

Scrutiny Review: Parks

A Review by the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel

2017/18

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

Haringey's parks are much loved facilities that provide a wide range of benefits for the community. There have been various attempts to quantify these benefits, but parks also contribute to life in the borough in ways that are not always quantifiable, in relation to areas such as health, education, social cohesion and place-making. Despite this, there has historically been a lack of recognition of the wide-ranging benefits that parks provide and a tendency to take them for granted. This has led to them being regarded as a low priority for funding and something of a financial liability.

Parks have suffered disproportionately from budget cuts. The adverse impact of these has been felt gradually but there are now signs that long-term harm is being done to our parks. Although the borough's Parks Service are highly-regarded, it has been widely acknowledged during this review that it is chronically underfunded, with staff numbers too low and maintenance levels insufficient to keep parks at the standards residents expect. The principal cause of this is, of course, the cuts to council funding from central government. However, as a panel we have tried to explore ways of increasing funding within the current constraints.

The most effective and efficient means of managing our parks is for those of sufficient size to have their own dedicated members of staff, as was the case in the past. Although we recognise that this is not possible within the current parks budget, it should be the council's long-term aspiration for the future. We should also be looking to obtain Green Flag status for as many of our parks as is possible, as this will help ensure that they all benefit from high standards.

It is important that a holistic strategic approach for our parks is taken and that the responsibility for their upkeep and development is more widely shared amongst the partners who benefit from the outcomes they produce. In particular, the Health and Well Being Board should play a key role. Natural Capital Accounting can help to illustrate the contribution that parks make to a range of outcomes by quantifying them, which should also help the service obtain funding from external sources.

Finally, we need to ensure that our parks and open spaces are preserved for future generations. The pressure on land in London is likely to intensify and this may cause parks to be considered as acceptable options for development. Any permanent development on land designated as a park should be objected to on principle, unless the overall provision of open land is enhanced. In addition to the loss of a valuable amenity for residents, any such development would be counterproductive to the regeneration of the borough by reducing its attractiveness. In order to increase levels of protection, we therefore feel that all designated parks should be put under covenant with the Fields in Trust.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Parks Service engage further with Friends groups to ensure they have a clear guide to the structure of the Parks Service and have a named contact for each area of responsibility (*paragraph 3.16*).
2. That the Council's formal position be, subject to the provision of suitable additional funding and the setting of service standards at an appropriate level, to support the making of parks into a statutory service (*4.5*).
3. That it is acknowledged that the current level of revenue funding for the Parks Service is insufficient to maintain parks and open spaces to an acceptable standard and risks causing long term damage to our parks and open spaces and that it therefore is increased (*4.14*).
4. That an explicit commitment be made to maximise the use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for parks and open spaces and that all of the cost of maintaining facilities developed using such funding should also come from the CIL (*4.18*).
5. That every effort be made to maximise capital funding from external sources but that any match funding required for capital works or projects should come from wider capital programme funding rather than specifically from the budget for the Parks Service (*4.19*).
6. That the Council state its aspiration to have a dedicated member of staff in all parks of sufficient size to warrant this and that this be included in its vision for the service within the forthcoming Parks Strategy (*4.23*).
7. That Green Flag status should be sought for all of the boroughs parks that are considered able to achieve it (*4.25*).
8. That, in respect of litter in parks, the development of pilot schemes aimed to reduce levels be welcomed and the Panel kept informed of progress (*4.29*).
9. That levels of litter in parks be monitored closely to ensure that recent changes to waste and recycling arrangements do not impact adversely on them and that information in respect of this be included in regular performance information submitted to the Panel (*4.29*).
10. That the wider benefits of parks are emphasised strongly within the new Parks Strategy and reflected in outcome specifications and that it be developed in collaboration with the Health and Well-Being board in order that health and well-being issues are fully taken into account (*5.5*).

11. That the Parks Strategy be developed utilising values calculated using the Natural Capital Accounting model (5.9).
12. That, in view of the significant contribution that they make to delivering long-term health and well-being benefits, a percentage of the Public Health budget be earmarked for the maintenance and development of parks and open spaces (5.17).
13. That where parts of the local transport infrastructure for walkers and cyclists pass through parks and open spaces, LIP funding be used for their development and maintenance (5.25).
14. That the Council commit to a programme of putting all of the boroughs designated parks and green open spaces under a Fields in Trust covenant and that this includes a clear timetable for completion (6.14).

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The review was set up by the Panel in response to community concerns regarding the cumulative effects of budget cuts on parks and open spaces within the borough and the possibility that these may lead to long term decline.

Terms of Reference

- 1.2 The terms of reference for the review were as follows:

“To consider and make recommendations to the Council’s Cabinet on the development of a strategy for the borough’s parks and open spaces and, in particular;

- Maintenance of standards and support;
- The wider benefits and contributions to Corporate Plan priorities that parks make;
- Potential sources of funding; and
- Effective protection from inappropriate development or commercialisation.”

Sources of Evidence

- 1.3 Sources of evidence were:

- Research documentation and relevant local and national guidance;
- Interviews with key stakeholders and local organisations; and
- Visits to Railway Fields and Albert Road Recreation Ground.

- 1.4 A full list of documentation considered and all those who provided evidence as Appendices A and B.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Approximately 13% of Haringey is open space. There are 61 parks and open spaces, 58 of which are the responsibility of the Council. There are also a small number that are not the Council's responsibility, including Alexandra Park, Tottenham Marshes and Highgate Wood. They are very much loved by residents, with 81% indicating that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their local parks and open spaces. There are 13.5 million visits to them per year, which works out as a cost of 9 pence per visit.
- 2.2 The Parks Service is currently part of the Council's Commercial and Operations business unit and comes within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Environment. The service is responsible for a number of functions, including:
- Grounds maintenance in parks and open spaces, around Homes for Haringey properties, next to highways and within sports and leisure facilities;
 - Allotments, which is the only part of the service that is statutory;
 - Nature Reserves;
 - Trees and woodland management;
 - Events in parks;
 - Capital Investment and major projects;
 - Sports and play facilities;
 - Partnerships and property management; and
 - Relationships with Friend's groups.

Strategic Role

- 2.3 The Parks Service has a direct relationship to Priority 3 within the Council's Corporate Plan; "A clean and safe borough where people are proud to live". However, it also makes a contribution to:
- Priorities 1 and 2 in terms of people's activity levels, food growing and children's play; and
 - Priorities 4 and 5 in terms of the creation of new green space or investment into existing green space and employment of apprentices or new business opportunities within parks.

Funding

- 2.4 Overall revenue expenditure is currently £4.7m per year. Employee costs are £2.5m of this total. The service has an income of £3.5m though and, taking this into account, the net cost of the service to the Council is £1.2m. 40% of the income of the service comes from its grounds maintenance contract with Homes for Haringey and almost half of all staff are engaged on this contract.
- 2.5 The income that the service receives comes from a wide range of sources, including:
- Grounds Maintenance services - £1.5m;
 - Cemeteries and crematoriums - £770k;
 - Events - £750k;
 - Leased community and commercial property - £245k;

- Professional advice to Homes for Haringey and housing services - £150k;
- Allotments - £94k;
- Filming - £50k;
- Sports fees and charges - £25k; and
- Traded services with schools - £20k.

- 2.6 The resources that are available for maintenance have not changed significantly since the budget for the Parks Service was reduced in 2011. Services provided to Homes for Haringey were unaffected by the cuts and therefore the remainder of the service was affected disproportionately. As a consequence, the number of Parks Service staff working within parks and open spaces was reduced by approximately 50%. There are currently 49 front line gardening and maintenance staff, of which 21 will be wholly engaged in work for Homes for Haringey.
- 2.7 The “More Than Parks” project formed part of Priority 3 of the Corporate Plan and was also part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2015-18. It sought to generate additional income and to reduce service costs by £1.2m over three years. The project represented the first three years of a five-year project to reduce the operational cost of the service to zero.
- 2.8 In addition, around £47m of capital investment has been secured over the last 12 years, of which 70% has been external. £1m of capital funding has come from events in parks but this income is now used for revenue purposes instead. The Council’s 10 Year Capital Strategy includes £7m investment for parks. No further budget reductions are planned over next three years. There is also a certain amount of Section 106 money, which is generally capital rather than revenue funding. In addition, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding has also been used for parks and open spaces.

External Funding

- 2.9 Whilst there are a number of external funding opportunities for parks, these are nearly all capital funding. External funding has been obtained from a range of bodies, such as Sport England, the Football Foundation, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Mayor’s Office and Veolia. In particular, the London Marathon Trust has contributed £0.5m to the refurbishment of the athletics track at Finsbury Park. It is sometimes the case that Friends of Parks groups can access funding that is not available to the Council.

Friends of Parks Groups

- 2.10 The Parks Service has a very good relationship with the 45 Friends groups that are active in the borough. Senior officers from the service meet regularly to discuss issues and strategy with them via the bi-monthly Haringey Friends of Parks Forum meetings. Amongst the things that Friends groups can provide are volunteer support within parks, assisting with tasks such as clearing vegetation, litter and clean-up operations, as well as monitoring maintenance issues, organising activities and events, promoting the park, conducting surveys,

developing vision and applying for external funding. The work that is done by Friends groups is greatly appreciated by the Parks Service. However, the Panel noted the view of officers that the service is now possibly over reliant on their efforts. Many of the actions that they undertake were previously undertaken by parks staff.

2.11 The service is also supported by a number of external partners including the Conservation Volunteers, Groundwork and the Police. Most parks have been adopted by a local neighbourhood watch scheme.

2.12 The Council submitted evidence to a recent DCLG Review of Parks. The government has published a response and there is now a cross departmental government group that is co-ordinating action with a cross-sectorial 'Parks Action Group (PAG)' of national greenspace organisations. Dave Morris, the Chair of Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, is a member of the PAG representing the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces

3. COMMUNITY VIEWS

Introduction

- 3.1 The Panel obtained the views of a number of interested people from within the local community on the current challenges facing parks within the borough. It heard from Dave Morris who fed back the views of Haringey Friends of Parks Forum as well as responses from a recent survey of all Friends groups across the borough. In addition, the Panel also heard from Clif Osbourne and Richard Evans from the Conservation Volunteers and Robby Sukdheo from the Pavilion at Albert Road Recreation Ground.

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

- 3.2 Mr Morris stated that parks and green open spaces were much loved facilities and extensively used. They provided a range of essential and unique services for all sections of the community. He felt that the Parks Service was chronically underfunded. It had suffered 50% cuts in staffing since 2011 but funding levels had been in the lowest quintile of London boroughs even before this. Net spending was now the third lowest in London.
- 3.3 The long term impact of cuts had taken a number of year to become manifest and there were now concerns that parks had reached a similar stage of crisis as in the 1980s and 90s and that this would take considerable effort to recover from. The need to generate revenue to compensate for the loss of funding had led to the controversial programme of major commercial events, including concerts, in parks.
- 3.4 Friends groups across the country were calling on local authorities to reverse budget cuts to parks and open spaces and to provide effective protection from development, sell off, fragmentation and inappropriate commercialisation. There was no desire amongst Haringey's Friends groups for alternative management models to be adopted and Mr Morris felt that the Parks Service did a great job despite chronic underfunding and understaffing.
- 3.5 It was important the service had adequate and long-term revenue funding so that it could be rebuilt. He felt that other services that gained benefit from parks should contribute to their upkeep. For example, the waste collection budget that is currently earmarked to Veolia could make a contribution in view of the litter that the Parks Service collects. Highways and Transport for London could also contribute as paths within parks are used as travel routes by residents. In order to achieve this, it was important to have a vision for parks. Parks were of particular significance for Haringey as a high percentage of people did not have access to a garden.
- 3.6 He stated that ongoing capital investment was or should be available for parks from sources such as CIL funding, the NHS, the London Mayor's Office and central government. He felt that any match funding should come out of the Council's capital budget rather than from the parks budget.

- 3.7 There needed to be on-site staffing for all substantial parks as well as effective levels of backroom staffing. All parks ought to be maintained to at least Green Flag standard as a minimum. There also needed to be effective protection, with all parks put into the Fields in Trust covenanting scheme. The Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) was a particular concern due to the potential for pieces of public green space to be placed within it. There was therefore every reason for all parks and open spaces to be placed under covenant in order to provide additional protection.
- 3.8 Community involvement was important and this meant more than just listening to the views of residents. Lordship Recreation Ground was co-managed between the Friends, user groups and the Council and he felt that such an approach could be adopted elsewhere across the borough.
- 3.9 In 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and Regions Committee concluded that a statutory duty of care for public spaces might encourage local authorities to give them greater priority when making funding decisions. The recent Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee report on parks had not recommended this as it was thought that they could be protected by other means. He felt that the lack of a recommendation regarding this had weakened the report. In the absence of suitable alternatives, protection through statutory status provided a way forward. It would need to be backed up with standards and funding though.
- 3.10 Whilst there was a good relationship between Friends groups and the Parks Service, he felt that the Council as a whole had not prioritised the issue of parks. All parks should be managed in a fair and equitable way and receive the same level of service. Finsbury Park was currently suffering disproportionately due to the concerts there, which had been made necessary to provide funding for all parks and open spaces in the borough.
- 3.11 Parks were an essential part of the borough's infrastructure and needed to be properly financed and managed. The Council was responsible for a wide range of services, many of which were statutory, and the budget for parks was a comparatively small part of this. A decision needed to be made by the Council to recognise that if parks were indeed a priority then, proper funding was required.

Friends of Parks Forum Survey

- 3.12 Mr Morris reported that there had been 19 responses to the survey of Friends groups. These contained answers to multiple choice questions as well as extensive comments that provided detailed evidence from most of the parks and green open spaces within the borough. A similar survey was undertaken in 2012, which received 11 responses and a summary of this was also presented. Most parks of a significant size were represented amongst the Friends groups that had responded to the more recent survey. He commented that parks with an active friends group were likely to be in a better condition than those without due to the contribution that Friends groups make.

- 3.13 The survey showed that Friends groups considered that the condition of Haringey's parks in 2010 was, on average between a scale of excellent to poor, between adequate and inadequate. Since the 2011 cuts, staffing presence, maintenance and management was felt to have deteriorated further. Infrastructure repairs and safety were considered to have diminished slightly. Most of the Friends groups that responded were involved in litter picking and maintaining flower beds and woodland. Most did this occasionally and for parts of sites. However, a lot felt that it would be difficult to sustain this level of activity and that they were also doing things that should be done by parks staff. There was a high level of goodwill but this could not be taken for granted.
- 3.14 Ease of contacting parks service grounds workers was currently considered to be between okay and good, with a similar response in respect of office-based staff. Half of respondents stated that their parks had been faced with a threat of inappropriate development or commercialisation. These mainly concerned planning matters, some of which were historic.
- 3.15 Compared with responses on the position in 2010 in the Friends Groups survey from 2012, relations with management were now rated a lot lower. In particular, the rating given to management in 2012 had shown a rapid deterioration following the budget cuts. Infrastructure repairs had also showed some decline. Friends groups had been contributing less to litter picking and flower bed and woodland maintenance in 2012 and had also felt that the level of their involvement at that time was more sustainable. In addition, there had been a substantial dip in the level of satisfaction with working and liaising with grounds workers and office based staff.

Communication with Friends Groups

- 3.16 Although witnesses were highly complimentary about the Parks Service, some Friends groups felt that there could be improvements in the communication between Parks Staff and Friends Groups. At times, queries from Friends Groups can go unanswered or are answered very late. In particular, it was noted that Friends groups do not understand the structure of the Parks Service or the appropriate officer to contact about specific issues.

Recommendation:

That the Parks Service engage with Friends groups to ensure they have a clear guide to the structure of the Parks Service and have a named contact for each area of responsibility.

The Conservation Volunteers

- 3.17 Mr Osbourne and Mr Evans felt that Haringey Parks Service provided an excellent service and were head and shoulders above other boroughs in their

work. However, they were limited by what they were able to do due to lack of resources. They had a good partnership with the Council and were in the process of agreeing a lease on Railway Fields from them, which they currently manage and run. They receive funding from the Council as well as some external sources, including the Veolia Educational Trust who contribute £30,000 per year. There is also some funding from corporate partnerships.

- 3.18 All the work on the site is currently undertaken by volunteers. The Conservation Volunteers also worked in 20 other parks. In particular, they produce conservation action plans and undertake Green Flag work in some parks. They stated that there was a biodiversity action plan for the borough but this was now out of date. They had worked closely with the borough's Conservation Officer and they were currently waiting for a new one to be appointed by the Council. The Panel was subsequently informed that this post is currently being filled.
- 3.19 Mr Osbourne and Mr Evans highlighted the educational work that the Volunteers currently undertake. They host a large number of visits from nursery, infant and primary schools during the year. A part time education project officer is employed and additional funding is being sought to extend his/her hours. Outreach is provided to some schools and bids for external funding had been made to support this work.
- 3.20 They felt that the Council's Parks Service was seriously understaffed and that this was bound to have effects. Without Friends groups, there would be a lot more difficulties. Understaffing had compromised the care that the service was able to give to parks. In some places, neglect of paths and benches was so bad that they were potentially dangerous. Managers could struggle to respond to enquiries due to the size of their workloads. In the light of the budget constraints that the service had, they felt that what they had managed to achieve was remarkable.

The Pavilion at Albert Road Recreation Ground

- 3.21 The Panel met with Mr. Sukdheo at the Albert Road Recreation Ground, which has benefitted substantially from investment in facilities. Of particular note is the impact that improvements have had on reducing anti-social behaviour and providing sports and leisure opportunities for local children and young people.
- 3.22 He reported that the recreation ground had been affected in the past by gangs and the Pavilion had had problems with graffiti. Facilities had since been vastly improved and external funding had been obtained to fund developments, including £300,000 from the Lawn Tennis Association. Recent enhancements included facilities for table tennis. In addition, work was being undertaken to resurrect the bowls facilities and to introduce petanque, which had been funded by the ward budget.
- 3.23 Tennis courts were available from £5. As long as there was nobody waiting for a court, people could stay on for as long as they wished. Children were allowed to use the tennis courts for nothing. The view was that income would instead

be generated by them taking tennis lessons in due course. In addition, schools were able to use the facilities for free. The hope was that this would encourage people to spend money in the café.

3.24 Levels of crime and vandalism were now very low. They had successfully employed a number of gang members and this has helped to reduce problems. It was now very rare for there to be incidents. There was a very good relationship with the Parks Service and the Friends Group. The Parks Service were responsible for the grounds maintenance. Bookings for the sporting facilities had increased by tenfold in the last 15 years.

3.25 He felt that the Parks Service were massively understaffed and severely stretched. This could lead to work not being done as often as it needed to be. For example, hedges had needed to be cut as they were almost on the road. Staff also tended to be moved around a lot, which could lead to a lack of continuity.

4. MAINTAINING AND SUSTAINING PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Introduction

- 4.1 The biggest current challenge facing parks and open spaces would appear to be ensuring that they are maintained adequately following the significant budget reductions that have taken place in recent years. The Panel therefore focussed in detail on the options that might be available to address this. Most local authorities are in a similar position to Haringey and there are a number of ideas that are currently being explored.
- 4.2 Tony Leach from Parks for London outlined some of the initiatives that are being undertaken. The purpose of Parks for London is to inform and advise all who manage and are involved in parks in London, celebrate all the good things that parks contribute and share good practice. Mr Leach felt that parks had reached a tipping point due to the cumulative effect of cuts. There was a danger of them suffering decline to the levels experienced in the 1980s, when their visible neglect made them a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

Statutory Status

- 4.3 Parks are not a statutory service and had therefore suffered disproportionately from budget cuts as services which were statutory had been prioritised. It has been suggested that making them a statutory service could provide a means of reversing their decline. However, Mr Leach commented that demands on statutory services were already very high though and designating another service as statutory without additional funding would merely increase demand on limited resources. He therefore felt that it would only be of benefit if accompanied by specific ring fenced funding.
- 4.4 The Panel noted the view of Mr Farrow, who commented that statutory services had also been affected deeply by budget cuts. It was the view of his professional colleagues that statutory status for parks could lead to a “race to the bottom”, with services benchmarked against the lowest standards.
- 4.5 Although it is not within the power of Haringey to change this, the Panel is of the view that making parks a statutory service would raise its profile and guarantee their maintenance to a certain level. It would also make parks a higher priority when funding decisions are taken. It is nevertheless mindful that it is very unlikely that there would be any benefit from this if it merely increased further the pressure on funds for statutory services. In addition, benchmarking would need to be set at an appropriate level so that this did not just lead to services being provided at the bare minimum. It nevertheless concurs with the view of Parks for London that there would be benefit in parks becoming a statutory service if this is accompanied by additional funding from central government and underpinned by the setting of service standards at an appropriate levels.

Recommendation:
That the Council’s formal position be, subject to the provision of suitable

additional funding and the setting of service standards at an appropriate level, to support the making of parks into a statutory service.

Funding

- 4.6 Mr Leach stated there are no simple solutions to the issue of funding but having a clear strategy would put boroughs in a better position. There were a wide range of grants available, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Section 106 and the London Marathon Charitable Trust and not all boroughs were taking full advantage of these. It was possible to use some sources of capital funding as revenue, for example CIL funding. One other option was crowd funding for specific projects with boroughs match funding the amounts raised.
- 4.7 The Panel noted that the biggest challenge was to identify sources of revenue funding. The government is encouraging a range of solutions, including investing to save. In larger parks, investment in facilities could provide a means of generating a revenue stream. One option that is being trialled is the setting up of endowment funds to provide a long-term revenue stream. This requires the creation of a trust to run those parks and open spaces that were to benefit from the endowment. Sheffield and Newcastle have considered such approaches but only Newcastle had so far decided to proceed, albeit for a small proportion of their open spaces. There is a danger that such an approach could create a “two tier” system. It is not yet clear whether endowment schemes are a viable option and, in particular, how safe money invested in endowments is. More money is currently spent on parks in London and the south east than elsewhere so the pressure to test such alternative approaches is not as intense.
- 4.8 There are already a number of parks that operate as independent trusts, including Alexandra Palace Park and Crystal Palace. All of them have faced challenges though. Bexley had run one of its parks through a trust but has recently brought it back in-house and wound the trust up. Potters Field, which is adjacent to City Hall, is owned by Southwark but run by a trust and has generated a lot of income. In particular, the trust has collaborated with the nearby Business Improvement District to improve other neighbouring parks.
- 4.9 There are some parks and open spaces that are particularly special and therefore well placed to generate income. Mr Leach felt that it was important to ensure that reasonable amounts were charged for their use. Some boroughs have developed trading arms, which allow them greater freedom to trade and make a profit, including Bromley and Hounslow. Such models are very new and it is therefore currently unclear how effective they are likely to be.
- 4.10 The Panel noted that most London boroughs have been forced to increase the number of events that are held in their parks in order to increase income. However, there have not been as many events that have taken place as perceived. There were only 9 very large events (50,000 plus spectators) in London in 2016 and 2 of these were royal events. There had been 34 events

that were classified as large (5,000 to 50,000 spectators) including events in Finsbury Park. However, Mr Leach felt that income from an increase in the number of events in parks was not a long-term solution to the revenue funding of parks.

Revenue

- 4.11 All of the witnesses that the Panel heard from felt that Haringey parks are chronically underfunded and that this was having an adverse effect that may have long-term consequences. It feels that there are currently not enough staff to meet demand in areas such as litter picking, grass cutting and carrying out basic maintenance and this is, in some cases, causing health and safety concerns. As shown by the Friends of Parks Forum survey, a majority of Friends groups feel that standards of both management and maintenance, along with Friends/Council communications, have declined. Without Friends groups, this situation would undoubtedly be considerably worse.
- 4.12 Any decline is not the fault of Haringey's parks staff and all witnesses that the Panel heard from were highly complimentary about them. For example, the Conservation Volunteers staff at Railway Fields described Haringey's Parks Service as 'second to none' in London.
- 4.13 A comparatively large percentage of Haringey residents do not have access to a garden and this means that parks are of particular importance to the borough. In addition, the majority of the new homes that are planned for the borough will not have gardens. This makes it particularly difficult to justify a net level of spending on parks that is now the third lowest in London.
- 4.14 The Panel feels that the current situation is unsustainable and risks causing long-term damage to our parks and open spaces. It needs to be acknowledged that there is insufficient revenue funding for the service. Whilst the Panel is mindful that all areas of the council's budget are under pressure, it nevertheless recommends that revenue funding for the Parks Service be increased.

Recommendation:

That it is acknowledged that the current level of revenue funding for the Parks Service is insufficient to maintain parks and open spaces to an acceptable standard and risks causing long term damage to our parks and open spaces and that it therefore is increased.

Capital

- 4.15 The Panel noted that Haringey's submission to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee review on parks stated that there will be between £7 and £10 million invested in parks through Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding over the next ten years. Peter O'Brien, Assistant Director for Area Regeneration, reported that parks and open spaces in Tottenham have already benefitted significantly from Section 106

funding. The funding arises from planning obligations and is therefore generally capital but a small percentage can be allowed for maintenance.

- 4.16 The Panel was advised that CIL funding can be used for revenue as well as capital provided that it is used to maintain infrastructure funded by it. However, a decision was taken in Haringey to use strategic CIL for spending against the Capital Programme. Access to such funding is likely to vary across the borough but there should nevertheless be opportunities to take advantage of it. Further opportunities will arise from the development of neighbourhood plans as 20% of CIL funding is intended to be spent on neighbourhood priorities. With several areas of the borough being developed, CIL funding can provide a significant additional source of funding. However, Mr O'Brien stated that there are considerable demands on CIL funding but its further use for parks could nevertheless be explored.
- 4.17 Mr Farrow reported that the proposed Business Improvement District for Wood Green has been extended to include Ducketts Common and could provide an opportunity to fund additional enforcement and litter picking there. In respect of CIL, he felt that it would be necessary to engage with planners regarding the identification of a percentage of funding for green open spaces and the joining up of such spaces. The Panel noted that a report is being submitted to the Council's Cabinet regarding a five-year programme for CIL funding.
- 4.18 The Panel has noted and concurs with the recommendation of the CLG Select Committee on Parks that states: "We believe that local authorities should be allowed to use Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funds to cover parks' revenue requirements." It feels a commitment should be made to maximise the use of CIL funding for the development of parks and open spaces, particularly in areas with a Neighbourhood Plan, and that *all* of the cost of maintaining facilities developed by such funding should also come from the CIL.

Recommendation:

That an explicit commitment be made to maximise the use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for parks and open spaces and that all of the cost of maintaining facilities developed using such funding should also come from the CIL.

- 4.19 The Panel notes that significant capital funding has been obtained from external sources, such as the London Marathon Trust, the Veolia Educational Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It feels that every effort should be made to maximise funding from such sources. However, it is mindful that obtaining such funding can also create difficulties for the Parks Service if match funding is required. It therefore feels that any match funding for capital works or projects should come from wider capital programme funding rather than specifically from the budget for the Parks Service.

Recommendation:

That every effort be made to maximise capital funding from external sources but that any match funding required for capital works or projects should come from wider capital programme funding rather than specifically from the budget for the Parks Service.

On Site Staff

- 4.20 Markfield Park and Lordship Recreation Ground are currently the only two parks within the borough to have dedicated on-site staff. However, this is to ensure that the terms of their Heritage Lottery Grant are complied with as there is a 10-year commitment to an increased level of maintenance. The Council's commitment to this is counted as additional match funding. Once the ten-year period has passed, there is no longer any financial contractual obligation, as is now the case with lottery-funded Finsbury Park.
- 4.21 Mr Farrow stated that, provided that there was sufficient work to keep them fully occupied, having a dedicated member of staff on site was the most efficient way to support and maintain individual parks and was a good aspiration. He felt that the Lordship Recreation Ground community/Council co-management model was a success story and showed what well-funded and well-staffed parks could be like in the future.
- 4.22 The view of Haringey Friends of Park Forum was that dedicated on-site staff are required in all parks of a significant size in order to improve standards of management and maintenance. Lewis Taylor, Parks Manager from Commercial and Operations, commented that there used to be site based staff in a lot of the larger parks and this had helped to develop a sense of ownership on the part of staff. The number of site-based staff had diminished following the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and they had been replaced with mobile staff.
- 4.23 The Panel is of the view that the Council should aspire to have a dedicated member of staff on site in all parks of sufficient size to warrant it. It is mindful that, within current budget constraints, this will need to be aspirational at the moment but feels that this is model of service that the Council needs to be working towards and part of the future vision for the service that should be included within the forthcoming strategy.

Recommendation:

That the Council state its aspiration to have a dedicated member of staff in all parks of sufficient size to warrant this and that this be included in its vision for the service within the forthcoming Parks Strategy.

Green Flag

4.24 The Council has been successful in gaining annual Green Flag status for 22 parks within the borough, a number that has gradually increased since 2003. The awards require eight sets of criteria to be fulfilled, including partnership with a range of bodies. 22 major parks and open spaces are also maintained to Green Flag Standard. Smaller spaces are managed to the same specification but do not have formal management plans.

4.25 The Panel is of the view that the Green Flag scheme is of value in promoting good standards within parks. It therefore feels that Green Flag status should be sought for all of the boroughs parks that are considered able to achieve it.

Recommendation:
That Green Flag status should be sought for all of the boroughs parks that are considered able to achieve it.

Litter

4.26 The Panel noted evidence that level of litter has increased. The Parks Service currently spends £0.25 million per year on litter picking and emptying bins, which could be better spent employing additional parks staff. Work has been taking place with Parks for London and Keep Britain Tidy to look at how levels of litter can be reduced.

4.27 Consideration is being given to the use of different types of bins and some open bins have been removed. The service is also looking at the greater use of equipment as there are pieces on the market that could help. However, many machines are too heavy and not suited to the terrain in parks. Community Payback has proven useful for litter picking but that there is an agreement that it can only be used where friends group are happy at their use.

4.28 Recycling collections have been withdrawn due to the issue of contamination, where a small number of non-recyclable items placed in recycling bins can result in entire loads being rejected. There are nevertheless still 13 recycling bins. The amount of recyclable material that comes from parks is, in any case, small. The best solution is for people to take their recyclable materials home.

4.29 Mr Farrow reported that a range of approaches will be piloted to reduce litter. One of these under consideration was removing all bins except ones for dog waste. It was not clear what was likely to work and there was no simple solution. The Panel welcomes the pilot schemes that are being developed and requests that updates on progress be presented to the Panel in due course. In addition, the Panel is mindful of the potential for recent changes to waste and recycling collection arrangements to impact on parks and open spaces and would also wish to monitor this issue.

Recommendations:
• That, in respect of litter in parks, the development of pilot schemes aimed

to reduce levels be welcomed and the Panel kept informed of progress;
and

- That levels of litter in parks be monitored closely to ensure that recent changes to waste and recycling arrangements do not impact adversely on them and that information in respect of this be included in regular performance information submitted to the Panel.

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5. THE WIDER BENEFITS OF PARKS

Introduction

- 5.1 The Panel heard that parks and open spaces contribute to a very wide range of benefits to the community and many of these are only now starting to be appreciated. The benefits cover a wide range of areas, which include:
- Health and well-being;
 - Leisure and recreation;
 - Climate change adaptation and mitigation;
 - Ecology and diversity;
 - Transport routes;
 - Social cohesion;
 - Flood control; and
 - A sense of place and attractiveness.

Strategic Role

- 5.2 Mr Leach stated that the development of a green infrastructure strategy by boroughs could provide them with an important tool to guide them and the Mayor's draft London plan encouraged all boroughs to do this. He felt that it was particularly important that the wider benefits of parks were reflected fully within this. A holistic approach was more complicated but could deliver greater rewards in the long term. Strategies could be developed in collaboration with Health and Well Being Boards as, in particular, parks provide a lot of health and well-being benefits. He also felt that having outcome specifications that relate to priorities such as health and education could also be useful in helping to generate funding.
- 5.3 The Panel noted the following finding of the Select Committee on Parks "We strongly believe that without being able to demonstrate the contribution made by parks to broader agendas, local authority parks departments will find it difficult to secure sufficient priority for their parks, or to access alternative funding sources. For this reason, we welcome the new models which are emerging to help assess the value of parks' broader contributions in a more nuanced way."
- 5.4 It is intended that the Council's new Parks Strategy will recognise the wider benefits of parks through considering the service's strategic role further and, in particular, aiming to quantify the contribution that is made to a range of corporate priorities. As part of this, it will explore opportunities for other Council services to commission further activities in parks. Work is also taking place with partners regarding shared management arrangements.
- 5.5 The Panel welcomes the recognition of the wider benefits of parks within the new strategy and feels that they should be emphasised strongly and reflected in outcome specifications. In addition, it is of the view that there should be specific collaboration with the Health and Well Being Board to ensure that health and well-being issues are taken fully into account.

Recommendations:

That the wider benefits of parks are emphasised strongly within the new Parks Strategy and reflected in outcome specifications and that it be developed in collaboration with the Health and Well-Being board in order that health and well-being issues are fully taken into account.

Quantifying the Value

- 5.6 Various efforts have been made to quantify the total value of the contribution that parks and open spaces make. This is important as parks may otherwise be regarded as a financial liability and investment in them as a drain on the public purse.
- 5.7 A tool developed by the University of Exeter has calculated the value of Haringey's parks and open space to the local economy at £24,308,554 per annum. A report (Natural Capital Account for London) commissioned by the Greater London Authority, National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund to estimate the economic value provided by London's public parks also found the following:
- London's public green spaces have a gross asset value of more than £91 billion, providing services valued at £5 billion per year;
 - For each £1 spent by local authorities and their partners on public green space, Londoners enjoy at least £27 in value;
 - Londoners avoid £950 million per year in health costs due to public green space;
 - The value of recreational activities is estimated to be £926 million per year; and
 - For the average household in London, the monetary value of being in close proximity to a green space is over £900 per year.
- 5.8 It is estimated that the gross asset value of Haringey's parks and open spaces was £2.9 billion. It put the mental health savings for Haringey as £41 per person per year and physical health savings at £70 per person per year. These figures are particularly important as they show that any money allocated to parks by the NHS or public health as part of preventative measures is likely to deliver positive outcomes.
- 5.9 The Panel concurs with the view of the Select Committee on Parks of the importance and assessing the value of the contribution that parks make to a range of outcomes. It notes that both Barnet and Barking and Dagenham have produced strategies for parks and open spaces that utilise values calculated using the Natural Capital Accounting model and feels that Haringey should follow a similar route as a means of strengthening its case for sustainable funding and generating funding.

Recommendation:

That the Parks Strategy be developed utilising values calculated using the

Natural Capital Accounting model.

Health and Well Being

- 5.10 The Panel considered in detail the significant contribution that parks and green spaces make to health and well-being. Evidence regarding this was received from Marlene D’Aguilar from the Council’s Public Health Service and Marco Inzani from Haringey CCG.
- 5.11 Ms D’Aguilar reported that there were targets for the borough for reducing levels of inactivity and these were currently going down. Parks had a key role in addressing inactivity through both organised activities, such as the Council’s walks programme, and unorganised activities, such as play. They are also used for formal and informal sports use, such as football, tennis and outdoor activities. Outdoor gyms and green gyms have made parks a purposeful health destination. There were people who use parks for walking and running and these activities have no cost. There are also established and informal walking and running groups who use parks on a regular basis. In addition to physical health, parks can also help to address mental health and social isolation through providing places for people to meet and socialise.
- 5.12 One particular initiative that was taking place is the placing of distance markers around some of the borough’s larger parks to assist walkers or runners in knowing how far they have walked or run. In respect of children, parks enabled them to use their imagination and active learning when playing and can assist in the development of leadership skills due to safe risk taking.
- 5.13 Mr Inzani reported that the CCG concurred with the views of Public Health. The CCG currently had a number of priorities and older people were a particular focus of attention. Action planned in respect of this would include initiatives to increase independence and reduce social isolation. There was an opportunity to link this work with the promotional work on parks being undertaken by Public Health. Prevention is also an important part of the work that is being undertaken and exercise and, in particular, walking are important parts of this with specific links to parks.
- 5.14 He stated that preventative work is the responsibility of Public Health. Whilst the CCG was supportive of the preventative agenda, actions arising from it can take a long time to deliver benefits. Some campaigns, such as smoking cessation, could deliver quicker results. The CCG also has its own cost pressures and currently has a deficit of £7 million.
- 5.15 The Panel noted that key parts of the Sustainable and Transformation Plan (STP) for the north central London are focussed on achieving savings through prevention. It is of the view that parks have an important role to play in the achievement of such outcomes. It is essential that there is provision for prevention in health budgets in order to provide funding for things that could

contribute significantly, such as parks. Failure to invest in prevention is likely to have long-term costs for the health economy.

5.16 Mr Inzani stated that he would be happy to refer any relevant recommendations from the review to North Central London Partners, who have overall responsibility for the STP. Prevention was nevertheless within the responsibilities of the local authority due to its role in respect of public health. However, prevention was something that the CCG believed in. The Panel noted that the total annual budget of Haringey CCG was £359 million whilst that of the Public Health Service was £20.742 million.

5.17 The Panel considers that the contribution that parks and open spaces make to health and well-being has so far been undervalued and unrecognised. Evidence provided to the recent Select Committee on Parks from the Land Trust highlighted research from the University of Exeter, which concluded that parks and open spaces in England contribute £2.2bn to public health. In addition, a significant part of preventative action that is planned as part of the STP in order to deliver savings for health and social care partners involves their use. The Panel therefore is of the view that a percentage of the Public Health budget should be earmarked for the maintenance and development of parks. The Panel is nevertheless mindful that prevention should not just be the responsibility of the local authority as it is priority for all local health and social care partners.

Recommendation:

That, in view of the significant contribution that they make to delivering long term health and well-being benefits, a percentage of the Public Health budget be earmarked for the maintenance and development of parks and open spaces.

Regeneration

5.18 The Panel received evidence from Peter O'Brien, Assistant Director for Area Regeneration on the role that the borough's parks and open spaces play within plans for regenerating and developing the borough. Parks were one of the attractions of Tottenham and a key ingredient for successful communities. The Panel noted his view that bad parks can have precisely the reverse effect. They were a major priority for residents, as demonstrated by a survey undertaken of residents in Tottenham Hale that placed them as their second highest priority. Social groups were also massively skewed towards those that were linked to the use of parks and open spaces. There was huge pressure to deliver additional housing for the borough and, as most of the planned housing developments do not have gardens, the importance of parks is even greater.

5.19 He reported that networks of green spaces are being developed by taking action to connect them. This will involve greening certain streets ("greening the grey"), which will help to improve air quality and biodiversity. He stated that healthy and active living is an increasing priority in regeneration.

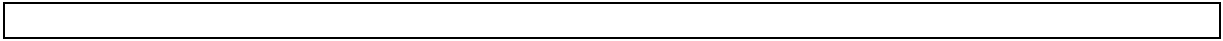
- 5.20 The Panel noted that proximity was not the same as accessibility. For example, a significant number of people in Tottenham have not visited Lee Valley, despite it being nearby. This demonstrated the importance of connections. The all London green grid provides the overall policy framework to guide the design and delivery of the green infrastructure for London. There is a Haringey grid beneath this and this could be used to focus action to bring in funding in regeneration areas, such as Tottenham.
- 5.21 The Parks Service are consulted on relevant planning applications and are also part of the planning process. They have been engaged from the outset in proposals regarding the regeneration of Tottenham and, in particular, “greening the grey”. Mr. Farrow commented that implementing policies such as connecting up green spaces took time. He reported that public space might not necessarily always be managed by local authorities and can instead be maintained by separate service charges to residents. An example of this is Queen Elizabeth II Park in Stratford.
- 5.22 The Panel was pleased to note that the boroughs parks and open spaces are a key attraction of Tottenham. They are therefore important to plans to regenerate the area. However, it is also mindful of the evidence that it heard that their neglect has the potential to have a negative impact on such plans. It is of the view that this further strengthens the argument for an increase in revenue funding.
- 5.23 It also recognises that where regeneration takes place and the population increases, the demand on parks will become greater. This increase will be accompanied by additional intake of council tax and business rates for the Council and, in recognition of the increased demand on parks, it feels that a proportion of this should be put towards the parks budget as additional funding.

Transport

- 5.24 The Panel noted evidence from Mr Leach that funding from Transport for London could be obtained by boroughs bidding for Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funds. This could be used to develop any parts of the local transport infrastructure that pass through parks and open spaces. In particular, the Mayors Transport Plan included the aspiration to develop healthy streets that were suitable for walking and cycling and this would include those that passed through parks and open spaces.
- 5.25 The Panel therefore is of the view that where parts of the local transport infrastructure that are used by walkers and cyclists pass through parks and open spaces, LIP funding be used for their development and maintenance.

Recommendation:

That where parts of the local transport infrastructure for walkers and cyclists pass through parks and open spaces, LIP funding be used for their development and maintenance.



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6. PROTECTION

Introduction

- 6.1 The Panel noted that parks and green open spaces within the borough are protected through a number of ways. All that are designated as such receive protection under the Local Plan. Major areas of open space are further designated as Metropolitan Open Land and Significant Open Land. A number of open spaces are designated as local nature reserves or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's). Eight parks have been dedicated as Queen Elizabeth II Fields, a Fields in Trust protection scheme that was set up in celebration of the 2012 Diamond Jubilee.
- 6.2 Concerns have nevertheless been expressed by residents about the possibility of parks being used for development purposes. Half of the respondents to the survey commissioned by Haringey Friends of Parks Forum stated that their park had been threatened with inappropriate development or commercialisation. The Panel also noted evidence from Mr Leach that, whilst the draft London plan had shown most parks and open spaces as being protected, this would not necessarily prevent planners from looking at some areas of such green space.

Regeneration and Development

- 6.3 Mr O'Brien felt that there was generally a high level of protection for parks and green open spaces, although this did not apply to open spaces that had not been formally designated as such. In some cases, swapping land used for parks and open spaces for other pieces of land could be considered. As a general rule, regeneration plans avoided the use of parks and open spaces if at all possible.
- 6.4 He stated that it is not Council policy to allow developments on land that is designated as parks and open spaces and this is not expected to change. Land that is not designated has a lesser level of protection. There is particularly strong protection for the three sites that have benefitted from Heritage Lottery Funding, with a 35-year claw back period. The development of the new Parks Strategy will include public debate about what is acceptable in parks.
- 6.5 Mr O'Brien commented that, in some limited circumstances, land swaps could lead to configurations of parks and open spaces that worked better. While clear planning protection exists and was important, a complete lack of flexibility could have unforeseen consequences in limiting the options available when delivering complex regeneration programmes.

Fields in Trust

- 6.6 The Panel heard from David Sharman, from Fields in Trust, who reported on the increased protection that could be provided for parks and open spaces through working with them to develop covenants. The organisation was set up over 90 years ago and originally called the National Playing Fields Association and is dedicated to improving outdoor facilities. There can be challenges regarding

land designated as green open space and a covenant provides a more secure and effective means of protection.

- 6.7 The covenants are a bespoke legal agreement that require the landowner to maintain the land in perpetuity. Any changes to the agreement require the approval of Fields in Trust. Activities ancillary to recreation are permitted and there is a list of permitted changes, such as the development of 3G sports pitches. Cafes, playgrounds and green gyms can be included within the protection.
- 6.8 Eight parks and open spaces in Haringey are already protected through such a covenant as part of the Queen Elizabeth II Fields scheme and the Panel heard that these have worked well. Mr Sharman felt that extension of such protection would demonstrate forward thinking on behalf of the Council and provide a significant public commitment to preserving parks and open spaces. Such a move could also provide improved access to funding through sources such as the London Marathon Trust.
- 6.9 Mr Sharman stated that should Haringey wish to extend its use of covenants to cover all of the borough's parks, it might be possible to use the borough as a model of good practice. Hammersmith and Fulham have already included all of its parks and Glasgow City Council has included 27 of theirs. Other local authorities are considering similar action.
- 6.10 The process for covenanting sites is relatively straightforward. A survey of sites would need to be undertaken and a template deed developed in collaboration with legal officers. The legal work required is likely to take days rather than weeks to complete. Once completed, the covenants require signing and sealing. The input of Fields In Trust and plaques is free of charge. The only upfront cost is £80 that needs to be paid to the Land Registry.
- 6.11 2,830 sites around the UK are currently protected, covering 31,000 acres. Approximately half of these have been covenanted since the current deed of dedication was developed. The protection that the covenants provide will be stronger than current protection, which can be subject to change due to revisions in local plans. The protection is also long term in nature. The covenants can allow for commercial events to be staged but a limit will need to be set. However, this can provide an efficient way of limiting the number of events.
- 6.12 The Panel heard that land swaps would still be technically possible where parks are protected by covenant. In such circumstances, a request would need to be submitted for approval to the Fields in Trust Land and Planning Committee. Approval can be given to disposal of land provided there was suitable replacement. Such replacements would need to be better and benefit the same community. Proposals for replacements also need to be firm and not speculative. The Panel is of the view that land swaps should only be proposed if they enhance provision of green space rather than merely replace pieces of land.

6.13 Whilst the Panel notes that all parks and open spaces are protected under the Local Plan, and some designated as Metropolitan Open Land or Significant Open Land, it feels that firmer protections are nevertheless needed to reassure residents and enshrine this commitment. In addition, current protections could be subject to change due to revisions in Local Plans.

6.14 The Panel also noted that the Parks Service would be likely to incur legal costs in the region of £1200 per covenant for each additional park or green open space that was put under covenant. It nevertheless is of the view that putting all of the boroughs parks and green open spaces under a Fields in Trust covenant would provide;

- An effective additional layer of protection;
- Demonstrate a commitment to preserving parks and open spaces for future generations; and
- Provide reassurance to local residents that developments will not be able to impinge on parks and open spaces.

Recommendation:

That the Council commit to a programme of putting all of the boroughs designated parks and green open spaces under a Fields in Trust covenant and that this includes a clear timetable for completion.

6.15 The Panel also feels that, as a point of general principle, there should be strong objection to any form of permanent development on land designated as parks and open spaces, unless overall provision is enhanced through a land swap and there is no net loss of open land. This should be enshrined in planning and regeneration policy. In addition, careful consideration needs to be given to what is acceptable on private land abutting parks and open spaces so that developments on such land do not impact adversely on them.

Appendix A

The Panel received evidence from the following:

- Simon Farrow – Highway, Parking, Parks and Open Space Manager, Commercial and Operations
- Lewis Taylor – Parks Manager, Commercial and Operations
- Dave Morris, Chair of Haringey Friends of Park Forum
- Marlene D’Aguilar – Health in All Policies Officer, Public Health Service
- Marco Inzani – Head of Integrated Commissioning, Haringey CCG
- Peter O’Brien – Assistant Director, Area Regeneration
- Tony Leach - Parks for London
- David Sharman - Fields in Trust.
- Clif Osbourne and Richard Evans - The Conservation Volunteers
- Robby Sukdheo – Albert Road Recreation Ground

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Appendix B

List of documents submitted or considered as evidence:

- Haringey Parks Service;
 - PowerPoint overview;
 - Overall Parks Budget Positions 2017-18;
 - List of 50 park sites and their protections.
- Haringey Friends of Parks Forum:
 - Haringey Parks and Green Spaces Scrutiny Review Summary/Appendices on Structure/Funding Options/Vacant Officer Posts/Forum Submission to National Inquiry/Mins of Sept 2017 Forum.
 - Results of Questionnaire of Haringey's Friends Groups 2017 (in full), and Results of Questionnaire from 2012 (Summary only)
- Friends of Parkland Walk statement and survey
- Panel Notes from 29 September 2017, 31 October 2017, 21 December 2017 and 8 January 2018.
- CLG Select Committee Report on Public Parks (30 January 2017)
- Natural Capital Accounts for Public Green Space in London – GLA, National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund (October 2017)
- Park Life: Ensuring Green Spaces Remain a Hit with Londoners - London Assembly Environment Committee (July 2017)
- Learning to Rethink Parks; Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Nesta (2106)