

Report of the Parks & Green Spaces Service to the meeting of the Bradford South Area Committee to be held on 22nd January 2015.

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Subject:**Bowls Clubs in the Bradford District – Alternative Delivery and Charging Model for Bowls Provision****Summary statement:**

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

As part of the departmental budget cuts the Parks & Green Spaces Service has been identified to achieve specific savings within its operational areas. The maintenance and upkeep of bowling greens and their associated facilities has been identified as one area where significant savings could possibly be achieved as the current level of maintenance is not sustainable.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

1. SUMMARY

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

This report highlights the number of bowls facilities throughout the district and also details the seasonal maintenance works and associated costs involved. As part of the departmental budget cuts the Parks & Green Spaces Service has been identified to achieve specific savings within its operational areas. The maintenance and upkeep of bowling greens and their associated facilities has been identified as one area where significant savings could possibly be achieved as the current level of maintenance is not sustainable within the present financial climate.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Parks & Green Spaces section sits in the Sports and Leisure Service, which is part of the Department of Environment & Sport. The service is responsible for the management, maintenance and development of Parks & Green Spaces used for physical activity, educational resource, sporting opportunities, children's play events and family/community activities.

Bradford residents have access to 36 public parks, 100 recreation grounds, 115 woodland areas and over 200 play areas/multi activity community areas (MACA'S)/Skate park facilities. The service employs some 80 fte gardeners within 5 separately managed area operations and the central growing nursery at Peel Park.

Within this remit the department is responsible for the maintenance of all council owned bowling greens within the Bradford District, of which there are 52 greens across 39 sites. The distribution of greens are fairly even within all 5 of the constituency areas and overall are made up of 3 treble green sites, 7 double green sites and 29 single green sites.

In addition to the greens, each facility has at least one pavilion for the use of its members although some have additional buildings for the use of Veteran's associations and during the winter season most of the facilities are still in use with the clubs meeting regularly to hold whist drives or domino games for their members. In addition to this, the veterans clubs also use the facilities for similar activities.

- 2.2 There are 2 main leagues/associations servicing the Bradford area and these are:-

Bradford Crown Green Bowls Association –

The association runs 5 leagues open to both male and female bowlers. These are; Saturday league (80 teams), Monday evening league (60 teams),



Wednesday afternoon (44 teams), Wednesday evening (30 teams). There is also a Sunday competition that runs every week throughout the season. The trend is that the number of clubs is generally remaining stable but the number of teams per club is decreasing.

Worth Valley Bowling Association –

The association runs a Saturday league (28 teams) and a Veterans league on Monday afternoons (46 teams). There are 16 clubs from the Bradford area that compete in the league.

There are many competitions throughout the season which clubs can enter as well as the normal league fixtures and there are also competitions that are run for teams or individual members.

In general the season commences during the first week of April and finishes at the end of October, although if the autumn is mild and dry some clubs do continue playing as long as the weather allows.

The Parks & Green Spaces Service always liaise with the clubs with a view to agreeing dates when the maintenance of the greens will commence in line with the planned fixtures and a 'final cut' date is always agreed, although, as mentioned above, some clubs do like to extend the season by playing if the weather allows.

The Parks & Green Spaces Service has the overall responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the buildings and pavilions and this can become quite costly due to attacks of vandalism. All of the clubs are key holders for each of their facilities and are responsible for the opening and securing of the premises and the reporting, to the area parks manager, of any damage or problems.

- 2.3 Due to budget pressures the service has had to reduce its general maintenance specifications and a reduced mowing frequency has been in operation over the last few years. This has resulted in all greens receiving a reduced weekly frequency of 2 cuts, down from the previous 3. However, where possible, the service does try to offer extra assistance to clubs with green maintenance if there is a specific high profile game or cup fixture but this is subject to other operational demands at the time.

Some clubs are very pro-active and will undertake small areas of maintenance themselves such as small scale horticultural works including the planting of flowers/plants, general gardening of areas and the painting of benches and the installation of scoring shelters, all at their own expense. The reduced level of maintenance has created a high level of concern amongst some bowls clubs as they have received mixed comments from visiting teams in relation to the playing surface. To this end, a number of clubs have expressed an interest in carrying out a number of additional grass cuts themselves.

- 2.4 In general, the staffing and fleet/plant allocation to maintain all the bowling greens within each operational area is very similar during the summer period



and usually consists of: -

2 x grounds maintenance operatives
1 x vehicle with trailer attachment
2 x Dennis fine turf mowers
Assorted peripheral small plant and hand tools

In addition to the above maintenance remit the staff also undertake other fine turf works in the areas such as high maintenance ornamental and sponsored sites.

The general seasonal maintenance schedules for bowling greens consists of the following:-

Spring – All greens scarified, edged, gullies cleaned, spring/summer feed applied, moss killer applied, general patching repairs and cutting.

Summer – Mowing twice weekly, edging greens, general repairs and selective weed killer applications.

Autumn – All greens scarified and spiked/hollow tined, over seeded and given autumn/winter feed.

Winter – scarified (although dependant upon weather conditions)

There are also other maintenance tasks that would be carried out throughout the year by the general maintenance teams which would consist of, weed killing, hand weeding and hedge cutting.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/OPTIONS

- 3.1 Due to ongoing budget pressures the department is now having to consider alternative ways in how the services are delivered and where substantial savings can be achieved. A further saving of £100k is required over the next 2 years and the maintenance of bowling greens has been identified as an area where further savings should be considered.

At the present time the favoured option through the budget setting process and currently out for consultation is to achieve the savings through the adoption of a club/community ownership scheme. This would involve the facility being maintained by the club and potentially offers the highest levels of benefit to both parties whilst achieving the proposed savings.

- 3.2 Each facility is very well used by the bowls clubs and the local veterans groups in both summer and winter alike. However, there is occasion when the facilities are used by the wider community, and, in some cases, the facilities can become a 'hub' of community activity. In addition to the bowlers and veterans the facilities are used for Neighbourhood Forum's, 'Friends of Group' meetings,



public consultations, Gala days and Police Contact Points.

Historically, bowls clubs have provided the local community with a central regular meeting point for both sexes long before community centres were developed, which promoted social interaction and helped to reduce areas of social isolation, and in addition to this the facilities have provided a moderate level of activity for the elder members of society promoting health & wellbeing.

4. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 At the present time each club pays an annual lease fee of £78.50 with an additional utility levy of £35.00. If clubs have a veteran's association who use the facility they also pay an additional £35.00 utility fee.

In general the annual service costs to the department for the delivery of the present model of maintenance is in the region of £4000 per green, however, this is not inclusive of any infrastructure maintenance and repair costs to pavilions, fences, paths etc.

It is proposed that through the delivery of the above model as mentioned in 3.1, a saving of a £100k could be achieved over 2 years 2015/16 – 16/17.

A range of subsidy levels and partial transfers could be considered such as offering the possibility to transfer administrative and semi skilled activities only, or offering the club an annual sum towards maintenance costs and/or purchase of a mower.

Through this model of ownership grant funding streams would be available to clubs for development whilst volunteer labour resources could significantly reduce the financial burden on the Council.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 The financial risks posed are limited by the nature of the expenditure delegated. However, through the delivery of the proposed model it may cause concern for some clubs as they may not want to adopt the 'self managing model' and as a result it may cause some clubs to merge with others or disband completely, potentially leaving some facilities 'vacant'.

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 within the Bradford District.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

There are no not for publication documents.



9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Bradford South Area Committee considers the content of this report.

10. APPENDICES

None

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

