

Report for: Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel – 5 September 2022

Title: Pocket Parks Update

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Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Key Decision

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this briefing is to update the panel on work to develop new opportunities for the enhancement and creation of pocket parks across the borough.
- 1.2. New funding of £50,000 per annum was included in the council's budget from April 2022 to establish a community led programme to identify suitable small green spaces that can be enhanced through environmental improvements.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. To encourage and support the community it has been proposed that a part time officer be employed to provide some practical support to the community.
- 2.2. This support will:-
 - Promote the existing of the opportunity to residents and Ward Councillors
 - Meet with residents and Ward Councillors on site to discuss their aspirations for area.
 - Help residents navigate the internal systems of the council to seek agreement for their proposal.
 - Obtain support and input from other council officers / departments
 - Support residents in any fundraising or crowd funding proposals
 - Link residents with other partners to help deliver their scheme
 - Provide some core match funding for the planned improvements.
- 2.3. Over the course of any 12-month period it is anticipated that 10-12 community groups will be supported to realise the improvements in their local small greenspace.

3. Progress to date

- Work to develop the new offer has been completed as above.
- A job description for the new role has been created and will be recruited to before Christmas.
- In the meantime, a pilot project is being supported by the Parks and Greenspace Volunteering Officer.

4. Pilot Project

- 4.1. A pilot project has been identified in the West Green Ward to make improvements to the small green space at the end of Caversham Road and the verges in the road.
- 4.2. The community are concerned that the small greenspace is attracting litter, and people sit on the knee rail fence and hang around. The residents have done some work to plant bulbs but want to go further to improve the biodiversity of their local greenspace and design out the ASB / Litter.
- 4.3. Working with colleagues in Highways they have agreed to remove the knee rail and reduce the small brick wall so that a low curb can be installed. At one end where the area meets the road, gaps will be left to allow water run off to enter the area and provide some additional watering.
- 4.4. Further work is going to take place to enhance the planting in the area to increase biodiversity and the sustainability of the planted area. Further tree planting may also be possible elsewhere in the road and this will be explored in partnership with Trees for Streets.
- 4.5. The learning from this pilot will help to improve the launch of the wider offer to communities.

5. Next Steps

- Recruit Small Greenspaces Officer (part time)
- Consider lessons learnt from pilot scheme
- Develop promotional resources for the wider launch of the scheme
- Brief All Councillors
- Launch Scheme