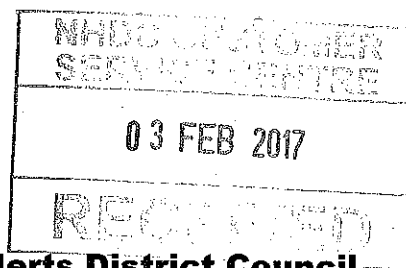


2nd February 2016



For the attention of David Miley, North Herts District Council

We respectfully request that the Green Space Management Strategy is called in for the following reasons;

We believe that the 29 people recruited to the focus group falls far short of the number of people that make a meaningful consultation and that a much larger group should have been consulted regarding these proposals. The wider public consultation also straddled the Christmas period which may have negatively affected the number of responses to it.

That the consultation by ORS was not transparent in the fact that no details relating to the exact make up of those 29 people recruited to the focus group was furnished to the Overview and Scrutiny committee. This makes it difficult to consider and evaluate whether their views represented the groups that use the facilities in question. Although it is understood that ORS recruited a "relatively proportional representation of different demographic and socio-economic groups" and that "focus group members were selected based on their geography" "and were asked about their occupation, qualifications, age, gender, ethnicity and whether they had children" the lack of exact information provided about those groups makes it unclear as to whether the representatives of the focus group were from a cohort that were from an age group, or had characteristics, that would be more likely or less likely to choose certain options. This may have skewed the results of the questionnaire. In this case we are convinced the council did NOT *"consider how to tailor consultation to the needs and preferences of particular groups, such as older people, younger people or people with disabilities that may not respond to traditional consultation methods"* (www.gov.uk). It appears children were not asked to participate in this consultation and this was potentially discriminatory.

The focus group "were against the removal of equipment from play areas" yet the report disregarded their views and recommends the


removal of play equipment in the named sites. Royston and Hitchin Area Committees also raised the same concern about removing equipment from play areas. The council take notice of decisions made by bodies such as the independent remuneration panel yet it seems that the comments made by this focus group and two area committees have been overlooked in relation to removal of playground equipment.


Focus group "participants considered it difficult to give a fully informed opinion because of a lack of detailed site by site information". It is also apparent that the local plan was not considered in the strategy nor was the information relating to the local plan and the increase in residents to the area put before the focus group or the wider public. *"Consultations should be informative" and "give enough information to ensure that those consulted understand the issues and can give informed responses"* (www.gov.uk)


The Brook View play area in Hitchin was not included in the final strategy as it generated a lot of email correspondence and online petitions fighting to keep it in its current format. Councillors have not been furnished with information to evaluate whether any other play areas or green spaces received any level of email correspondence, letters or petitions and whether they should also have NOT been included in the final strategy.

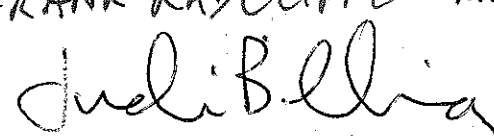
The council has not proposed or appeared to have considered using some of the proposed financial savings to encourage community groups to take on the running of pavilions or play areas.


Signed

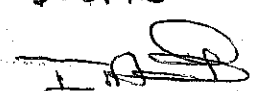

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