

**REPORT TO:** Safer Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 19 January 2016

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Community & Resources

**SUBJECT:** Petition Concerning anti-social behaviour at Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Royal Avenue

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To make the Board aware of a petition that was submitted by a resident of Royal Avenue, Widnes on 3 November 2015. The petition states that

*'The Halton Council-run football pitch on the junction of Royal Avenue and Derwent Road Widnes, has been the centre of Anti-Social Behaviour at night. Therefore the petition is to ask Halton Council to take responsibility by installing security gates, and to lock the football pitch each night as it does the parks. This will help deter ASB, and help to secure peace and security to our neighbourhood'.*

Fifty people have signed the petition.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) The petition be considered.
- 2) The MUGA should not be locked for the following reasons:
  - It is there to provide some space for young people to socialise.
  - The council does not have the resources to lock the MUGA.
  - The practicalities of locking and unlocking the MUGA can't be easily managed. Also it is not designed to be locked.
  - We have had no reports of ASB in recent months.
  - Locking would prevent use for young people who want to use them for the purposes they were put up.

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Council owned MUGA at Royal Avenue was installed in February 2003. It is managed and maintained by the Open Space Service. Its purpose is to provide informal sporting opportunities for young people. Staff report that the MUGA is well used and does not appear to be subject to vandalism.

- 3.2 Some of the Council's formal parks and two of its cemeteries are locked at night but MUGAs are not. They are designed to be accessible and don't have gates. Locking of parks and cemeteries is carried out by a security contractor and incurs a significant cost. The Open Space Service does not have the means to pay for the installation of gates and the ongoing locking of the facility.
- 3.3 Widnes Vikings have run community training events at the MUGA in 2015.
- 3.4 There have been no reports of ASB throughout the month of December in the area of the MUGA and for a distance of 200 metres around it. The last report relating to the MUGA was on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015. In the period prior to July 2015 there were enhanced police patrols in the area, additional CCTV cameras installed (At Queens Avenue and at a nearby Youth Centre) and community meetings. The area is currently not an ASB Priority Area. Should it become so the Community Safety team would work with local residents to resolve the matter.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 No policy implications.

#### 5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There would be financial implications if it was agreed that the site should be locked at night.

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

If the MUGA were to be locked at night young people would not have access to it and they would be displaced to other areas.

##### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

No implications.

##### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

If the site were to be locked at night opportunities for healthy exercise would be denied to potential users.

##### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Locking the facility may well displace young people to other areas which would not be as safe as the MUGA.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

No implications.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF  
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.