

Southend-on-Sea City Council

Report of Executive Director for Neighbourhood and
Environment Services

To

Cabinet

On

12th January 2023

Report prepared by: Paul Rabbitts, Head of Parks & Open
Spaces

Agenda
Item No.

Southchurch Park Lake

Relevant Scrutiny Committee - Place
Cabinet Member: Councillor Carole Mulroney
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To agree to replace small sections of the shin rail around the eastern section of the lake in Southchurch Park based on an agreed risk assessment.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the replacement of small sections of shin rail, with appropriate signage introduced, as identified from a risk assessment of areas of higher risk eg duck feeding station and end of path junctions on the eastern section.
- 2.2 To note the western section of the lake does not have a shin rail and is used by the local model boating club.

3. Background

- 3.1 Southchurch Park is a popular park within Thorpe Ward and visited by many residents from the surrounding area. It has several facilities including a café, play facilities, sports facilities, car park, ornamental areas as well as a large lake. The lake is central to the whole park and was once used for rowing boats but is today primarily a haven for birds and wildlife with the western section used by a model boat society.
- 3.2 The lake is typical of an urban park lake with formal edges, and an average depth at the perimeter of 600mm (the deepest is 900mm and the shallowest is 150mm). Paths circumvent the lake, with none immediately adjacent to it. The eastern and western sections are divided by a pedestrian footbridge which has a concrete barrier underneath it.

- 3.3 The lake's eastern section has had a timber shin rail around it for many years which over time, has deteriorated to such an extent that temporary fixes were no longer suitable. It has been removed.



- 3.4 Several discussions were held with parks' officers and colleagues in relation to the need for replacing the complete rail around the lake. This was based on a number of considerations and included the following:-

- No other lake in Southend has a rail or fence around it and this includes Friars, Priory and Shoebury Parks. They are all open.
- Most urban park lakes across the country no longer have barriers or fencing, including all the Royal Parks (Hyde Park, St James's Park, Regent's Park, Kensington Gardens, in particular) which have 80 million visitors a year and footways adjacent to lake edges. This also includes most of the London parks including Victoria Park or most recently, the Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park. Where they do exist, they are for the purpose of controlling wildfowl, such as Canada Geese eg in Battersea Park in London.
- Officers consulted with colleagues in neighbouring authorities and in particular Cambridge City Council, which has several waterways within the city, and Three Rivers District Council who manage the Aquadrome in Rickmansworth. As is the norm, none of their water bodies are fenced off and these two authorities no longer provide life buoys due to the increased incidence of vandalism.
- Historically, Southchurch Park lake was never fenced when it was used as a boating lake.



- The western section has never been fenced off.
- The presence of a rail can be a magnet for adventurous children to climb onto it, with the risk of falling into the lake increased.
- Longer term serving officers within the parks team have had no recorded incidents of children falling into the lake in the last 5 years.
- The total cost of replacing the rail is estimated to be £25,000.

3.5 It was, therefore, considered that the rail should be wholly removed and a risk assessment carried out to identify where a rail should be erected, leaving the remainder of the lake open. See appendix 3.

4. Other Options

4.1 Three other options exist:-

- Replace the entire eastern section with a new shin rail fence at a cost of approximately £25,000
- Leave the entire eastern section open. This is however, not recommended, based on the attached risk assessment.
- Ward members have indicated they would wish to use £10,000 of CIL money for the lake to be wholly fenced.

The cost of replacing the entire rail is estimated to be £25,000. The cost of replacing small sections based on a risk assessment is estimated to be £7,000. No budget exists for the replacement and would have to be funded by CIL or the capital programme.

It should be noted the following are not eligible for CIL funding -

- Use of the funds to explore feasibility of a scheme for which funds are not yet available;
- Projects that only benefit individuals or companies;

- Projects with on-going revenue implications/maintenance costs for Southend City Council.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The shin rail fence had reached the end of its useful life and research has shown that elsewhere, in similar circumstances, such barriers are no longer deemed essential.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

Pride and Joy - People are proud of living in Southend - the historic buildings and well-designed new developments, open spaces, and the seafront.

Safe and Well - Access to the great outdoors keeps our residents both physically and mentally well. The risk assessed areas as per the risk assessment will be fenced.

6.2 Environmental Impact

- 6.2.1 The quality of the fence affects the overall environmental impact of the park. Where deemed necessary it will be replaced with recycled plastic ensuring longevity. However, parks' would need to cover the cost of maintenance and repairs whenever vandalised or damaged, thus incurring ongoing revenue implications/maintenance costs.

6.3 Financial Implications

- 6.3.1 The cost of replacing small sections based on a risk assessment is estimated to be £7,000. No budget exists for the replacement and would have to be funded by CIL.

6.4 Legal Implications

- 6.4.1 There are no Legal implications associated with this report.

6.5 People Implications

- 6.5.1 There are no People implications associated with this report.

6.6 Property Implications

- 6.6.1 There are no Property implications associated with this report.

6.7 Consultation

6.7.1 No consultation was carried out as this was an operational decision by officers. The Ward Councillors and Portfolio Holder have been kept informed throughout, although there are differences of opinion that have been expressed.

6.8 Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.8.1 There are no Equalities and Diversity implications associated with this report.

6.9 Risk Assessment

6.9.1 A risk assessment was carried out in relation to the proposal to replace only sections of the rail. This is included as appendix A.

6.10 Value for Money

6.10.1 Officers consider that any funding should be targeted at other priorities in the park such as footpath resurfacing and lake maintenance.

6.11 Community Safety Implications

6.11.1 Officers have carried out a risk assessment indicating any community safety implications that exist and mitigation required.

7. Background Papers

7.1 There are no background papers.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment

Appendix 2 – Aerial view of the lake

Appendix 3 – location of proposed rail