

# Report of the Assistant Director, Sport and Leisure Service to the meeting of the Bradford South Area Committee to be held on 26 June 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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## **Portfolio:**

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## **Overview & Scrutiny Area:**



Suzan Hemingway, City Solicitor

## 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 South 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 South**

Within the constituency there are 9 main parks that are managed and 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 21 recreation grounds, 23 equipped play areas, 5 MACA's and 3 skate/BMX parks. Other facilities include 30 Football/Rugby pitches (4 of which are exclusively for juniors), 9 bowling greens, 1 cricket pitch, 1 tennis court, 3 lakes and an aviary

In addition to horticultural works the service is responsible for the upkeep of all the associated structures within the above sites including 11 pavilions, 4 changing facilities and 6 lodges.

## 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 projects being delivered over the last year:-

#### **Play Area at Wibsey Park ( Wibsey Ward)**

£ 101,000 (s106 / Wren Funding)

Removal of existing equipment from the play area and replacement with more exciting and challenging equipment. Worked with the Friends of Wibsey Park and ward Councillors to establish and achieve the project aims.

#### **Refurbish Play Area at Gleneagles Close and Hopefield Way (Tong Ward)**

£ 19,500 (s106 Funding)

Refurbishment of play areas to return them to acceptable standard.

#### **Fitness equipment Odsal Village Green ( Wyke Ward)**

£ 9,500 (s106 Funding)

New fitness equipment installed, working with ward Councillors and local residents

#### **Tip Top at Wilson Road Landfill Site (Wyke Ward)**

£ 20,000 (s106 Funding)

Environmental Project to bring the former Wilson Road 'tip top' into use for recreation. Working in partnership with the in house Landscape Design Unit.

#### **Black Carr woods (Tong Ward)**

£ 10,000 (s106 Funding)

Woodland Improvements, paths and access working with Friends group

**Wyke changing Unit (Wyke Ward)**

£ 185,000 (Sport England/s106 and Biffa land fill tax credits)

Brand new changing unit and community facility at Wyke Recreation Ground. Working with the local club, Sport England and the RFL in providing a state of the art changing facility for the village.

**2.3.2 Ongoing**

The Technical Unit is currently responsible for project management of a number of strategic District wide projects (including the Wyke Manor development), However, remaining resources currently allow for an average of 2 projects to be delivered in each constituency area annually with the following ongoing in Bradford South:

**Collinfield Rise / Woodside play Area Refurbishment**

£ 76,381 (s106 Funding)

New play equipment to be installed at existing play areas Collinfield Rise and Woodside. The majority of the work is to be undertaken at Collinfield with replacement equipment being installed whilst there is a single replacement at Woodside together with safer surfacing as this was a new play area constructed recently under the Playbuilder scheme. The project is being delivered by BCEP.

**Farfield Recreation Ground**

£ 86,000 (s106 and Wren funding)

New play equipment to be installed at the existing play area. Some existing play equipment is to be removed and replaced with new, whilst some items are to be retained. Additionally, an 8 item trim trail, a fitness station and new benches and bins are also to be installed. The project is being delivered by BCEP.

**Dane Hill Drive**

£ 40,799 ( s106 funding )

New play equipment to be installed at the existing play area. Some existing play equipment is to be removed and replaced with new, whilst some (better condition) items are to be retained.

**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.

Other significant events planned this year in Bradford South include:

- 5 Fun fairs at Knowles park, Wibsey fair site and Wyke Recreation ground throughout summer

- Harold Park Gala - July
- Event to celebrate 10th Anniversary of Harold Park Friends group
- 'On yer bike' - life cycle at Harold Park - May
- Great Horton gala and fun day - Brackenhill Park - September
- Hill top Cycle event - Wibsey Park June 2014
- Halloween event - Harold Park
- Children's summer activities – across all wards
- Boot camp fitness in Wibsey Park weekly through the summer.

All the above events do 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 South on a regular basis although the Friends group at Wibsey is inactive at present having achieved a number of improvements to the park including the building of a new play area.

Friends of Wyke Recreation ground are a small but active group who worked with the Service, local members and the rugby club to deliver new changing rooms after years of operation from an old air raid shelter. This group were also successful in raising funding towards a new play area in the Park several years ago.

Friends of Farfield Recreation Ground are a more recent group seeking to deliver improvements to the recreation ground. Local members have allocated section 106 funding for the project which is now at design stage following consultation for delivery as one of the schemes listed under 2.3 above.

The most active group is dedicated to Harold Park, the constituencies Green Flag Park, and is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Service supports the annual activity programme which now includes a gala and events at Easter, Christmas, Halloween and Remembrance day.

The group continues to maintain the sensory garden, built in 2011 through lottery funding, and the Service supports the on going community engagement work of the group which includes regular school visits and the provision of a large planter for growing vegetables for community use.

The level of commitment by this group was recognised last year through the award of a Platinum plaque from Yorkshire in Bloom for the quality of the park and the level of community involvement.

Oakenshaw Residents Association provide an active focal point for Service engagement not only in terms of our service provision but also in helping to address wider issues such as antisocial behaviour.

## **3.0 Front Line Operations**

### **3.1 Annual Review**

The first year of front line service internalisation was always going to be challenging given the nature of the process in terms of establishing a fully functional in house operation based on an expected number of incoming staff without equipment or an operating base. The necessary application of agreed procedures to populate the management structure added further pressures and the Service recognises that the operation on the ground failed to deliver in some key areas during last summer.

The operation was finally established at Foundry Lane (Wakefield Road) although this has not yet been confirmed as the long term solution. Staff resources consist of the Area Parks Manager, the Assistant Area Park Manager and 18 full time operational staff supplemented by up to 6 seasonal workers.

General grass cutting standards (10 cuts per season, 3 weekly) were not met although in general the high quality grass areas (bowling greens etc) were to standard. Flower beds, play areas and bin emptying were also delivered to specification.

It should also be noted that this depot base delivers all grave digging across the cemeteries within the City boundaries. Two teams deliver some 500 burials annually including almost 300 involving full size coffins across 7 sites. This operation remains a top priority for the Service and the early loss of one key employee placed further strain upon the available staff for general grass cutting duties.

The available management resource has also needed to absorb significant additional risk assessment activity following improvements to the grave digging process after intervention from the Health and Safety Executive.

The Service has continued to work on improvements to the Tong Street City Gateway having planted 15000 bulbs during Autumn together with ongoing improvements to Knowles Park.

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

### **3.2 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.

However, management recognised that Bradford South appeared to be further behind schedule than most other areas and moved to increase resources early in May after establishing that the first cut was completed some 8 days late. A

third grass cutting gang has now been introduced, targeting an individual gang for 2 wards rather than 3. All other activity remains on target.

#### **4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The constituency 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).

Within the Bradford South Area there is one operational depot at Wakefield Rd where all staff and plant are based.

- 4.2 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.

- 4.3 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

#### **5. OPTIONS**

- 5.1 **For Information Only**

Members may wish to receive this report for information only

- 5.2 **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

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.

### 5.3 **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 constituency 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, confirm their commitment to Wyke Manor as a strategic priority and agree the priority order for delivery in municipal year 2015/16. The options are:

#### **Brackenhill Park ( Great Horton Ward)**

£ 25,000 (106 Money)  
Refurbishment of the Toddler and Junior play areas

#### **Wibsey Pitches**

Funding yet to be confirmed from the Community Sports Fund / Sport England Proposal to drain and level the existing winter sports pitches in the park.

#### **Spinney Rise**

£ 45,000 (106 Funding)



New play area off Holme Lane, Holmewood. (Awaiting land transfer from the developer.)

**Harold Park 106 works**

£ 22,000 (106 Funding)

Agreed enhancements with the Friends of Harold Park

**Judy Woods**

£ 9,000 (106 Funding)

Scope of works yet to be agreed with the Friends group

**6. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL**

**6.1 2013/14 Bradford South 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 65k in 2013/14. Whilst costs were seen to be closely monitored with a provisional saving in the order of 40k, income targets were missed by over 100k.

This income shortfall is explained by the mild winter mitigating against achievement of challenging income targets for gritting and also a historic rent repayment that needed to be funded (50k)

**6.2 2014/15 Parks & Green Spaces Budget**

- The net controllable budget 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 constituency 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 South is £236,000 (net of income) for 2014/15. The gross budget is £759,000 and represents 21% 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 South. 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 South Park Operations	759	523	236
	<b>Activities Managed District Wide</b>			
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

### 6.3 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 70% of capital available has been 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
Tong	162,538	101,205	41,398	305,141
Great Horton	42,213	25,000	0	67,213
Queensbury	225,274	0	55,440	280,714
Royds	90,899	162,571	0	253,470
Wibsey	55,993	0	27,315	83,308
Wyke	0	20,000	9,560	29,560
<b>Total by Constituency</b>	<b>576,917</b>	<b>308,776</b>	<b>133,712</b>	<b>1,019,405</b>

## 7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 7.1 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.

## **8. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

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

## **9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **9.1 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.

### **9.2 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](mailto:jamie.saunders@bradford.gov.uk) for further guidance.

### **9.3 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.

### **9.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Community Safety Implications arising from this report.

### **9.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

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

### **9.6 TRADE UNION**

There are no Trade Union implications.

### **9.7 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.

**10. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

There are no not for publication documents.

**11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Bradford South Area Committee:

Notes the content of this report.

Considers the options available to receive further reports to change future operational delivery (section 5.2)

Considers the options available and prioritises capital schemes for delivery in 2015/16 (section 5.3)

**12. APPENDICES**

Grounds Maintenance Schedule (Appendix 1)

**13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None