

Report of the Director of Environment & Sport to the meeting of the Bradford South Area Committee to be held on Thursday 30 June 2016.

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Subject:

Parks & Green Spaces Service Annual Report

Summary statement:

The annual report for the Parks & Green Spaces Service, reviews the previous maintenance year of 2015/16 and also considers the significant issues that will have an effect over the coming 12 months, and presents 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 the previous maintenance year of 2015/16 and also considers the significant issues that will have an effect over the coming 12 months and presents options where appropriate for future service delivery.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Parks & Green Spaces Service

Currently sits in the Sport and Culture 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 South 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)
- Development of & support to '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 South

Within the constituency there are 9 main parks that are managed and maintained by the service area teams:-

Knowles Park - Wibsey Park - Harold Park (Green Flag) - Foxhill Park - Brackenhill Park - Horton Bank Country Park - Littlemoor Park - Russell Hall Park - Victoria Park.

There are also 21 recreation grounds, 23 equipped play areas, 5 MACA's (Multi Activity Communal Areas) and 3 skate/BMX parks. Other facilities include 30 Football/Rugby pitches (4 of which are exclusively for juniors), 9 bowling greens, 1 cricket pitch, 1 tennis court and 3 lakes.

In addition to horticultural works the service is responsible for the upkeep of all the associated structures within the above sites including 11 pavilions, 4 changing facilities and 6 lodges.

2.3 Review of last year

Last year, throughout the 'summer', Parks & Green Spaces' maintenance teams performed to a very high standard, including the Bradford South teams achieving a far better standard of maintenance than the year before. All parks and green spaces were maintained to the specified standard.

In addition to this, all flower beds, hedges and shrub beds were also maintained to standard and through the dedication of both the staff and management we were able to retain the 'Green Flag' status at Harold Park, Lister Park, Peel Park, Roberts Park, Central Park, Haworth and St Ives Estate.

Certainly in the Bradford South area, a lot of improvement from the previous year was expected and, whilst the year was still challenging, both management and the workforce implemented some operational changes that allowed for a more consistent approach to be adopted with the result that the service complaint levels were significantly reduced from the previous year.

2.4 Service delivery update 2016/17

With regard to this year there is very little change 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 & hanging baskets – see 3.1.

Officers have continued to engage with partners, such as, Members, colleagues in Neighbourhoods, Friends of Groups, Parish Councils, Residents Associations and the like, 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:



- The continued support of the Friends of Harold Park towards the numerous successful events they hold
- Supporting the development of the Friends of Wyke Recreation Ground
- Supporting the rapidly growing Friends of Brackenhill Park
- The removal of the old Aviary site at Wibsey Park following consultation with residents
- The completion of the Adventure Play Ground at Knowles Park

2.5 Events

The Parks & Green Spaces Service stages and/or supports a high number of events throughout the year (over 150) in its parks & recreation grounds, some of which are major District events such as the historic Bingley Show, the renowned Moscow State Circus, Keighley Show and Ilkley Carnival.

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

Events planned this year in Bradford South include:

- 5 Fun fairs at Knowles Park, Brackenhill Park, Wibsey fair site and Wyke Recreation ground -throughout the summer
- Harold Park Gala - July & various Friends of events and activities thought the year
- Knowles Park Holmewood Gala - June
- Brackenhill Park – Great Horton Community Festival - September
- Children’s summer activities – across all wards
- Boot camp fitness in Wibsey Park weekly through the summer.

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 & Woodlands update

In addition to carrying out the continuing workload to the council’s tree stock in woodlands, parks, public open spaces and on the highway, the Trees & Woodland section have been involved in some ‘one off’ externally funded projects within the South area over the last few years. These projects were achieved through the ongoing consultation with members and community groups and they provided some major improvements within the area.

Bierley Woods Community Access –

This project consisted of key footpaths being upgraded through the woodland, additional seating areas being installed to improve community access and provide opportunities for informal health and recreation. The project budget was £40,000 (Marks & Spencer £25,000, Sport & Leisure £10,000 and Ward budget £5,000). This project was completed in 2011/13.



Black Carr Woods Community Access –

Funding has been gained to provide some improvements to the main entrance and main footpaths with some additional seating and signage added to encourage more community use. This was achieved through consultation and the involvement of members and the 'Friends of group'. The project budget is £61,000 (WREN funding of £45,000 and Bfd Council £16,000). This project is to be commenced shortly and once completed will provide further health and recreation opportunities for the local community.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Floral Display Review Update – Flower beds/Hanging Baskets

The Council historically had prepared flower beds and hanging baskets for summer displays 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':



- The Friends of Brackenhill agreed to the removal of 2 of the smaller beds by the lodge, the enlarging of the remaining bed, and they assisted in the creation of 2 new large beds in the top area of the park. It was agreed that the beds would be planted with a more sustainable planting scheme to provide further interest.
- The Friends of Wyke Recreation Ground agreed to the future maintenance of the raised planted areas if Parks plant them with sustainable plants, as opposed to the proposal to remove them altogether.
- The partner organisation B.C.E.P. agreed to take on the planting and the maintenance of the flower beds within Wibsey Park.
- Victoria Park, Oakenshaw - the Residents Association agreed to plant some annual plants and Parks some rose bushes with the Residents Association taking on future maintenance.

It was previously agreed that the flower bed on Wibsey Roundabout would be removed and returned to grass and this has been completed.

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 had agreed a 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 is not being introduced in 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 take the Council Services in 2015/16, we agreed to step up the annual charges in line with the savings target being set at £25k in 2015/16, and a further £25K in 2016/17.

It was agreed that all clubs will collect, record and pay £15 per player in 2015/16, and £25 in 2016/17. In year 1 the saving target was met. However, to date year 2 is potentially showing a shortfall in achieving the proposed saving and the steering group is currently working on ways in which to address this issue.

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 for the future.



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 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.

3.4 Water Courses and Reservoirs

The parks & Green spaces department are responsible for a number of water courses/features on its own land which range from small streams in the botanical gardens at Lister Park to the larger park lakes and ponds around the district and one such feature are the reservoirs at Chellow Dene. The site consists of 2 large lakes with the lower one consisting of a large dam/banking which requires regular safety and operational inspections to ensure that all the sluice/overflow mechanics are maintained correctly and that the structure of the banking is not showing signs of any defects.

Unfortunately a recent inspection survey revealed that some works are required to the banking, and whilst the defect is not highlighting any immediate structural dangers, it is imperative that remedial works are carried out to ensure the ongoing safety of the site. The nature of such works have to be carried out by specialist companies and, as such, can be very expensive, and the proposed works in this instance will be in the region of £280,000. The department will be submitting a P.A.G. application to cover these essential works and will endeavour to keep the ward members and the local community informed of progress.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1.1 The Parks and Green Spaces Service was given savings targets for both last year and also for the current 2016/17 financial year.
- 4.1.2 The savings did prove to be challenging to achieve in year 15/16, but a lot of work was undertaken to successfully deliver the saving and minimise the impact on the service 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 in 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 South Area Committee:

1 Note the content of this report and in particular:

- The bowls club agreement
- The outcome following the consultation around the flower bed provision.

11. APPENDICES

Flower Bed reclassification proposal (Appendix 1) and images of alterations and suggestions.



12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

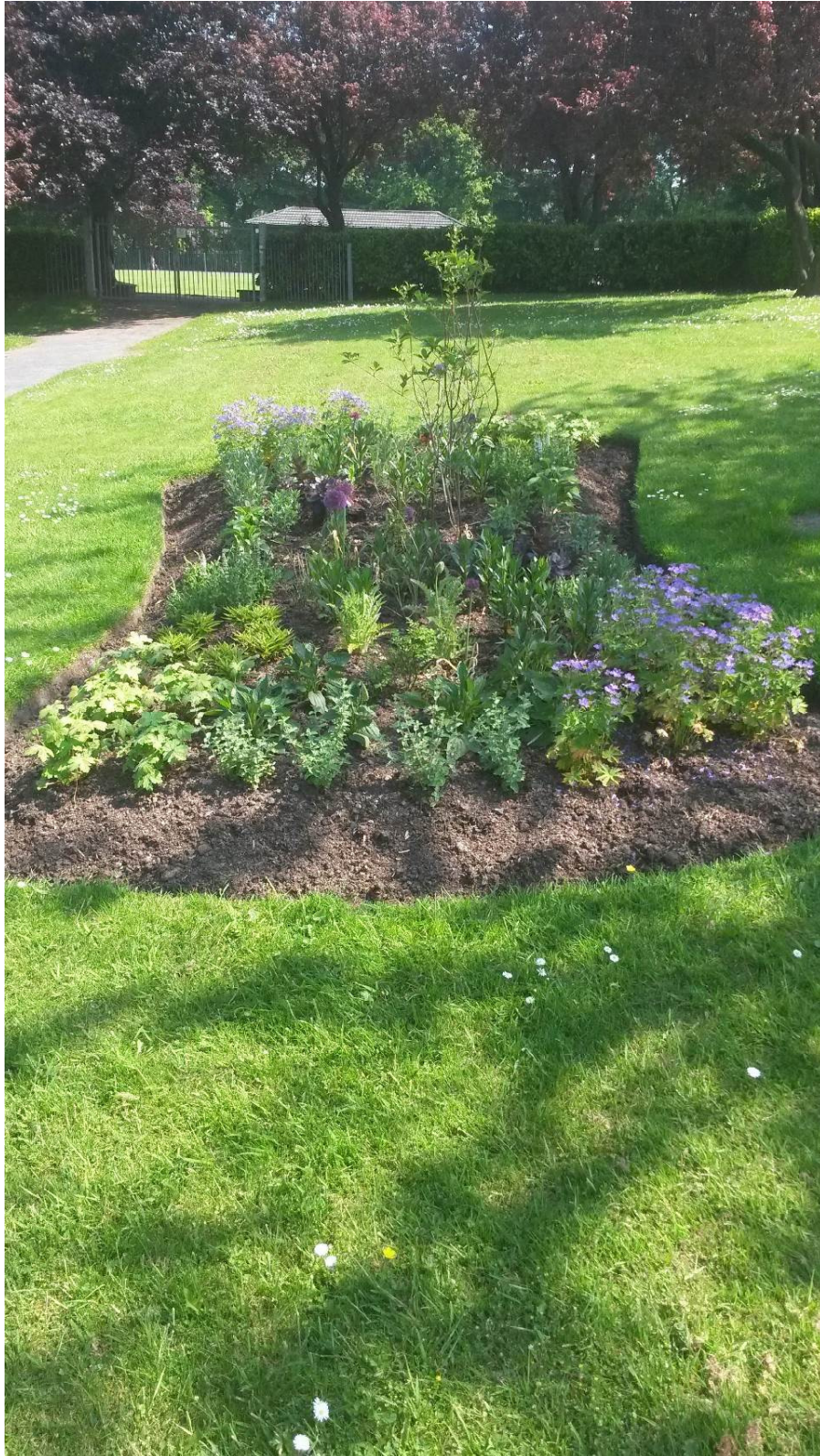
None



Appendix 1:- Bradford South Flower Bed Proposals

LOCATION	Number of Plants	Proposals
NORTH BIERLEY CEMETERY	1580	Perpetuity planting retain bedding
BRACKENHILL PARK	2526	Reduce scale and use permanent planting
SCHOLEMOOR CEMETERY	500	Reduce scale and use permanent planting
TONG CEMETERY	600	Reduce scale and use permanent planting
WIBSEY PARK	6077	Reduce scale and use permanent planting
VICTORIA PARK, OAKENSHAW	108	Remove
WIBSEY ROUNDABOUT	1300	Remove
WYKE RECREATION GROUND	200	Remove





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