

Shaping a New Future for Knowsley's Parks

Enquiries and Responses

As a local resident near Roby Community Hub I would just like to express my horror at the local councils plans to sell of some of its green spaces to set up a £40m endowment to protect other green spaces future.

While I'm fully aware of the cuts that have been applied by the government on local councils, I would urge you to reconsider such drastic and ultimately irreversible decision making.

I'm sure that more dialogue with the local residents, (rather than how I found out was through a Facebook page) another more suitable outcome could be reached.

I'm living in hope that central government will not be in power much longer and the diabolical squeeze on local authorities will end, whereas once this local parkland has housing on it. That's irreversible.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

As you have highlighted the Council has to make very sensitive and indeed difficult decisions due to the significant and unrelenting cuts that this Government has made our local services. Our budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by these cuts than any other Council in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced to consider a new approach to protecting the future of our parks. I suspect that we are highly unlikely to see any reversal in the Government's public sector fiscal strategy anytime soon.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018: <http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>.

An important feature of the Review Board's recommendations is that an independent Knowsley Parks Trust should be established from April 2019. This Trust would then become the custodian of 144 (90%) of Knowsley's current public parks and green spaces. Under such plans, these areas would be protected forever from any further funding cuts. Furthermore, their upkeep would be funded mainly from the return on

the investment of an endowment fund created through the surrender of the 17 parkland sites identified by the Cabinet for development over the next 15 years. The Council is now looking at whether this way forward is fully viable and the matter will be considered at Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 and again by the Cabinet in November 2018 before any final decisions are made. There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Therefore the public has influenced the identification of parkland for surrender and in applying this feedback the Council has taken an impartial view and selected the 17 sites on the basis of finding the best solution for Knowsley as a borough. Information on this site selection process can be found by accessing the following link:-

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

In respect to your local green space, Roby Playing Fields, I'm sure that you are aware that this parkland has been identified for future housing development. The Council expects a new public green space/play area to be created on this site as part of such a development from the Section 106 funding contributions the developer would be required to make to the Council - a matter that your ward councillors have been keen to explore. Also, you have in close proximity to this site other existing park and green space availability at Jubilee Park, Bowring Park and Cyril Cook Park within a ten minute walk plus a range of other sites such as Court Hey Park, KGV Playing Fields Huyton and McGoldrick Park within a 30 minute walk.

I can assure you that this Council is doing its utmost to end this Government's unwelcome term, so stopping its unjust attack on our local public services. However, in the meantime I must ensure that the Council's budget is balanced from April 2019 and identifying a new way forward for our parks is a very important part of this commitment.

No other options? Seriously? Well here is another. How about making the parks self financing via sponsorship and donations from Friends groups. The current budget is 1.3 million and there are 161 parks. This averages at just over £8000 per park. Prescot Tesco alone donate approximately £30,000 to the community via their bags of help scheme. If steps were taken to make them self financing it would release 1.3 million to use for other things. I would imagine the 1.3 million could be trimmed a little as well?

Mr Moorhead states:

“The review board, which included representatives from town and parish councils, friends of parks groups, the council, businesses and academics, carried out a very thorough piece of work and considered a number of possible management and funding models. In the end, they unanimously agreed that the creation of an endowment fund, managed by a charitable trust, was the best option. They recommended that if an endowment of £40m could be created through the sale of a small percentage (no more than 10%) of the borough’s green space, the interest from this could be used to pay for the upkeep of the vast majority of remaining parks, forever.” However this is refuted by both Prescot Mayor Jennifer Chadwick and Councillor Kai Taylor who states “Having been on the town council since March 2017 I can say I’ve never had an email, letter or any feedback from the review board.”

How much credence can we put in Mr Moorheads claim that the remaining parks would be safe forever if put into the NEW trust? We only have to look at what is happening with KHT at the moment to see that apparently nothing is Forever. The council gave all of its social housing stock to Knowsley Housing Trust (KHT), a not for profit organisation. The TRUST are now demolishing pensioners flats in Prescot. Their sister company will be building new properties to sell for profit. And the council have no control over this as they gave the housing stock away to a TRUST. Is that the best word for it? Similarly once the parks are given to a ‘TRUST’ it will be up to the TRUST to decide what happens to them in the future. Not the council. Will 40 million be enough? Nobody actually knows this for a fact. So much for an empty promise.

Mr Moorhead states “To be clear – the only other realistic option was to allow the parks to be left, unmaintained. That would mean overgrown, unattractive spaces where litter, dog fouling and antisocial behaviour would quickly make them no-go areas. That’s what happened during the dark days of the 70s and 80s and it was clear from the responses to the consultation that there is no local appetite to return to those times.” I would like to see a list of the other options considered. I hardly think litter and dog fouling would increase as the council has subcontracted the enforcement of these offences to a third party that generates a substantial income. As for Parks becoming no go areas? Hmmm.....does anyone remember the dark days of the 70’s and 80’s when parks were apparently “no-go areas?” I don’t and I haven’t spoken to anyone else who remembers this happening. And why would that happen if the grass wasn’t cut?

Mr Moorhead states “Since that decision in November, this matter has been looked at by our Scrutiny process and considered again by Cabinet. Several concerns have been raised, both by Scrutiny and members of the public and I hope that what we’ve done so far has answered a lot of those concerns.” The scrutiny committee, called by a concerned Labour councillor met for 2 hours. They voted to send the decision back to the cabinet for them to reconsider it.

The cabinet dismissed their concerns after reconsidering for less than 11 minutes. One might think it was a foregone conclusion?

Mr Moorhead claims “We have a duty to the most vulnerable in society to prioritise our spending on essential, life and death services, like children’s and adults’ social care.” This is of course true but not exactly the whole truth. Firstly he has already stated the 40 million raised from the sale of the land will all go to the new Parks TRUST. Secondly he has omitted to add that the council are currently exploring ways to PRIVATISE Knowsleys adult social care system. Consultants are costing Knowsleys council tax payers £180,000 for this privilege.

Check out this link for confirmation

<https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/adult-social-care-services-could-13303955.amp>

Mr Moorhead states “it has been suggested that local people might be happy to pay some kind of ‘precept’ added on to their council tax to fund parks. Unfortunately I just don’t think that is realistic.” NOT REALISTIC? Has Mr Moorhead forgotten that the maintenance of the 2 parks in Prescot is already paid for by Prescot Town Council? Prescot people already fund their own parks by paying a precept. Prescot people also pay to maintain every other park in Knowsley. They are paying twice!

Has Mr Moorhead got a problem with Prescot specifically? Is this a political measure to punish the people of Prescot for having the cheek to elect people who actually live in Prescot to represent them. Prescot has only 2 of the boroughs 161 parks. He is proposing to sell off one of those parks, Browns Field. There will be 144 left with a grand total of 1 in Prescot. Currently both of these parks are leased to Prescot Town Council. They maintain them, not Knowsley council. Knowsley council only retain responsibility for the 8-13 year olds play area. So of the 1.3 million budget only a tiny fraction could be saved by selling Browns Field.

I do despair when I see how poorly Prescot has been treated by Knowsley Council over the years. Swimming baths destroyed, Indoor 5 a side demolished, Boxing and judo facilities demolished, squash and badminton facilities removed. Library and Museums both sold and relocated to a small centre, thousands of new houses built with no concern for the infrastructure and increased pressure on doctors, dentists and the NHS. Two of its 3 secondary schools also sold off for housing. Greenbelt released. And now even selling off one of our few remaining assets, our largest park. Where will it end?

Thatcher did an awful lot of damage to Knowsley. But when she was finished we got up, dusted ourselves off and rebuilt. Once the parks and green belt have gone there is no going back. One Labour councillor stated yesterday that once we have a Labour Government we will improve as we will get more funding. Sadly it wont matter who is in government if we've already built on our parks. We can't replace them as once they are gone they are gone forever. Thatcher gained an infamous epitaph as Thatcher the Milksnatcher. Mr Moorhead may well go down with a similar epitaph, Moorhead the Parksnotcher.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

I hope you'll allow me to set a few things straight and explain more about the context in which I made my observations.

This Council very much recognises the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018: <http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

With specific regard to your comment – please see my responses in blue, below.

No other options? Seriously? Well here is another. How about making the parks self financing via sponsorship and donations from Friends groups. The current budget is 1.3 million and there are 161 parks. This averages at just over £8000 per park. Prescot Tesco alone donate approximately £30,000 to the community via their bags of help scheme. If steps were taken to make them self financing it would release 1.3 million to use for other things. I would imagine the 1.3 million could be trimmed a little as well?

I think you need to read the section of this report 'Reviewing Ways to Fund Parks and Green Spaces (pages 138 – 159)' which is clear about the Review Board's extensive research into future funding options. Sponsorship and funding from the community were considered, and deemed worthy of being pursued, however, it is evident that the financial contribution from these sources will come nowhere near meeting the £1.3 million funding gap required every year!

Since 2010 the Council's budget for the maintenance, management and development of parks and green spaces has been reduced by almost 40% through efficiencies and savings. A tipping point has now been reached whereby a new

funding approach is found or these much loved community places will quickly fall into dis-repair. I refer you to pages 70 – 74 of the Review Board's report which explains this position further.

Mr Moorhead states:

"The review board, which included representatives from town and parish councils, friends of parks groups, the council, businesses and academics, carried out a very thorough piece of work and considered a number of possible management and funding models. In the end, they unanimously agreed that the creation of an endowment fund, managed by a charitable trust, was the best option. They recommended that if an endowment of £40m could be created through the sale of a small percentage (no more than 10%) of the borough's green space, the interest from this could be used to pay for the upkeep of the vast majority of remaining parks, forever." However this is refuted by both Prescot Mayor Jennifer Chadwick and Councillor Kai Taylor who states "Having been on the town council since March 2017 I can say I've never had an email, letter or any feedback from the review board."

A number of people appear to be expressing their ignorance or distancing themselves from these difficult issues, however, I can assure you that a representative of Prescot Town Council was a member of the Review Board. The Liberal Democrats were offered and accepted a place on the board but chose not to participate in the review. Furthermore, the Chair of the Review Board wrote to the Clerk of the Town Council to invite representatives to attend a meeting to discuss the Review Board's proposals as part of a public consultation on this matter. This meeting took place on Monday 11 September 2017 and was attended by Louise Sefton from Prescot Town Council.

How much credence can we put in Mr Moorhead's claim that the remaining parks would be safe forever if put into the NEW trust? We only have to look at what is happening with KHT at the moment to see that apparently nothing is Forever. The council gave all of its social housing stock to Knowsley Housing Trust (KHT), a not for profit organisation. The TRUST are now demolishing pensioners flats in Prescot. Their sister company will be building new properties to sell for profit. And the council have no control over this as they gave the housing stock away to a TRUST. Is that the best word for it? Similarly once the parks are given to a 'TRUST' it will be up to the TRUST to decide what happens to them in the future. Not the council. Will 40 million be enough? Nobody actually knows this for a fact. So much for an empty promise.

The Review Board considered a range of alternative means of governing and managing Knowsley's public parkland and identified that a charitable trust would be

most appropriate. I refer you to pages 94 – 134 of their report. Furthermore, the endowment funding model to which you make reference is explained on pages 160 – 165 of their report, you may wish to take a look. Knowsley Council is currently testing the viability of both of these proposals and no decision has been reached at this stage by the Council on their implementation.

Mr Moorhead states “To be clear – the only other realistic option was to allow the parks to be left, unmaintained. That would mean overgrown, unattractive spaces where litter, dog fouling and antisocial behaviour would quickly make them no-go areas. That’s what happened during the dark days of the 70s and 80s and it was clear from the responses to the consultation that there is no local appetite to return to those times.” I would like to see a list of the other options considered. I hardly think litter and dog fouling would increase as the council has subcontracted the enforcement of these offences to a third party that generates a substantial income. As for Parks becoming no go areas? Hmmm.....does anyone remember the dark days of the 70’s and 80’s when parks were apparently “no-go areas?” I don’t and I haven’t spoken to anyone else who remembers this happening. And why would that happen if the grass wasn’t cut?

I think you will find that the photographs pages 79 – 84 of the Review Board’s report evidence the very poor state of public parks in the borough not that long-ago; a situation that this Council is working hard to avoid.

Mr Moorhead states “Since that decision in November, this matter has been looked at by our Scrutiny process and considered again by Cabinet. Several concerns have been raised, both by Scrutiny and members of the public and I hope that what we’ve done so far has answered a lot of those concerns.” The scrutiny committee, called by a concerned Labour councillor met for 2 hours. They voted to send the decision back to the cabinet for them to reconsider it. The cabinet dismissed their concerns after reconsidering for less than 11 minutes. One might think it was a foregone conclusion?

The Council has completed a robust process of review and debate by the committee who followed due process and reached a democratically legitimate decision in respect to the next steps it wishes to take in respect to the Review Board’s recommendations. This information is available on the Council’s website and recent meetings, including the Scrutiny Call-in are available on our YouTube channel for you to view in full.

Mr Moorhead claims “We have a duty to the most vulnerable in society to prioritise our spending on essential, life and death services, like children’s and adults’ social care.” This is of course true but not exactly the whole truth. Firstly he has already stated the 40 million raised from the sale of the land will all go to the new Parks TRUST. Secondly he has omitted to add that the council are currently exploring

ways to PRIVATISE Knowsleys adult social care system. Consultants are costing Knowsleys council tax payers £180,000 for this privilege.

Check out this link for confirmation <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/adult-social-care-services-could-13303955.amp>

This Council is not privatising the Provider Services within Adult Social Care, it is looking to establish a publicly owned Alternative Delivery Model which will protect it from further Tory government cuts as the current model is being starved of funding and we simply cannot continue with the current model which is unaffordable.

Mr Moorhead states "it has been suggested that local people might be happy to pay some kind of 'precept' added on to their council tax to fund parks. Unfortunately I just don't think that is realistic." NOT REALISTIC? Has Mr Moorhead forgotten that the maintenance of the 2 parks in Prescott is already paid for by Prescott Town Council? Prescott people already fund their own parks by paying a precept. Prescott people also pay to maintain every other park in Knowsley. They are paying twice!

Prescot Town Council lease two sites from Knowsley Council for which they are responsible for routine maintenance works. Knowsley Council provides support to this Town Council through green space grant funding and community engagement expertise and capital infrastructure funding support where appropriate. It is for Prescot Town Council to determine how it levies its precept.

Has Mr Moorhead got a problem with Prescot specifically? Is this a political measure to punish the people of Prescot for having the cheek to elect people who actually live in Prescot to represent them. Prescot has only 2 of the boroughs 161 parks. He is proposing to sell off one of those parks, Browns Field. There will be 144 left with a grand total of 1 in Prescot. Currently both of these parks are leased to Prescot Town Council. They maintain them, not Knowsley council. Knowsley council only retain responsibility for the 8-13 year olds play area. So of the 1.3 million budget only a tiny fraction could be saved by selling Browns Field.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected as a potential parkland area for development and there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescot School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescot Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-

provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

I do despair when I see how poorly Prescott has been treated by Knowsley Council over the years. Swimming baths destroyed, Indoor 5 a side demolished, Boxing and judo facilities demolished, squash and badminton facilities removed. Library and Museums both sold and relocated to a small centre, thousands of new houses built with no concern for the infrastructure and increased pressure on doctors, dentists and the NHS. Two of its 3 secondary schools also sold off for housing. Greenbelt released. And now even selling off one of our few remaining assets, our largest park. Where will it end?

If you take a walk around Prescott you will also see the £2m Prescott Soccer Centre, the £3.2m Town Heritage Initiative which is changing the face of the town centre shops, alongside the new public realm and highway improvements in Leyland Street and Atherton Street, and the construction commencing next month on the £500,000 investment in Market Place; the new £5m joint Police and fire station; the archaeological dig, hoardings and appointment of Kier Construction to build the £26m Shakespeare North Theatre that this Council has invested £6m and the land to build it; the site where a new 27 bed boutique hotel will be (construction starts next month on the former Imperial Hotel site), new homes to be constructed this year on Prescott Park which will further strengthen the viability of the town centre. We also expect to see our City Region bid succeed for our Shakespeare Connectivity programme which will bring a further £9.3m to improve the Railway station and access arrangements, deliver a Shakespearean trail from the Railway to the Theatre whilst replacing the whole of the public realm along Eccleston Street. We are working to deliver an 8 screen multiplex cinema for the town centre and during 2018 we will see a number of independent restaurants opening across Prescott. There are numerous other developments which will happen during 2018 which will create more new jobs, provide new business units for our expanding businesses, creating an evening economy for the town whilst establishing Prescott as a weekend destination.

Thatcher did an awful lot of damage to Knowsley. But when she was finished we got up, dusted ourselves off and rebuilt. Once the parks and green belt have gone there is no going back. One Labour councillor stated yesterday that once we have a Labour Government we will improve as we will get more funding. Sadly it wont

matter who is in government if we've already built on our parks. We can't replace them as once they are gone they are gone forever. Thatcher gained an infamous epitaph as Thatcher the Milksnatcher. Mr Moorhead may well go down with a similar epitaph, Moorhead the Parksatcher.

This Council has been the hardest hit of any local authority in England with £100m ripped from our budget by the Liberal Democrats and the Tories. We are not funded by the Tory government for parks yet we want to ensure they are safe from further Tory cuts and protected for future generations to enjoy. This is the only sustainable solution which will protect 144 of these special places forever. Furthermore, this Labour run Council has done more to turn around Prescot's fortunes in recent years than anyone else, in spite of the troubled economic climate. We will continue to invest in Prescot and deliver on the promises this Labour run Council has made to the local community as I have set out in my response to the previous question above.

I live near court hey park and the decision from the council to remove 34% of this park for redelopment is very wrong on a few levels . The land you wants to remove the car park which is used for people bringing children to the park to ride their bikes in a safe environment for children who don't have a safe place to play this is essential and to use the play area which are well used. And sensible dog owner bring their dogs and the cricket club use the carpark also. Taking the cricket pitch is a strange decision. The borough gets a rap on the knuckles for being unhealthy the cricket pitch. Surely is helping this helping keep people healthy . On the subject of the wildflower centre when it closed people,wanted to kkeep,it In Good condition but were told they would be trespassing due to. This fact some low lives vandalised it .the cafe was well used and a community groups .the cafe brought people to the park it . The cafe could be used for the students in the college catering course to make the cakes to sell in the cafe and other courses who ,need experience in serving the public it would be a win win giving the student experience and giving the Park is cafe in southport they have a cafe for people with special needs it has won awards . Also when it suits Knowsley council you use court hey park for the feel good festival and the flower show removing the space will,make these shows not as good you are destroying court hey park

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Please be assured that protecting the community value of Court Hey Park is an essential requirement of any new development at the site which the Council is

currently progressing with. We are currently in a procurement process since the demise of the National Wildflower Centre and the Council is confident that the public and environmental benefits of the site can be protected through this approach whilst mitigating the anti-social behaviour problems currently being experienced.

The Council simply no longer has the available funds to maintain Court Hey Park as it has done in the past, which is the case for all public parks and green spaces in Knowsley. This is directly because the Government has significantly reduced the amount of funding it provides to the Council to provide its public services in Knowsley. The Council is having to find new and innovative ways to fund its services, especially those that are non-statutory (which is the case for parks) in order to protect the services it provides to the most vulnerable children and adults in our society. This is why the Council is looking for new ways to fund and manage its parkland areas, the alternative is for them to fall into dis-repair which I'm sure you will agree is a future that we want to avoid.

600 new homes to be built in the borough which will Generate £1.25 million form the said new build. Knowsley Council Insist on selling the majority of the parks within the council Boundary as they need to generate roughly the same amount of money that will come from council tax payment form the new homeowners in the region. Why?

Cllr Moorhead replies:

The Council has agreed to sell six brownfield sites to develop 600 new homes in Knowsley. This will generate £26m in capital receipts from the landsale which in turn will fund £10m improvements in our school playing fields, contribute £6m to help bring forward the Shakespeare North Theatre and £10m to accelerate town centre regeneration in Kirkby, Huyton and Prescot. The annual Council Tax receipts of £1.2m per year will not be available in full from 1 April next year as it will happen over the next 10 years whilst those homes are constructed. The Council has already had to use this forecast improvement in Council Tax levels to offset the unprecedented cuts in funding that will be imposed by the Government until 2020 and this position is reflected in the three-year budget it has approved. Given the Council's financial position this budget does not include funding for our parks and green spaces from April 2019. We therefore have to find £1.3m to help with their upkeep, and so the level of funding that you refer is not available to sustain these much valued public assets.

The Council is having to make difficult decisions because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by around 50% since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit

harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is precisely the reason why we have been forced to consider new operating models.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:-

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

An important feature of the Review Board's recommendations is that an independent Knowsley Parks Trust should be established from April 2019. This Trust would then become the custodian of 144 (90%) of Knowsley's current public parks and green spaces. Under such plans, the majority of parkland areas would be protected forever from any further funding cuts. Furthermore, their upkeep would be funded mainly from the return on the investment of an endowment fund created through the surrender of the 17 parkland sites identified by the Cabinet for development over the next 15 years. The Council is now looking at whether this way forward is fully viable and the matter will be considered at Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 and again by the Cabinet in November 2018 before any final decisions are made. There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

Roby playing fields are at the rear of my house. I fully support the objections to selling of our green spaces.

In addition I request your help/advice regarding my main objection:

The field to the rear of the established houses in merton is low lying land with a high water table, thus making it prone to flooding, so much so that knowsley regularly drain it off. If it is sold for new build and therefore making those properties water tight and sage from flooding, the rising water will take the easiest route out, the only place it can go is onto the surrounding already established properties in merton.

This would result in claims against the authority for the damage caused, possibly being settled from monies raised from the sale of open spaces.I look forward to your comments.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Thank you for your email regarding Roby (Merton) Playing Fields. I note your concerns and have passed this on to the team working on this project for their information also.

As part of any proposed development on this site (or indeed others), detailed site investigations will be required and a flood risk assessment will be undertaken. If issues are identified through these investigations, they would be incorporated into the planning guidance and any development would be required to address these issues and mitigate any risk through appropriate design.

I hope this helps to allay your concerns.

I am writing to ask you to reconsider the proposal to sell of areas of green space in Knowsley.

I appreciate that KMBC is in financial difficulty through the actions of a callous and uncaring government but selling off green space cannot be the answer. Our parks and green spaces are precious and once lost can never be replaced. They are what makes Knowsley a pleasant place to live.

I am particularly concerned about the proposals to build on a large section of Court Hey park. This will significantly change the accessibility and use of the park, destroy established civic amenities, areas of wildflowers and established trees - some over one-hundred years old. The effect on wildlife and the surrounding area would be severely damaging.

I grew up around Court Hey park and my parents still live in the borough. I have always lived on Merseyside and I appreciate the wonderful environment we have in our county. I have many happy memories of playing in Court Hey park as a child and I would like more children to have this opportunity in the future.

I have been a lifelong Labour voter and I have always trusted KMBC to make the right decisions on behalf of all citizens. If you are not wealthy access to green space is at a premium and any loss of this is to be regretted.

The Labour party in the 1980s and 1990s rightly criticised the Conservatives for selling off public assets to maintain current expenditure. This is not something that should be repeated by a Labour council.

I sincerely hope that you will preserve all of Knowsley's public green space now and in the future, even if that means it must be less well maintained than at present, at least it will still be there to enjoy.

I urge you to reconsider your decision.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

I note your comments and have also passed this correspondence on to the team working on this project for their information also.

As you correctly point out, Court Hey Park is a site identified for partial site surrender. It is the intention however that the park it will retain its Green Flag Standard and its wider community offer (e.g. the play areas, gardens and playing fields).

In the particular case of Court Hey Park I think it is important to mention that the Council's ambition remains to secure a partner organisation that will develop / operate out of the former National Wildflower Centre building footprint. That's why earlier this year we invited organisations to express an interest in redeveloping the land and buildings.

If we are able to successfully appoint a partner to do this, this would provide an annual income to the Knowsley Parks Trust (not the Council) and therefore may actually negate the need to surrender the identified section of the park. I must point out that this is not guaranteed and this process is ongoing – we'll begin the final stages of tendering for a tenant in the Spring.

Unfortunately if the Council is unable to secure a partner organisation which generates a sufficient regular income, the Council will need to proceed with proposals to surrender the identified section of the site. Before any development would take place, extensive site investigations would be undertaken including ecology and biodiversity assessments. Any potential development would need to protect wherever possible existing biodiversity and provide adequate mitigation and / or compensation for any loss in circumstances where harm from the development is unavoidable.

I do appreciate your concerns but failing to take action to protect the vast majority of our parks now will sadly mean that all parks will quickly fall into decline as soon as the funding ceases in April 2019. I am sure you would agree that this is not something we would want to see happen.

I am writing to voice my concern over the recent Knowsley Council decision to sell off parkland to establish a charitable trust to run the borough's parks.

I am a lifelong Labour supporter and member of the Labour Party and am dismayed at this short term solution to the Conservative Government policy of austerity and its impact on local councils. Once these lands are sold for development we will lose them forever. The health benefits of green space in urban areas are well documented they give environments for socialisation, healthy living, sport and play, and provide people with a sense of well-being and they should be protected for future generations in better times which will come.

Our local park provides a haven for wildlife and has an abundance of trees and plants which will be affected if the land is used for housing as many established trees will have to be removed. The site has been designated as a local wildlife site and there is excellent biodiversity which would be difficult to replicate in other areas. The recommendation not to sell land which was well used, attractive, close to people and wildlife rich appears not to have been taken in to consideration on the proposed selling of land in Court Hey Park.

Court Hey park scores at the highest rating in community use, green flag status, recreational status, access and is of historical and cultural significance and scores the highest of all the proposed sites in the consultation and yet is set to lose a third of its site which will have significant impact.

I am a Physiotherapist and have worked in the N.H.S for almost 40 years and encourage my patients to use their local parks to exercise and remain active to improve their health and prevent physical deterioration in their condition but also we should be promoting active life styles and activity to prevent illness and promote good health. The proposal also puts in jeopardy the survival of the local cricket club which promotes active sport to the children in the area.

I have major concerns around the consultation process. The committee in their released information congratulated themselves on their success but I had no formal contact during this process and was unaware until the decision had been made in November 2017 following local television reports. I did not receive a letter or email and do not get Knowsley Challenge newspaper. I also did not see any local information in the park or on bins which again the committee thought was a success.

I am concerned that the land will be sold to facilitate housing and the increase in traffic and pollution in the area with the necessary loss of green space and trees will have a severe impact on the young and disabled in the area.

These areas provide an escape and an environment for peace and quiet and we should protect them for the future so the generations to come can enjoy what I and my family have had the privilege of having as a public amenity.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Many thanks for your email. I note your concerns and have also passed your correspondence to the team progressing with this work.

You raise a number of questions within your email – many of which can be addressed by the information that has been provided on the Council website and also the Knowsley Parks Review Board website. In particular there is detailed information provided about the consultation process and the criteria behind the selection of sites.

Just picking up on your other comments, I completely echo your sentiments with regard to recognising the benefit of parks to the community. Our residents having access to good quality parks and open spaces is really important to us – hence why we are taking action now to protect 90% of our parklands forever, rather than risk the decline of 100% of our parks and open spaces once the funding runs out in April 2019.

In specific relation to Court Hey Park it is one of the site's identified for partial site surrender. It is the intention however that the park it will retain its Green Flag Standard and its wider community offer (e.g. the play areas, gardens and playing fields).

In the particular case of Court Hey Park I think it is important to mention that the Council's ambition remains to secure a partner organisation that will develop / operate out of the former National Wildflower Centre building footprint. That's why earlier this year we invited organisations to express an interest in redeveloping the land and buildings.

If we are able to successfully appoint a partner to do this, this would provide an annual income to the Knowsley Parks Trust (not the Council) and this may actually negate the need to surrender the identified section of the park. I must point out that this is not guaranteed and this process is ongoing – we'll begin the final stages of tendering for a tenant in the Spring.

Unfortunately if the Council is unable to secure a partner organisation which generates a sufficient regular income, the Council will need to proceed with proposals to surrender the identified section of the site. Before any development would take place, extensive site investigations would be undertaken including ecology, biodiversity and environmental impact assessments. Any potential development would need to address any issues highlighted through this process.

Thank you again for your comments and I hope my response is useful.

I've just attended the meeting at the Council Chambers regarding the selling off of 17 parks and green spaces, which I have only become aware of via social media this weekend. I'm a bit confused as to the final decision made at the meeting, was it a final decision on the sites that will be considered for development with further meeting and consultations taking place to give residents in the areas their chance to object and have their say or was it a final decision that these 17 sites will be sold off and no further objections can be made? I would be grateful for your time in explaining this.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

I can clarify for you that the 17 parkland areas will be surrendered for new development over the course of the next 15 years in order to create an endowment that will be used to fund the upkeep of the remaining 144 (90%) public parks and green spaces in Knowsley forever. This decision was necessary so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November.

I can also confirm that the sale and subsequent development of the 17 sites will be subject to the normal statutory consultation processes which must be completed in respect to land appropriation and planning consent.

I am complaining about the process and decision to include KGV Browns Field in the list of 17 parks to be sold off to enable the maintenance of the other parks in the borough.

I would like to know how after ranking 89th on the independent review you commissioned that it was decided it should be in the 17. I believe the whole process has been non transparent and flawed, with many residents unaware of the decision to sell the parks. I don't think that a sticker put on a wheelie bin is an effective way of communicating with the people you represent. Surely the least you could have done was to post a leaflet through every household door. As a Prescot resident I pay an extra £97.23 on top of my council tax to Prescot Town Council. This goes towards the maintenance of our parks that are leased from you until 2090, I would like to know how a park that is not costing Knowsley Council anything to maintain should be up for sale to maintain other parks, some of which didn't score as high as Browns Field on value to the community. I hope to receive a swift reply to my complaint.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

The process the Council used against all 161 parks and open spaces to select the 17 parkland sites for surrender, including KGV Browns Field, is explained on the Council's web-site on this link <http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp->

content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf I can advise you that whilst Browns Field scores highly on community value, which ranked it 89th on the list, this was not the only scoring factor which influenced its final positioning in the 17 parks to be surrendered.

The key determining factors for the filtering process included the fact that all Green Flags were to be protected, which removed another 18 sites from the list, whilst we also had to remain within 10% of the total number of parks. In order to achieve this we had to look at land values and this was a significant factor for Browns Field.

Browns Field does not hold a Green Flag, it doesn't have a formal Friends of Parks group, it doesn't provide the biodiversity value of other parks and green spaces in the borough, and it offers a large and attractive site for housing development and so it will secure a large financial return from its sale. This park is owned by Knowsley Council who are considering ending the lease with Prescott Town Council so that its development value can be used to help sustain the vast majority (90%) 144 of public parks and green spaces across Knowsley.

Whilst Prescott Town Council pays for the park's current routine maintenance, Knowsley Council funds the capital infrastructure repairs / replacement and this funding will not be available from April 2019.

The Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced this approach to protecting our parks for the future.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected as a potential parkland area for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Additionally, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

I would emphasise that the Council is now progressing the recommendations made by the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board who did conduct a robust and statistically sound public consultation on their proposals during August and September 2017. Their report can be found using the following link, with specific information on their consultation on pages 174 – 201:

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

I am writing to express my concern at the sell off of browns field. This is a well used facility. I regularly visit this park, one of only two parks in Prescot. The carnival is held here and is highly successful

I'm fully aware of cuts from central government but I would be interested to hear if any discussions that have been had about other options being considered. What were these options and why have they been ruled out

Concerned Knowsley resident

Cllr Moorhead replies:

This Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced this approach to protecting our parks for the future.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018: <http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

This report provides information regarding the options that the Review Board considered, why a number were ruled out and provides the reasons for the recommendations it made to the Council.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescot School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Harbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field. I am happy to work with stakeholders and the Town Council to consider how and where the Carnival can be retained.

(As a follow-up to previous correspondence,)

Thank you for your response. I do, however, feel that my concerns have not been addressed in your email. Please could you address the following points.

- **where will future carnivals be held?**
- **what other options were considered?**
- **why were these options ruled out?**

To say that there are other parks available can be said about other Knowsley green spaces. Is Prescott school open to the public? Is this a green space or is it artificial? The other parks, with the exception of Eaton Street are not in Prescott. For me to walk to , say Sawpit Park, this is almost an hour's walk from my house, McGoldrick park is more than an hour to walk and if you can walk to Stadt Moers in ten minutes from Browns Field you must walk quicker than me.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

If the proposal goes ahead Knowsley Council will work with Prescott Town Council to identify a new location for the Prescott Carnival, an appropriate site has yet to be determined at this stage.

Information on the method used to select the 17 parkland sites for surrender can be found using the following link. Pages pages 51 – 54 of this document provide information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescott (Brown's Field) was chosen. <http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Carr Lane woods is in Prescott and the other sites are within reasonable walking distance and whilst I accept they are not in Prescott the people of Prescott are

allowed to use parks outside the towns boundary and indeed I am sure they use many across the City Region.

Prescot School has a number of grass sports pitches and these can be booked by the public out of school hours by contacting www.volair.org.uk.

I am writing to inform of my dismay and disgust at Knowsley Council's decision to sell off the King George V playing fields (Brown's Field) in Prescot. I have lived in Prescot for 20 years and my grown up children, and now my grandchildren, have all loved playing on this green space. It is an iconic Prescot space and is used by thousands of people each year for lots of different leisure activities and is also the venue for the annual Prescot Carnival.

This green space should not, and cannot, be sold off for redevelopment, probably for more new housing, that Prescot really doesn't need, nor can cope with!

Please can you and your fellow councillors reconsider your decision to sell off this land before it is lost to the residents of Prescot forever.

Thank you.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

This Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced this approach to protecting our parks for the future.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:-

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The Council is now looking at whether this way forward is fully viable and the matter will be considered at Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 and again by Cabinet in November 2018 before any final decisions are made. There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field. The Council will also work with stakeholders and the Town Council to identify how and where to retain the Carnival.

I'm basically informing you of my displeasure at the fact your planning to sell this land for a housing development. I live right facing this and my two boys love playing football on there so If you decide to build on there what are my children supposed to do?

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Thank you for your email dated 31 January.

This Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced this approach to protecting our parks for the future.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:-

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The Council is now looking at whether this way forward is fully viable and the matter will be considered at Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 and again by Cabinet in November 2018 before any final decisions are made. There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

I would like to object to the plans to reduce OUR parks and green areas specially Browns field in Prescott.

This facility I have used on numerous occasions through the years and I still do.

It seems the council are ripping apart the fabric of our borough with no foreword vision for the future never mind the present.

Ethics and standards should be a independent board of people impartial to your administration.

Regards,

Cllr Moorhead replies:

This Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have

been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced this approach to protecting our parks for the future.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities both now and as part of a thriving future Knowsley. Because of this strategic perspective we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:-

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

I would highlight that the Review Board was completely impartial to my administration and was free to determine its own recommendations to this Council. As such there are certainly no ethical or standards issues.

The Council is now looking at whether this way forward is fully viable and the matter will be considered at Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 and again by Cabinet in November 2018 before any final decisions are made. There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

I wish to express my great concern about the Local Authority plan to take Browns Field away from the residents of Prescott and the way this has been done without full public consultation.

The way in which this has been handled and the lack of opportunity to raise concerns really is disappointing and smacks of disrespect.

Please explain what steps were taken to consult with residents prior to the decision to remove Brown's Field from the public.

Many thanks

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Knowsley Council very much realises the value that public parks and green spaces offer to Knowsley's communities. However, the Council has been hit harder by Government funding cuts than any other local authority in the country and this trend will continue until at least until 2020. As such the Council can no longer afford to fund non-statutory services – it has to use the money it has to support the most vulnerable children and adults in Knowsley. Therefore a new way of paying for the maintenance, management and positive use of our parks must be found so that their qualities can be sustained in the short term and then for generations to come.

This is why the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research during 2017 into new funding and management arrangements that could be adopted in light of the Council's significantly reduced funding from central Government. The Review Board's Report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations have been approved by the Council's Cabinet (9 January 2018). <http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The public consultation conducted by the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board on its proposals was robust and statistically sound. Please refer to the Review Board's report, in particular pages 174 – 201 (Reviewing feedback from Knowsley residents and other stakeholders).

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 51 – 54 of this document providing information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescott (Brown's Field) was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

The sale and subsequent development of the 17 sites will be subject to the normal statutory consultation processes which must be completed in respect to land appropriation and planning consent.

There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

I don't presume for one minute that I'll receive any response from you or your colleagues in response to this email but it felt so important to me to air my views with regards to the proposed sell off/building on this wonderful park.

I was born and bred in Prescot and being one of four children, we all spent a lot of time there, making memories. As I've now grown up and stopped playing on the swings, I now have so much pleasure in taking my own children there.

It saddens me that such a wonderful green space is potentially being taken away from our community. Lots of families, dog walkers use this space each day. Without these facilities, where are we supposed to go? It's practically the only piece of green space left in our lovely little town that you and your team seem to have great pleasure in taking away. We have very little by way of leisure facilities left here after the removal of the swimming baths and leisure centre.

I note a huge amount of building work already taking place on the Manchester road site. Those new residents will buy those houses, with the knowledge and selling point of a park being so close by. Green space makes the town look more appealing to families. So why take it away? To build more houses? Not sure I'd want to purchase a £200K property in an area without so little green space. I really hope this puts those buyers off buying those houses!

It makes little or no sense and I'm hoping that for once you start to listen to residents who are clearly amazed, furious but not altogether surprised that you intend to make such decisions when it comes to Prescot!

It's a disgrace, and I will together with the rest of the residents continue to battle on to stop this decision!

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Knowsley Council very much realises the value that public parks and green spaces offer to Knowsley's communities. However, the Council has been hit harder by Government funding cuts than any other local authority in the country and this trend will continue until at least until 2020. As such the Council can no longer afford to fund non-statutory services – it has to use the money it has to support the most vulnerable children and adults in Knowsley. Therefore a new way of paying for the

maintenance, management and positive use of our parks must be found so that their qualities can be sustained in the short term and then for generations to come.

This is why the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research during 2017 into new funding and management arrangements that could be adopted in light of the Council's significantly reduced funding from central Government. The Review Board's Report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations have been approved by the Council's Cabinet (9 January 2018). <http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 51 – 54 of this document providing information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescot (Brown's Field) was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

The sale and subsequent development of the 17 sites will be subject to the normal statutory consultation processes which must be completed in respect to land appropriation and planning consent.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescot School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescot Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will also require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

I have recently seen your comment regarding the lack of correspondence to you in opposition to the sale of Brown's Field Park, Prescott to housing developers. Perhaps this is because people generally are slow to action in these circumstances but may I take this opportunity to advise you, if you do not already know by now, that there is a massive and growing opposition to your proposal to build on the last green open and recreational space left in the town of Prescott.

The proposal by Knowsley to sell of ten per cent of its parks to, ostensibly, fund the remaining ninety percent was a disgrace in itself and the public questionnaire offered on line was a travesty as the questions were formulated in such a way that any opposition to the proposals was impossible to articulate...but of course it was designed to be just like that and offer to the Council just what it wanted to hear.

However although your headline of ten percent might convince some that the proposals are not too devastating, the people of Prescott are now beginning to realise that you are hoping to sell off ninety five percent of the parkland that is left in Prescott. If your proposals go through, all that will be left in Prescott is the very small Eaton Park in another area of town. Brown's Field is the last and final green open space recreational parkland left in Prescott. The population of the town relies on it on a multitude of levels from sports activities, areas of play for our children, public events and just an area for walking that is safe, traffic free and an area for observing the wildlife and fauna of the area. It is incredible to think that in an age where great concern is expressed about our children and their fitness, obesity and lack of exercise that a local council could even think about selling off the last open area area in the town which can be used to address the health concerns for our children and young people. If Brown's Field is sold there will be nowhere for any outside sports or other activities in the whole town. You will be helping to consign the health of our children further into the doldrums especially as the Council has already closed all the other recreational facilities in Prescott such as Scothbarn Swimming Baths and the Leisure Centre on Warrington Road (replaced by a wholly inadequate tiny gym.)

Already there is a massive programme of house building proceeding in Prescott - on the site of the former St. Edmund Arrowsmith's School in Scothbarn Lane, on the site of the former B.I.C.C. Club, again in Scothbarn Lane, on the site of the former baths (now completed) and of course the enormous development on the site of the former B.I.C.C. factories. All of this

development will bring thousands more people to live in the town with the subsequent pressure on health services, educational provision, transport infrastructure and recreational requirements. Your proposed, ill thought out, plan to sell Brown's Field takes away at a stroke the open space that these people should be entitled to and of course adds massively to the pressures mentioned above.

Of course we all know the primary reason for the sell off decision...money into the Council coffers through the sale of the land and the council tax etc. which will follow in the coming years. The well being of the people of Prescot does not seem to feature at all in the deliberations of this Council. The fact that Brown's Field is held in Trust to remain as an open recreational area in perpetuity for the people does not seem to worry the Council and the fact that it is in essence administered by Prescot Town Council, again for the good of the local people also does not seem to deter these proposals... though of course I doubt whether the Town Council would have the backbone, given its political majority, to in any way stand up to the wishes of the Borough Council.

If you do have time to reply to this e mail please do not churn out the same old tired rhetoric about Government cuts to funding and related problems. We all know that there have been financial pressures on all Councils in recent years but none of them to my knowledge have proposed to sell off huge areas of public parkland and of course to release an enormous fifty one percent of green belt land over to housing developers - which of course is another, but not wholly unrelated, issue. Knowsley Council needs to think again and be more imaginative in its approach to the final few open spaces in the Borough and especially in its approach to destroying the vast majority of the open space left in the town of Prescot.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

You reference the reality of the significant and ongoing cuts imposed by this Government on Knowsley Council as being the same old tired rhetoric but I can assure you that managing the effective provision of public services in such context is a very serious, complex and challenging undertaking. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by around 50% since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The funding that we do have available is being quite rightly allocated by this Council to protecting the most vulnerable children and adults in our society, whilst the Council is also driving forward major development schemes across the Borough in order to attract people to live, work and do business in Knowsley. The bottom line for public services in Knowsley is that the Government expects the Borough to look after itself financially. We will not be able to do so unless we grow.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities, but the lack of funding for our parks is precisely the reason why we have been forced to consider new operating models. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018.
<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The public consultation conducted by the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board on its proposals was robust and statistically sound. Please refer to the Review Board's report, in particular pages 174 – 201 (Reviewing feedback from Knowsley residents and other stakeholders) if you require evidence of this.

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 51 – 54 of this document providing information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescott (Brown's Field) was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it that can be used for the purposes you describe:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will also require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity. Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

I note your comments about the impact of new housing on public utilities. Local infrastructure is certainly an important consideration which will inform the Council's decision-making process associated with any and all future planning applications. Where appropriate, a developer can be requested to contribute towards improving local education and health facilities.

I can assure you that the future vitality of Prescot and its residents is a priority for Knowsley Council. I can evidence this through the £2m Prescot Soccer Centre, the £3.2m Town Heritage Initiative which is changing the face of the town centre shops, alongside the new public realm and highway improvements in Leyland Street and Atherton Street, and the construction commencing next month on the £500,000 investment in Market Place; the new £5m joint Police and fire station; the archaeological dig, hoardings and appointment of Kier Construction to build the £26m Shakespeare North Theatre that this Council has invested £6m and the land to build it; the new 27 bed boutique hotel which starts construction next month on the former Imperial Hotel site, the new homes to be constructed this year on Prescot Park which will further strengthen the viability of the town centre. We also expect to see our City Region bid succeed for our Shakespeare Connectivity programme which will bring a further £9.3m to improve the Railway station and access arrangements, deliver a Shakespearean trail from the Railway to the Theatre whilst replacing the whole of the public realm along Eccleston Street. We are working to deliver an 8 screen multiplex cinema for the town centre and during 2018 we will see a number of independent restaurants opening across Prescot. There are numerous other developments which will happen during 2018 which will create more new jobs, provide new business units for our expanding businesses, creating an evening economy for the town whilst establishing Prescot as a weekend destination.

If, after reading the Review Board's report, you have any better suggestions than those that this Council has already considered then please let me know.

I have been advised to contact you by a local Councillor regarding the sale of the above. I have not been consulted by Knowsley Council so wanted to share my views with you. I am completely AGAINST the plans my children and I use the park daily. My youngest son plays football at this park and my eldest rides his bike there. I go for daily walks with the dog as I suffer with anxiety and the open green space makes me feel better. I have health problems so going to Browns Field is my escape from being at home.

I urge you to reconsider your decision. I do appreciate the cutbacks etc. but surely there is another way than destroying our community.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Knowsley Council very much realises the value that public parks and green spaces offer to Knowsley's communities. However, the Council has been hit harder by Government funding cuts than any other local authority in the country and this trend will continue until at least until 2020. As such the Council can no longer afford to fund non-statutory services – it has to use the money it has to support the most vulnerable children and adults in Knowsley. Therefore a new way of paying for the maintenance, management and positive use of our parks must be found so that their qualities can be sustained in the short term and then for generations to come.

This is why the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research during 2017 into new funding and management arrangements that could be adopted in light of the Council's significantly reduced funding from central Government. The Review Board's Report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations have been approved by the Council's Cabinet (9 January 2018). <http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The public consultation conducted by the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board on its proposals was robust and statistically sound. Please refer to the Review Board's report, in particular pages 174 – 201 (Reviewing feedback from Knowsley residents and other stakeholders) if you require evidence of this.

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 51 – 54 of this document providing information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescott (Brown's Field) was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it that can be used for the purposes you describe:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will also require

the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity. Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

If, after reading the Review Board's report, you have any new suggestions then please let me know.

Please don't sell this off our children and grandchildren need it.

Please save it for the future generations in this built up area.

We are already sort on green open spaces, many families cannot afford to travel to other green spaces. The closure of the wildflower center was a disgrace.

kind regards

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Firstly, let me please assure you that I share your desire to save the value that all our parks and green space provide for future generations. However, since 2010 Knowsley Council has been forced to manage the impacts of the significant and unrelenting funding cuts that have been imposed by the Government on local public services. The funding it does have is being used to support the most vulnerable children and adults in our society. This means we have no option but to find a new way of funding our parks or they will all fall into rapid decline.

It is for this reason that the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and

public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 24 – 26 of this document providing information as to why 34% of Court Hey Park was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Whilst 34% of Court Hey Park has been selected as a potential parkland area for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it:-

- Bowring Park (within a 10 minute walk) – which is currently undergoing a £2.6 million improvement programme; and
- Neighbouring public green space within Liverpool e.g. John Alderman Village Gardens, KGV Memorial Fields, Lyndene Park, Score Lane Gardens and Belle Vale Park.

I was very disappointed with the demise of the Charitable Trust who were responsible for the National Wildflower Centre and its closure last year and the Council is currently working to identify a viable new use for the land and buildings they occupied.

There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

I have just been informed that you are about to sell court hey park to the highest bidder! The reason (i was told) you gave was the lack of response / complaints you had from the public. This if true it's diabolical - the residents and public have not in anyway been consulted by the authority. This park should be kept as a park, part of the grèen belt of Merseyside. If the park is to be sold you should be giving a guarantee that all the land is to be used as a park with the possible development of a restaurant where the wildflower centre buildings are.

I look forward hear from you, with your plans of sale and hopefully correcting me with the information I have been given.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Moorhead replies:

I want to make it absolutely clear that Knowsley Council is not selling Court Hey Park to the highest bidder. However sections of the Park (the land and buildings that were occupied by the former National Wildflower Centre plus land at the front of the park adjacent to Roby Road) have been identified as potential areas for new development. However, the potential for this is currently being explored by the

Council and I hope that the procurement process will deliver a solution that will maximise development of the existing buildings whilst retaining the front of the park as parkland.

I do however need to emphasise that since 2010 Knowsley Council has been forced to manage the impacts of the significant and unrelenting funding cuts that have been imposed by the Government on local public services. The funding it does have is being used to support the most vulnerable children and adults in our society. This means we need to find a new way of funding our parks or they will all fall into rapid decline.

It is for this reason that the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 24 – 26 of this document providing information as to why 34% of Court Hey Park was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Whilst 34% of Court Hey Park has been selected as a potential parkland area for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it:-

- Bowring Park (within a 10 minute walk) – which is currently undergoing a £2.6 million improvement programme; and
- Neighbouring public green space within Liverpool e.g. John Alderman Village Gardens, KGV Memorial Fields, Lyndene Park, Score Lane Gardens and Belle Vale Park.

There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

I am contacting you on behalf of my 76 year old mother who has lived on Manchester Road Prescott for 53years.

She has asked me to express her disgust for your proposal to sell King George V playing field and the manner in which the council has gone about this. As a long standing resident whose children and grandchildren have always used these facilities she is totally against this sell off.

She is disabled and does not have access to the internet so was unaware of the proposal until she saw an article on the BBC, how Knowsley Council can claim that they have carried out a valid consultation with the public is beyond comprehension.

She would also like to know why the council have ignored the independent boards scoring matrix and chose King George V playing field as one of the 17 sites to be sold despite it ranking 89th in their independent report?

Why have the council disregarded the value that the local community place on this facility? This field scored a 3 (over 200,000 visitors per year) using your independent boards scoring.

King George V playing fields are protected by Fields in Trust and the Charities Commission in perpetuity so why do the council believe they can sell our park?

I look forward to receiving your answers to my mums queries

Cllr Moorhead replies:

I note your comments regarding the identification of King George V Playing Fields for potential development. However, as I'm sure you will have read from the report of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board (see link below) and the communications Knowsley Council has made over this matter, this situation has been directly caused by the Government's significant and unrelenting cuts to the funding it provides to local public services. The funding it does have is being used to support the most vulnerable children and adults in our society. This means we need to find a new way of funding our parks or they will all fall into rapid decline.

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The public consultation conducted by the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board on its proposals was robust and statistically sound. Please refer to the Review Board's report, in particular pages 174 – 201 (Reviewing feedback from Knowsley residents and other stakeholders), as this explains the approach taken which did not only require internet access to participate.

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing so that the Council can progress the preparation of a

business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 51 – 54 of this document providing information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescott (Brown's Field) was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it that can be used:

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity. Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

The Council is aware of the Fields in Trust interest in Brown's Field and is in dialogue with them over this.

I'm emailing you to raise my concerns regarding the sales of all of Knowsley's parks, but in particular Brownsfield Park.

What plans do you have in place to replace the playing areas that you are taking away from our children? Knowsley has an appalling record for childhood obesity, adult obesity and mental health problems, all of which will surely increase, therefore putting further demands on other local services which one would think would counteract the money you claim you can save by selling.

Now, if as you say, we need the housing, how come there are not any affordable housing being built? Yes, it's nice to attract more people to live in Knowsley, without increasing GPs, schools etc, but when local people can't

afford to pay the prices of the rent or buy these new houses then something has gone wrong. It appears that the idea is to build bigger houses, therefore council tax revenue is higher and don't worry about local people. It is going to be a concrete jungle.

Prescot has lost its swimming pool, it's leisure facilities and is now set to lose 50% of its parks. You seem determined to take away everything from Prescot and just have housing estates.

You claim to not of heard a lot from residents who are opposing the plans for Knowsley parks, but how would you? Your ideas for a consultation with Knowsley residents was to stick a sticker on the wheelie bins! Almost as though you were hoping to pass it through quietly and didn't expect this fuss. Even a Labour borough councillor was quoted on a chat group stating that there were no plans to get rid of Brownsfield, so was this person lying to their constituents or had they been lied to by people higher up?

As a Labour council, you seem to go against everything that Jeremy corbyn stands for, blue Labour or blairite Labour springs to mind. It's easy to blame the government cuts to enable you to make appalling decisions with no thought or explanation to your residents.

An absolute disgrace and it needs to stop.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Knowsley Council is not seeking to sell all of Knowsley's parks - in fact it is seeking to finding a way to protect the vast majority (144 sites, making up 90% of the total) forever.

Since 2010 Knowsley Council has been forced to manage the impacts of the significant and unrelenting funding cuts that have been imposed by the Government on local public services. The funding it does have is being used to support the most vulnerable children and adults in our society. This means we need to find a new way of funding our parks or they will all fall into rapid decline.

It is for this reason that the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:-

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The public consultation conducted by the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board on its proposals was robust and statistically sound. Please refer to the Review Board's report, in particular pages 174 – 201 (Reviewing feedback from Knowsley residents and other stakeholders) if you require evidence of this.

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing (of a type yet to be determined) so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 51 – 54 of this document providing information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescott (Brown's Field) was chosen. <http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected as a potential parkland area for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it that can be used for the purposes you describe:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will also require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity. Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

I note your comments about the impact of new housing on public utilities. Local infrastructure is certainly an important consideration which will inform the Council's decision-making process associated with any and all future planning applications. Where appropriate, a developer can be requested to contribute towards improving local education and health facilities.

I can assure you that the future vitality of Prescott and its residents is a priority for Knowsley Council. I can evidence this through the £2m Prescott Soccer Centre, the £3.2m Town Heritage Initiative which is changing the face of the town centre shops, alongside the new public realm and highway improvements in Leyland Street and

Atherton Street, and the construction commencing next month on the £500,000 investment in Market Place; the new £5m joint Police and fire station; the archaeological dig, hoardings and appointment of Kier Construction to build the £26m Shakespeare North Theatre that this Council has invested £6m and the land to build it; the new 27 bed boutique hotel which starts construction next month on the former Imperial Hotel site, the new homes to be constructed this year on Prescott Park which will further strengthen the viability of the town centre. We also expect to see our City Region bid succeed for our Shakespeare Connectivity programme which will bring a further £9.3m to improve the Railway station and access arrangements, deliver a Shakespearean trail from the Railway to the Theatre whilst replacing the whole of the public realm along Eccleston Street. We are working to deliver an 8 screen multiplex cinema for the town centre and during 2018 we will see a number of independent restaurants opening across Prescott. There are numerous other developments which will happen during 2018 which will create more new jobs, provide new business units for our expanding businesses, creating an evening economy for the town whilst establishing Prescott as a weekend destination.

There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

I had to email you regarding the proposed sell off of Browns field, I am totally against the sell off of parks in Prescott

We are retired pensioners in Prescott and have already lost the swimming baths and leisure center that we could access easily and regular ,we use both browns field and eaton street park on a regular basis and wish to continue to enjoy the parks for our health and well being as we get older .

We also have grand children and great grand children that use both the above parks regularly, one grandchild is on the pathway for Autism and benefits greatly from the parks .

Knowsley council has greatly put leisure facilities out of reach for a vast number of Prescott and Whiston residents every thing seems to be moved to Huyton '

I there for ask you to reconsider this Ludicrous decision to sell of parks that incur no cost to the council as Prescott town council pay for the maintenance of the above parks

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Since 2010 Knowsley Council has been forced to manage the impacts of the significant and unrelenting funding cuts that have been imposed by the Government on local public services. The funding it does have is being used to support the most vulnerable children and adults in our society. This means we need to find a new way of funding parks across Knowsley or they will all fall into rapid decline.

It is for this reason that the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:
<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify the 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing (of a type yet to be determined) so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November 2018. The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Information on this selection process can be found using the following link, with pages 51 – 54 of this document providing information as to why King George V Playing Fields Prescott (Brown's Field) was chosen.

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it that can be used for the purposes you describe:-

- (a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and
- (b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will also require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity. Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

I can assure you that the future vitality of Prescot and its residents is a priority for Knowsley Council. I can evidence this through the £2m Prescot Soccer Centre, the £3.2m Town Heritage Initiative which is changing the face of the town centre shops, alongside the new public realm and highway improvements in Leyland Street and Atherton Street, and the construction commencing next month on the £500,000 investment in Market Place; the new £5m joint Police and fire station; the archaeological dig, hoardings and appointment of Kier Construction to build the £26m Shakespeare North Theatre that this Council has invested £6m and the land to build it; the new 27 bed boutique hotel which starts construction next month on the former Imperial Hotel site, the new homes to be constructed this year on Prescot Park which will further strengthen the viability of the town centre. We also expect to see our City Region bid succeed for our Shakespeare Connectivity programme which will bring a further £9.3m to improve the Railway station and access arrangements, deliver a Shakespearean trail from the Railway to the Theatre whilst replacing the whole of the public realm along Eccleston Street. We are working to deliver an 8 screen multiplex cinema for the town centre and during 2018 we will see a number of independent restaurants opening across Prescot. There are numerous other developments which will happen during 2018 which will create more new jobs, provide new business units for our expanding businesses, creating an evening economy for the town whilst establishing Prescot as a weekend destination.

Whilst Prescot Town Council do fund the maintenance of Browns Field they lease the site from Knowsley Council. Given the site's anticipated high land value for housing, and its score in respect to community use and natural habitats (as examples) when compared to other parks and green spaces, Knowsley Council have identified it as a potential site for surrender for the benefit of the wider network of parks across Knowsley.

There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

Just a quick e mail regarding the decision to sell off the local parks. I understand the idea behind raising money for future use to keep and maintain the parks and that budget cuts from central government mean that councils need to be a little creative but it's been made known that you have said that due to lack of complaints, the idea of the sell off isn't a bad idea with the Prescot community.

I'd like to ask you to take a look on Prescot Chat facebook page where you will find a lot of anger and resentment towards this decision. It may be an idea to go on the page yourself and listen to the people and maybe answer questions and/or put your point of view across regarding the reasons why this seems like the way forward for the council.

Just a thought.

A concerned resident

Cllr Moorhead replies:

I have been encouraged by the various questions and comments I have received about the Council's recent decision on the future of our parks and green spaces as I know how passionate we all are about these special places. That is why we took the decision to explore the new model as it provides an opportunity to protect 144 of our parks (90%) for our future generations to enjoy forever and that work will continue over the coming months.

I also recognise that social media is a powerful communication tool. I also recognise that the amount of questions and comments I have received is approximately 50; and I have received a signed petition for Browns Field with 174 signatures on it and a signed petition to save all 17 parks with 319 signatures on it. However, we have 19,430 residents who live in Prescott North and South wards and 147,000 residents who live across Knowsley. Those are facts and our challenge is to ensure we protect as many parks and open spaces whilst continuing to protect the most vulnerable in Knowsley from the relentless budget cuts from this Tory, and previously the Coalition, Government.

Furthermore, the method by which the Council's Cabinet has used to identify potential parkland areas for development is explained in the document that can be accessed via the following link:-

<http://knowsleynews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Identification-of-Parks-Summary-03.01.18.pdf>

I am PRESCOT BORN AND BRED . I have lived here all my life and i am astonished that you can think it is alright to sell off more than 50% of our open spaces by selling off BROWN's FIELD. I have used the park as a child . I took my children there . My son spent hours fishing on Carr Lane. My dog played there all his life. I took my grandchildren there when they were younger. There is nothing in Prescott you have taken away all our Leisure Facilities and now you want to leave us with one small park . Well it is not good enough.

There are no facilities in Prescott to build more houses. I have to wait more than two weeks for a doctors appointment and during the summer my GP rang for an ambulance for me and I waited for FIVE AND A HALF HOURS . So I think it is time you do something for the people of Prescott as well as SAVE OUR PARKS . To build on Brown's Field is unthinkable . THINK AGAIN ! PLEASE

Cllr Moorhead replies:

The Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced this approach to protecting our parks for the future.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:-

(a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk); and

(b) Eaton Street Park, Prescott School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescott Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

This Council is doing a great deal for the people of Prescott. I can evidence this through the £2m Prescott Soccer Centre, the £3.2m Town Heritage Initiative which is changing the face of the town centre shops, alongside the new public realm and highway improvements in Leyland Street and Atherton Street, and the construction commencing next month on the £500,000 investment in Market Place; the new £5m joint Police and fire station; the archaeological dig, hoardings and appointment of Kier Construction to build the £26m Shakespeare North Theatre that this Council has invested £6m and the land to build it; the new 27 bed boutique hotel which starts construction next month on the former Imperial Hotel site, the new homes to be constructed this year on Prescott Park which will further strengthen the viability of the town centre. We also expect to see our City Region bid succeed for our Shakespeare Connectivity programme which will bring a further £9.3m to improve the Railway station and access arrangements, deliver a Shakespearean trail from the Railway to the Theatre whilst replacing the whole of the public realm along Eccleston Street. We are working to deliver an 8 screen multiplex cinema for the town centre and during 2018 we will see a number of independent restaurants opening across Prescott. There are numerous other developments which will happen

during 2018 which will create more new jobs, provide new business units for our expanding businesses, creating an evening economy for the town whilst establishing Prescott as a weekend destination.

Thank you for reading this email. I am deeply disappointed in Knowsley council decision to sell parks off for new homes. I think this is short sighted of the council. I understand the financial constraints the council has but this is not the answer.

-The cost of services to all these new houses bin collections, street lighting etc. In the long run it will cost more than a cost of a park.

Children and adults need open space for their well being. Mental health is a really problem and the ability to have exercise in fresh air is a positive towards good mental health.

Obesity is through the roof and the health related illnesses that accompanies this. People need to exercise go for a walk ride their bikes. You can not do this on the road.

Dog walkers use the parks.

Again Knowsley is falling behind other councils. Today Liverpool announced they will not be building on Sefton park. They recognise the importance of having parks.

If you look at other areas for example Churchtown Southport. They have invested in their parks and people want to live there. House prices are high.

This is a massive mistake. We need the green land. We need trees.

I hope that you also share my concerns and is willing to help fight this.

I am going to email other councillors and I have emailed the MP George Howarth. I am also emailing Jeremy Corbyn. I feel so strongly about this.

I look forward to hearing your reply

Response:

Thank you for the email you sent to Councillor Connor which he has kindly shared with me for response.

I can confirm that Knowsley Council very much realises the value that public parks and green spaces offer to Knowsley's communities. However, the Council has been hit harder by Government funding cuts than any other local authority in the country and this trend will continue until at least until 2020. As such the Council can no longer afford to fund non-statutory services – it has to use the money it has to support the most vulnerable children and adults in Knowsley. Therefore a new way of paying for the maintenance, management and positive use of our parks must be found so that their qualities can be sustained in the short term and then for generations to come.

This is why the Council asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research during 2017 into new funding and management arrangements that could be adopted in light of the Council's significantly reduced funding from central Government. The Review Board's Report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations have been approved by the Council's Cabinet (29 November 2017).

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

It was necessary for Cabinet to identify 17 parkland sites to surrender for development e.g. housing (which includes part of Court Hey Park) so that the Council can progress the preparation of a business case to fully test the viability of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board recommendations. The Council's Cabinet expect to consider this business case for final approval in November. The cost of Council services to any housing developments on these sites will be funded by the additional Council Tax raised.

The sale and subsequent development of the 17 sites will be subject to the normal statutory consultation processes which must complete in respect to land appropriation and planning consent.

There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

Rupert Casey

I am really annoyed to hear that Knowsley are planning to sell off some of it's green space to save money. I have been shown a list of parks/green space with the percentages of how much will be sold off to developers.

We moved to Halewood in 2001. We bought a house off Wood Road in Halewood, which is opposite Grace Park. What attracted us to the property was fact we were not overlooked and had a beautiful view of a park opposite. Now I hear Knowsley are planning on selling 100% of Grace Park to developers!

What really annoyed me was the fact there was no consultation with local people about these plans and same with other areas in Knowsley. Considering we are supposed to be a democratic country, I think it should have been decided by the people in Halewood/Knowsley to decide what they wanted. Maybe a vote should have been done before you just went ahead and decided.

The sale of Grace Park and other parks in Knowsley will have a negative impact on our community members mental and physical health. As there will be no play area, walking space, recreational space and dog walking space. These parks are used regularly by the community for such activities.

If Grace Park and other parks in Knowsley are sold off to developers, houses will be built, which means there will be more traffic congestion, less oxygen and no nice views.

Halewood/Knowsley will become a concrete jungle like London! And with that comes consequences for community members such as increased waiting times in GP practices, longer waiting lists for affordable/council properties and less chance of your child getting a school place.

I do not want this for my children, children from my boxing club or any other child in Halewood/Knowsley areas. Or in fact, I don't want this for all the people of Halewood/Knowsley areas. This/these are our areas. Let us decide what is best, we live/work here!

I would be grateful if you could reply to my email.

Cllr Moorhead replies:

Thank you for your recent email.

The Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by around 50% since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is precisely the reason why we have been forced to consider new operating models.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be

accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:-

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

An important feature of the Review Board's recommendations is that an independent Knowsley Parks Trust should be established from April 2019. This Trust would then become the custodian of 144 (90%) of Knowsley's current public parks and green spaces. Under such plans, these areas would be protected forever from any further funding cuts. Furthermore, their upkeep would be funded mainly from the return on the investment of an endowment fund created through the surrender of the 17 parkland sites identified by the Cabinet for development over the next 15 years. The Council is now looking at whether this way forward is fully viable and the matter will be considered at Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 and again by the Cabinet in November 2018 before any final decisions are made. There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

The selection of the 17 sites was based on the application of the Review Board's Recommended Strategic Criteria for Site Selection and feedback to the Review Board's market research and public consultation. Therefore the public has influenced the identification of parkland for surrender and in applying this feedback the Council has taken an impartial view and selected the 17 sites on the basis of finding the best solution for Knowsley as a borough.

I note your concerns about the impact of new housing on public utilities. Local infrastructure is certainly an important consideration which will inform the Council's decision-making process associated with any and all future planning applications. Where appropriate, a developer can be requested to contribute towards improving local education and health facilities. The bottom line for public services in Knowsley is that the Government expects the Borough to look after itself financially. We will not be able to do so unless we grow.

From: David Clay [mailto:davidclaydavidclay@googlemail.com]

Sent: 23 January 2018 20:18

I have been asking many MPs, councillors, council workers to try and get an answer to my questions as to how Court Hey was chosen and have been unable to get an answer to my specific question. I am therefore writing to see if you would be able to provide one. I have read all of the documents provided for scrutiny and also the other documents that were sent to the MPs to help them try to understand your decision, but none of these answer my specific question and therefore leaves me to draw unfavourable conclusions to the reasoning that it was chosen.

It says in Appenix C of the call in meetings, it states that it was resolved that "the Council should respond to feedback from local residents by protecting all

of Knowsley's 18 Green Flag parks from the loss of such status on the basis that these public assets exemplify the benefits which green spaces offer to Knowsley;

This was similarly referenced in Appendix F "The Neighbourhoods

Cabinet Member also proposed an additional criterion which would protect the status of all of Knowsley's current 18 Green Flag parks and green spaces."

For this reason, when you read through the mitigation for choosing/not choosing the parks (appendix H), many of the Green Flag sites read as follows:

Sawpitt park - it has not been selected for surrender due to the application of the Green Flag retention requirement

McGoldricks PARK - Not suitable for development due to the status of the site as a Green Flag site

Webster PARK - Not suitable for development due to the sites status as a Green Flag site

Henley Park - Not suitable for development due to the sites status as a Green Flag site

KGV- Not suitable for development due to the sites status as a Green Flag site.

The list continues, I am sure that you are familiar with it! Anyway, when it comes to Court Hey, the fact that it is a Green Flag site isn't mentioned even though the site scored significantly higher on the other criteria and offering similar contribution to the endowment as partial sale of some of the other Green Flag sites, which in turn would have offered a high contribution to the endowment. So why was Court Hey chosen?

None of these sites have been evaluated on the sheet, or in any other document that I have read, to show whether these sites could be partly surrendered and retain the Green Flag status!

It is Court Hey's mitigation on the same sheet that causes me further concern, I am surmising from the other information and from the call in, that the site may not need to be surrendered if the council make enough money from the NWC. This is not in any of the criteria for selection of a site, tendering process is not mentioned in any selection criteria so I am not sure why this is suddenly used to make the selection of Court Hey as one of the 17 sites.

If the process was followed fairly, and they realised that they couldn't make the endowment without using a green flag site, then surely this has to be

applied consistently to all green flag sites in order to decide whether any area of the site can be surrendered without affecting the Green Flag status. This surely would start with the sites scoring lowest on the criteria decided by the council/ the independent board.

This leads me to think that Court Hey was only chosen, unfairly, to justify the sale of the NWC to make as much money as possible rather than to keep it for community use. It further saddens me that charities that made approaches to keep this wonderful site in use felt that there was " no evidence of enthusiasm from KMBC officers or councillors to connect" to this organisation and that their CEO felt "there was so little interest to help save both a unique local seed industry en situ for the region, and the Centre itself, as a National Millennium Project".

I spoke with my local councillor last week who assured me there would be transparency in this process that to this point is completely lacking. I am writing to you to try and get a response that shows the full rationale behind your decision making. It is well and good pointing to documents, but if the documents don't seem to be following a procedure and criteria as outlined in those documents (in relation to Court Hey), it leads to more questions and anger among residents.

Please could you shed some light on the issues raised above.

Your incredibly concerned resident,

Response:

Thank you for your email to my colleague Mr Birtles who has kindly passed to me for a response.

As you will have seen from the information I provided in my email to you dated 18 January 2018 six assessment measures and 18 assessment indicators were used to establish the 17 parkland sites for surrender; this led to part of Court Hey Park being chosen. Retaining the Green Flag status of Court Hey Park is a clear requirement of the Council and as such any new development on the site must ensure that this happens (this applies to the land and building occupied by the former National Wildflower Centre and the land identified at the front of the park adjacent to Roby Road). The Council is confident that this can be achieved.

The Council will use the outcomes of the process to secure formal plans from parties interested in developing / using the former National Wildflower Centre site to assess the level of income it may receive from such a new venture. The outcomes of this will inform how, and if, the other land on the park, identified for surrender, is used for housing. As you will have seen from the Prospectus I sent you the link to, the Council is committed to seeking a solution for the National Wildflower Centre part of the park that provides community and environmental value; new income is therefore

not the only criteria that will be used to assess formal proposals. This process, which commenced in May 2017 prior to the Parks Review Board commencing their work, moves onto the next phase in the procurement process which will take place during February to April this year and the tender documents (including assessment criteria) will be publically available.

Follow-up enquiry from the same resident

Thank you for taking the time to read my email. Unfortunately, I had mistaken someone else for being in your position so my apologies to them. As you may ascertain from the response that I recently received fro Rupert Casey, we have had previous correspondents regarding Court Hey Park, however, each time I am left with the same question that has failed to be answered. Therefore, I was hoping that you, as chief exec, would be able to find out the information to answer my question. I am unsure why, each time (including this time) I have asked Mr Casey, he does anything but answer the question. Each time I am pointed to documents and information that I have read and I am sure that fully understand. It out of this understanding, however, that I remain with the question that I emailed in the previous email. Why were the parks listed below chosen because of their green flag status while the same criteria was not applied in the decision to surrender Court Hey:

Sawpitt park - it has not been selected for surrender due to the application of the Green Flag retention requirement

McGoldricks PArk - Not suitable for development due to the status of the site as a Green Flag site

Webster PArk - Not suitable for development due to the sites status as a Green Flag site

Henley Park - Not suitable for development due to the sites status as a Green Flag site

KGV- Not suitable for development due to the sites status as a Green Flag site.

They have not been selected due to their status as a Green Flag site even though they score significantly lower than Court Hey on the criteria that again Mr Casey references in his email, the criteria that Mr Casey claims that he has used to make the decision of which sites to surrender.

The only justifiable response to this is that it is due to the fact that they couldn't be partially surrendered without losing their Green Flag status. If this was the case, then I am unsure why this information isn't highlighted in Appendix H from the documents released for the scrutiny committee but this information is not mentioned anywhere in the documents or mentioned in any

of the released minutes that they had to go back through the parks as they couldn't make the required endowment without surrendering at least part of one of them. Having read the documents for Green Flag status for parks, I can't see anything that would mean it was more likely for Court Hey to be able to keep its green flag status than the other Green flag sites highlighted in the document. I am therefore left wondering why the criteria has not in this case been fairly applied and also left wondering why there is a continued refusal to directly answer this question!

Many thanks for the time that I am sure you will take you to investigate this matter fully and hopefully find out why the criteria has not been fairly applied and do something to rectify this error in using the processes highlighted by Mr Casey.

Yours sincerely

Response

I refer to your email to me dated 24 January 2018 requesting clarification in relation to why Court Hey Park appears on the list of parks for potential disposal despite other "Green Flag parks" having been excluded from that list by virtue of their Green Flag status.

As Rupert Casey stated in his email to you on 24 January 2018, "retaining the Green Flag status of Court Hey Park is a clear requirement of the Council and as such any new development on the site must ensure that this happens (this applies to the land and building occupied by the former National Wildflower Centre and the land identified at the front of the park adjacent to Roby Road). The Council is confident that this can be achieved."

The closure of the National Wildflower Centre forced the Council in early 2017 to seek alternative funding sources and uses to maintain Court Hey Park. As a result, prior to the recent decision to identify sites for potential disposal, we were already several months into a process which we hope will secure an investor or other third party who may be able to take over the running of Court Hey Park and maintain its Green Flag status. Court Hey was therefore included in the list of sites because this work was already ongoing and because that work is intended to protect the site's Green Flag status.

I hope that this clarifies matters for you.

Follow-up enquiry from the same resident:

Thanks for your clarification, however, the offers very little clarification and only reemphasises the fact that Rupert, and his department did not treat all sites fairly in the evaluation process. In fact, again i am frustrated again that it doesn't fully answer my question.

From my knowledge of the other green flag sites and the criteria for Green Flag sites, it is not just Court Hey that could have been partially surrendered and the Green Flag status maintained so this offers no clarification as to why Court Hey has been considered while the others have not. I hope this clarifies my complaint with the process and the lack of transparency. I would therefore ask that you would properly investigate this decision.

With respect to your second paragraph " The closure of the National Wildflower Centre forced the Council in early 2017 to seek alternative funding sources and uses to maintain Court Hey Park. As a result, prior to the recent decision to identify sites for potential disposal, we were already several months into a process which we hope will secure an investor or other third party who may be able to take over the running of Court Hey Park and maintain its Green Flag status. Court Hey was therefore included in the list of sites because this work was already ongoing and because that work is intended to protect the site's Green Flag status."

None of this is part of the criteria for selection of the sites and therefore should have no influence on its selection as one of the sites to be surrendered. If this was the case, this tender process needed to be highlighted earlier on in the process and agreed by councillors which from my reading of the information it was not. This information therefore offers no justification for the inclusion of Court Hey in the list of sites to surrender.

Could you therefore please look again at how Court Hey was selected for surrender based on the criteria by the independent review body that was agreed by council before the process began.

In summary can you look into why,

1 - Court Hey was the only Green Flag site considered for partial surrender (without losing the Green Flag Status) whilst there is no evidence from any of the paperwork released by the council that the others were also looked at in this way.

2 - Criteria used to justify Court Hey's selection was not agreed prior to the selection process (the tender process is not part of the criteria).

3 - Why it has been claimed that criteria has been applied fairly across all sites when it clearly hasn't (I refer to Rupert Casey's email where he suggests that "

Thanks for taking the time to thoroughly look into this.

Could you also please inform me of the steps that I would need to take to escalate this so that a body independent of the council could look into the way

that the decision making process has been applied in this instance if again the council fail to explain how they applied the agreed criteria fairly or alternatively agreed to reevaluate all of the 160 sites using the agreed criteria.

Yours sincerely

Additional comments:

Apologies for sending without the quote from Rupert!

"six assessment measures and 18 assessment indicators were used to establish the 17 parkland sites for surrender "

The tender process, from what I have read is not included in any of these assessment measures or 18 assessment indicators and these were agreed by the board.

Follow-up enquiry from the same resident:

I emailed 10 days ago with regards to Court Hey Park asking for further clarification and have had no reply.

I am assuming that as I have followed Step 1 of the Complaints Procedure and have a reply from Rupert Casey, Head of Sustainable Resources

And now having followed Step 2 and had a review undertaken by head of service (yourself)

I can now proceed to step 3 and make a referral to the local government ombudsmen. Would you be able to provide further clarification to my questions before I make that step.

Yours sincerely,

Response:

Thank you for your latest email dated 13 February 2018 and I'm sorry for the delay in responding to your previous email of 29 January 2018. I understand that you also emailed the Leaders blog on 24 January on the same issues and therefore please accept this as a single response to your enquiries to the Council.

I am conscious that you have had a number of responses from Rupert and myself, and whilst you may disagree with the way the Council has applied the criteria I can reassure you that this has been robust, fair and consistent across all 161 parks and open spaces (including the 18 Green Flag Parks). I have set out below the reasons

as to why Court Hey Park has been selected against the points that your specifically highlight:-

1 - Court Hey was the only Green Flag site considered for partial surrender (without losing the Green Flag Status) whilst there is no evidence from any of the paperwork released by the council that the others were also looked at in this way.

The land values of all 161 Parks and Open Spaces were considered (including the 18 Green Flag Parks) and the land per hectare in Court Hey Park for housing development is projected to be of high value and its release helps the Council to remain within the 10% threshold.

2 - Criteria used to justify Court Hey's selection was not agreed prior to the selection process (the tender process is not part of the criteria).

The Council cannot simply ignore the current tender process which commenced before the review board engaged their work and it is within the Council's gift to incorporate this approach to ensure it protects 90% of its parks and open spaces.

3 - Why it has been claimed that criteria has been applied fairly across all sites when it clearly hasn't (I refer to Rupert Casey's email where he suggests that "

See the responses to 1 and 2 above.

The Council's formal complaints procedure is available should you wish to use it. This can be accessed via the following link:-

<https://secured.knowsley.gov.uk/haveyoursayform>

I hope this has resolved the issue for you however if you remain dissatisfied you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Local Government Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry CV4 0EH

0300 061 0614

Yours sincerely

**This email is in response to the proposed development at the rear of
Blackburne Drive L25 0QF.**

I am concerned for many reasons about the use of this land for new properties.

If you take a look at the attached photograph you will see my back garden – no it's not a pond I have constructed – it is supposed to be grass!

The rear garden of my, and other properties cannot reasonably be used over the winter and indeed at many times in the summer (this photo was taken in June). The introduction of new buildings will, by their very nature, introduce impervious materials over a large area of the green space, this in turn will increase run off (due to the decrease in natural drainage) to the existing properties along Blackburne Drive.

I therefore fear the building of houses on the “Doorstep Green” would not only place a burden on existing infrastructure, but produce a flood plane at the rear of the existing properties on Blackburne Drive, whilst depriving the communities in the area of a much needed recreational space.

Over the years the Doorstep Green has build a rich flora and fauna with many new species evolving. In Summer 2017 there was a nightly occurrence of pipistrelle bats, the latest inhabitants to the green.

As I am sure you appreciate all the UK species of bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and it is illegal to harm them or disturb their roost sites.

I hope you can see that building on this area of green space would be ill-advised for the above reasons, and believe me there are other issues too, but I do not wish to take up any more of your valuable time.

Regards & Best Wishes.

Thank you for your email dated 21 February which Councillor Finneran has passed to me to respond to.

You are clearly skilled gardeners who are committed to protecting our natural environment. These are attributes that Knowsley Council very much values and shares, as the wide ranging benefits that all green space offers to the borough are unique.

The decision of Knowsley Council to consider the sale of the part of Halewood Doorstep Green (approximately 42%) that is adjacent to your garden for housing has been made on basis that the money raised would be used (alongside funds secured from the sale of 16 other parkland sites in Knowsley) to pay for the upkeep of the vast majority 144 (90%) of public parks across Knowsley forever. I appreciate your concerns regarding this potential development, however, Knowsley Council has

been forced to take this action given the significant and unrelenting cuts that central Government is making to its funding. The funding Knowsley Council does have available is being used to support the most vulnerable children and adults in our society and so unfortunately the Council cannot afford to fund the upkeep of parks from April 2019. Therefore, without a new way of funding and managing our parks they will fall into rapid decline or indeed close altogether.

You may be interested to read the report that can be accessed using the following link that explains this very difficult situation in more detail.

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

Any new development on Halewood Doorstep Green would be carefully planned by Knowsley Council to take into account the important surface water drainage issues you highlight and consider the impact on the flora and fauna the site hosts. No development can take place unless it has secured planning permission which includes a requirement to consult with those living in proximity to the site and interested organisations such as the Environment Agency who will take particular interest in the issues that you have raised.

I would highlight that if this development did proceed:-

- 58% of Halewood Doorstep Green would be retained as public green space which would benefit from improvements that would be funded by the housing developer, plus would be protected forever from any future funding cuts Knowsley Council has to make;
- Within a 10 minute walk of the site the local community can access other green spaces including Halewood Park and New Hutte Woods; and
- Within a 30 minute walk the local community can access green spaces including Arncliffe Playing Fields, Frensham Park and Court Farm Woods.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done before Knowsley Council makes any final decision on this matter.

Yours sincerely

I write, on behalf of several members of my local community, in reference to the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review “the Review” which has been unanimously agreed by Knowsley Council’s Cabinet on 9 January 2018.

We have read the large amounts of correspondence and documentation that the Review had produced and appreciate the extensive hard work and commitment that has gone into finding a solution to secure the financial future of 144 park sites by surrendering 10% (17) of the borough’s park sites,

We support the Review as the best solution going forward however members of our local community are extremely concerned that the Review is fundamentally flawed.

One of the retained 144 sites is “Blacklow Brow” located at Twickenham Drive in Huyton and is listed as Amenity Green Space “that will be protected forever”. The land is known locally as the field/land on Twickenham Drive

St Anne’s Catholic Primary School has submitted a planning application to erect 2.4 metre high fencing and gates to enclose the majority of the land at Blacklow Brow thereby taking a significant amount of amenity greenspace away from the local community.

Knowsley Planning Department, on 31 January 2018, recommended granting permission. Knowsley Planning Committee met on 8 February 2018 and deferred a decision until 15 March 2018.

One of the reasons cited by the many objectors to the planning application is the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review as the land at Blacklow Brow is listed as “amenity green space” and is “parks and green space that will be protected forever”.

The planning departments reply is “The application site is allocated as Urban Greenspace and Education land on the Local Plan policies map. The substantive report explains why the proposal is considered to be consistent with local planning policies. The Knowsley Parks and Greenspace review document is not part of the Council’s development plan against which planning decision should be made, in accordance with legislation, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Please forgive our presumption in quoting the definition of Amenity Green Space:

“Amenity green spaces are most commonly found in residential areas and function as informal recreation areas, green space in and around housing estates and village greens. Amenity green space is usually publicly accessible and serves the immediate local community providing a space for children’s informal play, jogging and dog walking. Amenity space can also act as a buffer, reducing the noise from a busy road or providing shelter from prevailing winds. Amenity areas should always be highly accessible and, therefore, very close to where people live or work”.

Blacklow Brow is the very definition of Amenity Green Space. It is an integral local amenity, used daily over the whole of the day and in the summer part of the evening by local children, various sports groups and residents for numerous activities. Local residents, young and old, enjoy a safe green space which meets the needs of the local community, encourages them to pursue a healthier and more active lifestyle and fosters a safe and cohesive community.

Our concerns/queries are as follows:

- 1. Is the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review correct?**
- 2. Is “Blacklow Brow” Amenity Greenspace or not?**
- 3. If it is Amenity Greenspace the planning application should not be granted**
- 4. If it is not Amenity Greenspace will the Review be reassessed as:**
 - a. Incorrect information has been presented to the public, the media and Knowsley Council**
 - b. Have other errors been made in the classification of the parks and green spaces listed in the Review which would bring the viability of Review into the question?**
 - c. How will you restore public faith in the Review?**
- 5. The Review states that each of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces sites has been assessed by appropriate officers of Knowsley Council. Why then the disparity between the Review, saying the land is Amenity Green Space and protected forever, and the planning department saying “it is educational land” and that 7,200 square metres can be taken away from the local community**
- 6. How, when after extensive research and consultation, the Review Board declares and Knowsley Council Cabinet agrees, that Blacklow Brow is Amenity Green Space, Knowsley Council Planning Department can disregard the Review and state it does not form part of their planning decisions?**
- 7. In recommending the planning application to Councillors the planning department stated residents could use St Johns Millennium Green. Are they not aware that this is one of the 17 parks/outdoor sports sites identified for sale?**
- 8. Why are the Planning Department ignoring the Parks and Green Spaces Review?**
- 9. Are Knowsley Council Planning Department autonomous from Knowsley Council Cabinet?**

10. On checking the Knowsley Interactive On line Policies Map Cyril Cook Park, Sawpit Park, Cowper Way, Bowring Park Golf Course, 10 Acre Pits, McGoldrick Park and Stadt Moers Park (to name just a few listed in the Review which are in the L36 area) all have an allocation or description type of “Urban Greenspace and Education Land”. Presumably this will apply to the majority of parks and green spaces in the Review. Does this mean that having this description type allows the Planning Department to ignore the Review and the protected status of the listed parks and green spaces and allow land, if requested by an educational body, to be taken away from the local community in direct contravention of the Review?

11. Why after the Cabinet agreeing the Review on 9 January 2018 are Knowsley Council on 31 January 2018 looking to give a school 6,530 square metres more outdoor space than Department of Education Guidelines specify? As asked by a councillor at the planning meeting on 8 February 2018, does this not set a worrying precedent to other schools/educational facilities in the Knowsley area to ask for more land than they need? This would greatly impact on the Review (see point 10 above)

12. In the Review, 6 of the 17 sites identified for sale – Cowper Way, King George V Playing Fields Prescott, Roby Playing Field, Spring Wood, St John’s Millennium Green and Westview - in the section marked “green space provision measure” it is stated the public have access to Bowring Park Golf Course, Cyril Cook Park, 10 Acre Pits and McGoldrick Park. These are the 4 parks which the planning department have advised local residents to use after the loss of Blacklow Brow.

- The above 4 parks cannot be expected to accommodate ever increasing numbers as more and more green space is lost to the local community**
- We have recently lost a large piece of wooded habitat in Cyril Cook Park to new housing. Has the reduced size of Cyril Cook Park been included in your Review?**
- Under the Review over a third, (35%), of the sites identified for sale are in our L36, Huyton/Roby area**
- Should Blacklow Brow be lost this would increase to 39%.**
- Given that under the Review L36 is shouldering a significant portion of the parks/green spaces to be sold off, Huyton/Roby cannot sustain further loss to our Amenity Green Space by losing Blacklow Brow.**

13. If the majority of Blacklow Brow is allowed to be fenced off now this valued green space will be lost to the local community forever.

14. Public trust and support for the Review will be eroded. Please see below.

Councillor Moorhead has requested support from the residents of Knowsley “We call on all our residents to embrace this new Trust and work to ensure the remaining 144 parks and green spaces – 90% of what we have now – continue to be special places for ourselves and future generation to enjoy forever”.

We have looked at your public consultation documents and it is significant that the largest response to the consultation survey was in the L36 area with 26%

In addition the greatest support of Option 2 was from the L36 area with 69%.

The local community of Huyton/Roby have shown that they are prepared to trust and support the Parks and Green Space Review but in less than two months of the Cabinet agreeing to the proposal we are facing the loss of a much used and valued green space which is listed in your Review as protected Amenity Green Space. How, going forward, are Knowsley residents to have faith in the Review and belief in Knowsley Council?

As you are both well aware in the Review “community use” was rated as the most important criteria for the prioritising of the parks. If a park/green space is well used by local residents it indicates its importance to the community and that it is meeting local need.

To say local feeling is running high, against the planning application, is an understatement. One has only to read the objections on Knowsley Council’s Planning Department website to gauge the strength of feeling.

Objectors to the planning application, 378 on line plus numerous others who submitted written objections, come from all parts of the local community: families who use/have used the field, parents of pupils from Blacklow Brow Primary School, pupils from Blacklow Brow, parents of pupils both past and present from St Anne’s, ex pupils of St Anne’s, dog walkers, local residents who so not want to lose the greenspace, sports teams, elderly residents, doctors etc. All these people cannot be wrong in their desire not to lose an integral local amenity which contributes to the happiness, health and wellbeing of a large number of the local community. These are the very people that have given their support to your Review.

We believe that the Cabinet of Knowsley Council should advise Knowsley Council Planning Department that having unanimously agreed to the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review, the Cabinet stand fully behind the Review and that the planning application to fence off the majority of the land at Blacklow Brow, which they have declared is Amenity Green Space, is not permissible.

At the very least, given that Councillor Moorhead has advised that no park sites will go up for sale until after the full business case vote by Cabinet in November 2018, the Cabinet rule that, until this date, no changes will be allowed to any of the parks and green spaces listed in the Review. Consequently the planning application for Blacklow Brow would be put on hold until after the Cabinet vote in November 2018.

In summary:

- Is Blacklow Brow, as listed in the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review, Amenity Green Space?**
- Dependent on your answer – considering all of the above, what is your next course of action?**

As the next planning meeting in this regard is the 15 March 2018 we should be grateful to receive your early replies to our concerns.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Yours sincerely

Response from Cllr Moorhead:

Thank you for your email dated 5 March 2018.

The recommendations made by the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board were based on a range of information that included an audit of the use of publicly accessible green spaces in Knowsley that took place in 2015. In approving these recommendations Knowsley Council recognised that they offer a strategic direction and potential solution which it communicated to the public in January 2018. At this time the Council also explained it is now necessary for it to fully assess the deliverability of the Review Board's proposals before it can make a decision as to whether to implement them or not (with the Council's Cabinet due to make this decision in November 2018). This analysis includes updating the information used by the Review Board (including the outcomes of a new green space audit currently being conducted) which will enhance the level of business case accuracy and analysis applied to the Review Board's proposals. Thus, the Council's business case is expected at this stage to reflect subtle differences in the use of the 144 parks that you reference; a potential example of this is Blacklow Brow. In this case the change would be for approximately 36% of the site moving from an amenity green space use to one of school playing field. If the proposed Knowsley Parks Trust was to be established this part of the site would not transfer to its custodianship, its use and upkeep would be managed and funded by St Anne's Catholic Primary School.

The legal position in relation to Blacklow Brow is that it is owned by the Council and is assigned for use by St Anne's Catholic Primary School. The Council has a legal duty (under the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012) to provide sufficient land for the activities of the School and we fulfil that duty by providing this land for the School's use. The School has never to date laid "sole claim" to the land (for example by erecting a fence or by making any other security arrangement) and neither has the School sought to prevent the public from accessing the site. As a result, custom and practice has grown over a number of years so that the public do access the site – this is why it was included within the scope of the Review Board during 2017. However, the fact is that this public use was always informal. The School has always had the right of priority access to this site and has always been able to take steps to secure the site if and when it wanted to do so. This was referenced in the information that the Council issued on 28 December 2017 regarding method by which it had identified the parkland sites identified for development - please see link below (page 81).

<http://councillors.knowsley.gov.uk/documents/g7272/Public%20reports%20pack%2009th-Jan-2018%2017.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10&StyleType=standard&StyleSize=none>

Clearly, St Anne's Catholic Primary School has now decided that the time is right to secure the site and that is why this particular planning application has come forward. This does change matters in respect to Blacklow Brow and these new circumstances will be included in the Council's detailed business plan of the Review Board's recommendations.

I should emphasise that Blacklow Brow is not being sold and that St Anne's Catholic Primary School's is enacting its legal right to enclose the land for its use, although the height of the fence proposed means that planning permission is required.

I thank you for your interest in this matter and I trust that the above information is useful to you.

Yours sincerely

Prescot seems to be the money cow for this council to raise funds by closing down facilities or selling any land for building. to generate money for other areas of Knowsley. Scotch barn baths gone, Two butt lane playing fields - gone, St Edmund arrowsmiths & old central school land - gone, all houses. Now Brown's field. What space and facilities will there be for children in the near future. Other areas of your council have public baths, sport facilities and land, Prescot all too soon will have no land at all. It aggrieves me that our green land and sports fields are being sold off to fund other areas. Prescot

land makes more money as it is a more desirable location than most parts of your borough, but you cannot keep selling Prescott off 1 piece of land after another. Once built upon the land will never come back. The councils short sightedness will leave future generations of proscot children and families with on where to play or to walk and see a bit of green. Another the Old BICC site, another housing estate, Kirby, Huyton do not have this, they have sport facilities and land. Leave Prescott alone and move onto other areas and sell of there land. We have little left ot give, that you have not already sold of for housing.

Stop building on Prescott till the next generations have no green land to walk or play on.

Thank you for your recent enquiry.

This Council has taken the difficult decision you refer to because of the significant and unrelenting cuts that the Government has made to local services. Knowsley Council's budget has been cut by £100m (around 50%) since 2010 – in fact, we have been hit harder by Government cuts than any other local authority in England. The lack of funding for our parks is exactly the reason why we have been forced this approach to protecting our parks for the future.

We very much realise the value of our parks and green spaces to our communities. That is why we asked the independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board to conduct extensive research last year into new funding and management arrangements which might be adopted as a way of protecting these assets as far as possible from the Government's funding cuts. The Review Board's report can be accessed via the following link and its recommendations were approved at a Cabinet meeting on 9 January 2018:-

<http://knowsleyparksboard.co.uk/>

The Council is now looking at whether this way forward is fully viable and the matter will be considered at Scrutiny Committee in June 2018 and again by Cabinet in November 2018 before any final decisions are made. There is a lot more work to be done before the Council makes a final decision over this matter.

Whilst Brown's Field has been selected for development there are other public green spaces in close proximity to it, namely:-

(a) Carr Lane Woods and Stadt Moers Park (within a 10 minute walk) - Carr Lane Woods has not been identified as a site for new housing; and

(b) Eaton Street Park, Prescot School, Henley Park, KGV Playing Fields (Huyton), Sawpit Park, McGoldrick Park, Huyton Wetlands, Two Butt Playing Fields, Windy Arbour Playing Fields and Lord Derby Playing Fields (within a 30 minute walk).

The new housing development progressing at Prescot Park will include a new public green space and any new housing development on Brown's Field will require the re-provision of one hectare (equivalent to one full size football pitch) of new parkland / play area on the site whilst the new housing development's boundaries would be appropriately landscaped to retain good visual amenity.

Furthermore, the Council is assessing the potential for improving Carr Lane Woods so that it can provide some of the football and other recreation features provided by Brown's Field.

I can assure you that the future vitality of Prescot and its residents is a priority for Knowsley Council. I can evidence this through the £2m Prescot Soccer Centre, the £3.2m Town Heritage Initiative which is changing the face of the town centre shops, alongside the new public realm and highway improvements in Leyland Street and Atherton Street, and the construction commencing next month on the £500,000 investment in Market Place; the new £5m joint Police and fire station; the archaeological dig, hoardings and appointment of Kier Construction to build the £26m Shakespeare North Theatre that this Council has invested £6m and the land to build it; the new 27 bed boutique hotel which starts construction next month on the former Imperial Hotel site, the new homes to be constructed this year on Prescot Park which will further strengthen the viability of the town centre. We also expect to see our City Region bid succeed for our Shakespeare Connectivity programme which will bring a further £9.3m to improve the Railway station and access arrangements, deliver a Shakespearean trail from the Railway to the Theatre whilst replacing the whole of the public realm along Eccleston Street. We are working to deliver an 8 screen multiplex cinema for the town centre and during 2018 we will see a number of independent restaurants opening across Prescot. There are numerous other developments which will happen during 2018 which will create more new jobs, provide new business units for our expanding businesses, creating an evening economy for the town whilst establishing Prescot as a weekend destination.

Yours sincerely