

# Community Meeting

## 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Princess Gwennlian Centre – 7.00pm

### Present

Councillors		Police
J. Gilasbey (Chair)	J. Lewis	PCSO Sion Moore
S. John	D. Lloyd-Waterford	PCSO Phil Davies
T. Burns	L. Poynting	
K. Davies	M. Thomas	
A. Jenkins		39 Members of the Public
No representatives from the county council were present		

### Mayor's Welcome

The mayor Councillor Jeanette Gilasbey welcomed the police and members of the public and thanked them for attending. She stated that the purpose of the meeting was to establish a definitive location on which to site the park benches.

### Background Information Relating to the Removal of the Benches

Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) has ownership of Parc Stephens held in trust and is responsible for maintenance. However, no representative from CCC was in attendance. County Councillor Keith Davies was therefore asked to explain how the problem had arisen.

As part of the "Safe Routes Scheme" various sites in Kidwelly had been targeted for enhancement and alteration to make safer and easier access routes through the town. Parc Stephens was included in this scheme. While conducting a site visit, Matthew Howells, CCC officer in charge of the schedule of works, had been approached by residents regarding the location of the benches. He was informed of the anti-social behaviour (ASB) exhibited by youths, gathering around the benches which was causing distress to the householders of Park View Drive, who requested the benches be removed. Matthew Howells contacted CCC parks officer who had the benches removed in November 2014. No consultation took place with the county councillor, town council or other groups of residents.

Lack of seating in the park meant that no one was able to sit and enjoy the park and less able members of the public had no place to rest while making their way into the town from the Morfa Maen area of Kidwelly.

A site visit to consider the problem was held in the park on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015, retiring to the Rugby Club for further discussion due to inclement weather. It was decided that the benches would not be replaced in their original position, but would be relocated by CCC. CCC then laid concrete plinths in new positions ready for the installation of the benches. Many residents were dissatisfied with the sites chosen for the benches and a petition of 200 names was sent to the council. The town council convened this meeting in an attempt to resolve the problem.

### **Police Position**

The police had been made aware of ASB in the park. Two incidents had been reported to the police who had attended on both occasions to find that the youths had already left the area. On a further occasion they had been called out to find youths loitering, but they were not inebriated and moved on without trouble when asked to leave the area. Police have instigated patrols to monitor the situation, with special attention paid to Friday nights and weekends.

The police stressed that every incident of ASB should be reported immediately so that they can be present to deal with it. Residents were urged to call 999 or 101 depending on the urgency of the disturbance. Attendance at PACT meeting was also encouraged. A resident stated that he had reported several incidents of ASB, in person, to officers at the police station.

The police had attended the site meetings and had recommended that the benches be placed in open areas where they could easily be monitored. The original locations were somewhat secluded and encouraged clandestine congregations of young people who could not be seen from the road or car park.

All sides agreed that ASB was a general problem, not specific to the park. It was recognised that everyone needs to work together to overcome its negative effects on the community

### **Present Position**

The benches have been taken from their original locations. There are no benches in the park.

Plinths have been prepared for the re-location sites.

### **Options for Future Location**

#### **Option 1 – the original position**

Viewpoint A - Locating the benches in their original position or anywhere along the path behind Park View Drive would merely allow the ASB to continue. Those present were informed of the serious nature of the ASB and criminal damage which has caused considerable distress for over 20 years.

Viewpoint B – The original position was convenient for the less able as it was a half way point between the town and Morfa Maen. It was in a sheltered location.

## **Option 2 – the present position of the plinths**

Viewpoint A – The police have recommended this location as it enables the benches to be easily observed, discouraging youths from ASB. It is also a half way point for those who need to take a rest.

Viewpoint B - One bench is facing railings which interrupt the view over the field. The other, in the centre of the park, is considered to be too exposed to the weather.

## **Option 3 – a new location**

A totally new location acceptable to everyone may be possible. If a third option is found, Mr Tonge has volunteered to create a new plinth for the benches if CCC has signed over the park to the Kidwelly Park Sporting Association (KPSA) before a decision is made.

It was suggested that a consultation exercise be carried out whereby a plan of the park be created and residents could place pins in their favoured locations.

## **Decision**

It became evident that no decision could be reached.

Mr Nigel Gower proposed that

“A steering group be set up to find a solution acceptable to the majority. It would comprise 2 members of KPSA, 2 town councillors, 2 representatives from Park View Drive and 2 representatives from Morfa Maen.”

This was seconded by Ms Kath Woodsworth.

A vote was taken: For – 32      Against – 0      Abstain – 1

The meeting ended at 8.45pm