

Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of the Bradford South Area Committee to be held on 29th November 2018

O

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 and proposed management structural changes that will have an effect over the coming 12 months with options where available for future service delivery, investment and savings

Steve Hartley
Strategic Director, Place

Report Contact: Ian Wood
Phone: (01274) 432648
E-mail: ian.wood@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Healthy People and Places

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration & Environment

1. SUMMARY

The annual report for the devolved Parks & Green Spaces Service reviews activity during the past year and also considers the significant issues and proposed management structural changes that will have an effect over the coming 12 months with options where available for future service delivery, investment and savings.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Parks & Green Spaces (PGS) Service

2.1.1 Following some re-alignment of Assistant Directors managed remits the PGS currently sits within the department of Neighbourhood & Customer Services, 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 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 6 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 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 South

2.2.1 The following main parks are managed and maintained by the service area teams – Brackenhill Park, Harold Park, Knowles Park, Russell Hall Park, Victoria Park

Oakenshaw, Wibsey Park– together with 23 recreational spaces and playing fields containing 26 equipped play areas, 5 MACA's (Multi Activity Communal Areas) 3 skate/BMX parks and 21 pavilions, changing facilities and lodges.

2.2.2 Other facilities in use this season include 16 Football/Rugby pitches, 9 bowling greens, 1 cricket pitch and 1 tennis court. 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 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 were almost negligible from local bowls clubs. This is certainly a reflection of the work of the gardeners involved and also possibly due to the closer working between management and the bowls leagues. Some of the bowls clubs in the area adopted a 'self-maintenance type model' for this season with Wibsey Park cutting their own green and the council attending to other services and treatments and both Asa Briggs and Brackenhill opting to undertake a full maintenance package on their greens. 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 patterns this year have been largely favourable despite a very dry 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 Harold Park following a 'secret shopper' visit by the judges.

2.4 New Works/Projects

2.4.1 The following new projects have been successfully achieved in the last 12 months:

2.4.2 Wibsey Park was a 'Healthy Living' park in 2018 with a summer programme of fun activities taking place. The Healthy Living parks was delivered by 'Your Back Yard' in partnership with the Friends of Wibsey Park and Bradford Council.

2.4.3 Wibsey Park saw a valued resurgence of the 'Friends of Group' and they were involved in a number of events over the year.

- 2.4.4** The successful sale of Wibsey Park Lodge was completed and it was agreed that the proceeds from the sale of £150,000 could be reinvested into the park.
- 2.4.5** Harold Park retained its Green Flag Award and also received a Gold Award from Yorkshire in Bloom.
- 2.4.6** Both Harold and Wibsey Parks became 'Dementia Friendly' with a measure mile walking trail that is colour coded and also some specific interpretation boards were installed.
- 2.4.7** Parks officers worked with the Forest of Bradford to plant 20 extra heavy standard trees in both Cooper Lane recreation ground and Foxhill Park.
- 2.4.8** Officers assisted bowls clubs, Asa Briggs and Brackenhill to adopt a 'self-manage' scheme and also Wibsey with 'part managed' scheme.

2.5 Events

- 2.5.1** PGS administers, stages and supports a high number of events throughout the year in its parks & recreation grounds (over 230) with 16 events being held in the South area. These events include both sporting, fun and charity and include the following:
- Fun Fairs in Brackenhill Park, Knowles Park, Wibsey Fair Site (2) and Wyke Recreation Ground
 - Off road trial run and cycling events in Littlemore Park
 - Various one day play & activity sessions
 - Family Fun days in Brackenhill Park
 - Various friends of events in Harold Park
 - Donkey Derby – Foxhill Park
 - Summer Gala – Harold Park
 - Great Horton Festival – Brackenhill Park
 - Spooky Halloween Event – Harold Park
 - Health & Fitness day – Wibsey Park
- 2.5.2** 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.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Service Merger

- 3.1.1** Following the move into the Neighbourhoods & Customer Services area it is inevitable that there will also be some operational and structural changes to consider. A planned merger of the Parks & Cleansing services will take place which will positively create a larger more resilient workforce and will allow greater flexibility across the service areas.
- 3.1.2** A management re-structure will also take place which will see the creation of 5 new Parks & Street Cleansing Manager roles who will be responsible for the combined services and report directly to the Area Coordinators.

3.1.3 There will also be a post of a senior Parks & Green Spaces Manager based at a more strategic level and reporting to the Shipley Area Coordinator.

3.1.4 It is anticipated that the proposed new structure will be implemented early in the new year.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.2 Financial Performance 2018/19

4.2.1 Bradford South operations has a notional net budget of £264,000 and there are no potential concerns at this stage. The area continues to undertake additional internal and external contract works in an effort to gain additional income. A further review of Service wide budgets is planned during the current year and this issue remains one of the key priorities

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 There are serious risk or governance issues associated with this report.

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.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

8.1 None

9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Increased local decision making has the potential to create more sustainable solutions to local issues.

10. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

- 10.1** 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.

11. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

12. HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

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

13. TRADE UNION

- 13.1** Trade Unions at all levels are engaged in consultation over the proposals included in this report.

14. WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1** The information in this report is relevant to all Wards in the area.
- 14.2** Increased devolution of the services will allow the Area Committee to further address local priorities for those services within wards.

15. AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1** There are no Area Committee Action Plan implications arising from this report.

16. IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

- 16.1** There are no implications arising from this report.

17. ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

- 17.1** There are no privacy impact issues arising from this report.

18. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

- 18.1** None

19. OPTIONS

19.1 None applicable to this report.

20. RECOMMENDATIONS

20.1 That the South Area Committee note the content of this report and welcome the planned merger of the Cleansing Service.

21. APPENDICES

21.1 None

22. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

22.1 None