

19th June 2018

Policy, Projects and Resources Committee

Centenary Fields

Report of: *Kim Anderson, Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager*

Wards Affected: *All Brentwood Borough Wards*

This report is: *Public report*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** The Centenary Fields programme aims to protect one green space in every local authority area across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to commemorate the centenary of World War 1 (WWI). These protected sites could be war memorial parks or recreation grounds, memorial gardens, parks and recreation grounds that contain war memorials or other valued green spaces. Safeguarding these sites will create a living UK-wide legacy in commemoration of the sacrifice made by those who lost their lives in WWI. Fields in Trust is working in partnership with the Royal British Legion to deliver the programme.
- 1.2.** The report before Members tonight is to agree the site for the proposed Centenary Field in Brentwood.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members agree to support the Centenary Fields Programme and;**
- 2.2 That officers liaise with the Royal British Legion to identify a suitable site in Brentwood in consultation with the Chair of Policy, Projects and Resources Committee.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1.** Fields in Trust have been protecting outdoor space since 1925 to safeguard fields in perpetuity via a legal document called a deed of dedication. Decades of urban development have seen the stock of playing fields reduce substantially and once outdoor recreational spaces are lost to development they are lost for good. Safeguarding sites through the Centenary Fields programme and other Fields in Trust initiatives ensures that more parks, playing fields and other spaces will be available for future generations to enjoy. Previous initiatives have protected

recreational spaces such as King George V Fields and the Queen Elizabeth II Fields protected in celebration 2012 Diamond Jubilee.

- 3.2.** The Centenary Fields programme is also a way of local authorities fulfilling the Armed Forces Community Covenant that the vast majority have signed up to.
- 3.3.** The deadline for applications is 11 November 2018 and all deeds of dedication must be signed by May 2019. Any sites where the deed is not signed by this time will not become Centenary Fields.
- 3.4.** A site could be a war memorial park or recreation ground, memorial garden, park or recreation ground that contains a war memorial or other valued green spaces. If there isn't a war memorial on the site then it must have some significance to WWI, for example it could be playing a key role in the local WWI commemorations.
- 3.5.** Each application will be assessed through a site visit but as a minimum, the following criteria must be met:
 - a) The landowner of the site must complete the application form
 - b) Evidence of ownership, and where relevant freehold interest must be produced;
 - c) The principal use should be outdoor sport, play or recreation. This can include buildings or facilities if the use is ancillary to the outdoor space
 - d) Sites must have public access;
 - e) Sites should be accessible in terms of location and affordability for the local community;
 - f) Sites should have local managers who are responsible for the quality of the facilities, maintenance and development, improving participation and financial and operational sustainability;
 - g) The Landowner must be able to sign the agreed Deed of Dedication within six months of submitting an application;
 - h) The site must have a tangible link to WWI, either existing or planned.
- 3.6.** The WWI memorial can take various forms, for example a monument, remembrance garden, memorial gates or village hall.
- 3.7.** The Centenary Fields programme also links in with other WWI initiatives such as the War Memorials Trust, who fund the repair and restoration of war memorials and Historic England who have an ambitious programme to list the country's significant war memorials.
- 3.8.** It is not necessary for the sites involved in the programme to change their names. The site would acquire Centenary Fields status and receive and display signage associated with this which would ensure there was no requirements for any actual name change.

3.9. The first stage in the process is for the landowner to complete an application form and this will be followed by a site visit, after which the landowner will be told whether the site is accepted as a Centenary Field or not. If the site is accepted the legal process, then starts and sites will be protected in England via a deed of dedication. Fields in Trust will draw up the draft and then the landowner has a chance to make amendments. When all parties are satisfied with the deed it will be signed and then registered with the Land Registry. The site is then able to order a Centenary Fields commemorative plaque and can organise an unveiling event. The plaques will have provision for the name of the site and/or name of the landowner or the geographical location.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1.** If the Council would like to establish a Centenary Field in Brentwood, then it will need to identify the most appropriate site where there is an existing connection or a planned connection.
- 4.2.** There are four existing war memorials across the borough, Middleton Hall Road, Great Warley, Kelvedon Hatch and Herongate but none of these are located within an existing park or open space.
- 4.3.** There is a memorial cross which was originally sited on Courage's Playing Fields near the junction of Shenfield, Hutton and Chelmsford roads. After an act of vandalism, it was repositioned to the south entrance door to St Mary Church.
- 4.4.** There are 10 war graves in London Road Cemetery, 1 in the Roman Catholic Cemetery, 3 in St Mary's Churchyard and 1 at the Warley Hospital Burial Ground.
- 4.5.** Warley Playing Fields could be considered as it is in the vicinity of the Warley Barracks which were used during World War I and could be included in the improvements works for the play area.
- 4.6.** Sites that are already protected as King George V or QEII Fields are not eligible to be put forward for the Centenary Fields programme. The programme aims to increase the amount of playing fields, recreation grounds and parks protected by Fields in Trust. However, to acknowledge the fact that these sites have a link with WWI Fields in Trust will be happy to provide a commemorative plaque in return for the landowner protecting an additional site.
- 4.7.** There are also sites that have existing covenants in place on them which protect them from development such as Courage's Playing Fields and Larkins Playing Fields.

- 4.8.** If the Council were to look at any planned connection, then other sites could be considered, and it is suggested that this is done in consultation with the Royal British Legion. This could include one of the Council's Country Parks or open spaces such as Hutton Country Park, Warley Country Park St Faiths, Hutton Recreation or Bishops Hall Park.
- 4.9.** St Faiths is adjacent to London Road Cemetery which has 10 World War 1 war graves.
- 4.10.** Fields in Trust does accept that on rare occasions change and land use changes accordingly. Parts of sites, or very rarely, whole sites can therefore be disposed of provided the disposal is of clear advantage to, and in the best interests of, the community from a recreational perspective.
- 4.11.** The criteria which Fields in Trust applies to replacement facilities are that they should be of:
- a) At least equal size;
 - b) Better quality;
 - c) Serving the same community in terms of catchment area;
 - d) Additionally, and very importantly, any disposal should apply as much of the proceeds as necessary to replacement sport, recreation and/or play facilities, with priority given to outdoor before indoor facilities
- 4.12.** There is no quota per area, and the programme is not competitive between landowners. Each application will be judged against the criteria on its own merits.
- 4.13.** Examples of schemes that have been adopted in other areas include planting schemes to commemorate the centenary of the war or holding Centenary Field Day events.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 The Centenary Fields programme provides a fitting legacy to those that gave their lives in World War I.

6. References to Council Priorities

The Centenary Fields sits under two main strands of the Vision for Brentwood 2016-19: Environment and Housing Management to provide strong and sustainable leisure facilities for residents and businesses; and Community and Health - to work with community and voluntary organisations to develop the priorities for community development

7. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Interim Chief Finance Officer
(Deputy 151 Officer)

Tel & Email: 01277 312829/Jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

- 7.1 There will be legal associated costs with agreeing the deed, the costs of installing the commemorative plaque which will be provided free of charge by Fields in Trust and the costs of registering restrictions with the Land Registry – currently £80 for up to three titles.
- 7.2 There will also be costs associated with any planting schemes and together with ongoing maintenance costs that will need to be identified if Members wish to support the programme.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Daniel Toohey, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Tel & Email: 01277 312860/daniel.toohey@brentwood.gov.uk

- 7.3 The deed of dedication will likely give rise to limitations on the use for the property in the form of for example a restriction on title, although it is noted that this is in itself probably consistent with the aims of support and participation in the programme. Legal Services are available to provide further advice on the documentation, and consider appropriate amendments if required.

8. Background documents

- 9.1 Fields in Trust.

9. Appendices to the report

- 10.1 None

Report Author Contact Details:

Name: Kim Anderson - Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager

Telephone: 01277 312634

E-mail: kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk