

## **COUNCIL NOTICEBOARDS**

### **Introduction**

On 15 May 2023, the Council appointed a noticeboard strategy working group because it recognises the importance of communicating with residents in non-electronic form.

On 9 October 2023, the Council's Amenities Committee dissolved the working group and requested that Council officers report to the full Council (minute ref. A/23/62).

The full Council had adopted the former working group's terms of reference on 26 June 2023 (minute ref. 23/107) as follows:

1. The working group is not a Council committee and will refer to the Town Council for decisions. It will communicate and inform the Council of its findings through sub-committees if appropriate, and/or to make recommendations to full Council.
2. The group will meet as required, meetings will not be open to the public and agendas, reports and meetings notes will not be publicly available.
3. The group will review the value of noticeboards.
4. The group will review the current type of noticeboards, their purchase and installation costs and vulnerability as evidenced in various acts of vandalism.
5. The group will consider the existing network of noticeboards, potential relocation or expansion of the network into new or alternative locations.
6. Consider whether the noticeboards in the Country Park could/should identify the Country Park and if/how these could be made to look different from "Council" noticeboards.
7. Consider opportunities for sponsorship of noticeboards.
8. The group will consider the accessibility, content and ongoing management of the noticeboards.

The group does not concern itself with Council communications as a whole or the wider subject of community engagement but is to confine its review of the public noticeboards.

The above terms had been drafted to include some of the questions to which the Council requires a response before making any decisions in relation to the provision of noticeboards across Cranbrook. Below are responses to each of the points raised in the former terms:

### **Value of Noticeboards**

Anecdotally, the Council knows that the noticeboards throughout the town are well-used and appreciated by residents who may not be computer literate or who do not have a personal social media presence. Noticeboards provide current and upcoming information for the public and members of the community. This includes but is not limited to community clubs, wellbeing groups, charities and events/activities.

In addition to this, noticeboards are a form of media for new and external members of the community. Providing informative details of the area such as Country Park maps, policies, and council contact information.

### Review of Current Type of Noticeboards

In June 2023, the Council had commissioned a review of the current type of noticeboards, their purchase and installation costs and vulnerability as evidenced in various acts of vandalism.

The Council currently owns seven floor-mounted three-door noticeboards and one wall-mounted two-door noticeboard. These are located at the Younghayes Centre (wall-mounted two-door) as well as at Tillhouse Road, Southbrook Meadow and five noticeboards located across the Country Park (all floor-mounted three-door). All Council noticeboards to date have been sourced from the Parish Noticeboard Company's Prestige range and that Company's current range and price list is attached to this report.

On 21 November 2016, the Council resolved to purchase the two floor-mounted noticeboards in Tillhouse Road and Southbrook Meadow at £1,440.00 each plus £150.00 anti-graffiti coating per board after the Council had obtained four quotes for noticeboards (minute ref. 16/274). Their delivery and installation in 2017 cost £450 which was funded by the then Parishes Together fund – which is why those two noticeboards still carry the logos of East Devon District Council and Devon County Council.

The five noticeboards located in the Country Park were purchased and installed by the East Devon New Community Partners.

Some of the existing noticeboards have been vandalised. However, during 2022-23 and 2023-24, the Council only incurred one invoice of £37.50 from the Council's Handyman for repairs and maintenance on all Cranbrook Country Park noticeboards. The replacement and installation of Perspex where required on doors with glazing missing is included in the quote from the Council's Handyman on page 4 below.

### Country Park Noticeboards

Tony Benger Landscaping Ltd had recently submitted an application for a Green Flag award, an international accreditation given to publicly accessible parks and open spaces which is managed under licence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Keep Britain Tidy. The judges provided informal feedback which included a comment that the noticeboards located in the Country Park do not denote the Country Park as they are headed with the wording "Cranbrook Town Council". In order for the "Country Park" noticeboards to look different from "Council" noticeboards, the wording "Cranbrook Town Council" at the top of those noticeboards could simply be replaced with the wording "Cranbrook Country Park".

The Parish Noticeboard Company is able to supply replacement lettering for all five noticeboards at a cost of £75 plus VAT. The Company can supply an instruction sheet of how to remove and apply lettering on a board.

The Ranger updates the noticeboards to provide relevant information for users. Including monthly 'what to see' posters and related events hosted in the Country Park.

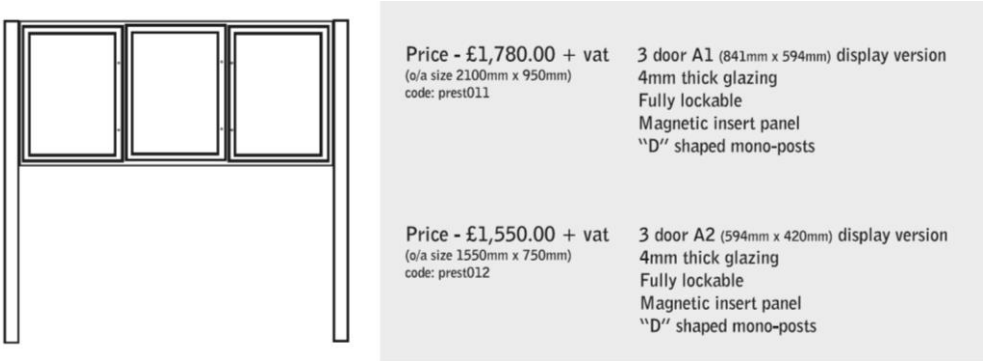
Councillors who attended the Council's Amenities Committee on 9 October 2023 commented at that meeting whether the Country Park should have noticeboards which are more in keeping with the Country Park and whether that change could happen over a period of time which would enable the existing Country Park noticeboards to be relocated to new locations. There are a variety of styles available from tree branch style posts to boards with a canopy which might be more suitable than the existing metal boards within the setting of the Country Park. Officers advise against the installation of timber structures which will inevitably have a shorter life expectancy than ones made of more durable materials. Play equipment in the St Martin's play area was installed in 2014 made of timber which is failing.

Review of Existing Network of Noticeboards

In June 2023, the Council had commissioned a review of the existing network of noticeboards, potential relocation or expansion of the network into new or alternative locations.

The current noticeboards were installed at significant locations across the town; those locations continue to be well frequented and the noticeboards in those locations continue to serve their purpose.

As the town continues to grow, it is suggested that the Council should expand its network of noticeboards in order to benefit those residents living in the eastern part of the town. A natural additional location appears to be the triangular public open space at the junction of Rush Meadow Road with Yonder Acre Way. It is suggested that the same make and model of noticeboard be purchased again in order to ensure recognisability and a consistent street scene. The current purchase cost of the relevant Prestige floor-mounted three-door noticeboard from the Parish Noticeboard Company is £1,780 plus VAT, plus delivery at £100 plus VAT and installation at £695 plus VAT.



Looking into the longer-term future, the Council may wish to consider whether it would like to instal additional noticeboards at the Platinum Park, the Ecology Park (for purposes similar to the Country Park noticeboards) and/or the Ingrams sports pitch site.

Sponsorship of Noticeboards

When the Council first considered sponsorship opportunities on 15 May 2023, the Council articulated concerns in relation to VAT compliance, among other considerations (minute ref. 23/90).

On 25 September 2023, the Council considered a report from DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd regarding the treatment of VAT. That report explained that donations which freely given with no benefit to the giver are not subject to VAT and that sponsorship or payment for advertising at an agreed payment rate are subject to VAT (minute ref. 23/165).

The Council is still progressing its VAT registration with an effective date on 1 October 2023 and there is no reason why sponsorship opportunities at noticeboards could now not be pursued. Any invoice created to a sponsor will simply attract VAT at the standard rate. On 15 May 2023, the Council considered a report which suggested that Council noticeboards, being located in highly frequented areas in the town, could feature A4-size sponsorship information at a cost of £40 per month plus VAT.

### Accessibility, Content and Ongoing Management of Noticeboards

The Council's noticeboards are all located in accessible locations at appropriate heights.

The noticeboards in the Country Park are used to display Park-related information, whereas the remaining three noticeboards are used to display Council-related information, including the summons for Council meetings.

Council staff visit the noticeboards at least weekly and update their content as part of their regular duties. The Council's Ranger and Handyman have been managing the noticeboards' maintenance ad-hoc. On 9 October 2023, the Council's Handyman submitted the following quote for £415 covering a more comprehensive maintenance programme of the eight noticeboards to include:

- Replacing and installing where needed all barrel locks to allow for a single key to access all boards (the locks would be supplied by the Council at £150 plus VAT for 20 locks)
- Removing sticky residue from glass panels and any debris from inside the boards
- Strengthening weak points in the structures by riveting through main body to posts on the older boards and tightening up Allen screws where possible on the newer boards
- Replace and install Perspex where required on doors with glazing missing or too discoloured
- Replace rubber seals around glazing where required

The locks in the current Parish Noticeboard Company noticeboards began to fail surprisingly early in their life but have not been replaced to date.

## **Recommendations**

- a) To replace the wording “Cranbrook Town Council” with the wording “Cranbrook Country Park” on the five noticeboards in the Country Park at a cost of £75 plus VAT.
- b) To purchase one additional noticeboard from the Parish Noticeboard Company to instal at the triangular public open space at the junction of Rush Meadow Road with Yonder Acre Way and to include this position in the Council’s draft budget for the 2024-25 financial year at a cost of £2,575 plus VAT including delivery and installation.
- c) To confirm whether the Council wishes to instal additional noticeboards at the Platinum Park, the Ecology Park (for purposes similar to the Country Park noticeboards) and/or the Ingrams sports pitch site.
- d) To offer sponsorship opportunities at Council noticeboards to contribute to their maintenance and eventual replacement in the form of A4-size sponsorship information at a cost of £40 per month plus VAT.