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D'line: 12/6/09

# Jonathan Shaw

Member of Parliament for Chatham and Aylesford



411 High Street  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 4NU

Tel: 01634 811573  
Fax: 01634 811006  
www.jonathanshaw.org.uk

Mr Robin Cooper  
Director of Regeneration and Development  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 4TR

MEDWAY COUNCIL

26

May 2009

Our Ref: GS/JS

29 MAY 2009

Director's Office  
Regeneration, Community  
and Culture

Dear Mr Cooper

**Re: Maidstone Road Sport Ground (Chatham)**

Please find enclosed copy of an email from Ms Tracey Coutts, 43 Ingle Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 5SD.

I understand that over 280 local residents have added their signature to a petition to save the park and also improve the existing facilities. I am aware that my constituent and the other petitioners are not satisfied with your response to their concerns so far and that the matter has been referred to Regeneration Community and Culture Scrutiny on 16th June.

Ms Coutts describes the situation as unacceptable and feels that the local residents have been ignored and disregarded.

I would therefore ask that my interest is noted in this case. I would be grateful for your urgent attention to this important local issue and your reassurances that the local authority is committed to safeguard the park and improve the existing facilities.

I look forward to receiving a positive reply in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Shaw MP

## Harrington, Nicola

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**From:** ALBISTON, Jane  
**Sent:** 14 May 2009 08:35  
**To:** Harrington, Nicola  
**Subject:** FW: Letter from your constituent T Coutts

-----Original Message-----

**From:** T Coutts [mailto:gowers.family@blueyonder.co.uk]  
**Sent:** 14 May 2009 00:05  
**To:** ALBISTON, Jane  
**Subject:** Letter from your constituent T Coutts

T Coutts  
43 Ingle Rd  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 5SD

Phone: 01634842743

Email:  
gowers.family@blueyonder.co.uk

Thursday 14 May 2009

Dear Jonathan R Shaw,

have emailed you before re. the plight of our last remaining green spaces, for public use & enjoyment, shame so much is now being eroded, in such a deprived ward, 20% of the most deprived of such provision in the whole of England?, some say conspiracy of builders / council/ government, we hope not,

have already emailed re. local green space, maidstone rd sports ground [chatham], appears you have not responded

understand maybe constraints, & time, your constituents need you & want response, I note that other mps are realising their constituents wishes, may i mention, jubilee Gillingham

Yours sincerely,  
a committed labour voter, but i wonder, Tracy Coutts & family

549ef72ce73c77d00380/63e1ef51f5cb6ac36802  
(Signed with an electronic signature in accordance with subsection 7(3) of the Electronic Communications Act 2000.)

[ This message was sent by WriteToThem.com. If you have had any problems receiving this message, please email team@writetothem.com and we'll get back to you. See www.writetothem.com for more details about the service. We have sent this email to albistonj@parliament.uk; if this address is out of date please email us so that we can update our records. ]

Please contact: Sam Irvine  
Director's Assistant

Your ref:

Our ref: RC/SI/letters/me257ack

Date: 29 May 2009

Mr Jonathan Shaw MP  
411 High Street  
CHATHAM  
Kent ME4 4NU

Director's Office  
Regeneration, Community and Culture  
Medway Council  
Civic Headquarters  
Gun Wharf, Dock Road  
Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR  
(DX56006 STROOD)  
telephone: 01634 331323  
facsimile: 01634 331729  
email: sam.irvine@medway.gov.uk

Dear Mr Shaw

**Maidstone Road Sport Ground (Chatham)**  
**Ms Tracey Coutts, 43 Ingle Road, Chatham ME4 5SD**

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2009 and the enclosed copy of an email from Ms Coutts dated 14 May 2009..

I confirm that your interest in the case has been noted and will be passed to the Overview and Scrutiny team in preparation for the meeting on 16 June.

Yours sincerely

**Sam Irvine**  
**Director's Assistant**

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**This information is available in other formats and languages from Sam Irvine on 01634-331323. If you wish to contact the Council through the Minicom (text) facility please ring 01634 333111.**

164 Maidstone Road,  
Chatham.

~~Kent~~

4/6/69

ME4 6ED

Dear Caroline,

Although unable to attend the meeting held recently in Maidstone Rd. Sports Ground, Chatham, we would like to join the appeal for securing the future of this very old and much needed recreation space.

We have lived opposite the Sports ground for over 40 years and have seen various changes over that period - especially on the Maidstone Rd. side. The original St. John's Tennis Club, once disbanded, was left as an expanse of well worn grass, on which people walked their dogs and stopped for a chat. Recently, a number of teenagers have regularly played football there and we have been impressed with their excellent behaviour. At a time when young people seem to get into all sorts of trouble and the plea is that they have 'nowhere to meet up', surely the Council's priority is to make sure there is at least one well kept and permanently supervised parts where people of all ages can feel safe and enjoy their relaxation.

An attendant, full time, and regular maintenance of the Sports ground is surely the least that decent people, young and old deserve for this lovely green space.

Yours sincerely,  
John & Josephine Sutton.

We are not asking for too much, we want the Football/Park Grounds left as they have been for many years, with maybe the addition at peak (summer holidays) times a park attendant, and maybe re-open toilet facilities at those times maybe to make money for the council an Ice cream Van/Mobile Canteen at peak times.

Yours sincerely,



09.06.09.

1A Letchworth Ave

I was born in Kitchener Avenue and have used the Football Grounds for over 50 years and want to continue to do so - S.S.

Regeneration, Community  
and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
c/o Caroline Salisbury  
Medway Council  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Rd  
Chatham  
Kent ME4 4TR

Re- Maidstone Rd Sports Ground [Chatham] 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009

I have been a regular user of the park for the past 22yrs and find it hard to believe the council could think of allowing this, the only green space for children in this area, to be allowed to degenerate, the removal of the park attendant now means that the children using this park have no-body to turn to, should they have a problem. It also means the community spirit that was there, is disappearing. The adult knew that for the most part their children were relatively safe.

Yours sincerely,

Yours Sincerely

MRS. L. Mumford

**SAVE OUR PARK Maidstone Rd Sports Ground [Chatham]**

No guarantee of site's future. Council neglect & further run down our dear old park. Did you know we no longer have attendants or access to toilets on site? Council now want community to form a 'Friends Group' & fund raise for the park. But haven't we paid, aren't we still paying through our taxes already? What has the Council done with our money, they haven't maintained in fact they've cut services?. Sure the Council wants 'Friends Groups', to save them even more money, but these groups cannot guarantee to win any funds & think of the scale of the amount to be raised & what would have to be continually raised in future. If the park was reliant on this, what would happen if no money could be raised or funds ran out, just like what has happened to so many other services now extinct or closing. Even if the Community did fund raise in this way, the Council would still keep ownership of the site & what's on the site, so they could sell it off & or build houses on it at any time should they choose to.

Residents have protested & petitioned, we need our park & deserve better. Backed by MP & ward councillors we are appealing to the Council to reconsider their investment & for urgent maintenance & improvements, -repair & re-open the toilets – staffing at busiest times – more benches – 5 A side football [change of use/make over of seasonal grass tennis courts area] - & ongoing maintenance/ supervision of hard tennis courts

Your views are important, can you help to persuade the Council to reconsider & secure a future for our park? Please write to the Council, letters up to June 24<sup>th</sup> - you may wish to use the slip & envelope provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ please tear here \_\_\_\_\_

Regeneration, Community  
and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
c/o Caroline Salisbury  
Medway Council  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Rd  
Chatham  
Kent ME4 4TR

Re- Maidstone Rd Sports Ground [Chatham] 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009

*The items outlined above must be  
acted on. You were voted in to help the  
community at large - not to play National  
Politics - locally.*

Yours sincerely,

  
12/6/09

137 CHARLTON ST  
CHATHAM

salisbury, caroline

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**From:** schobs, margaret  
**Sent:** 28 May 2009 14:05  
**To:** salisbury, caroline  
**Subject:** Re:Maidstone Rd , Chatham sports ground appeal

Dear Caroline

I am a resident with 2 children & use our nearby park. I am very concerned that its upkeep/maintenance appears to be threatened ie attendant being taken away, etc. Please accept my e-mail as my opposition to any threat to sports ground

With thanks & regards  
Margaret & Andrew Schobs

56 Bournville Avenue  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 6LR

Caroline Salisbury  
Regeneration, Community & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
Medway Council  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 4TR

18 June 2009

Dear Caroline Salisbury,

**MAIDSTONE ROAD SPORTS GROUND APPEAL**

I am writing to ask you to reconsider your option to remove the park attendants from the Maidstone Road Sports Ground. Living opposite the park has given me a sense of pleasure seeing so many people using this sports ground and it's facilities, through all weather conditions. It fact my family and I are regular users of the park.

It is with regret that I must inform you that the state of the park has declined over the last few years and that is despite the hard work of the park attendants looking after a very green and pleasant piece of park land. What will happen to the park with nobody to deter those that vandalise and miss treat these meagre facilities?

Chatham Council boasts of their care for the community, its people, facilities and green space. Therefore why is the council cutting investment in this kind of environmentally friendly green land and therefore lowering the overall appearance of Chatham, for the sake of what must be a very small investment?

It would appear that the Council has an alternative agenda which it is following at the expense of the Maidstone Road Sports Ground.

I implore you to reconsider your options and reinvest in the Maidstone Road Sports Grounds and make this area which is a pleasure to use and enjoy by those who live in the Chatham area.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Paul Clucas



Mrs T Coutts  
43 Ingle Road  
Chatham  
Kent ME4 5SD

21<sup>st</sup> June 2009

Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Medway Council

**Maidstone Road Sports Ground [Chatham] petition 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

Dear Committee,

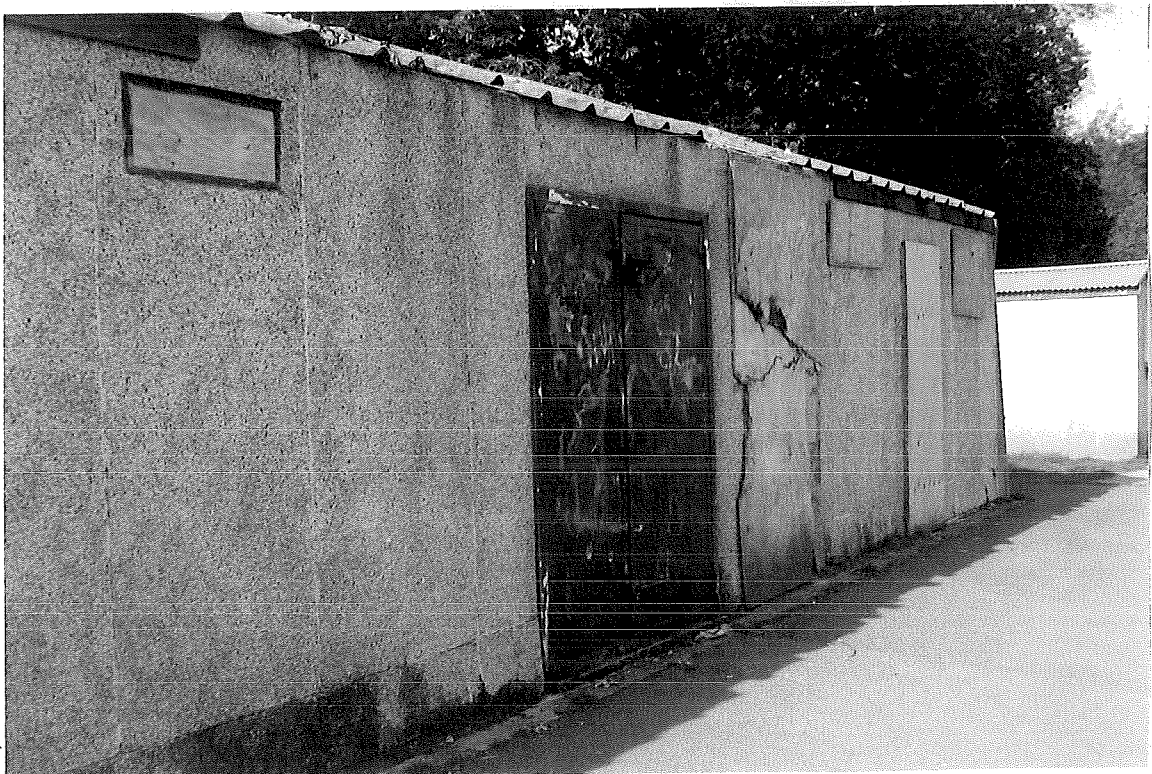
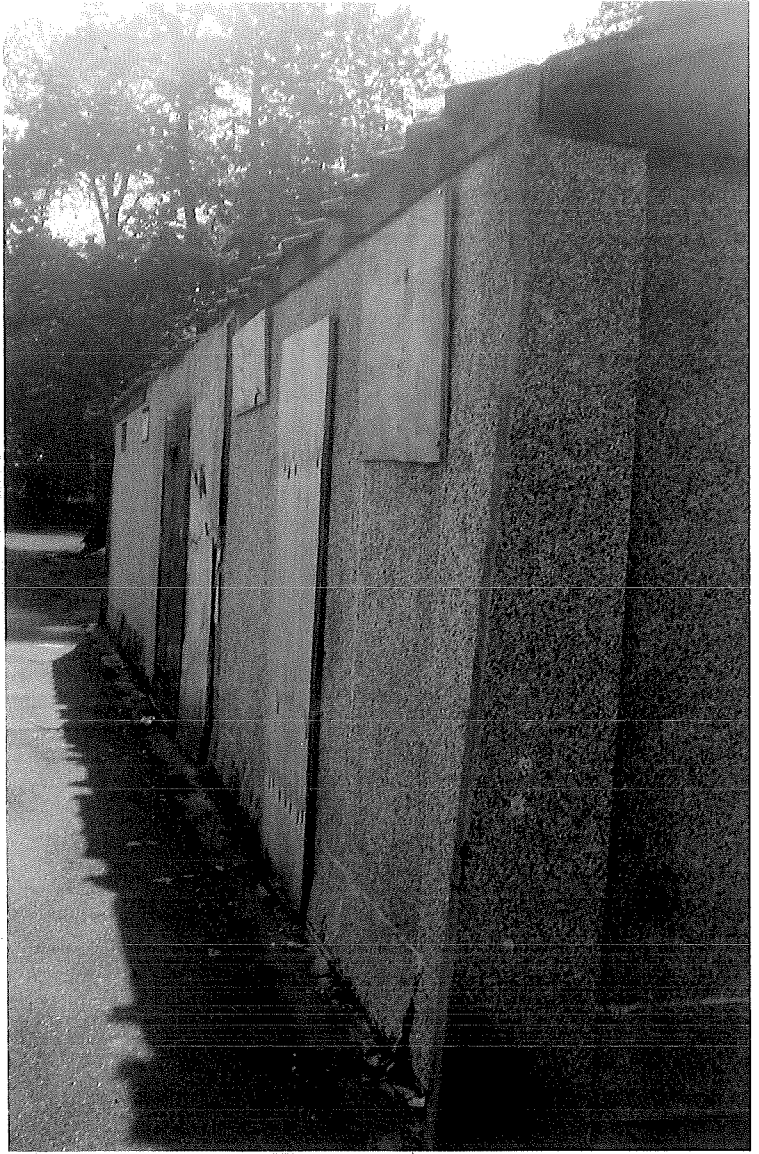
I write to you today with my concerns about the future of this sports ground. I would urge the Council to reconsider their investment in this much needed & popular amenity. Please do spare a thought for our community and young people. We really do deserve much better, really we do ?.

The sports ground.

What a heritage this lovely old site has, with records existing of its' public use way back in the 1890's & throughout the world wars and in more recent memory as a sports ground. The past does not diminish its' current relevance as it remains intrinsic to the needs of the people who live here and the aesthetics of the area, as it has always done.

With thought to the distribution of open space & investment priorities Chatham Central Ward is amongst the 20% most deprived of such in England. How precious our park is indeed, in an urban area that is so built up and becoming increasingly more so, with such a large community that is ever growing. It is an oasis of green space, an essential community resource, so much needed for recreation and our children. With its' mature trees, flora & fauna it is also a haven for wildlife. Literally thousands of people live in close proximity to the park, what other such nearby amenity do we & our children have to enjoy ?.

Please think of our community, families with young children, those that are on low incomes, our youths, the older people and the disabled ?. Perhaps they cannot travel afar, they may not have a car or may have problems with accessing public transport, or the cost of such may further prohibit ?. Some of the most prestigious parks in Medway are so far away from us & not even on mainline bus routes.



With thought to concerns about the increasing obesity in children and in the population, I suggest there has never been a greater need to promote healthy life styles. To encourage more physical activity, surely it is therefore of paramount importance to invest in & to have a local & 'first rate' recreation & sports facility that is suitable for the needs of the people & the amount of the people who currently use it & will in future use it.

In reality, how are these needs are being met ?.

Our only sports ground is local & does provide much needed recreation space. We can walk to it, it is so accessible, and easy for the disabled. However as to the amount of & quality of current services it provides, one may be very disappointed.

Neglect ?.

You could be forgiven for concluding that an option has been taken to ignore & make no investment ?. In fact, even worse you may think the park is being deliberately run down ?.

It is so hard to understand, not to invest, harder still to understand not to maintain, but hardest of all to understand to actually cut what is left ?.

The 'old pavilion' has been allowed to become virtually derelict and was boarded up last year 2008, so there is no longer access to the existing & much needed toilet facilities & water on site. The sports facilities are poor, tired & shabby and there is even a lack of basic amenities such as benches. And in April this year our on site attendants were also made redundant.

How difficult it is now to come with your family & spend the day in the park & utilise the facilities [ what little there are], with no access to toilets & water, few places to even sit and no attendants on site to supervise.

We have always had toilets on site, what happened in 2008, when did our needs change ?. Where did our on site staff 'powder their nose' where does one 'go' now, as there is no other such facility nearby or around ?. Perhaps the 'Council', intends our park to be used in future as a public latrine. And indeed this is what is actually happening. Is it acceptable for the children playing on swings in the playground to have to watch fully grown men exposing themselves & peeing & or other in the park ?. Perhaps what is deemed as acceptable is worked out by postcode, because things are quite different in Rochester, 'Jacksons Fields' or in Rainham at 'Riverside Country Park' or even at Capstone, I don't see them going without their toilets ?. I also believe that these parks have plenty of benches, so 'one' can also sit down, what a shame we aren't afforded the same privileges.



There can be no doubt that our attendants did help to keep the park clean & safe deterring litter, dog fouling and the anti social and in the past they also did supervise the toilets ?. With thought to the size of the park & sheer volume of people, the amount of children, even schools who use it, why cut this much needed & appreciated service ?. Why cut this service completely, perhaps reduction in hours, day a week or even just seasonal staffing may have been considered if appropriate. And wouldn't you have thought that the Council would have involved the community in consultation before making cuts, but alas this was not so.

Now unattended, what detriment to both community & park, families' fears resulting in them staying away. The problems of, litter, the anti social, the 'druggies' & their needles, and of course you may have to battle it out to use the tennis courts for the purpose they were designed for, as the courts are now often in use for other activities ?.

Perhaps we should call our park, Maidstone Road Sport Ground instead of Sports Ground, what sports facilities are there for public usage ?. The public do not play football in the football stadium on site. We only have access to the stadium & its' facilities, toilets & café kiosk etc during 'fixtures' to watch football matches which are seldom, & only seasonal, and we do also have to be able to pay the additionally gate fees to do this.

Sport on site, well we actually only have access to the tennis courts. Did you realise the cost of access, nearly ten pounds for 4 children to play for just an hour, which is quite beyond the reach of most of our children & families. And what would you be paying for, the cost would be the same as any where else in Medway but you'd get poor, tired & shabby facilities here & with no access to toilets or water on site, which you might find off putting ?. The grass courts are seasonal & only open just 2 months of the year and there's not even a bench to sit on. Since unmanned, the Council proclaimed their intension to make tennis free. I would argue, that it is 'free' at the point of access surely ?. What other decision could have been made, but I do wonder though, as the courts were in fact locked up for so many weeks thereafter and of course you now have to battle it out to use them and still may not even be able to use them ?.

What provision is there for our youths ?. They want to play is football, 5 A side, & or basket ball, but unfortunately there isn't such provision on our site. But we do have the already fenced grass tennis courts area which is closed for 10 months of the year and is virtually unused [for tennis] during the 2 months when it is open. You would think that Council would be keen to consult the young people & plan to provide as per their needs & wishes and would have already put this into action, wouldn't you ?, but alas- not so !!.



Since the staff were made redundant, just look at the considerable trouble the community have been put to, to highlight the issues of neglect & lack of provision, & to get the courts unlocked, and the litter picked up, - complaining by phone, letter & email, protesting, petitioning and advertising in the press and meeting with Council Officers.

The petitioners are just ordinary folks, mums, dads grans & granddads - mainly, what time & resources do they have ?. But they do care, and they have made the time and gone to so much trouble even though they are so under resourced & disadvantaged.

What have the Council done ?. Well we have had a letter from Mr Hicks in response to the petition, inviting us the community to further fund raise for the site. Officers have alluded to promises, but as to outcome, there is nothing guaranteed. And of course we have also been asked to call off our appeal ?. Well to be fair, the Council have only had our petition for some nine weeks, what could 'one' expect in this time ?.

You could be forgiven for thinking that perhaps it is quite deliberate to ignore & to do nothing, I suppose this strategy does save the Council some considerable money ?.

Thinking of funding, the council tax payers have paid for the park & continue to pay for the park & its' services. As our council tax rises, and services are being reduced on site, it would be accurate to say - aren't we in fact paying more than ever for less of a service ?.

Having neglected the maintenance on site, & with no investment for new provision either and having also cut on site staffing, the Council now asks the community not only to keep on subsidising through taxes but also to additionally fund raise for the site via a 'Friends Group'.

Are we expected to beg for lottery money ?. Funds can never be guaranteed & think of the scale of the amounts to be raised & what would have to be continually raised in future. If our park was reliant on this, what would happen if no money could be raised or funds ran out, just like what has happened to so many other services, now extinct or closing. Even if the community did fund raise in this way, the Council would still keep ownership of the site & what's on site, so they could remove what we may have funded or sell the site off at any time should they choose to. This is madness ?.

Additionally, as to donations, how does it look ?. If the Council cannot up keep what's already on site, how do they hope to look after what ever is provided in future ? This really is a poor advertisement.





Isn't the Council already content with the money it is making ?. The revenue derived from our taxes and of course there are the phone masts sited in the football stadium. 'One' could question whether it was appropriate to site these where so many children are being encouraged to play. Surely this is an important question, as there is also another mast not so very far away ?. It would seem that our back yard is really being used to generate cash for others, but surely such monies generated in this way should be being used to benefit the community who have to put up with it. Anything else would surely be thought of as abusive. As to the amount of revenue derived, 'one' can only guess, as the Council are not happy to divulge because it might jeopardise their business interests !!.

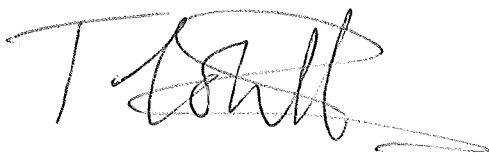
No money for us ?.

What a shame then that the Council are not spending monies on the park, they are not addressing long standing maintenance issues such as the restoration of the 'old pavilion' with its' much needed toilets, they are not re-instating our attendants, we have no 5 A side or basket ball for our youths and we haven't even got replacement benches.

You would have thought that the Council would have invested to such an extent that our park & sports facilities would be 'first rate' & be accredited and win monies in this way just like other 'green flag' sites in Medway ?. You would have thought they would have chosen this route, wouldn't you, but alas – no ?!!.

Please spare a thought for our community, & our dear old sports ground. I urge the Council to re-consider their investment in this amenity for urgently needed restoration & improvements. Such investment would secure a future for the park which is relevant for the benefit of the current community who use it & for the people who will use it in future.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Coutts', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mrs T Coutts