

DEPUTATION ONE – FRIENDS OF ALLERTON PLAYING FIELDS

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MS C BRITTON: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, good afternoon. I am Charlotte Britton, Chair of Friends Allerton Grange Fields and I would like to introduce Depinder Dev, who is the Secretary.

The Friends of Allerton Grange Fields were established in 2009 and are a voluntary association made up of residents and local stakeholders. With our partners we work to protect, enhance and maintain the Allerton Grange playing fields as a public recreation ground. These fields are located just off Lidgett Lane, on the boundary of Roundhay and Moortown wards.

The reason we are so passionate about the fields is because we believe this green open space will benefit the local community, especially children and young people, in a number of ways, such as making stronger communities and improving physical and mental health.

Today in this deputation we are seeking the following outcomes:

To ensure the continued protection, maintenance and public access to Allerton Grange Playing Fields in accordance with original planning permission so that local people can continue to enjoy the fields.

Also, to seek support and guidance from officers and local Councillors for progressing the community's aspirations through the proposed environmental improvements to the fields.

Let me give you some background. Back in November 2010 we stood before you making our first deputation. Our vision and drive have not waivered and we remain committed.

In 2005, during the BSF Allerton Grange School planning application discussions, local Councillors and residents were informed at public meetings that the Allerton Grange Fields, (which were surplus to Allerton Grange School requirements) would to be transferred to Leisure Services and made available for public use.

In 2011, the Department of Children's Services explored the potential for a new primary school on these fields and a series of public consultations were held. This proposal for a new primary school has now been withdrawn due to sustained objections from local residents, Highways and the Planning Authority relating to traffic, highway access and loss of playing fields.

The Department of Children's Services has subsequently asked neighbouring Moor Allerton Hall Primary School if they would want to take on ownership of the fields. After consideration, the Governors have unanimously decided not to take on ownership of the land through a Full Governing Body resolution this July.

We are now back to the position where the Department of Children's Services are set to declare the fields surplus to education requirements. The Friends of Allerton Grange Fields would like to ensure that Leeds City Council fulfils its original obligation to transfer the fields to Parks & Countryside so that the fields can be adequately maintained for community use.

At present the fields are maintained on an *ad-hoc* basis. Local residents have to go through a very frustrating process of making individual requests each time the grass needs cutting.

This process can take many weeks to arrange and often means that local children cannot use the fields for sport or play. Indeed we cancelled our 'Celebration on the Fields' which we had planned on 7th July to celebrate the Olympics, because the grass was too long.

Following our last deputation in November 2010, the Friends have also explored the potential for a Community Asset Transfer of the fields with senior officers in Asset Management. However following advice from Voluntary Action Leeds and other third sector organisations, we have been unable to build a sustainable business plan as the playing fields do not generate sufficient income to cover annual maintenance costs.

Therefore, to deliver this community vision, we the Friends of Allerton Grange Fields propose a formal partnership with Leeds City Council is established to ensure that the fields continue to be protected, maintained and enhanced as a recreation space. The Friends are already committed to working in partnership with Leeds City Council through 'sweat equity' of its volunteers on community litter picks and bulb planting.

By way of policy background, the Leeds Open Space Sport and Recreation Assessment Report provides the evidence base for the Leeds Local Development Plan. This report recognises that there is a 19 hectare deficiency in playing field provision in the Inner Leeds North East area.

Allerton Grange Fields could become a lasting sports legacy of the London 2012 Olympics and help fulfil the vision of the people of Leeds to make it the best city in the UK and a child friendly city.

As our elected councillors, you have this once in a lifetime opportunity to safeguard the Allerton Grange Playing Fields for present and future generations.

We would also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank our Roundhay and Moor Town ward councillors who have supported us all the way. Thank you for your time. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon. *(Applause)*