

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

3 September 2020

Parks

March 2018 Scrutiny 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.**

Cabinet response - Recommendation 1 is agreed and was completed in June 2018 by the Head of Commissioning and Client Services.

March 2019 Update - Completed and has been further developed to identify a lead project officer for each park in the Borough.

September 2020 Update - A Parks project team is now in place and fully operational. In addition, an Apprentice Park Project Officer has been recruited. Project officers have direct contact with park stakeholders including Friends Groups and ward Members and pre-Covid had established a regular schedule for Park Spotlight meetings in the Green Flag parks. The purpose of the Spotlight meetings is to establish a shared view between Councillors, Friends and other park stakeholders and the short term and longer-term priorities.

In addition, further interim arrangements have been initiated to bolster management arrangements within Parks Operations. A permanent restructure will be implemented 20/21.

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.**

Cabinet response - Recommendation 2 is partially agreed.

In 2016 the DCLG completed a review of parks to which there was the largest public response to any review the department had undertaken. The conclusion of the review based on the evidence they received was that statutory status for parks would not provide the protection from budget reductions that the public sought.

There were many examples of other statutory services that had suffered severe cuts equal or greater than those experienced in parks. The council's own response to the review stated that whilst some areas may benefit from parks being made a statutory service, Haringey felt that this may impose restrictions on who the council partners with and may hinder some of its plans to manage the parks in Haringey.

The government's response to the review was to establish a cross departmental Parks Action Group. During a recent update on their work at the LGA Parks Seminar the action group indicated that they are working to produce Parks and Open Space Standards that will include the following:

- A benchmark for total provision of parks and green spaces;
- A target for the percentage of parks and green spaces that meets a quality standard;
- A target for the percentage of parks and green spaces that are protected for the future;

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

- A mechanism to assess Local Authority performance against these targets;
- The identification of support routes to improvement.

Further information will be available during 2019 on the proposed standards.

It is therefore proposed that once the new standards are published that they are reviewed and considered as part of the wider work on the new Parks & Open Spaces Strategy.

The Head of Commissioning & Client Services will progress this recommendation during 2019 following the publication of new national standards for parks.

March 2019 Update - We await the publication of any new standards.

September 2020 Update – to date the new standards have still not been published and will be progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

- 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.**

Cabinet response - Recommendation 3 is partially agreed.

Over the last seven years the Parks Service has had to adapt to a leaner staffing structure, drive out efficiencies in its operation and generate new income from a wide variety of sources. This issue should be further considered as part of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy development as this will identify priorities for investment over the life of the strategy. In part this recommendation is linked to recommendation 2.

This recommendation will be progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services between July 2018 and October 2019.

March 2019 Update - In 2018/19 changes to the Park Project team has resulted in the addition of five officers representing a self-funding investment of £290k. An additional £270k of income is being invested in new operational staffing resources during 2019/20. This includes a new two-person mobile horticultural team, a fourth three-person litter team. In Finsbury Park three new gardeners, a new dedicated manager, two new park rangers and three seasonal Park Keepers.

September 2020 Update - Like any large organisation a diversity of income is important to insulate the organisation from significant shock. The council has been at the forefront in developing income routes such as filming, property, sports income, and concessions.

With all events being cancelled this year this has caused a pressure within the parks budget of £1.1m. There is also a loss of income £35k from filming and £29k of income from parking in Finsbury Park. In addition, it has been necessary to spend additional monies on temporary fencing and playground sanitisation at £150k and £35k on additional signage.

The service continues to benefit from external grant funding and since the last update has secured £533k (Sport England (£46k), London Marathon Trust (£195k), Schools Grants (£30k) & Defra/GLA (£262k) and partners have secured over £1m worth of investment for our parks.

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

- 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.**

Cabinet response - Recommendation 4 is partially agreed.

In June 2016 and then confirmed in October 2017, Cabinet made a commitment that CIL would be spent on items that are in the Capital Programme. Some of these will be parks and open space projects, however CIL needs to fund a variety of infrastructure to support growth and it cannot be confirmed at this time that parks and open spaces can be prioritised. When CIL does fund parks and open space projects the funding from maintenance can also come from CIL.

This recommendation will be progressed by Assistant Director Planning on an ongoing basis.

March 2019 Update - Ongoing exploration of both the opportunities to use Council CIL and to work with residents to use the Neighbourhood portion of CIL to make local improvements.

September 2020 Update – CIL continues to be used to support the wider capital programme for investment in our parks. The parks service has several schemes in the programme which total £2.2m this financial year. In terms of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy, earlier this year the council agreed a range of projects. Many are in parks and include the following projects to be completed by March 2022: -

Priory Park	£100,000
Woodside Park	£46,000
Chapman's Green	£20,000
Springfield Park	£10,000
Wood Green Common	£50,000
Bruce Castle Park Landscape	£50,000
Bruce Castle Park Multi-Use Area	£140,000
Tower Gardens Pesticide-Free	£30,000
Lordship Rec Changing Places Toilet	£65,000
Downhills Park Tennis Court	£100,000
Hartington Park	£30,000
Highgate BMX Track	£170,000
Parkland Walk Play Area Highgate	£90,000
Tree Planting BGrove, TGreen & THale	£24,000
Tree Planting Highgate	£24,000

- 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.**

Cabinet response - Recommendation 5 is agreed.

In the council's 10-year capital strategy, funding has been allocated across three work streams: Active Life in Parks, Parks Asset Management and Parkland Walk Bridges. Wherever possible these funds and other external sources of funding, such as Section 106 or events income, are

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

used to secure additional external funding. We will not use the operational budget as match funding for capital projects.

This recommendation is completed and will continue to be monitored by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services. This recommendation is now monitored by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

March 2019 Update - Completed. None of the operational budget is used for match funding. This is an issue directly related to HLF type funding bids. The HLF are about to announce their new funding streams, we do not know what their approach to capitalising future management costs will be. This will need to be considered on a case by case basis for any parks that apply for funding from HLF.

September 2020 Update – The council continues to commit to regular capital funding to improve parks and this year that commitment extends to £2.2m. This sum includes regular funding of £300k for park assets and £230k for sports and play. It also includes several schemes that span several years such as Parkland Walk Bridges and Down Lane All Weather Pitch. There are also new schemes this year which include decarbonising the parks operational buildings and a recurring budget of £100k to plant trees across the borough each year.

- 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.**

Cabinet response - Recommendation 6 is partially agreed.

There are already dedicated staff members based in Finsbury Park, Lordship Recreation Ground and Markfield Park. The permanent staffing includes 3 parks apprentice posts. The upcoming Parks & Open Spaces Strategy may well include this aspiration for our larger parks. The establishment of any further dedicated staff will be subject to securing additional sustainable income or growth in the park's revenue budget. In part this recommendation is linked to recommendation 3.

This recommendation will be progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services and Head of Operations on an ongoing basis. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

March 2019 Update - This will be considered as part of the Parks and Green Space Strategy work.

September 2020 Update – The council remains committed to this objective and will seek to address this aspiration within the new Parks and Greenspaces Strategy. Through the development of policy within the strategy the council will seek ways to release and reorganise its resources to further this objective. One way of achieving this will be to dramatically shift people's attitude to littering in parks, making this behaviour socially unacceptable and enabling us to focus our limited resources on improving our parks rather than cleaning them.

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

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

Cabinet response - Recommendation 7 is agreed.

With financial investment and support, including establishment of local friends' groups, it is possible that the number of green flags could be increased from 22 to 30 over time. Keep Britain Tidy are considering establishing a Borough Award and application for this could be considered if it is introduced in the future. There is a link here to the work the national Parks Action Group are doing identified under recommendation 2.

This recommendation will be progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services and Head of Operations on an ongoing basis. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure

March 2019 Update - Following the unprecedented level of inspection by Keep Britain Tidy in 2018, the council's focus is now on retaining the current 22 green flags.

Each of the 22 parks will have a full inspection this year.

The Parks and Green Space Strategy will explore future aspirations.

September 2020 Update - Over the course of August and October 2019 all 22 existing Green Flag parks were fully judged by KBT. All were found to be maintaining the standards of the Green Flag Award. The Council and KBT have agreed that the same judging format be undertaken for all 22 sites in 2020. Although the pandemic has delayed the planned May 2020 judging, KBT are now indicating that all parks will be judged before the end of September, with winners announced in October. The Parks and Green Space Strategy will explore future aspirations.

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.

Cabinet response - Recommendation 8 is agreed.

During 2017 Haringey took part in a Keep Britain Tidy trial to explore ways of encouraging people to change their behaviour and not drop litter when they were in the park. The evaluation of this works shows that part of any litter reduction strategy needs to be about engaging with the public about the impact of their littering.

The second pilot project which is based on the installation of smart self-compacting bins commenced on 30th May 2018 for a six-month trial in Finsbury Park.

Further pilots, such of the removal of all bins in a park, are being considered based on evidence of work currently being undertaken by Keep Britain Tidy.

This recommendation will be progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services and Head of Operations on an ongoing basis. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

March 2019 Update - A six-month trial of "Smart Bins" was conducted in Finsbury Park and at other park sites in the borough. The trial although successfully completed the cost of the bins proved not viable in the long run. New bin styles are being explored with the Friends Forum as

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

part of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy development. In 2018/19 new trials of large capacity bins will take place in Finsbury Park and a trail of bins at exits only will take place.

September 2020 Update - To supplement standard bins within Finsbury Park, an additional eight 1,100 litre bins are located within Finsbury Park on a permanent basis to provide significant additional waste capacity.

38 dual recycling / waste bins are starting to be installed in parks across the borough at pre-identified hotspots. To date (24/8) 14 have been installed.

Since lockdown was introduced and subsequent restrictions easing, parks have experienced a significant increase in both the volume of litter left in parks in and around existing and temporary bins, and on the ground where people have dropped or are leaving their litter where they were.

Where historically litter would have been greater over the weekends and bank holidays, higher visitor numbers means greater volumes of litter being left in parks for parks staff to deal with every day of the week.

An awareness and behavioural change campaign is currently taking place through August / September – ‘Bin it or take it home’ – with the aim of highlighting the current issues being faced, explaining what the council are already doing and encouraging visitors to take personal responsibility for their waste.

The campaign has included:

- posters, banners and floor stencils installed in parks
- key facts on LBH website
- social media messages
- engagement with community groups / partners

Further activities planned:

- engagement by frontline staff and users
- litter enforcement within parks

There has been a spate of unlicensed music events (UMEs) and large gatherings of people in parks for BBQ's. The Police and the council have put in place specific resources each weekend to try to counter such activities before they start. This is likely to remain a feature of the summer whilst inside venues remain closed. This has added pressure onto existing resources.

Further pilots are planned for 2021 which will include the removal of bins from a selection of parks to test in real world conditions the findings from pilots in other boroughs that removal of bins dramatically reduces the littering within parks. If these pilots are successful consideration will be given to adopt this approach more widely across the borough. Even halving the resources put into picking up litter and emptying bins could release the equivalent budget to fund eight full time gardeners based in parks in support of recommendation 6.

- 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.**

Cabinet response - Recommendation 9 is agreed.

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

Monitoring of litter is undertaken regularly by Parks Staff and an overall hygiene score is produced for parks each month. Any incidents of fly tipping will be dealt with by the council's enforcement teams and appropriate action taken. This recommendation is being progressed by the Head of Community Safety and Enforcement and Head of Commissioning & Client Services and will be monitored on an ongoing basis. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure and the Head of Community Safety and Enforcement.

March 2019 Update - No discernible impact has been identified during 2018. However, this may have been masked by the very hot and long summer which brought many more people out into parks. Despite more littering taking place hygiene standards were maintained above target. Target 55% against 62.9% YTD.

A fourth mobile hygiene team is being added for 2019. Which should improve performance further. The Park Keeper team in Finsbury Park is also being expanded.

September 2020 Update - Litter and rubbish disposed of in May 2020 was double of that disposed of in May 2019. This shows the significant increase of parks usage, and waste left behind during the Covid period. The weight of waste disposed of by the parks team is being monitored. This will provide an indication as to the effectiveness of the campaign following the summer. A number of roadside greenspaces managed by Parks have now been included in the Veolia contract for cleansing at no additional cost and released park service resources to spend more time in parks.

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.

Cabinet response - Recommendation 10 is agreed.

A new Parks & Open Spaces strategy will be developed over the next 12 -18 months in collaboration with Friends, residents, Business and Partners. Input will also be sought from colleagues across the council and will seek to fully quantify the role Parks and Open Spaces make to life and health in the borough. We will be working with the Health and Well-Being Board to provide input into the new strategy's development.

This recommendation is being progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services between July 2018 and October 2019. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

March 2019 Update - Progress on the strategy's development has been delayed due to the unprecedented level of inspections by Keep Britain Tidy in relation to Green Flag. However, we remain on track to complete a draft document for Cabinet to consider in Qtr4 2019/20. A fourth mobile hygiene team is being added for 2019. Which should improve performance further. The Park Keeper team in Finsbury Park is also being expanded.

September 2020 Update - Park usage has significantly increased during lockdown and subsequent movement restrictions introduced. The public at large have had a unique opportunity to fully comprehend the role and benefit parks play in their life. The council committed very early on to keeping the parks open for exercise and casual use.

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

In March, all facilities within parks including playgrounds, ballcourts outdoor gyms etc were closed and all events and organised activities cancelled.

Nearly 4 miles of temporary HERAS fencing was placed around all closed-off areas to ensure people adhered to the closures. Facilities were regularly broken into so contractors were on hand to re-establish any breaches of fencing on at least two occasions per week.

Despite the daily challenges of ensuring social distancing measures were followed, all parks have remained open for casual usage.

Banners and floor stencils were put in place reminding people of social distancing measures, and dogs were required to be on leads.

Initially, weekend social distancing patrols in parks were introduced using a variety of staff including civil enforcement officers, parks staff and staff from the council's enforcement team. After the first couple of weekends this moved to a seven day a week operation with a team of 30 staff involved. At weekends this was supported by dedicated police resource, including police horses, helicopter and dedicated joint command and control partnership between the police and the council. This lasted for a period of 10 weeks, including four bank holidays.

Following the easing of restrictions, facilities have fully re-opened.

Tennis courts and ball courts were opened first with supervised sessions provided in the busiest parks including Finsbury Park, Lordship Rec and Ducketts Common. These supervised sessions are ongoing, although ballcourts are now open all day.

All Playgrounds (x40) and outdoor gyms (x10) were opened over a two-week period in July. This was to ensure that all temporary structures were removed, sanitisation and cleaning was carried out, risk assessments done, grounds maintenance completed, and new permanent signage erected. Facilities were fully open by the end of July, as the school summer holidays started. Parks staff have been carrying out a twice weekly sanitisation of all play and gym equipment since the facilities were reopened.

The Summer Holiday Programme also commenced for the summer with many activities taking place in parks ensuring the social distancing rules can be implemented and managed safely.

Throughout this whole period the parks staff have continued to provide a good quality of service despite depleted resources due to a percentage of the staff shielding.

11. That the Parks Strategy be developed utilising values calculated using the Natural Capital Accounting model.

Cabinet response - Recommendation 11 is agreed.

A natural capital account has been developed for the whole of London which includes specific figures for Haringey. Officers are in discussion with colleagues at GLA to learn from their experience and see how the Natural Capital Accounting model can help to make the case for investment in Parks by a whole range of services.

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

This recommendation is being progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services between July 2018 – October 2019. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

March 2019 Update - This will be part of the new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.

September 2020 Update – external consultants have been appointed to undertake the Natural Capital Account for Haringey. This will include a survey of all the council’s parks and greenspaces, woodlands, and nature reserves to understand the extent and value of the landscape. The findings of the Natural Capital account will be available in December 2020 and will form part of the draft Parks and Green Spaces Strategy which will be considered by Cabinet in March 2021.

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.

Cabinet response - Recommendation 12 is not agreed.

Although the public health grant is currently fully committed, we do recognise the significant contribution that parks and open spaces make to delivering long-term health and well-being benefits and public health staff support numerous activities promoting their use.

Examples are the Haringey Walks campaign (with better walks signage, led walks, nature walks, and a walk weekend 14th July); the Weekend of Play (April 20-22) which encouraged community groups to have a small play event in a park/open space; and health promotion at numerous parks events. Public health staff have also supported funding bids related to the use of parks and open spaces.

This recommendation is not being progressed by the Director of Public Health.

March 2019 Update - The situation with regards to funding remains the same. However, the service remains ready to engage with any Public Health lead initiatives in parks to increase the activity level of the population.

September 2020 Update – The Parks service, with support from Public Health, have undertaken a pilot Health Study of four parks in the borough. This study which has been conducted in accordance with a recognised protocol has highlighted the current quality of the four parks to support health outcomes. The findings of this study will be used to shape policy and actions in the new Parks and Green Space Strategy. Officers are also working on the development of several projects that if successful will support social prescribing in parks.

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.

Cabinet response - Recommendation 13 is partially agreed.

The LIP funding process is subject to the criteria set by TFL and therefore, where it is possible to do so, the Parks service will work with Planning to identify opportunities either through the LIP or other TFL funding opportunities. A good example of such a collaboration is on the Quietway’s projects where TFL investment will deliver lighting to key routes in Finsbury Park.

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

This recommendation is being progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services and Assistant Director – Planning on an ongoing basis. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure and the Assistant Director – Planning on an ongoing basis.

Where other opportunities arise, we will seek to secure funding into parks.

March 2019 Update - Works to progress the Quietway 10 and the Cycle Future Route 2 in and around Finsbury Park continue.

September 2020 Update – Prior to lockdown the council was developing approaches to secure additional funding in the Tottenham and Crouch End area via the Liveable Neighbourhoods funding from the GLA. However, this funding, funding for cycleways and also the normal LIP funding has now been rescinded and therefore the outlook in this area is unclear for the foreseeable future.

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

Cabinet response - Recommendation 14 is partially agreed.

Whilst in principle such a proposal is to be supported, the practical and financial implications of such a proposal are substantial.

Of a total of 58 parks and open spaces in the borough:

- 9 are protected either as QE2 fields or King George memorial parks.
- The majority of sites have protection either as Metropolitan Open Land, Significant Open Land, Local Nature Reserve, Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) or as Ancient Woodland.

From our initial review of records, we have identified one Local Park and nine Small Local Parks and Open spaces that do not benefit from any form of additional designation protection.

Fields in Trust do not charge to dedicate a park in perpetuity but there are officer costs in the council for Parks, Property and Legal Services. These costs equate to around £3,000 per location, regardless of size of the space. The cost of putting all parks under a Fields in Trust Covenant would be in the region of £150,000 and be a full-time job for one officer for a year.

A more prudent approach would be to consider the 10 unprotected sites as a priority for protection under a Fields in Trust Covenant over the next two years and for further consideration be given to the remaining parks as part of the development of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

This recommendation is being progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services between July 2018 and June 2020. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

March 2019 Update - Progress has commenced on this item and meetings held with Fields in Trust. Officers have started to gather the required information for the first ten parks.

Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Update

September 2020 Update – Fairlands and Brunswick Parks were granted full Deeds of Dedication in January 2020 and awarded community grants of £5K.

The remaining parks (Manchester Gardens, Page Green Common, Tewkesbury Road, Durnsford Road, Belmont Rec, Rowkesly Gardens, Somerford Grove, Springfield Park) set out in the original 2019 scheduled list are currently with FiT and Council legal teams to progress, although this has been delayed due to the pandemic.

15. That, when considering planning applications on land abutting parks and open spaces, planning officers negotiate with developers to ensure that developments are sympathetic to their surroundings through measures such as limiting shadowing, greening the façade of buildings and developing a “buffer zone” on land directly adjacent.

Cabinet response - Recommendation 15 is agreed.

These matters are already considered when planning applications are determined. This recommendation has been progressed by the Assistant Director of Planning and will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

March 2019 Update - Ongoing

September 2020 Update – Ongoing

16. That a report on the implications of the ring fencing of income from events in parks to the specific parks and open spaces in which they take place, including the details of the full financial impact, be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and included within the Committee’s work plan for 2018/19.

Cabinet response - Recommendation 16 is agreed.

The Council has recently completed an exercise to calculate the cost of running Finsbury Park and identify all income generated by the park. The impact of the court ruling will have no significant impact on the overall parks budget. A full report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

This recommendation is being progressed by the Head of Commissioning & Client Services. Where other opportunities arise, we will seek to secure funding into parks. This recommendation is now being progressed by the Head of Parks and Leisure.

March 2019 Update - To be completed in 2019/20.

September 2020 Update – Still to be completed.