

Report of the Parks & Green Spaces Service – to the meeting of the Bradford South - Area Committee to be held on 26th September 2013

AB

Subject:

Parks & Green Spaces - Services and Resource Deployment

Summary statement:

The Council's Executive has identified the Parks & Green Spaces Service to report to Area Committees through the devolution agenda.

This report outlines the basis on which the Parks and Green Spaces Service operates through the deployment of its resources within the Bradford South Area.

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Portfolio:

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Environment and Waste Management



1. SUMMARY

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

The overall budget for the service area is set through the Council formal procedures and levels of budget provision will need to be reviewed, subject to any savings requirement placed upon the Council in future years.

This report outlines the basis on which the Parks and Green Spaces Service deploys its operational resources in financial year 2013/14 and seeks area committee member views on the current position

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Parks & Green Spaces section sits in the Sports and Leisure Service, which is part of the Environment & Sport Department. Its main function is the management of, and grounds maintenance to, the District's parks, open spaces and woodlands. The service delivery element includes the following –

- Maintenance of Parks, recreation grounds and other Council owned land
- Maintenance of sports pitches and bowling greens
- Maintenance of play areas (equipment maintained by a District wide team)
- Grave digging and cemetery maintenance
- Winter maintenance activity on highways and to Adult & Children's Services
- Maintenance of highway verges throughout the district.

In total the service manages and develops 36 parks, 115 recreational spaces and over 188 play areas. The service also provides support to voluntary groups, friends of groups and assists with all sporting fixtures on playing fields within the service remit.

- 2.2 In addition to the above, the district wide highway footway weed spraying contract is managed by this service to deliver 3 sprays of glyphosate annually and this is presently linked to the Bradford South management area who liaise with the contractor and monitor the service weekly.

- 2.3 The Service is managed and co-ordinated by the five Area Parks Managers, one responsible for each parliamentary constituency.

This arrangement has evolved over the years following merger of client and contractor responsibilities in 2003 and Area working is currently believed to be the most efficient and effective operational model.

- 2.4 The Area Managers currently report directly to the Principal Manager Parks & Green Spaces Manager who in turn reports to the Assistant Director Sports & Leisure. Within each area there is one Assistant Parks Manager (except Keighley/Ilkley with two) and generally one operational depot, (2 in Shipley/Bingley and Keighley/Ilkley) where the majority of staff and plant are based.
- 2.5 A key partner group are 'Friends of' groups and at the present time there are 18 such active groups who play an important role in various parks throughout the district
- 2.6 **Bradford South Area** – Within the Bradford South constituencies there are 9 main parks that are maintained by the service area teams:-

Knowles Park
Wibsey Park
Harold Park (Green Flag)
Foxhill Park
Brackenhill Park
Horton Bank Country Park
Littlemoor Park
Russell Hall Park
Victoria Park

There are also 9 recreation grounds, 27 equipped play areas, 5 MACA's and 4 skate/BMX parks. Other facilities include 31 sports pitches, 1 cricket pitch, 1 tennis court and 10 bowling greens.

In addition to the general grounds maintenance works the service is responsible for the upkeep of all the associated structures within the above sites such as, pavilions, changing facilities, etc.

- 2.7 Relationships/Contacts
- Portfolio Holder
 - Elected Members
 - Bereavement Services
 - Adult Services
 - Children's Services

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Service Delivery Plans

The following summarises the delivery of the Parks and Green Spaces Service. This includes Parks, Playing Fields, Recreation Grounds, Cemeteries, Highway Verges, Roundabouts and Town gardens. There are 6 Green Flag awards (Lister, Peel, Harold, Central Park Haworth, Roberts, St Ives) and in addition to this there are numerous sponsored roundabout sites, and Bradford City Centre.

The delivery options that the service has adopted were designed to deliver the

budget measures approved by Council

The service will deliver a reduced number of floral displays and move to a more sustainable planting scheme that adds further biodiversity across the area. This will include:

- Reduction in the use of annual spring bulbs.
- Adding bio-diversity by developing some flower beds into a mix of herbaceous and annual planting.
- Maintenance regimes will continue at current levels

The service has also adopted alternative management arrangement for parks and green spaces. There will be a reduction in some direct maintenance and the creation of wild flower meadows adding biodiversity. This will include.

- No reduction in grass cutting frequency, subject to seasonal variation.
- Reduced maintenance of some high manual input grass areas, such as bankings with some being taken out of mowing regimes and developed as wildflower areas.
- Natural or wild flower areas will be established for low use grass areas.
- Reduction in the number of ornamental areas maintained on the weekly standard.
- Variation in the number/day/time of cuts allowing best use of staff resources in line with bowling green usage.
- Amendments to surface maintenance and marking regime of sports pitches to maintain service levels with reduced input.

3.2 At the moment the service delivery is aligned to areas as opposed to wards and is dictated by the needs of the service in those specific areas. Some user groups already have an input to how the service is delivered such as 'friends of' groups, and they also have access to grant funding to which the council is not eligible to access and this could possibly be extended to other groups such as:

- Area Coordinators office
- Local Community groups
- In Bloom groups
- Village Societies

4. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 Resource allocation for Bradford South Area

The indicative resources allocated and available is £202,000 (net of income) for 2013/14. This is approximately 11% of the overall Parks and Green Spaces allocated budget.

The central depot in the Bradford South area is at Foundry Lane (Wakefield Road) and all operations are run from this base.

The staff base consists of the Area Parks Manager, the Assistant Park Manager and 19 full time operational staff. In addition to this up to 6 seasonal workers are employed on an annual basis to assist with the workload through the main

season (April – October).

The table shown in Appendix 1 highlights the working gang structure (permanent staff) of the Bradford South operational teams during the high season (March – October). Each team has a defined work remit but some overlap of services can occur due to seasonal fluctuations and work pressures.

The Cemetery team carry out some 500 burials annually in the following cemeteries, North Bierley, Scholemoor, Bowling, Thornton and Tong.

The Marking out/Horticultural team work mainly on sports pitches carrying out line marking and other preparation works and they also assist with the planting out and maintenance of ornamental flower beds.

The Greens/A1 team maintain all the bowling greens and high specification ornamental grass areas along with other associated works such as weeding and hedge cutting.

The Cemetery back up team carry out all the grass cutting within the above mentioned cemetery sites apart from Bowling and Tong (maintenance carried out by East and West area teams) and they also assist the 2 main grass cutting teams with 'back up' works as and when required.

The 2 grass cutting teams work across the 6 wards (3 wards to each team) and have programmed cutting routes that are completed on a 3 week cycle. They attend to all grass areas including highway verges, parks, recreation grounds, sports pitches, internal client sites, sports centres and other public open spaces.

In addition to the above front line grounds maintenance teams there is also a litter/bin team that covers all sites carrying out scheduled bin emptying and other litter picking tasks.

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 9th October 2012 and 16th April 2013.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

7.5 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community Safety Implications arising from this report.

7.6 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

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

7.7 TRADE UNION

There are no Trade Union implications.

7.8 WARD IMPLICATIONS

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

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

There are no not for publication documents.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Bradford South Area Committee notes the content of this report and comments on future presentation of information and when it needs to be brought forward to this committee.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Bradford South Area Parks Operational Structure

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

APPENDIX 1

Bradford South Area Parks Operational Structure

