

Report of the Director of Environment and Sport to the meeting of the Bradford East Area Committee to be held on Thursday 25 June 2015

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Subject:

Parks and Green Spaces Service Annual Report

Summary statement:

The annual report for the Parks and Green Spaces Service considers the significant issues that will have an effect over the coming 12 months and presents options where appropriate for future service delivery.

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1. SUMMARY

The Annual Report for the Parks and Green Spaces Service considers the significant issues that will have an effect over the coming 12 months and presents options where appropriate for future service delivery.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Parks and Green Spaces Service

Currently sits in the Sport and Leisure Service, which is part of the Environment and 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)
- Maintenance of cemeteries
- Winter maintenance activity to Highways, Adult and 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 and Woodlands (including highway trees)
- War Memorials
- Control and coordination of the Parks and Green Spaces Fleet

2.2 Managed Facilities in Bradford East



Within the constituency the following main parks are managed and maintained by the service area teams - Peel Park, Bowling Park and 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 (e.g. 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. This area of the service is part of the 2015/16 service savings and will be considered in more detail later in this report.

2.3 New Facilities

The following new or refurbished facilities have been delivered in the last 12 months:

- Lupton Street Play Area Refurbishment undertaken with £50k Wren funding.
- Upper Seymour St Recreation Ground CCTV installation funded through section 106 to value of £16k.

In the coming months, the Technical Unit will be delivering the following projects:

- Harrogate Road Playing Fields - £20k
- Eccleshill Park Play Area Refurbishment section 106 - £50k
- New all weather cricket wickets at Myra Shay and Woodhall Park. Approximately £10k each, funding from ECB.

2.4 Events

The Parks and Green Spaces Service stages and supports a high number of events throughout the year (over 150) in its parks and recreation grounds, some of which are major 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:

- Fun fair in Peel Park in May
- A firework display in Peel Park in November
- Funfairs in Bradford Moor Park, in April and July
- 2 Fun Fairs in Eccleshill recreation ground in May and August
- Teddy Bears picnic in Bradford Moor Park in August
- 1 Funfair in Bowling Park in June.



- Fun Fair in Idle recreation ground in June
- Eccleshill Village Fair – The Delph in July
- Bradford Park Avenue 5-a-side tournament Apperley Bridge PF in 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 in December
- British military fitness runs 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.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Floral Display Review

3.1.1 Introduction

The Council historically has prepared flower beds and hanging baskets for summer displayed at various street scene, parks and green spaces locations throughout the District and then again in the winter for the flower beds only.

The Council has made a decision to reduce the level of funding allocated to this provision for future years which will have an effect on the appearance of the flower beds and the hanging baskets across the District.

3.1.2 Hanging Baskets

It is proposed that hanging basket provision in summer 2016 is handed back to the local areas to fund and source.

In recent years the Parks and Green Spaces Service has provided the following typical numbers of baskets. The provision includes making up, putting up, maintenance and removal but there has been a mixed picture in terms of income received as outlined in the notes below the table.

Parks Provided Hanging Baskets		2014	2015
		number	number
Bradford	18" Hanging baskets (top & side)	208	0
	Lamppost Baskets (half) 20"	90	40
Keighley	18" Hanging baskets (top & side)	54	0
	Lamppost Baskets (full) 20"	118	0
	Barrier Boxes	35	0
Ilkley	Lamppost Baskets (full) 20"	46	0
Shipley	18" Hanging baskets (top & side)	0	0
Totals		551	40



- Ilkley had all baskets provided and funded by the Council
- Bradford had almost 300 baskets of which typically only 40-50 generated income (the 2015 provision is for supply only)
- Keighley had just over 200 of which approximately one third would have generated income
- The free provision of 20 baskets in Shipley ceased in 2013

3.1.3 Flower Beds

The substantive majority of the flower beds, flowers, planting and maintenance in the district is provided by the Parks and Green Spaces Service.

The flower beds are generally prepared and planted for the summer and are then stripped and replanted in the autumn with a high level of maintenance being required throughout the year. The planting takes place in May/June and Oct/Nov each year with plants that have been grown at the Councils own nursery.

The Council has taken a decision to reduce the expenditure on flower beds by 80% across the district. Peel Park nursery grows the flowers and will be closed due to the size of reduction and consequent inefficiency that would be created in operating the nursery all year round.

It should be noted that there are a number of beds across the District which will need to remain planted to prevent claw back of lottery grants. There is also a requirement to provide bedding to a number of graves under the perpetuity planting scheme. This commitment may require up to 20% of the overall future provision).

The current adopted methodology for service reductions resulting from budget savings is to apply the reduction from the current position equally across the district as follows:

Summer Bedding Plant Provision by Constituency

Summer Bedding Plants by Constituency 2015 (Indicative numbers)		
	Current	Future
Bradford South	13,000	2600
Bradford East	11,000	2200
Bradford West	43,000	8600
Shipley	46,500	9300
Keighley	87,500	17500
Total	201,000	40200

The application of similar proportional scaling down is, however, not likely to provide the optimum outcomes in terms of both colour and value for money if delivered at neighbourhood levels. Therefore, new models of delivering the service are being considered.



A range of options have been looked into by officers and the ideas with the greatest potential are as follows:

- Grass over the flower beds in low priority areas
- Reduce the size and/or density of planting in some beds
- Continue to plant a very limited number of high profile flower beds
- Introduce planted beds that produce colour all year round with minimal maintenance
- Introduce a community planting and maintenance scheme through a 'friends of the flowers' model
- Use precept charges to support the future cost of flower bed provision in some areas
- Use voluntary sector groups to grow plants to support the planted beds

All of the above options would need to be agreed in detail with the appropriate Area Committee and then consulted with organisations, partners and community groups. The mix of solutions will be different in each area, but all will reflect a cost saving proportionate to the 80% reduction from the existing position. However, if the mix of solutions is managed correctly then the medium to long term effect of the change should be less severe than that suggested by the scale of the budget reduction particularly if the specification for flower bed planting is changed as suggested by the 4th option above.

The majority of the new provision could be through permanently planted flower beds, which would flower at different times during the year. They would be maintained and litter picked periodically and would be refreshed during the traditionally quieter winter period by the park service. The regular maintenance work could be carried out by the parks team, and/or a facilitated interest group or independent community 'friends of the flower' community group.

As a starting point the parks team have considered the flower beds and RAG rated (Red Amber and Green) them based upon a set of perception criteria to show their priority and then classified them for a type of treatment that is proposed for each flower bed in the committees area based upon the rating and the available resources (See appendix 1).

This initial assessment has been based on the amount of resources that are available in each area. If different options were identified then the proportion of each element would be affected and further analysis would be required to ensure the proposal is within the available budget.

The timing of full implementation is likely to take place over two winter periods to enable all of the conversions to take place within the existing staff resources and funding available for the purchase of flowers.

3.2 Bowling Greens

The Council has agreed savings target from the operation of bowling greens throughout the district for both 2015/16 and 2016/17.

The original proposal was for maintenance savings to be achieved through a 'Community Club' model where each club would maintain the greens through their own members (e.g.



mow their own greens). This option is still available to the clubs, however it is not being introduced in 2015/16, but might be adopted in 2016/17 by some clubs. It will be for the clubs to determine if this is the way they wish to progress.

On the basis that all clubs take the Council Services in 2015/16, we have agreed to step up the annual charges in line with the savings target being set at £25k in 2015/16 and an additional £25K in 2016/17.

All clubs will collect, record and pay £15 per player in 2015/16 under a mutually agreed method. A single invoice to clubs will be issued in early August 2015 to an agreed sum representing all the 'pay per player' contributions at each club.

The Council will continue to set the fees for a 'pay per player' model and continue to develop the 'Community Club' model with any club that wishes to investigate that option further.

The 'pay per player' model will be £15 for 2015/16 and £25 per player in 2016/17; the latter will be invoiced in early April 2016 to coincide with the start of the bowls season.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1.1 The Parks and Green Spaces Service has been given savings targets for both the current year and also for 2016/17 financial year.

4.1.2 The savings will be challenging to achieve in year, but work has commenced to deliver the saving and minimise the impact as far as possible.

A summary of the savings to be achieved is as follows:

Parks and Green Spaces Savings Targets	2015/16	2016/17
	(K)	(K)
Review the workforce to reflect seasonal variations	65	85
Management Restructure	100	0
Bowling Greens	25	25
Achieve 100% of events at zero cost	25	50
Reduce floral displays and close the nursery	150	50
Total Savings	365	210

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 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

- 6.1 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 & 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. The proposal to move to permanently planted flower beds is more sustainable for both economic and environmental reasons.

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

Trade Unions at all levels are engaged in consultation over the proposals included in this report.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

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

Increased 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

Member are asked to consider the proposals to radically change the way in which flower bed planting is carried out in the district as detailed in 3.1 above and appendix 1 of this report to achieve the budget savings, increase efficiency and retain significant floral displays within the resources available.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Bradford East Area Committee:

- 1 Note the content of this report and in particular:
 - The bowls club agreement
 - That there will be no provision by Parks and Green Spaces of hanging baskets from summer 2016
- 2 Consider and approve proposals for each flower bed based on the options and detail in section 3.1 and Appendix 1 of this report.

11. APPENDICES

Flower Bed reclassification proposal (Appendix 1)

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None



Appendix 1:- Bradford East Flower Bed Proposals

Location	Indicative Historic Number of Plants	Proposals
Bolling Hall Museum	300	Reduce size and use permanent planting
Bowling Cemetery	850	Reduce scale and use permanent planting
Greengates Cenotaph	1775	Reduce scale and use permanent planting
Peel Park	7500	Reduce scale and use permanent planting
Industrial Museum	120	Remove
Whiteoak Hostel	120	Removed