

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY 10th July 2018

ITEM NO: 10 – COPYTHORNE PLAYGROUND

The Seventh 3 Monthly progress report from Friends of Copythorne Playground:

Purpose:

This paper sets out a summary of work carried out by the Friends of Copythorne Playground Group since our sixth progress report was delivered to the Parish Council Tuesday 10th April 2018.

The Previous Work Programme and Consultation

Friends of Copythorne Playground noted in our last report that there was some doubt as to whether the advice we had received that VAT was recoverable upon the purchase of the playground was correct. The final ruling from HMRC was that VAT could not be recovered. With this in mind our fundraising effort was continued and the final total raised was £55,999.99. Through negotiation with our preferred bidder Creative Play we were able to reduce the cost of our preferred design without compromising the quality. This discount together with the additional funds raised over and above our £50,000 target enabled us to install exactly the playground we had hoped for and pay the VAT.

Progress During Sixth Reporting Period 11 April 2018 to 10 July 2018

Once it became clear at the beginning of February that sufficient funds were available, FOCP started a bidding process with playground equipment suppliers. We decided to go for a two stage procurement process to facilitate a more rigorous final assessment. Five companies submitted their proposals at stage 1. These were scored and two companies Playdale and Creative Play were shortlisted. Stage 2 of the process was based upon a final design, competitive pricing and best contractual terms. At the Parish Council meeting 10 April it was decided to approve Friends of Copythorne Playground's proposal to contract Creative Play to build the Playground. Our order was confirmed on 12 April and a 30% deposit of £16452.72 was paid 25 April. Whilst works were effectively completed by the target date of 01 June, the installation was then subject to independent inspection on 06 June, and the minor issues identified by the inspector had to be dealt with. The Completion Certificate was issued on 20 June and children started enjoying this new facility on that date. The £23,000 grant from NFDC was received 02 July and a further 60% (£32,905.44) was paid to Creative Play the following day. FOCP will pay the final 10% (£5484.24) on 02 August subject to any faults being discovered by that date. FOCP's projected surplus on this project will amount to £295. An inspection of FOCP's accounts will show that our expenses are zero. All costs incurred were met by members of the committee and every penny that was donated was spent on the playground with the exception of the £295 which FOCP still hold.

During the build process in May, the nearest resident to the playground, Mrs Boyce, started making comments on Facebook to the effect that she was unhappy that children standing on the towers of the playground would be able to look into her garden. Mrs Boyce was invited to attend the FOCP committee meeting on 31 May in order to explain her objections but she declined. She wrote instead to Julian Lewis who passed on her concerns to Councillor Derek Tipp. FOCP responded to the points made and attended the Parish Council meeting on 12 June in case the matter was raised at that meeting. Mrs Boyce has since written to the Parish Council and a reply was sent stating that the Council was happy that the relevant regulatory and design requirements have been met. FOCP firmly believe that they have acted correctly at every stage

and can provide an audit trail of all actions. FOCP are also convinced the Mrs Boyce has no reasonable grounds for complaint. However, at the request of the Chair of the Parish Hall Trustees wishing to find an amiable solution to a neighbour's problem, FOCP has approached Creative Play to see if the towers could be modified in any way so as to obscure the view from the towers in the direction of her property. Creative Play have responded that such a modification would not be feasible.

The official opening event for the playground was held on Sunday 01 July. The event was sponsored by Le Chateau at no cost to FOCP. A speech was jointly given by the founders of FOCP Holly Green and Laurie Gibbs and the ribbon was cut by a collection of local children. There was a bouncy castle, face painting, barbeque, ice creams, cuddly toys, live music, refreshments and cakes to enjoy as well as the new playground. It was attended by approx. 150 including District and Parish Councillors. The event was publicised in advance on both local radio and the press and reports of the event including photos will also be published, raising the profile of the parish in a favourable context.

FOCP are continuing to work with Creative Play in order to resolve a few minor items on the "snagging list". All items will be resolved under warranty and FOCP continues to hold 10% of the cost of the playground against their resolution.

The next 3 months

Friends of Copythorne Playground expect to transfer ownership of the completed playground to Copythorne Parish Council in accordance with resolutions passed 25 October 2016 and 12 June 2018.

Risk Register

- It is for the Parish Council to form a final view on the issue raised by Mrs. Boyce as to whether it remains a dispute. The most recent communications via the Parish Hall Committee Chairman (available to the Parish Council as of 03 July 2018), states that the options for possible 'goodwill' changes to the playground tower design are not feasible in terms of design or costs. In addition, the responses from all other contacted parties – The Parish Council itself, the local MP Julian Lewis and District Councillor Derek Tipp have all indicated that the playground meets fully all regulatory requirements and any other concerns have already been taken into account. Therefore, the letter from the Chairman of the Parish Hall Committee states that as far as all are concerned, the matter is now closed. For this reason, FOCP do not believe there is any dispute and that the Parish Council can now proceed with the handover of the playground under the Deed of Assignment. This view is subject to the deliberations and decision making of the Parish Council and if a contrary view is taken the handover of the playground will be delayed.

FOCP – July 2018

