

## **APPENDIX 6**

# **Whitfield Parish Council Request for Further Dog Control Measures at Whitfield Recreation Ground**

**Re: Request for amendment to Public Space Protection Order for Whitfield Recreation and Sports Grounds**

There is a specific ongoing problem with Dog Mess and Uncontrolled Dogs on Whitfield Recreation Ground which would be significantly reduced by a PSPO requiring dogs to be kept on a lead in all open areas of the Recreation Ground, in addition to the existing PSPO exclusion of dogs in the Children's Play Areas and MUGA, in which Dog fouling frequently found in spite of the ban on dogs.

At the January 2021 meeting, the Parish Council considered all options including (i) doing nothing and (ii) asking for a total ban on dogs, but the majority voted for a request for the PSPO to be amended to include dogs to be kept on leads. This was considered to be the most practical and fairest way of accommodating the needs of both dogs and owners, and the needs of all the other users of the Rec (One Councillor voting for a total ban).

**Whitfield Parish Council therefore request that the new PSPO includes a requirement for dogs to be kept on leads in all open areas of the Recreation Ground, with the total ban on dogs being continued in the fenced Children's Play Areas and MUGA Games Court.**

If such an order is approved, the Parish Council has obtained a quotation and approved expenditure for a 100 metre x 15 metre fenced area to be installed on the Recreation Ground where dog owners can let their pets safely run off the lead, as we recognise the need for such areas to be available for dogs and their owners.

The Parish Council is not anti dog, but complaints on dog mess and dogs chasing and frightening young children playing on the Recreation Grounds are common. We have tried all other avenues to address this problem, running various campaigns through articles in the Parish Newsletter. We tried Chalk Paint marking in collaboration with your Andrzej Kluczynski but, unfortunately, with only short-lived success. The Recreation Ground has many dog bins and we do provide free bags from dispensers.

Professional dog walkers and many others come from River, St Margaret's and elsewhere to exercise dogs as there are various bans and restrictions on dogs at their own Parish Facilities

The Environmental Protection Act, other Legislation and Government Guidance places a duty on Local Authorities to keep these public areas clear of dog faeces and for Recreation areas and Sport Pitches to be kept in a safe and clean state so everyone can use them without health hazards caused by dog mess or the safety issues caused by uncontrolled dogs chasing them, the legal definition is that *"any dog is dangerously out of control if it injures a person, or if it behaves in a way that makes a person worried that it might injure them"*, as in the case of a child being harassed by an 'over friendly' dog.

Dogs on the Recreation Ground should not be at the detriment of the rest of the people of Whitfield not being able to use their recreational facilities because of the amount of dog mess and being constantly worried and chased by free-roaming dogs. This activity is just not compatible with the local community's amenity and quality of life. Most owners are responsible, but once off the lead, dogs are generally not sufficiently obedient for their owners to control or stop them harassing people, chasing children, or straying into the play areas to foul or 'cock their legs' against the many picnic tables and benches. Few owners walk from one end of the Recreation Ground to the other to

pick up mess, even if they see it has occurred. Dogs being kept on leads would halt all this behaviour, while still allowing moderate exercise and socialising opportunity on the Recreation Ground.

DDC's own definition is that "*Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) specify areas where activities take place which are or may likely be detrimental to the local community's quality of life. The orders impose restrictions on how people may use specified areas*".

There are various formal and informal groups who use the Recreation Grounds for Dance Aerobics, Keep Fit, Weightlifting Club and our Adult Gym equipment is not fenced. The participants and users are often subjected to the unwelcome attentions of roaming dogs and the problems of unpicked dog mess.

A major concern is that the Recreation Ground is regularly used by Whitfield Juniors Football Club for all their home games. The Parish Council considers that the health, welfare and wellbeing of the dozens of children who play in the various teams outweigh that of the local dog population being unrestricted while using the Recreation Ground. Without going into the health issues, we are all well aware that mess picked up by the owner is of no hazard, but dog faeces not picked up develops into a hazard and stays in the soil for up to 2 years. During wet weather, any faeces is quickly broken down into the soil leaving this hazard in the ground. In addition to health considerations dog fouling is particularly unsightly, unpleasant, smelly and anti-social. Not only does it look nasty and smell nasty, but it also causes a nasty mess if you step in it, cycle through it, push a wheelchair through it, drive a mobility scooter through it or even worse ... if you fall in it.

Other adult football teams used to use the Recreation Ground, but stopped using it due to the amount of dog mess.

The Parish Council have recently built a storage facility for the Whitfield Juniors and are have refurbished the home and away dressing rooms to bring them up to current FA specification and to attract other users for the pitches. If the dog problem continues, there is a chance that the Juniors will not be able to use the pitches. We have complaints about them having to poo-pick before matches and training sessions and of dogs running onto the pitches during matches.



**Proposed amendments to current PSPO for Enclosed Children's Play Areas and MUGA, Whitfield Recreation Ground off Cranleigh Drive, Whitfield**