

21st March 2010.

Friends of Moneyhole response to the WHBC report:

SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 MARCH 2010
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FINANCE AND OPERATIONS
MONEY HOLE LANE CAR PARK: REQUEST FOR AUTOMATIC SECURITY
BARRIER

(Report to be presented and discussed at the SOSC meeting on March 25th).

Summary:

The Friends of Moneyhole (FoM) group is disappointed with the content and tenor of this report. This is a missed opportunity to solve the ASB suffered over 13 years.

The narrow report objectives of costs and operational implications failed to:

- explore the validity of the ASB allegations made by victims,
- give a balanced view on the security barrier proposal,
- suggest a superior alternative solution.
- state which technical authorities were consulted in order to arrive at these conclusions.

No victim was consulted. Despite repeated offers of expertise in the field of Health & Safety and the security barrier, the FoM group was not asked for input.

The report spent more effort on unrelated issues and to discredit the good intentions of FoM volunteers.

The FoM volunteers are group of civic minded Panshanger residents, who want to make an important local, but neglected, recreational park safer and cleaner for the whole community. The FoM save the Council and Finesse a great deal of money by:

- collecting litter, including dog mess left by inconsiderate owners, daily;
- working tirelessly to enhance the community spirit around the park;
- project managing and working to maintain a nature trail for park users;
- acting as ears and eyes to notify the authorities of vandalism, broken glass, trip hazards, fallen trees, fly tipping, ASB etc.

Most of the work is carried out quietly without any fanfare. Neither recognition nor support was forthcoming.

It is iniquitous, that the Council and Finesse are now undermining the FoM volunteers' effort to help the community in this biased report.

The report released by WHBC has been reviewed by members of the FoM group, several inaccuracies are glaringly obvious. Many of these are technical in nature, but some of the facts presented within it appear to be wrong. May we ask what technical authority was consulted in the production of this report?

The purpose of this response is to properly inform the committee members in advance of the meeting of the key points surrounding this proposal. Reading the

report as is, the reader could be very easily misled into forming the conclusion that the barrier proposal is an unworkable and costly solution that should be dismissed. We feel that a review of the full [accurate](#) facts presents the proposal in a far more positive light. Readers are reminded that barriers of the same type are currently operational in the town centre, across from Dominos Pizza, and at the new high security data warehouse on Mundells. The University of Hertfordshire also has rising kerbs barriers.

A point by point response follows using the original reports nomenclature:

2.1 The Friends Group have obtained a quote from APT to install a kerb-type barrier for £12,000 - £14,000 with a maintenance contract £500 - £900 per annum. This is subject to a site survey and does not include the commissioning of an electricity supply which could be an additional £3,000 - £8,000. Plus ongoing electricity charges. This type of barrier could not be funded from the Community Chest budget as there are ongoing revenue implications.

R.2.1

There is today an electrical supply cabinet located at the entrance to the park exactly where the barrier would be installed. This cabinet is currently supplying the power for the car park lighting. It has space within it to accommodate an electrical spur for the barrier.



A photo showing the cabinet on the right.

The new cable run would be in the order of six feet long. These facts were confirmed when a member of Herts Highways Lighting team was on site recently. How the report comes to the conclusion that this eight foot of cabling would cost £3000 - £8000 is baffling. If this is deemed a good value quote then something is clearly amiss with procurement. Is there a quote for this huge sum, and if so who produced it?

2.2 The use of sleeping policemen / road humps would prevent the car park from being used as a race track but would not prevent cars being on site at night. The humps would cost approximately £1,000 each to install with very little maintenance required.

R2.2

Sleeping Policemen actually generate noise (ask anyone who has traffic calming outside their property). This defeats the object of the exercise. Also youngsters on scooters and motorcycles would be attracted to the car park to use the humps as launching points for wheelies. The number of anti-social cases caused by two wheeled youngsters would most likely rise, as would the noise and nuisance they cause.

Car raves, revving engines, loud music, drug use, fly tipping, and other anti-social behaviour would continue.

Points 2.3 – 2.7:

2.3 To excavate out roots, make good and resurface the car park has been estimated at £23,989.

2.4 To excavate out roots and shrub beds, make good, form new central path and resurface car park has been estimated at £46,382

2.5 To excavate out roots and shrub beds, make good, resurface car park with barriers around lamp posts has been estimated at £55,000 2.6 White-lining would cost an additional £750 per day

2.7 No budget has been designated in 2010-11 for either capital or revenue funding associated with any of these options.

R. 2.3-2.7

The barrier proposal did not ask for any of this, why is it even included?

However it raises a good point. The spend on KGV is about 10 times more than on Moneyhole. Moneyhole is also a local amenity but it appears to be run on a shoestring compared to KGV. Had there been a reasonable level of investment in maintaining the car park over the years the big numbers above would not exist. Questions about the lack of funding at Moneyhole are not new, but a coherent answer has still never been given. Our councillors have made statements about it, but they were never acted upon.

How would spending on points 2.3 -2.7 park solve any of the ASB issues? We think the amount is also excessive, and not the best use of such a significant sum.

3.1 Introduce temporary (maximum 3 months) CCTV cameras to monitor issues in the car park.

R.3.1

What will this achieve? We already have proven records of ASB at the park (as FoM were asked to provide), we know ASB is a regular occurrence. Putting in cameras just provides another three months (plus installation lead time and data analysis time, so probably another three months) in which to do nothing. Proving further what residents already know, this seems to be nothing more than an exercise in buying time.

To be effective, activity has to be monitored in real time and police respond whilst the culprits are still on site. The lack of lighting is also a major issue.

Why the report not make this a permanent CCTV like KGV to keep other ASB in check? Moneyhole would benefit greatly because it is surrounded by trees which conceal offenders. CCTV might also deter drug dealing and feral gangs.

4

4.2 On 14 October 2009 the Friends of Money Hole Lane circulated an email to indicate a "wish-list" of things they wanted the Council or Finesse to include within the budgets for Money Hole Lane from 2011-12 and beyond.

This was their ranking:

1 all weather/3G tennis and multi-purpose courts enclosed with flood lights (like KGV)

2 public toilet facilities (opened during park hours)

=3 bowls

=3 dog agility area

=4 picnic area

=4 adult fitness area

=4 more car parking, better access road for emergency vehicles

=5 Splashland facility

=5 security gate for Wyton Park entrance

R.4.2

What has the Wish List of desirable features got to do with this petition to reduce car related ASB?

The wish list was part of FoM's 3rd and long term aim of being inclusive. Discussion will continue take place as a separate strand.

4.3 It is interesting to note that the issue of an automatic barrier did not feature prominently on the list.

R.4.3

The automatic barrier was excluded as a desirable future feature because it is the petition's proposal, which is a separate and urgent issue.

What is interesting about it? Are you alluding to some sort of collusion or conspiracy by FoM based on dishonesty? The report seems quite confrontational and biased when statements like this appear. Not what is expected of a report authored by a civil servant.

4.4 In terms of the future development of Moneyhole Lane, it was emphasised to the representatives of the Friends Group at the meeting that the above list was unrealistic, especially in the current economic climate and the Friends Group were offered the opportunity to work with Finesse in order to develop a realistic and achievable Management Plan for the future of Moneyhole Lane. That offer has been made to the Friends Group on several subsequent occasions but to date it remains an opportunity that they do not seem willing to take.

R.4.4

Again statements like this are inappropriate and have no bearing on the objective of the petition or this report.

The fact is that Finesse failed to attend FoM meetings for six months, despite being invited. In the last couple of weeks a small meeting was held with them to discuss the Green Flag status application and how FoM can become involved in that process. It is misleading to suggest FoM is not keen to engage with the Finesse, they know full well the door is always open to them.

Since February 2009, at Andy Carr's instigation, the FoM has submitted five wish lists, after much consideration, but Finesse never responded.

4.5 In respect of the **alleged** problems with car related antisocial behaviour we were concerned to learn at the meeting that the Police had no record of any such incidents other than one call they received in August 2009.

We explained to the Friends Group that it was important to work closely with the Police regarding such matters and we explained how, by working together, the KGV Friends Group and the local Police have virtually eliminated similar problems at KGV Playing Fields. The Friends Group suggested that local residents weren't reporting such matters to the Police because they felt that nothing would be done about it - and also because they found it difficult to quickly find the correct telephone number to call when such activities were happening. As a result, Finesse prepared a large number of individual information cards that local residents could easily use in future. The card contains the number to call and the questions to ask when speaking to the Police, including getting a reported crime reference number. These cards were subsequently distributed to local residents by the Friends Group.

R.4.5

Again statements like this are inappropriate and have no bearing on the objective of the petition or this report.

As for the **alleged** car problems, please read the Barrier Minutes of 06 March and the FoM Incident Log for a more balanced view. Both are available on FoM website.

FoM consistently asked for more police involvement including organising a police focus meeting in December and attending police surgeries. Our quest remains to get greater proactive policing to reactive. However a 24/7 open park is hard to police.

KGV has 5 CCTVs, unrestricted views from nearby properties, working street lamps and a PSCO who works closely with the Friends group.

The individual card was proposed when Cllr Trigg, Cllr Bennett, Carol Rigby, Mike Barlow and Andy Carr all failed to recall the 0845 non emergency number when asked at the 16 Nov meeting. FoM supplied the instructions distilled from the A4 sheet of police instructions. FoM also added Moneyhole post code to assist the police call takers.

4.7

- a) How the barrier would be powered and who would pay for this?
- b) Who would be responsible for maintaining the barrier and the associated costs?
- c) How would the emergency services access the site when the barrier was in the raised position?

R.4.7

- a) See R.2.1 above. The unit would only use more than quiescent power when rising/falling. Usually that would be twice in 24 hours for about 40 seconds in total. It requires a 240v single phase supply and draws around 10 amps of current. **The cost of running it should be a very small fraction of the cost of lighting the car park.**
- b) **APT can provide annual maintenance from £500, or maintenance can be bundled in with the maintenance of the councils other parking equipment, currently outsourced to a contractor called Zeac.** The parking office in WGC claimed this would not a problem when they were asked.
- c) **Emergency Services always carry access keys for all car entry barriers, this would be no different.** It is the same as the other car parks the council manages such as Campus East, or Osborne way. This is accepted practice all across the country. Note also: If the power to the barrier fails the step will automatically lower.

4.8

Please note the best cover only ensures a call out time of less than 8 hours. Therefore as the maintenance contract does not provide 24 hour cover, we would need to identify a way to overcome this problem. The quote is to provide an automatic rising kerb barrier with a swipe card entry which would not be appropriate for this site. A timer to lower and raise the kerb at pre set times would be more suitable, with a pressure pad which would lower the kerb to allow cars to leave the car park at any time.

R.4.8

Call out time: If there is a problem with the step it can be lowered through an override by anybody with a cabinet key. An eight hour response is not needed as no loss of revenue would occur. If the step does its job and blocks a car from entering (a collision), the repair fee would be chargeable through the drivers insurance, just as it is for any damage to street furniture caused by dangerous driving.

Swipe Card:

The quote obtained includes both an swipe card access and programmable daily raise/lower timer.

6 Risk Assessment

6.1 Any barrier would need to be carefully positioned to avoid it becoming a hazard to other users of the site; consideration must be given to wheelchair users, visitors with pushchairs and cyclists.

R.6

This would be achieved by use of the existing pavement, cyclists could also ride through between the barrier and kerb side.

6.2 The barrier would also need to allow access for emergency vehicles.

See R.4.7 (c) above.

7 Explanation

7.2 The Chairman of the Panshanger Youth Football Club, which is based at Money Hole Lane and uses the pavilion and football pitches on a regular basis, is not aware of the issues reported by the Friends Group. However, as long as the club have access to the site until 10pm every day they would not object to the installation of a barrier, although he thought it was not the most effective use of Council funds.

R7.2

The PFC Chairman does not live next to Moneyhole park. It is unsurprising that he is unaware of the issues endured by the residents. What is surprising is that the PFC Chairman was consulted when the adjacent residents **were not**.

At 08 Aug 09 Park Safety meeting chaired by Cllr Bennett, PFC Vice Chair, Club Secretary, PFC Committee Members, PFC Managers and PFC Fund Raisers attended and discussed this very issue. After discussion, they suggested 9.30 pm was acceptable for the barrier to be raised. The minutes written, by Cllr Lotz, secretary, are available on the FoM website. The attendance register is also available on request.

Photos of recent car tracks on the football pitches were sent to PFC with the ASB Log.

His support for the barrier is welcome. The PFC Chairman's comment on the effective use of Council funds is irrelevant, as is any comment on the Council's exorbitant spend of £93k on the PFC Pavilion roof, of which no Panshanger resident outside of the football club could benefit. We welcome enhanced cooperation with the football club, and recognise it as a great facility for local young people.

7.3 The Council's Corporate Property team report that the rising kerb type barrier is more robust than most but can still be subject to vandalism and with careful use of the pressure pads from inside the car park it may allow vehicles to enter.

R7.3

Virtually no car parks use pressure pads in the UK, this is misleading. No amount of pressure on or around the barrier will cause it to lower. Car park

management systems use electronic inductive loops to detect the presence of a large metallic objects i.e. cars. If properly installed it takes at least a small car to trigger a lowering of the barrier.

7.7 Until early 2009 Moneyhole playing fields was a popular place for young people to gather on Friday evenings in large groups of which some were drinking, and causing a nuisance on leaving at about 2200-2300.

R7.7

Again the statement is irrelevant to the petition and report.

What is relevant are the number of cars abandoned, torched and car related ASB in Moneyhole over the years that the police been told. The car park still bears the scars of the last burned car. See minutes of Barrier Petition 06 March.

PC Edmondson had visited at least one resident at Russett House in recent years about the years of torment she suffered from car related ASB. She also visited Grant Shapps on the same ASBs on 20 November 09.

7.8 Action: Since the introduction of the Policing Pledge (to respond to what local people thought mattered most), Moneyhole has been one of the three priorities for Panshanger ward.

R7.8

The statement is misleading as the police withdrew this priority on 28 February 10. This was raised at December police focus group meeting.

The rest of the statement is again irrelevant to the petition and report.

7.9 Community Information Day was conducted in September 2009 with a positive reaction from nearby residents adjoining the park stating that antisocial behaviour has gone down, recognition of local officers was good and residents liked the way the area was policed.

R7.9

How is this relevant to the barrier petition?

Can the police provide evidence of the actual number of people consulted?

See FoM log created since November 2009.

7.10 Residents described problems with calling 0845 3300222. The Constabulary's control room managers contacted Mr Choo. A notice was posted in the playing fields to identify officers and promote the non emergency number. A local resident who finds it hard to hear was given a text number. Calls to the police are rare, usually about speed of cars or cars in the area making noise. A traffic survey was conducted in the area with no speeding cars at the times stated by residents. Reports from residents give no details. Officers do attend but vehicles have always gone. Vehicles have been stopped and searched in the area, words of advice given but no offences evident.

R7.10

This is a police credibility issue. We have written to the police about this process and what the issues are. The reluctance to recognise there is a problem and to take on board feedback and suggestions mean that non emergency calls could still be low.

0845 cost at least 98p + VAT, from a mobile, is a deterrent to repeat calls if no police attends or culprits are apprehended. Police attendance is an aspiration.

The one incidence of control room contact was to explain why a call failed to get through due to the volume of calls.

Again a security barrier will eliminate the need for car related ASB calls and the police would not waste their valuable time which could best be deployed elsewhere.

We find Chief Inspector Denis O'Connor's recent remarks on Police attitude towards ASB and the public confidence refreshingly candid and believe they reflect the experience of our local community.

Please read link. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8560720.stm>

7.11 The Friends Group have also requested that we look at removing the shrub beds and resurfacing the car park to increase the number of parking places, please see 2.3 – 2.6 for estimated costs.

R7.11

Again this is not relevant to the barrier petition and report.

This is also misleading. The original request came from Karen Blease (now ex PFC), who consistently requested for more car parking. Andy Carr made the proposal to remove the scrubs for 20 car extra parking spaces. He sought and obtained a vote at the FoM on 01 May 09. Minutes are available on FoM and Finesse websites.

Most local residents walk to the park. PFC members mainly drive. The FoM group current view is that this is a low priority relative to the park security and cleanliness.

The car park resurfacing does not deter ASB.

Removal of the shrub beds, however, will be essential to the effectiveness of the CCTVs when installed.

Conclusion:

This report should have been a golden opportunity to resolve the long standing car related ASB problems by adopting a barrier solution.

If this suggestion is not the most appropriate, then WHBC should consider other options, including closing the park at night.

In operating a 24/7 open park without any sensible security measures to protect nocturnal users and nearby residents, WHBC and Finesse do not seem to be taking the right of residents to have peaceful uninterrupted sleep seriously. The approach of burying heads in sand could be described as naïve or even negligent.

Undermining FoM volunteers and disparaging victims of ASB is not an honourable strategy that inspires confidence.

Finally, this response has shown that the councils own report is lacking in several key areas, especially in the technical realm. Therefore to proceed and make a decision based upon it, with no modification, does a disservice to local residents, and only serves to compound the feeling of exclusion and despair felt by residents in dealing with matters of anti-social behaviour.

The audit commission's December 2009 rating of merely 'adequate' in this area, and their telling statements **"There are low levels of satisfaction among residents...Residents also feel they cannot influence council decisions"** (Organisational Assessment Summary, 2009, p.2) seems to continue to hold true.

WHBC should be acting as a partner and facilitator in all this, and not be adopting such a confrontational tone, as can be seen in this supposedly professional and impartial report.

Lastly it is hoped the members SOSC committee will consider all the points made in the foregoing, and come to their own individual conclusions as to the best way to solve this problem, and act accordingly as fair minded representatives.

FRIENDS OF MONEYHOLE
21st MARCH 2010