

Report of the Director of Environment & Sport to the meeting of the Bradford East Committee to be held on 17 September 2014

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Subject:

Parks & Green Spaces Service Annual Report

Summary statement:

The Annual Report for the Parks & Green Spaces Service reflects back on the previous 12 months and presents options for future service delivery

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:



1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's Executive on 9 October 2012 identified the Parks & Green Spaces Service to report to Area Committees through the devolution agenda.

The Annual Report for the Parks & Green Spaces Service reflects back on the previous 12 months and presents options for future service delivery

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Parks & Green Spaces Service

Currently sits in the Sports and Leisure Service, which is part of the Environment & Sport Department and the main function is the management and maintenance of the district's parks and green spaces. The area of land managed by the section totals over 1,000 hectares of parks/grassed areas and around 850 hectares of woodland.

In total, utilising its 95 permanent gardeners, the service manages, develops and maintains 36 parks, of which 5 have achieved Green Flag status, 115 recreational spaces (which include football, rugby, cricket, tennis and bowls facilities) and 276 play areas. Property responsibility is also held for over 50 pavilion/changing rooms, 20 lodges and 5 cafes.

The service provides support to community, voluntary and friends of groups whilst co-ordinating all sporting fixtures on playing fields within the service remit.

This service includes the following operational activities managed and delivered within Bradford East Area:

- Management and development of sites including parks, buildings, sports provision and community events.
- Maintenance of Parks and recreation grounds
- Maintenance of sports pitches and bowling greens
- Maintenance of play areas (other than play equipment)
- Grave digging and cemetery maintenance
- Winter maintenance activity to Adult & Children's Services
- Maintenance of highway verges and green spaces vested in other internal clients.

In addition to the above, the Parks and Green Spaces service is responsible for the following services, managed and delivered on a District wide basis:

- Highway weed spraying (delivered by an external contract)
- Plant production and floristry service (Peel Park Nursery)
- Technical Unit (including management of play equipment repair)
- Events relating to sports and parks (including Bingley Music Live) and



- development of 'Friends of' groups
- Trees & Woodlands (including highway trees)
- War Memorials
- Management and coordination of Parks & Green Spaces Fleet

2.2 **Managed Facilities in Bradford East**

Within the Bradford East Area the following main parks are managed and maintained by the service area teams - Peel Park, Bowling Park. Bradford Moor Park.

These parks along with 19 recreational spaces contain 17 equipped play areas, 10 MACA's (Multi Activity Communal Areas) and 3 skate/BMX parks.

Other facilities include 30 Football/Rugby pitches, 10 bowling greens, 5 cricket pitches and 2 tennis courts. The depot also provides services to 11 local schools.

In addition to horticultural works the service is responsible for the upkeep of all the infrastructure (fences, walls and footpaths) and associated structures within the above sites including 19 pavilions, changing facilities and lodges

Additionally the central growing nursery is based at Peel Park, growing in excess of 500,000 bedding plants annually with a 48 panel photovoltaic system installed.

2.3 **New Facilities**

2.3.1 **Completed**

The service has an ongoing programme for new and refurbished facilities, overseen by its Technical Unit, resulting in the following significant project being delivered over the last year;-

Rawdon Meadows

£ 400,000

CBMDC- £175,000

Football Foundation- £100,000

Woodhouse Grove School £125,000

Replacement changing block, indoor archery practice lane and community rooms to serve Rawdon Meadows Playing Fields. The project was undertaken in partnership with Woodhouse Grove School, the Football Foundation and the users of the site . The school has been granted a long term lease of the site and has assumed responsibility for maintenance.

2.3.2 **Ongoing**



The Technical Unit is currently responsible for project management of a number of strategic District wide projects. However, remaining resources currently allow for 1 or 2 further projects to be delivered in each area annually with the following ongoing in the Bradford East Area:

Upper Seymour Street Park
£ 45,000 (Section 106 funding)

Refurbishment of the park with CCTV cameras being installed to address anti social behaviour.

Lupton Street Play Area
£ 55,000 (Wren / Ward Funding and CBMDC)

Refurbish the existing play area to bring the site up to standard.

2.4 **Events**

The Parks & Green Spaces Service stages and supports a high number of events throughout the year (over 150) in its parks & recreation grounds, some of which are huge events such as the prestigious Bingley Music Live festival which is held at Myrtle Park, Bingley each year.

Events planned this year in Bradford East include:

- 2 Fun fairs in Peel Park one in May and one in September
- 1 Circus in Peel Park in August
- 2 Funfairs in Bradford Moor Park, one in May and one in September.
- 1 Funfair in Bowling Park in June.
- Peels on Wheels – cycling event in June at Peel Park
- Eccleshill Village Fair – The Delph in July
- Friends of Bowling Park Gala - July
- Idle Village Tide - September
- Bradford Park Avenue 5-a-side tournament Apperley Bridge PF –July
- 25 one day play schemes across the district.
- BMX bandits regional race events(3) throughout the Summer – Peel Park
- National Cyclo Cross 2 day Event Annually – Peel Park December
- British military fitness run 2 fitness sessions in Peel Park weekly throughout the year

All the above events create a very large footfall in our parks and green spaces from both the local community and the wider population of the district; indeed, some of the larger events attract people from all over the country.

2.5 **Community Groups**

The Service engages with a number of community groups within Bradford East



on a regular basis. These include – Eccleshill Village Steering Group, Greengates Community garden group and Bradford Moor PASS

The Friends of Bowling Park - based in a pavilion in the park and provide refreshments throughout the Summer to the general public to generate income to fund fun days and other events they organise. The Service has worked with the friends of Bowling Park to create 2 wild flower beds and improve footpaths.

The Friends of Peel Park –supported to promote their activities through the provision of a gazebo, tables and chairs at the Peels on Wheels event

Idle and Thackley Urban Village Group – maintain a community garden with poppy plants provided this year by the Service

All of the above groups share a commitment to improve parks and green spaces and to organise community events.

2.6 **Front Line Operations**

2.6.1 **Annual Review**

The operational base for Bradford East is located at Peel Park Depot. Staff resources consist of the Area Parks Manager, the Assistant Area Park Manager and 17 full time operational staff supplemented with 1 seasonal worker.

Last season the general grass cutting standards (10 cuts per season, 3 weekly) was met with the exception of highway verges which did not receive the 10th cut due to the termination of seasonal workers before the end of the mowing season. In general the high quality grass areas, sports pitches (Football, Cricket and Bowling Greens etc) were to standard. Flower beds, play areas and bin emptying were also delivered to specification.

Peel Park retained its prestigious Green Flag Award for both 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Over 150,000 Poppies have been grown from seed and planted around the district at high profile and specific sites such as War Memorials and sponsored roundabouts as part of the WW1 centenary year. Seeds were also supplied to the Children's Service for distribution schools throughout the district for their pupils to seed and nurture and use as part of the curriculum in relation to WW1

2.6.2 **Current Position**

The combination of a very wet but mild winter and a warm spring interspersed with downpours has resulted in grass growing at a far higher rate than normal causing an issue for the Service, operating on minimum cut numbers, across the District. By early August the service had recovered to achieve the general



mowing schedule.

The general mowing team consists of 1 Large Tractor, 6 Ride on Mowers and 3 operatives using pedestrian machinery. They cut the general grass in Parks, Recreation Grounds, Sports/Playing Fields, highway verges, closed churchyards, cemeteries, Asset Management & Social Services sites as well as contracting for schools and other organisations.

All other activity remains on target including gardeners working across Bradford East planting 25,000 summer bedding plants in parks, roundabouts, cemeteries and the City Centre.

An Ice cream vendor has been commissioned, commencing May 2014, in Peel Park at weekends and through the school holidays.

The Service has re-opened and made good the cricket square at Bowling Park so that league cricket is being played at this site for the first time in 20 years.

Some 135 Litter Bins in Parks, Recreation Grounds and Play Areas across Bradford East are emptied every week in addition to carrying out a site litter pick where necessary. In the first 5 months of this year we have collected over 50 tonne of litter and generated over 85 tonne of green waste from maintenance operations.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The Area based services listed in 2.1 are managed by Area Parks Managers, based in each area. The Area Managers report directly to the Principal Manager Parks & Green Spaces who in turn reports to the Assistant Director (Sports & Leisure).

3.2 All the maintenance teams across the service work to the same specification delivery schedule (appendix 1) with all the maintenance tasks being undertaken at specific times throughout the year.

The maintenance schedule covers all the work aspects that the service offers and highlights at what time of the year the specific works are carried out.

In general, the Area Park Managers and the service teams do attempt to operate rigidly to this schedule but the schedule can deviate due to unforeseen pressures such as periods of bad weather or mechanical breakdowns.

3.3 Service Relationships/Contacts

- Portfolio Holder
- Elected Members



- 'Friends of' Groups
- Community Groups such as 'In Bloom' committees
- Village Societies
- Area Co-ordinators Officers
- Bereavement Service
- Adult Services
- Children's Services

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 2013/14 Bradford East Area Parks and Green Spaces Financial Performance

The current figures showing in the Council's financial system suggest that the service failed to achieve its financial target by some £172k in 2013/14 (gross budget some £700k). The major issue involved income shortfalls (134k), particularly from one off work internally (70k) and schools (30k) whilst wages overspent by some 40k.

The reduction in activity for 'one off' and schools work has occurred over many years and is unlikely to be restored although the additional income targets set in 13/14 for winter maintenance will be rationalised and reduced for future years. Clearly, during a mild winter, even these reduced targets will not be possible to achieve.

Additional overtime working and seasonal staff resources were required to address the challenging growing season experienced as staff levels and budgets have been reduced to minimum levels.

4.2 2014/15 Parks & Green Spaces Budget

- The net controllable budget for the whole District for Parks and Green Spaces is £4.24m
- The total budgeted spend is £7.24m with a challenging income target (£3m) representing over 40% of total spend.
- Almost £3m of the £4.24m net parks budget is allocated to Area based working (including the 1m spend on fleet that is monitored and controlled centrally but mainly deployed in the devolved area operations)
- The budget allocated to the Area Parks Manager for Bradford East is £277,000 (net of income) for 2014/15. The gross budget is £687,000 and represents just over 19% of the overall devolved budgets.

The table below shows information taken from the Councils financial system relating to those services that are centrally managed but all of which deliver activity within Bradford East. The figures do not include budgets devolved to



Facilities Management for repair of buildings nor capital costs or departmental/corporate recharges all of which are applied at the end of the financial year.

2014 - 2015		Gross Budget	Income	Net Budget
1	Bradford East Operations	687	410	277
	Activities Managed District Wide			
2	Trees Woodlands	495	98	397
3	Nursery/Floristry	316	137	179
4	Play Equipment Maintenance	83	14	69
5	Fleet	975		975
6	Parks Events	543	472	71
7	Highway Weedspraying	145		145
8	Technical Unit	771	425	346
9	War Memorials	8		8

4.3 Overview of Section 106 Monies

The table below shows the Ward totals of section 106 monies held for both revenue and capital spend. Currently almost 65% of capital available remains to be allocated in consultation with local members. Revenue contributions are held to fund maintenance of capital projects for 20 years.

Ward	Revenue Funding	Capital Allocated	Capital Unallocated	Ward Totals
Bradford Moor	0	0	0	0
Bolton & Undercliffe	0	0	26,000	26,000
Bowling & Barkerend	22,669	30,912	18,524	72,105
Eccleshill	38,112	50,459	0	88,571
Idle and Thackley	169,851	0	87,827	257,678
little Horton	67,112	42,321	0	109,433
Total by Area	297,744	123,692	132,351	553,787



5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The financial risks posed are limited by the nature of the expenditure delegated. However, there is potential to reduce efficiency and overall quality of the service in specific areas if any proposed change is not considered for the wider implications. It will be important to establish a financial governance regime to devise and ensure sound stewardship of the limited resources available. This is work in progress and must be in place to support effective devolution.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

The contents of this report are in accordance with the decisions of the Executive on 9 October 2012 and 16 April 2013.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Area Committee decisions will need to be made in line with Equal Rights legislation. This will require Area Committees to assess the potential equality impact of any decisions they make.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Increased local decision making has the potential to create more sustainable solutions to local issues.

Contact the Sustainability Co-ordinator (Policy), on Bradford 434123 or e-mail jamie.saunders@bradford.gov.uk for further guidance.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

The Parks and Green Spaces service provides a pro-active approach in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through the local deployment of its maintenance teams. Teams are based in areas in an effort to reduce travelling times with its fleet/plant resulting in reduced fuel consumption. In addition to this parks and recreation grounds/trees/woodlands provide communities with 'green lungs' which can naturally assist with the filtering of polluted air.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community Safety Implications arising from this report.



7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

7.6 TRADE UNION

There are no Trade Union implications.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The information in this report is relevant to all Wards in the area.

An increased level devolution of the services will allow the Area Committee to further address local priorities for those services within wards.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

9.1 For Information Only

Members may wish to receive this report for information only

9.2 Revenue Funded Front Line Operations

Members may wish to consider options for future changes to operational service delivery through requesting detailed option appraisals on one or more of the following. Further reports outlining such options would be brought to future meetings for potential implementation in the following year, although elements of some have already been adopted in response to the various agreed budget savings:

- Reduce overall grass cutting and remove some grass areas from the schedule to leave as 'wild' areas
- To remove larger areas from the schedule and cultivate as 'wild flower meadows'
- To reduce some specifications in certain areas and raise in others
- To reduce/increase annual bedding displays
- To increase/decrease weed spraying activity
- To increase/decrease sports letting charges following review of levels of subsidy by sport
- To involve community based project groups in maintaining and improving



areas

- To specifically prepare an options report for bowling greens across the District including elements of the two options immediately above.

Clearly any decision making in this area will need to be made against a background of reducing resources and in line with the Council's corporate decision making process.

9.3 Capital Projects

The Technical Unit is currently responsible for the project management of a number of strategic District wide projects including:

Wyke Manor Community Sports Pitches
Cliffe Castle Heritage Lottery Bid
Doe Park Extension and High Ropes
Charitable Trusts and Section 106 Recreational Allocations
Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategies
Play Area Management and Maintenance

However remaining resources currently allow for an average of 2 projects annually in each area. The schemes below are awaiting resource allocation nominally for 2015/16 and have not been prioritised at the current time.

Members are asked to consider the current list of possible projects and agree the priority order for delivery in municipal year 2015/16. The options, in suggested priority order, are:

Rimswell Holt Play Area

£50,000 (Section 106 funds)

Refurbishment of the existing Play Area to bring the site up to standard.

Harrogate Road Playing Fields

£ 20,000 (Community Sports Fund)

Improvements to the former school playing fields to bring the site back into use as community sports pitches

Peel Park

£50,000 (Trust Funding)

Repairs to the Victorian cast iron bridge in the park to allow vehicular traffic onto the upper terrace.



10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Bradford East Area Committee:

Notes the content of this report.

Considers the options available to receive further reports to change future operational delivery (section 9.2)

Considers the options available and prioritises capital schemes for delivery in 2015/16 (section 9.3)

11. APPENDICES

Grounds Maintenance Schedule (Appendix 1)

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

