

Background

Wem Town Council Amenities and Services Committee first considered the condition of the railings on Wem Recreation Ground adjacent to Aston Street in 2021. This was following concerns raised by the Groundsman and Town Clerk. Details of resolutions made on this issue since June 2021 are outlined below

15.6.21 Amenities and Services Committee Agenda item

Recreation Ground railings - to discuss condition of and consider options for replacement/restoration.

A site inspection of the railings took place prior to the meeting where Councillors were able to see the erosion at the base of the railings. Councillors were made aware of the age of the railings and the need to ascertain whether restoration was a viable option. One quote was presented for a restoration report on the railings.

Resolved:-

- **That the committee agree to suspend standing orders to allow only one quote to be considered due to the specialist nature of the works.**
- **To commission a report from Stokes of England as per their quote to evaluate the condition of the railings and whether restoration is a viable option along with estimated costs of work. To allocate £600 from the Recreation Maintenance and Repair Budget for this purpose.**

21.9.21 Amenities and Services Committee Agenda item

Recreation Ground railings - to discuss condition report and recommendations within.

Resolved:- that as per the recommendations in the report to

- **Seek quotes for portable sand blasting of the railings.**
- **Arrange for the removal of the laurel bushes along the length of the railings over the winter period.**

14.12.21 Amenities and Services Committee Agenda item

Recreation Ground railings - to discuss quotes received.

A discussion took place on the condition of the railings and the potential restoration costs which would not be known until the railings were cleaned. Concern was expressed over the unknown repair costs. A suggestion was made that the railings could be removed then restored at a later date and re-erected at another location in the town e.g. back of Jubilee Square.

Resolved:- to recommend that due to the specialist nature of this work, the Clerk is instructed to seek a quote from Stokes of England for the following works

- To write a specification for cleaning the railings as per the recommendations in their report and to seek quotes from 3 companies for sandblasting based on the specification drafted.

The Clerk is given delegated authority in consultation with the Committee Chairman and Mayor to place an order to outsource the process of obtaining quotes for this work to Stokes of England up to a maximum of £1500.

£10,000 proposed to be included in budget for replacement railings

3.3.22 Amenities and Services Committee Agenda item

Railings refurbishment/replacement - to discuss.

The Clerk explained that the companies approached to quote for cleaning had expressed the view that it would not be practical to sandblast the railings in-situ due to their location and proximity to the public footpath. Concerns were expressed about what condition the railings would be in after removal and cleaning and the potential cost of refurbishment works. Councillors also discussed the heritage value of the railings verses the safety implications of the spiked railings which a ROSPA trainer had recommended be replaced due to the spiked tops and the differing ground levels. Following a discussion, it was

Resolved:- to recommend to Council that

- The railings at the front of Wem Recreation Ground are replaced with new railings but that the original WH Smith Posts are retained.
- Once removed, the original railings are retained so that they may be restored at a later date and reused in a more suitable location in the town should one be identified.
- The Clerk is instructed to seek quotes for replacement railings which will be considered at a future committee meeting.

21.6.22 Amenities and Services Committee Agenda item

Railings replacement - to agree design and consider quotes received.

It was reported that only 1 quote¹ had been received which is more than budgeted funds.

Resolved:- that the item is deferred to next meeting so that the Clerk can seek more quotes and councillors can consider which type of decorative top (if any) they would consider on the railings.

13.12.22 Amenities and Services Committee

Matter not considered again as no feedback from Councillors on design and Clerk not progressed matter due to workload. However, £10,000 was proposed to add to budget 2023-24 for replacement costs which was agreed

¹ Approx £20,000

14.3.23 Amenities and Services Committee Agenda item*Fencing – to discuss*

A discussion took place and Cllr Towers suggested that the Committee consider the use of some redundant railings adjacent to Fir Tree Lane. The Clerk explained that there was a height difference between these railings and the recreation ground railings and that ownership of the railings was unclear.

Resolved:- that

- **Cllr Towers seek to identify who owns of the railings alongside Fir Tree Lane.**
- **A site meeting will take place with Cllr Broomall, Cllr Towers and the Groundsman, to consider the suitability of relocating the Fir Tree Lane railings to the Recreation Ground.**
- **Advice will be sought by Cllr Towers on whether the Fir Tree Lane railings could be modified by a contractor so that they match the height of the existing railings.**
- **The Clerk will discuss the matter with the Town Council's insurance.**

No update on ownership details regarding the Fir Tree Lane Railings

Progress Since March 2023

Cllr Towers suggested a new contractor who would be willing to quote for onsite restoration work. Following an initial meeting with him the Groundsman agreed to clear the soil from the base of railings and a second meeting was held to assess the condition of the railings. The works undertaken by the Groundsman uncovered that the erosion was more extensive than previously thought as the main upright sections of the fence are eroded. Therefore, what was initially proposed as a repair would not work due to the weight involved. The quote for the repair is included in the meeting pack

In August 2023 following the kiosk working party Cllrs Hoffmann, Meakin, Drummond and Barker viewed the railings. All present were of the opinion that the railings need replaced with the original WH Smith Gateposts being retained.

An indicative quote has been received which is slightly more than is currently in the budget and reserves.

Cllr Hoffmann has proposed the erection of a commemorative arch that could be used to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II (sketch attached).

Decision required

- Whether to replace the railings and if so prior to the Clerk seeking quotes to provide guidance on the style for the top of the railings.
- Whether to progress the option of a decorative arch.