

**Question from Dr Robert Hadley to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety—Public Protection and Safety PDS—29<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

*The safety of the public, particularly of children, using the unlit public footpath through the woodland between Crofton Avenue and Newstead Avenue in the Crofton Ward, has been brought to the attention of the Council on very many occasions by a resident who has made a request for the path to be lit. The head teachers of both Newstead and Darrick Wood Schools have now supported this resident for a request for a Risk Assessment to be made of the paths' safety.*

*Would the Council support such an assessment in view of the fact that no reports of any criminal activity have ever been recorded from this path and does the Council agree that this path should be illuminated?*

**Answer from the Portfolio Holder:**

*Thank you for question Dr Hadley.*

*As a former pupil of Newstead Wood, I am very familiar with the footpath and its usage. The crux of the impasse between the resident that you refer to in your question, and I with the others at the Council and the local police team, is that whereas he believes lighting the footpath would make it safer, we believe it (perhaps counter-intuitively) would make it more dangerous.*

*Unlike a usual footpath or alleyway that would be suitable for lighting, this one goes through woods where it is easier for people to lurk and hide. I don't wish to action anything that would encourage children or adults into woodland after dark.*

*Several months ago, the resident in question sought to get the police to support his campaign. They declined. Recently I have spoken with both the local sergeant and the Farnborough and Crofton Ward dedicated PCSO, and they reconfirmed to me that they did not support the installation of lighting in this vicinity.*

*I cannot confirm or otherwise, your statement that no reports of any criminal activity have ever been recorded from this path. However I can confirm that not a single crime has been reported on the footpath during the last 6 years that the local PCSO has been working on the Ward.*

*The advice given to me whilst at school was never to walk through the woods after dark and instead to walk around the longer street way, and during the daytime never to walk though alone. This advice I believe is the best advice to keep residents and particularly our school children safe.*

*As lighting is the remit of Environmental Services, not Public Protection and Safety, I will now hand over to the Executive Director for Environment and Community Services to answer the part of the question concerning risk assessments.*

**Response from the Director of Environmental and Community Services concerning Risk Assessments:**

*I agree with the Portfolio Holder that there would be a greater element of risk outside of daylight hours.*

*If the local authority introduced street lighting then the implication would be that the alleyway could be used after dark and so there would be an increased risk by encouraging individuals to enter woodland after dark. If an incident then occurred the local authority could be held liable. In the circumstances I recommend that individuals should use lit highways after dark.*

*Risk has been assessed both by the local authority in conjunction with the police although no formal risk assessment has taken place in these circumstances as it has not been deemed appropriate for the reasons given above. Formal risk assessments as prescribed by the Health and Safety Executive are more relevant to the workplace.*

There were no supplementary questions.

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