

Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of the Bradford West Area Committee to be held on 23rd December 2019

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Subject:

Parks and Green Spaces Annual Report

Summary statement:

The operational management and maintenance of Bradford District's Parks and Green Spaces is a service devolved to Area Committees. The service merged with the Street Cleansing Service in April 2019. This report seeks to review the activity during the past year and the trends and direction options where available for future service delivery.

Steve Hartley
Strategic Director, Place

Report Contact: David Cansfield
Phone: (01274) 437026
E-mail: david.cansfield@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Healthy People and Places

Overview and Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration and Environment

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The operational management and maintenance of Bradford District's Parks and Green Spaces is a service devolved to Area Committees. The service merged with the Street Cleansing Service in April 2019. This report seeks to review the activity during the past year and the trends and direction options where available for future service delivery.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In April 2019 the management structure of Parks and Green Spaces merged with the Street Cleansing Service. This followed the 'lift and shift' of the Parks and Green Spaces operation from Sport and Culture to Neighbourhood and Customer Services in September 2018. There are five Parks and Street Cleansing Managers who report to an Area Coordinator and oversee the operation of both Parks and Street Cleansing services. The individual staff teams have not yet amalgamated to the same operating locations. However, the intention is to do so and work is currently ongoing with Estates.
- 2.2 The Parks and Green Space Development, Technical and Play Officers remain within Sport and Culture; a summary of their work is detailed in section 3.
- 2.3 There are over 188 named parks, playing fields, recreation grounds and pleasure gardens throughout the district. Operation and maintenance of these sites falls to the devolved service via the Area Coordinators and the Parks and Street Cleansing Managers. These sites range from district wide destination parks with a wide range of facilities and large sporting hubs, to parks and open spaces provided for local communities.
- 2.4 Facilities within these sites include a wide range of buildings and structures, many of which have 'listed' status. These include operational depots, lodges, changing rooms, pavilions, cafes, statues, bridges, memorials, walls, gates and fences in addition to lakes, paths, signage and seating.
- 2.5 Operation of these sites including the coordination of their use and the direction of development is in collaboration with the 'Friends Of' groups. Other user groups include bowling, football, rugby and cricket teams, and regular users such as Park Run, fitness classes, cycle training, and model engineering clubs.
- 2.6 The Service books and facilitates an annual cycle of fun fairs, circuses and band concerts across the district. We also provide venues within the parks and green spaces for over 200 events each year. These events range from Friends Of events, and events provided by, or aimed at the local communities, to large events with a district wide appeal.
- 2.7 In addition to the operation and maintenance of the Park's sites the service also oversees the highway weed spraying contract and provides a grounds maintenance service to the council's varied estate. This includes the civic spaces in town and city centres, roundabouts and urban highway verges, cemeteries, social residential care facilities, libraries, sports centres, museums, public open space and other grassed

open spaces. The combined total area of the grass maintained by the service is in excess of 7.5 million square metres; the equivalent of 1043 Wembley Stadium pitches. The service also plays a major role in the winter gritting programme.

2.8 The service operates in committee areas with each area retaining its own staffing profile and budget. Some service delivery across boundaries occurs due to geographic practicalities, skill set and service demand. This enhances service efficiency. The service operational staff base is 72 gardeners and 21 seasonal workers. Included in the base line are 10 vacancies which were covered with additional seasonal agency staff and tendered contracts for grass cutting operations. Rationalising the area budgets taking into account previous and future budget savings will enable the service to rebase staffing for next year.

2.9 District wide Parks Depots Budget

Expenditure	2019-20 £'000	Income by Source	2019-20 £'000
Employees	2,810	Other incl.	(594)
Premises	571	(Fees and charges)	
Transport	811		
Supplies and services	244		
Third Party Payments	(933)		
Gross Cost	3,502	Total Income	(594)
Net Council Base Budget			2,908

2.10 Recent budget savings focus on alternative management and maintenance models of sites and facilities. This has and is likely to continue to include Community Asset Transfers, Licences, Leases and Service Level Agreements. Ward Members are consulted as part of the process.

2.11 Maintenance standards across the Bradford District reflect the staffing level and previous budget savings. Previous reductions in the service level have included reduction in the maintenance frequency of all grass areas, bowling greens, shrub beds during the mowing season and the reduction of annual floral displays.

2.12 Grass cutting related complaints April to September 2019 District-wide:

Area	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Change 18/ 19	Change %
East	69	51	48	164	145	191	72	86	70	95	66	-29	-31%
Keighley	58	44	65	93	60	87	71	70	73	31	57	26	84%
Shipley	42	38	64	77	58	69	56	48	24	48	42	-6	-13%
South	83	78	61	349	186	222	97	175	104	256	92	-164	-64%
West	52	36	37	97	53	62	41	37	33	36	36	0	0%
Multiple Areas	16	4	9	43	35	25	13	24	21	27	23	-4	-15%
Unknown	9	21	17	43	30	40	19	29	17	23	9	-14	-61%
Total	329	272	301	866	567	696	369	469	342	516	325	-191	-37%

- 2.13 The table shows even with the significant change in management structure, complaints reduced by 37% overall from 2018 to 2019 with levels in Bradford West remaining consistent.

Bradford West Overview

- 2.14 Bradford West has a mix of provision including Lister Park which is a destination park with district wide appeal, Horton Park is a well used Heritage Park, and we have busy local sites including Ladyhill Park and West Park Girlington as well as heavily used smaller sites like Victoria Park Clayton.
- 2.15 The focus on grass sports pitches in Bradford West is mainly single pitch sites these include Bingley Road Playing Fields, Green Top Street, Prune Park and Woodhead Road Playing Fields.
- 2.16 There are numerous other parks and green spaces across the area including but not limited to:

Beaconsfield Recreation Ground, Carlisle Road Play Area, Copthorn Linier Park Delph Recreation Ground, Drummond Road Recreation Ground, Greenwood Park Haworth Road Playing Fields, Haworth Road Recreation Ground, Heaton Hill Recreation Ground, Hill Top Recreation Ground, Infirmary Fields, Kipping Gardens Ley Top Recreation Ground, Lily Street, Listerhills/Legrans Play Area, Little Horton Green Playing Fields, Lower Grange Play Area, Lupton Street, Munby Street Recreation Ground, Patent Street Recreation Area, Royd Street Thornton, School Green Recreation Ground, Scotchman Road Playing Fields, Shipley Fields Road St Michael's Recreation Ground, Temple Bank School Playing Fields, The Avenue Recreation Ground (Clayton Field), Thurnscoe Road, Victor Street, Wensley Bank West, Whetley Terrace.

Operational Review

Horticultural and Maintenance review 2019

- 2.17 Service performance can fluctuate due to staff absence and variation in seasonal patterns. However, the mowing operation achieved the targeted 10 cuts this season. Other horticultural seasonal works over the autumn and winter are expected to be completed as per schedule.
- 2.18 Grass cutting related complaints April to September 2019 in Bradford West by ward:

Ward Sort	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
West: Across Multiple Wards	5	6	6	7	11	14	7	10	13	12	9
West: City		2	5	35	5	10	6	2	3	1	3
West: Clayton & Fairweather Green	6	5	10	27	15	12	11	6	5	5	7
West: Heaton	7	4	1	5	5	4		4	2	3	3
West: Manningham	2	2	1	9	1	5	3	1	1	8	1
West: Thornton & Allerton	18	14	12	6	11	7	11	7	7	3	8
West: Toller	14	3	2	8	5	10	3	7	2	4	5

Litter in Parks and Green Spaces

- 2.19 Bradford West has 192 litter bins across its parks and green spaces. Two gardeners rotate around the area emptying bins and litter picking each site weekly. Heavily used sites have an increased frequency to combat peaks in use where resources allow. It is hoped over time when staff move together into area depots that closer working operations between parks and cleansing operatives will further improve services.
- 2.20 Four solar powered smart bins have been located in Horton Park, Lister Park and Chellow Dene Reservoir this summer to help assist with capacity and frequency of visits. These bins hold nine times more litter than standard bins, compacting the litter to increase the amount that can be deposited before they require emptying. Managers are alerted automatically by email when the bins are full.
- 2.21 The control of litter within park sites can be problematic due to peaks in demand during periods of good weather. Where possible, other gardeners assist the dedicated team to control the spike in demand but this removes them from their normal horticultural duties.

Awards

- 2.22 Lister Park continues to receive accolades during 2019.

The park received a Silver Guild award in the Tourist Attraction category in this year's Yorkshire in Bloom competition.

- 2.23 We retained the Green Flag Award for the eighteenth consecutive year. This year the site received a mystery shop assessment rather than an accompanied judging. The judge commented "*Standards of horticulture are excellent, especially in the botanical garden which is well planted and expertly maintained. Well done.*" also "*It is good to see that the high standards achieved by the HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) restoration are being maintained more than a decade later*".

- 2.24 Lister Park was one of 364 parks and green spaces nominated in the Fields in Trust's 'UK's Best Park' competition. Following a national public vote Lister Park was one of 73 sites to receive "Much Loved" status. It was one of only six parks in Yorkshire to receive the status and recognises the support the park received from those who use and love it.

Events

- 2.25 Events taking place in Parks and Green Spaces in Bradford West this year include council arranged fun fairs and band concerts in Lister Park along with ten charity fun runs and sponsored walks including Cancer Research's Race for Life and Epilepsy Action's Reindeer Stampede.
- 2.26 Community events in parks and green spaces included those organised by Clayton Dickensian Market, Friends of Horton Park, Lower Grange Community Association,

Hollings Youth Association and Girlington, Heaton & Manningham Council of Churches plus Eid prayers on Infirmary Fields, Lister Park and Woodhead Recreation Ground.

- 2.27 Other activities taking place included, a Driving for Cohesion event, Lister Lanterns, Sport England Local Delivery Pilot, Join Us: Move. Play (JU:MP) events, football and cricket sessions, orienteering and forest schools.

Direction and Trends

- 2.28 The Service has a commitment to continue to engage with clubs and community groups to encourage them to take over the management and maintenance of playing pitches and bowling greens. The service remains open to Community Asset Transfers of facilities to Town and Parish Councils.
- 2.29 There is an increased desire within the district and a trend nationally, towards more naturalist 'nature friendly' parks. This leads us towards reducing the amount of chemicals used in parks and green spaces and increasing the amount of space managed with nature in mind, providing habitats for plants and animals. Chemicals are used to manage weeds on hard surfaces and grass growth around obstacles and vertical edges.
- 2.30 Moving in this direction requires a mind shift in relation to what is considered a well maintained park or green space. Areas of long grass under trees, on bankings and in designated areas, would be considered the norm. Plants previously considered as weeds would be welcomed as diverse flora.
- 2.31 The Friends of Peel Park have been instrumental in assisting officers to test a nature friendly approach this summer. Agreed areas in the park have received differential grass land maintenance this summer. The trial will continue whilst we assess the environmental and social impact.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Parks and Green Spaces Development

Sport Pitches Investment Programme (SPIP)

- 3.1 The Council's Sports Pitches Investment Programme will deliver the District's new 2019 Playing Pitch Strategy to provide a hierarchy of outdoor playing pitch and ancillary facilities, which meets current and future demand. This will seek to address declining playing numbers within the key sports of football, cricket, rugby (both league and union), tennis and athletics.
- 3.2 The capital spend of £15m, approved by the Project Approval Group and the Council Executive will be partnered by other external grant funding from National Governing Bodies and partners. This will deliver three district wide multi-sports hubs, five local multi-sports hubs and a number of single pitch improvements, creating opportunity for everyone to participate in physical activity and sport to

improve outcomes across the District relating to health, well-being and community cohesion.

- 3.3 The sites within Bradford West will be assessed in the second phase of the project when developing the local multi-sports hubs and the single pitch improvements.

Play Areas

Maintenance

- 3.4 Officers continue to carry out operational inspections of all play areas, multi-use games areas, wheeled sports facilities and other play facilities across the district. An annual independent play inspection was last carried out in July 2019. A team of two playground maintenance operatives carry out emergency and on-going maintenance repairs. They prioritise high-risk safety issues and also undertake a programme of routine maintenance and repairs as required by the individual site.
- 3.5 The Council has an indicative maintenance budget for children's play areas for the whole of the district of £100,200. This budget funds the maintenance operatives who repair the 308 facilities and allows a spend of £39,300 on replacement materials and equipment.
- 3.6 The play team received and responded to 3 complaints via the Council's contact centre relating to facilities in Bradford West which were passed onto the Police due to criminal damage. The cases related to Horton Park, Lister Park and Royd Street, Thornton.

Bradford West Play Assets

19 playgrounds
3 skate parks
9 multi-use games areas
3 goal ends/sports walls
4 five-a-side facilities
2 outdoor gyms
4 trim trails
1 climbing wall

Playable Spaces Strategy (PSP)

- 3.7 The PSS is still in development, but will provide a strategic policy document against which new play facility requests can be measured and assessed in an objective manner to ensure a needs proportionate distribution of facilities across all parts of the district. This will deliver a strategic and detailed plan for a network of play facilities that are financially sustainable within existing revenue maintenance budgets.

Development Projects

- 3.8 **Recently Completed Projects**

Greenwood Park Play facility improvements and new equipment.
Woodhead Road Recreation Ground
Improvement works to the football pitch, fencing and gates.

3.9 **On Going Projects**

Horton Park

Potential renovations and improvements within the park dealing with local drainage and flooding issues and to create a safer and healthier outdoor place to improve emotional health and fitness. Lead by Landscape Design Unit in conjunction with Better Start Bradford.

Lister Park Play Area

Replacement of the existing worn out play area with a new Destination Play Area as part of the council's Playable Spaces Strategy.

Little Horton Green Cricket Ground

Replacement of cabins used by the cricket club.

4. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 Bradford West operation has a notional net budget of £455,800. The transport recharges, prudential borrowing costs and district wide services within West are accounted for separately.
- 4.2 The budget saving for Parks and Green spaces district wide for 2020/21 is £50,000, to be achieved by reducing the number of sports pitches directly managed by the service.
- 4.3 Rationalising the area budgets, taking into account previous and future budget savings will enable the service to rebase staffing for next year.
- 4.4 Staffing base level for the area is 14 gardeners and four seasonal workers.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 There are no 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, pleasure grounds and other recreational facilities but is under no obligation 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 EQUALITY and DIVERSITY

7.1.1 None.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

7.2.1 Increased local decision making has the potential to create more sustainable solutions to local issues. 'Nature friendly' parks increase diversity and sustainability of wildlife.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

7.3.1 The 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 local areas to reduce travelling times, with its fleet/plant resulting in reduced fuel consumption. In addition to this parks and recreation grounds/trees/woodlands etc provide communities with 'green lungs' which can naturally assist with the filtering of polluted air.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.4.1 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

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

7.6 TRADE UNION

7.6.1 Trade Unions at all levels are engaged in regular consultations with management.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS AND WARD PLANS

7.7.1 This report concerns all wards in the Bradford West area.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

7.8.1 There are no implications arising from this report

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

7.9.1 There are no privacy impact issues arising from this report.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 None.

9. OPTIONS

- 9.1 The area committee may wish to confirm its view on trialling or expanding the concept of 'nature friendly' parks within Bradford West; or express a preference for maintaining the traditional concept of parks and green spaces.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the Bradford West Area Committee welcomes the content of this report and the smooth merger of the operational management and maintenance of Parks and Green Spaces with the Street Cleansing Service, whilst maintaining levels of service.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 None.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 12.1 'Parks and Green Spaces Service Annual Report', Document T, Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of Bradford West Area Committee, 28 November 2018.
- 12.2 'Parks and Green Spaces Service Annual Report', Document O, Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of Bradford West Area Committee, 25 October 2017.