

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 17TH SEPTEMBER 2003

“NO BALL GAMES/NO GOLF” SIGNS

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek clarification of the Committee’s policy on the installation and maintenance of “No Ball Games/No Golf” signs in parks and open spaces.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Community Services Committee considered the use of “No Ball Games” signs, amongst other issues, as part of a report on Misuse of Parks and Open Spaces, on 4th April 2001.
- 2.2 As part of the above report, the Committee noted that “No Ball Games” signs have no legal standing and cannot be enforced by either the police or Council officials. Furthermore, these signs are expensive to erect and are frequently vandalised; continued expenditure on these signs offers questionable value for money.
- 2.3 It was further noted that “the Council has no staff to supervise or monitor the use of parks and open spaces particularly during evenings and weekends when problems generally tend to occur”. This places a heavy reliance on the police to attend any reported incidents of misuse of parks and open spaces. Their involvement in complaints of this sort must be prioritised alongside the many other issues police officers are required to deal with.
- 2.4 The report also outlined the legal and statutory powers available to the police in dealing with misuse of parks and open spaces.
- 2.5 The legal position and the level of resources available to address these issues have not changed since April 2001, however there are still requests being received for the installation of “No Ball Games/No Golf” signs and clarification of the Committee’s policy regarding this issue is requested.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 There is no doubt that there is a perception in some communities that “No Ball Games/No Golf” signs would help to address a local problem and several Councillors have requested the installation of these signs.

- 3.2 There are several factors that the Committee should take into account when determining how the Council should respond to this type of request:-
- i) The signs have no legal standing;
 - ii) There are limited resources available to monitor use of parks and open spaces and respond to complaints;
 - iii) Signs can cost between £150 and £300 to purchase and install;
 - iv) Once installed, there is an expectation that the signs would be replaced if they were to be vandalised;
 - v) There is no specific budget available for signage;
 - vi) Installation of signs can cause disputes within communities between those who wish to see areas used for ball games and those that do not. This has placed Council staff in a difficult position when signs have been installed in the past.
- 3.3 Problems with ball games and golf tend to be seasonal and sometimes only arise for short periods. In addition, some residents' views of a particular issue will change over time, for instance, as children grow older and their interests change. For example it may be acceptable to some residents for young children to play football on grassed areas but not for teenagers, the provision of "No Ball Games" signs does not discriminate between ages, abilities or the type of game involved.
- 3.4 Any decisions on how the Committee should respond to install "No Ball Games/No Golf" signs in areas within its remit must be considered against the background of the factors described above, and it is important to ensure that a consistent approach is taken.
- 3.5 Since April 2001, the general response to such requests has been to explain the legal and financial situation and turn them down in most cases. Should the Committee wish to amend this approach, financial resources would need to be allocated to the provision of signs, in the absence of additional funding this would require a reduction in another aspect of the Outdoor Amenities Service.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is estimated that to respond to requests to install "No Ball Games/No Golf" signs and publicise their usage would cost in the region of £10,000 to £15,000 per annum. These funds cannot be found without reducing the level of service available in another area of Outdoor Amenities work i.e. Cemeteries, Children's Play, Amenity Grass Cutting or Planting etc.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Nil

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 In view of the issues raised in this report the Council should not erect "No Ball Games/No Golf" signs on areas managed by the Community Services Department.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) agree to refuse all future requests for the erection or replacement of "No Ball Games/No Golf" signs;
- ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/JAG/KH

18th August 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Report to Community Services Committee dated 4th April 2001 on Misuse of Parks and Open Spaces.

Anyone wishing to inspect the background papers should contact John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services on 01563 576264.

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