

Report of the Director of Environment & Sport to the meeting of the Bradford East Area Committee to be held on Thursday 21 July 2016.

Subject:

Parks & Green Spaces Service Annual Report

Summary statement:

The annual report for the Parks & Green Spaces Service reviews activity during the past year and also considers the significant issues that will have an effect over the coming 12 months with options where appropriate for future service delivery.

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1. SUMMARY

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 reviews activity during the past year and also considers the significant issues that will have an effect over the coming 12 months with options where appropriate for future service delivery

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Parks & Green Spaces Service

Currently sits in the Sport 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 75 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 & 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)
- 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
- Control and coordination of the Parks & 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.

2.3 Review of last year

Last year, throughout the peak activity 'summer' season maintenance teams performed to a high standard resulting in all parks and green spaces being maintained to the specified standard.

In addition to this, all flower beds, hedges and shrub beds met specified standards and through the dedication of both the staff and management retained 'Green Flag' status for Peel Park, Harold Park, Lister Park, Roberts Park, Central Park, Haworth and St Ives Estate.

Once again, consistency proved to be a key factor in the Bradford East area and, even with a change in management mid-way through the year, all the operational targets were met along with providing the additional support to partners and events.

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

- 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 Service delivery update 2016/17

With regard to this year there is very little changed proposed for the way the grounds maintenance service will be carried out or delivered across the district other than the revised specifications for flower beds and hanging baskets – see 3.1.

Officers have continued to engage with partners, such as, Members, colleagues in Neighbourhoods, Friends of Groups and other local action groups, and this has provided benefit to all parties in providing regular updates on service matters and events and also



provides the opportunity for positive dialogue. Some of the positive outcomes achieved are as follows:-

- Assistance and support on the redevelopment of the Jane Binns Memorial Garden in West Bowling. £32k project.
- Continued support of the Friends of Bowling Park and assisting them to receive £50k WREN funding to refurbish areas of the park and play area.
- Continued support and assistance with Greengates Action Group.
- Support for the 'Fresh Start' project in Peel Park

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

- Providing assistance to the Friends of Bowling Park with the delivery of the projects as mentioned above.
- Works to the bridge structure in Peel Park.

2.5 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 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
- Eid festival in Bradford Moor Park in July
- 2 Fun Fairs in Eccleshill recreation ground in May and August
- Sky Ride Local in Peel Park in August
- Eccleshill Village Fair – The Delph in July
- Fun fair in Bowling Park in June
- Fun Fair in Idle recreation ground in June
- 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 Championships 2 day Event – Peel Park in January 2017
- 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.



2.6. Trees & Woodland update

Within recent times the Tree and Woodlands section has been working hard in woodlands and other public open spaces and championing schemes that enable citizens to become actively engaged in managing our public open spaces.

Following the winter floods a river Aire Clean up took place and working with Neighbourhoods we were able to support Idle and Thackley Environment Group and Ward Councillors with their litter pick of the riverbanks. T&W provided 6 and 8 foot long reach litter pickers and the Health and Safety framework for the popular event.

In Esholt: working in partnership with Ward Councillors, members of Esholt Village, Cyclist (Riders and Friends of Esholt Woods) and Yorkshire Water to manage “cycle path” development in the jointly owned woodlands. Ecologically more important areas of woodland have been declared out of bounds and cycle tracks will be removed; tracks in other areas are being mapped and additional signage will be put in place to help all users to enjoy the woods safely and without conflict.

In Buck Wood at Thackley work has been ongoing with the Friends of Buck Wood and local equestrians to develop a permissive bridleway link through the woodland to take horse riders off the highway. Progress was halted when West Yorkshire Archaeological Service registered the prehistoric site as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The scheduled status of the sites is welcomed as it recognises the endeavour of the Friends of Buck Wood and the historic importance of the site. However, it required the closure of the new bridleway and opening up the existing path to all users. Work is now being undertaken to make sure that all users can access and use the routes safely.

At Moorwell Place, Eccleshill, a plan to end a long running concern about trees adjacent to Moorwell Place was agreed with the residents. Four trees will be removed and five trees planted elsewhere in the recreation ground where they will have space to mature...

Coming up or Ongoing schemes:-

National Citizens Service: during July and August we will be working with young people through the NCS on projects centred on parks and woodlands. This is the first year of involvement of NCS in Bradford. Projects include making “instructional videos” at Esholt and Peel Park for People Can Make a Difference website (www.peoplecanbradforddistrict.org.uk) and footpath restoration in Buck Wood.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Floral Display Review Update – Flower Beds/Hanging Baskets

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.

Through the 2015/16 budget setting process the Council made a decision to reduce the



level of funding allocated to this provision which had an effect on the appearance of flower beds and hanging baskets across the District. Hanging basket provision for summer 2016 has been handed across for local areas to fund with no baskets being provided by the department. It was also agreed to reduce the expenditure on flower beds by 80% across the district due to the closure of the central nursery with any future plant requirements being contract grown externally.

There remain a number of beds identified across the District which need to remain planted to prevent claw back of lottery grants and there is also a requirement to provide bedding to a number of graves under the perpetuity planting scheme.

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

However, in order to minimise the effect of the necessary saving, committee agreed that officers should consider other options/ideas and these included the following:-

- 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

Members also requested a consultation exercise with various interested user groups which resulted in the following beneficial outcomes for the sites highlighted within 'Appendix 1':

- Consulted and worked with Greengates Action Group and they are now assisting with the Cenotaph flower bed along with the good work they were already doing at the community garden
- Consulted with Members and an action group from Idle & Thackley and have assisted them with planters and formed a working partnership and supplied them with plants
- Assisted colleagues in Neighbourhoods to promote the growth in the Friends of Peel Park group and ongoing development of flower beds within the park
- Worked with colleagues at Bolling Hall Museum to replant a bed with suitable sustainable planting in keeping with the period of the building

It was suggested that the timing of full implementation of the agreed changes to the floral displays across the district would be likely to take place over two winter periods, however, due to early consultation and a concerted staff effort over 90% of the new proposals have been completed this winter/spring, although it is anticipated that further development will continue through the newly formed partnerships in this area.



3.2 Bowling Greens - Update

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 was not taken up during 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 continue to take the Council Services, we have agreed to step up the annual charges in line with the savings targets of £25k in 2015/16 and an additional £25K in 2016/17.

All clubs collected, recorded and paid £15 per player in 2015/16 under a mutually agreed method. A single invoice to clubs was 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 £25 per player in 2016/17; the latter will be invoiced in early April 2016 to coincide with the start of the bowls season.

3.3 Community Asset Transfers (CATS) – Town & Parish Councils

Whilst the Service continues to work with colleagues on a number of individual CATs, predominantly around sports pitches/facilities, there is a growing interest from Town and Parish Councils in making applications covering assets across a number of different services. The most current application, not within East, includes buildings from both theatres and libraries together with the vast majority of the green spaces in the parish, together with the management and horticultural maintenance of the latter.

A senior officer group is currently considering the councils response to such applications with the intention of selecting one or more as pilot schemes to allow a protocol to be developed to inform the Council's future approach

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

Members are asked to consider the content of this report and in particular to offer comment on the way the service engaged with other user groups to achieve a satisfactory outcome in relation to the proposed flower bed proposals.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Bradford East Area Committee:

- 1 Note the content of this report and in particular:
 - The bowls club agreement.
 - The outcome following consultation around the flower bed provision.

11. APPENDICES

Flower Bed reclassification proposal (Appendix 1)

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None



Appendix 1:- Bradford East Flower Bed Proposals

Location	Indicative Current 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	Remove

