:

1. Note the contents of the developer's correspondence.
2. Confirm that The Paddocks shall continue to be managed as a public amenity area in accordance with the transfer documentation and Section 106 obligations.
3. Agree that requests for organised activities and community gatherings at The Paddocks may be submitted through the Council's Community Use Application process.
4. Confirm that the submission of an application does not imply approval and that each request shall be determined on its individual merits.
5. Require all applications to demonstrate compliance with any conditions imposed by the Council.
6. Review the wording of the existing signage to ensure it accurately reflects the legal status of the land and permitted activities- a sticker can be added rather than order new sign.

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