

Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of the Bradford East Area Committee to be held on 14 September 2017.

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Subject:

Parks & Green Spaces Service Annual Report

Summary statement:

The annual report for the devolved 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 available for future service delivery, investment and savings.

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1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The annual report for the devolved 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 available for future service delivery, investment and savings.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Parks & Green Spaces (PGS) Service

2.1.1 PGS currently sits in the Sport and Culture Service, which is part of the Department of Place and the main function is the management, maintenance and development of the district's parks and other 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.

2.1.2 Woodland management, tree works, play area maintenance, highway weed-spraying and technical services are all delivered on a District wide basis whilst the management and maintenance of local parks and green spaces is provided through at least one operational depot based within each Area Committee boundary. The operational areas, using a total of 74 permanent gardeners, manage and maintain:-

- 36 parks, of which 5 retain Green Flag status
- 115 recreational 'grounds' (including football, rugby, cricket, tennis and bowls facilities)
- 283 outdoor play/fitness facilities across 163 sites
- 50 pavilion/changing rooms
- 20 lodges and 5 cafes
- 40 War Memorials

2.1.3 The PGS also provides support to community, voluntary and 'friends of' groups, including the booking of some 230 events held annually within Parks and Green Spaces ranging from Bingley Music Live to the local village gala.

2.1.4 PGS provides a grounds maintenance service to 6 schools in Bradford East and numerous council services including Estates Management, Bereavement Services, Highways, Libraries, Museums, Sports Centres, Adults and Children's Services (including winter gritting operations).

2.1.5 PGS has provided growing support to the council's highway winter gritting operation with some 25 staff now regularly employed as drivers to cover precautionary gritting routes or ride-on tractor operatives to treat footways.

2.2 Managed Facilities in Bradford East

2.2.1 The following main parks are managed and maintained by the service area teams – Peel Park, Bowling Park and Bradford Moor Park – together with 19 recreational spaces and playing fields containing 17 equipped play areas, 10 MACA's (Multi

Activity Communal Areas) 3 skate/BMX parks and 19 pavilions, changing facilities and lodges.

2.2.2 Other facilities in use this season include 24 Football/Rugby pitches, 8 bowling greens, 4 cricket pitches and 2 tennis courts. 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.

2.3 Operational Depot Review of 2017

2.3.1 The adopted requirement for maintenance standards remain at minimum levels for general grass cutting, hedges, flower and shrub bed maintenance. Budgets are set to reflect the levels of workforce required to maintain these minimum standards with little or no resource resilience. Service performance throughout the peak season is therefore highly susceptible to unseasonal weather or unexpected staff absence.

2.3.2 The operational staff have successfully delivered all maintenance works to the highest possible standard throughout the year. As a result of this it has been notable that complaint numbers have fallen in general and by almost three quarters from local bowls clubs, certainly a reflection of the work of the gardeners involved and also possibly due to the closer working between management and the bowls leagues. The adoption of more sustainable flower bed regimes appears to have been successful, particularly as the herbaceous planting begins to become established.

2.3.3 Given that weather pattern this year have been largely favourable despite a relatively wet summer, the major operational challenge remains that of litter and fly tipping, this interferes with other programmed activity (such as general grass cutting) due to the need to clear excessive litter prior to completing other tasks.

2.3.4 Officers continued to engage with partners such as Friends of Groups, local community groups, councillors and the Neighbourhood Service to deliver a wide range of improvements to the Area's green spaces as evidenced by the retention of the Green Flag Award for Peel Park with an increase in the judges' score.

2.4 New Works (Including Section 106 Monitor)

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

Eccleshill War Memorial Garden - designed and assisted with a new perennial based planting scheme.

Thackley Open Air School - provided interpretation sign at Buck Wood with Friends Group

Peel Park Listed Building – security protection

Bowling Park - Play Area refurbishment with Friends Group

2.4.2 Over the coming year the Technical Unit will be engaged in delivering the following projects:

King George V Memorial Playing Fields - 3G artificial pitch and classroom/changing facilities in partnership with One in a Million school.

New threshold signs for Buck Wood with Friends Group

Peel Park - Bridge repair/ improvement works

2.4.3 Bradford East Section 106 Recreation Receipts

	Total	Unallocated	Allocated	Allocated Projects
Bolton & Undercliffe	37,600	37,600	0	Peel Park Play Area under consideration
Bowling & Barkerend	112,732	112,732	0	
Bradford Moor	0	0	0	
Eccleshill	0	0	0	
Idle & Thackley	81,227	76,227	5,000	Buck Wood signs
Little Horton	25,837	25,837	0	Works at the ARK under consideration

2.5 Events

2.5.1 PGS administers stages and/or supports a high number of events throughout the year in its parks & recreation grounds (over 230) with 45 events booked within the Bradford East area this year, some of which are National events such as the British Cyclo-cross World Championships in Peel Park.

2.5.2 The Sport & Culture events team is responsible for organising, delivering and promoting a number of prestigious destination events across the District. These include Skyride, Bradford City Run and the popular Bingley Music Live festival which attracts in the region of 40,000 people over the weekend.

2.5.3 Other events planned this year in Bradford East include:

- Fun Fairs in Peel Park (2), Bradford Moor Park (2), Bowling Park, Idle Recreation Ground, Harrogate Road Playing Fields and the gala at The Delph
- Circus in Peel Park
- Orienteering and cycling events
- 26 one day play & activity sessions
- Fitness session in Peel Park
- Community Lunches and picnics

2.5.4 The team at Peel Park also facilitate events across the district by erecting market stalls in liaison with the Council's Markets Section.

2.5.5 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 Peel Park Nursery Glasshouses

- 3.1.1 The move towards more sustainable floral features and the removal of subsidised hanging baskets resulted in the closure of the plant growing nursery at Peel Park.
- 3.1.2 Initial efforts were made to constitute a sustainable partnership of volunteer, community and charitable groups with a view to leasing the facility for plant/vegetable growing. Unfortunately the lead partner, a local education/training college withdrew as the business case was beginning to formulate and the partnership dissipated.
- 3.1.3 Given that officer resources continue to diminish, a more realistic option may be to offer the facility to the commercial sector although the existence of a charitable trust on part of the land, restricted access and limited associated office/welfare facilities could be major drawbacks.
- 3.1.4 The glasshouses are currently being partly utilised for storage by a number of Council services. Options for the direction of travel are included at section 9.

3.2 Bradford Moor Park Lake

- 3.2.1 The department has received a number of complaints over the last couple of years in relation to the condition of the lake. Historically, the lake was used for boating but has been 'redundant' as such a facility for a number of years. A model boating club was in residence and did use the lake on a weekly basis and assisted in keeping it clean and tidy, however, due to some vandalism issues the club moved to a facility at Wibsey Park.
- 3.2.2 The lake is still treated for weed and algae growth with litter accumulations also being removed but is now home to a fluctuating population of geese whose presence does leave the surrounding paved areas detritus ridden. In addition to this there are large quantities of food deposits left for the birds which also create maintenance and vermin issues.
- 3.2.3 The water within the lake does not have any significant flow or aeration and can become stagnant and unsightly in the height of the summer.
- 3.2.4 As this water facility does not provide any added benefit to the park area in its present state, further consideration should be given to the future of this area with a number of options included in section 9.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 Budget Savings 2017/18

- 4.1.1 The Service is charged with a savings target of £180,000 for the current year as

part of the adopted Outcome Based Budget Process.

	17/18
CAT's Town/Parish Councils	25
Car Parking Charges	40
BML	50
Woodlands	40
Bowling Greens/Sports Pitches	25
Total	180

- 4.1.2 Members will note that further savings are required from Bowls Clubs in conjunction with other Sports Clubs using playing pitches. The overarching principle remains that of community management of facilities as delivered through implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy, however other options based on increased voluntary activity will also be considered.
- 4.1.3 Devolution of the management and maintenance of parks and open spaces to local town/parish councils will be pursued where a significant cashable saving is available; Burley Town Council has already completed such a lease involving a range of service providers. The introduction of car park charging within identified parks and woodlands remains challenging and it is unlikely that the cumulative saving will be achieved during the current year; there are currently no Bradford East sites within the first phase of implementation.
- 4.1.4 Proposed savings within the Trees & Woodland unit reflect completion of management plans for all Woodlands together with reduced volumes of activity following the introduction of a higher threshold requirement for authorising tree works and the introduction of a new tree management system.

4.2 Financial Performance 2016/17

- 4.2.1 Bradford East operations has a notional net budget of £409,000 with an indicative overspend in the region of £47,000. Although this is a lower overspend than previous years it is evident that a structural pressure in the region of £45,000 exists, primarily due to reduced rechargeable activity. A further review of Service wide budgets is planned during the current year and this issue remains one of the key priorities

5 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The majority of Ward Action Plans reflect support for outdoor play and sport, many recognising the need to retain local parks and green spaces whilst maximising their potential. The value of 'Friends of groups' is also recognised within the People Can initiative, particularly at Bowling Park and Peel Park
- 5.2 PGS continues to work closely, and generally successfully, with the Neighbourhood Service to deliver such joint aspirations.

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
- 6.2. The Council has various powers to provide parks and pleasure ground and other recreational facilities but is under no duty to do so. The management of such facilities is a matter for the Council subject to its general duties under Occupiers Liability legislation or Health and Safety.
- 6.3. Members should note that Section 106 Agreements entered into after the 1st July 2017 will no longer contain recreational contributions. These will now be subject to the CIL Charging Schedule and the use and distribution of such infrastructure funding will become a matter for the Executive. However S106 contributions payable under agreements entered into before that date can still be used for the intended purpose. It should also be noted that in areas where there are local councils 15% of CIL monies received for their areas will be distributed to them to spend on infrastructure projects including parks and recreation.

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.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

PGS 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

9.1 Bradford Moor Park Lake

9.1.1 PGS Officers are keen to consider improvements such as providing an aeration system or draining and filling in the lake either completely or partially. This would allow either a grassed area or possible creation of a wetland habitat/nature reserve. However significant support will be required from other Council services to carry out local consultation and to assist in identifying funding from outside PGS.

1. To retain the lake as it is and carry on with the present maintenance regime.
2. To make improvements to the lake as identified through stakeholder consultation and subject to funding being available.

9.2 Peel Park Glasshouses

9.2.1 Following the demise of the community partnership group, the facility is currently used for incidental storage of goods and equipment. The facility is integral to the surrounding depot infrastructure which, together with the Trust considerations creates significant challenges when considering alternative use. Nevertheless Officers are recommending that options for commercial use are initially pursued through Estates Management to determine whether this is a viable option to deliver an income stream.

- 1 Test the commercial market for rental income
- 2 Retain for use as rented storage space for Council services
- 3 Transfer the glasshouses and land to Estates Management to include within the Corporate Property Management Portfolio

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Bradford East Area Committee:

- 10.1 That the content of this report be noted.
- 10.2 That option 2 be adopted for Bradford Moor Park.
- 10.3 That option 1 be adopted for Peel Park Glasshouses.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None