

Report of the Chief Officer Parks and Countryside

Report to North West Outer Area Committee

Date: 3rd February 2014

Subject: Annual Report 2013 – for the Parks and Countryside Service

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Adel & Wharfedale Horsforth Otley & Yeadon Guisley & Rawdon		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. This report provides an area profile of key assets and services provided in the North West Outer area.
2. It highlights the current progress towards Leeds Quality Park (LQP) status for community parks in the area. It provides the costs of achieving and retaining LQP status in community parks up to the year 2020.
3. It details capital improvements in community parks, sport pitches and fixed play in the area for the last 12 months and planned improvements to be delivered in the next 12 months.
4. It gives a detailed breakdown of events and volunteering in the area.

Recommendations

5. The Area Committee is requested to note the content of the report and to communicate priorities for investment in community parks, playing pitches and fixed play facilities in light of the issues raised.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks to further develop the relationship between the Parks and Countryside service and the North West Outer Area Committee, as agreed at Executive Board.
- 1.2 It provides an overview of the service and sets out some of the challenges faced along with key performance management initiatives. In addition it seeks to provide a positive way forward for delivering the extended role of the Area Committee.
- 1.3 In particular it sets out at an area level progress made in attaining Leeds Quality Park standard. It also sets out investment need to attain and sustain LQP standards.

2 Background information

Service Description

- 2.1 Leeds City Council has one of the largest fully inclusive local authority Parks and Countryside services, managing almost 4,000 hectares of parks and green space. This includes 7 major parks, 62 community parks and 95 recreation grounds and 391 local green spaces, which include 144 playgrounds and 500 sports facilities ranging from skateboard parks to golf courses, and which play host to 600 events annually. The service also manages a nursery which produces around 3 million bedding plants each year, 97 allotment sites, over 800km of Public Right of Way (PROW), and 156 nature conservation sites, as well as 23 cemeteries and 3 crematoria.

Description of Priority Advisory Function

- 2.2 The priority advisory function for Area Committees relates to community park provision that have a wide range of facilities, including general recreation, sports pitches, play and formal and informal horticultural features.
- 2.3 Where developments are less significant or only impact on one site then ward members and community groups are informed and consulted using established procedures. It is important to note that good levels of engagement with ward members exist and this function seeks to enhance this engagement.
- 2.4 There are proposals currently being considered to increase the scope of this delegation to include development and horticultural maintenance of cemeteries, recreation grounds, natural areas and local green space in addition to community parks. These proposals would delegate investment decisions and the setting of resource priorities using the asset register as the basis of allocation to each area committee. Consultation and rollout is currently being directed by the Area Leaders team.

3 Main issues

Area Profile of the Service

3.1 The following table summarises community green space assets managed by Parks and Countryside in the North West Outer Area Committee:

Asset	Quantity
Community parks	8
Playing Pitches:	
Cricket	4
Football	28
Rugby League	3
Rugby Union	1
Bowling greens	8
Playgrounds	17
Multi-use games areas	1
Skate parks	5

3.2 Regarding bowling green provision, it should be noted that a report was considered by Executive Board in October 2013 that approved revised arrangements as follows:

- The introduction of a charge which would see the implementation of a season ticket at a cost of £25 in 2014/2015 rising to £31.50 in 2017/2018.
- The removal of 1 bowling green at 6 sites across the city with more than 1 bowling green. This does not include any bowling greens in the North West Outer Area Committee.
- That where feasible, appropriate arrangements are established in order for bowling clubs to meet the costs associated with their own direct use of gas and electricity by March 2014.

Community Parks

3.3 The community parks in the North West Outer area are as follows:

- Grove Hill Park
- Holt Park
- Horsforth Hall Park
- Kirk Lane Park
- Micklefield Park
- Nunroyd Park
- Tarnfield Park
- Wharfemeadows Park

3.4 The current position on the quality of these sites is examined later in this report as is the investment need to attain or sustain the Leeds Quality Park standard.

Sports Pitches

3.5 Parks and Countryside provide annual pitch hire for sports teams. The table below shows the number of teams with current bookings playing on pitches in the area: *(note this excludes clubs who have a long term lease in place)*

Age Group	No of Teams
Open Age	19
Juniors	57

Volunteering in the Parks and Countryside Service

3.6 The service continues to focus on increasing the number of volunteers and groups working in the area to achieve the following:

- To increase corporate volunteering working in partnership with Business in the Community and Leeds Ahead
- Continue to improve involvement with the many “in bloom” groups in Leeds.
- It is an ambition to have a volunteer group for every community park where there is a site based gardener.

3.7 It is estimated that volunteers across all groups contribute 1,975 days of voluntary work in the North West Outer area over a 12 month period. The tables below provide details of volunteering in the area since January 2013:

Voluntary work supervised by Parks and Countryside staff:

Site	Organisation	Task	No. of Vol Days
Breary Marsh	24th North Leeds Beavers	Nature Walk	5.7
	Leeds Wildlife Volunteers	Fen management	8.2
		Himalayan balsam removal	7.4
Cragg Hill Recreation Ground	Cragghill & Woodside Residents Group	Footpath renovation, sewing ground flora in bottom of hedgerow, litter pick	5.7
Cragg Wood	Cragghill & Woodside Residents Group	Bench repair	1.6
		Fungi Foray	3.2
		Bird box building and litterpick	9.7
	Leeds Wildlife Volunteers	Dry stone walling	29.1
Hunger Hills	4th Horsforth St. Margarets Brownies	Bat Walk	4.3
	Friends of Hunger Hills	Bat Walk	8.1
		Bluebell Walk	13.5
		Dawn Chorus Walk	3.2
		Slide Talk	8.1
		Woodland Management	12.5
Lawnswood	CSV	Tidying the cemetery	32.4

Site	Organisation	Task	No. of Vol Days
Cemetery/Crematorium	Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery	Balsam Bash, litter pick, cut back vegetation	8.8
		Cutback vegetation and tidy	29.8
		Leaf raking and pruning	8.8
		section 1910 veg cutback	17.6
		vegetation cutback	16.4
		Vegetation cutback in 1910 section, 3 benches painted	9.1
		vegetation cutbacks	12.2
		Victorian section clear surrounds, cutback	0.0
Little Hawksworth Wood	Cragghill and Woodside Residents Group	General tidy up	0.0
	Leeds Wildlife Volunteers	Construction of flight of stone steps	6.7
Otley Chevin Country Park	Bridge Church Cub Group	Pond dipping	4.5
	Environment Agency	Scrub removal on Beacon Moor	7.4
	Friends of Chevin Forest	Bracken bashing	3.0
		Himalayan balsam removal	5.4
		Keeper's Cottage Excavation	4.1
		Orchard maintenance and general tidy up near White House	5.7
		Pond clearance, ditch maintenance and seedling removal from meadow in Yorkgate Quarry area	5.9
		Scrub bashing	5.7
		Scrub removal and dead hedging - Thompson's Field	5.4
		Scrub removal on Beacon Moor	12.6
	Wild Art event	0.0	
	Leeds Wildlife Volunteers	Drainage ditch excavation	9.7
Scrub removal and dead hedging - Thompson's Field		5.7	
The Outwood	Cragghill and Woodside Residents Group	Ivy clearance from external walls, cut back on footpaths, erecting bird boxes, litterpick	16.4
	Newlay Conservation Society	Bench repair, veg cutback and scrape on paving, litter pick	2.0
Total			355.6

Local business volunteers supervised by Parks and Countryside staff:

Site	Organisation	Task	Vol. Days
Golden Acre Park	Lloyds Banking Group	Mulching collections beds	8.9
Otley Chevin Country Park	Mercer	Himalayan balsam removal and bracken bruising	10.4
Total			19.3

Educational work within the North West Outer area:

Site	School	Activity	No Of Children
Golden Acre Park	Ireland Wood Primary School	Seed Gathering	60
	Ralph Thoresby Secondary School	Arboretum management i.e. removal of weed trees	234
Lawnswood Cemetery/Crematorium	Ralph Thorsbey School	Cutback vegetation and tidy	70
Otley Chevin Country Park	Springbank Primary	Pond dipping / mini-beasts	484
Total			848

Volunteer groups working independently in the North West Outer area:

Group Name	Number of Volunteers	Estimated Volunteer Days
Chevin Watch group	2	0
Cragg Hill and Woodside	5	10
Friends of Chevin Forest Park	30	180
Friends of Engine Fields	10	72
Friends of Hawksworth Wood	5	15
Friends of Horsforth Hall park	10	0
Friends of Hunger Hills Wood	12	20
Friends of Kirklane Park	2	0
Friends of Yeadon Banks	5	10
Friends of Yeadon Tarn	5	10
Total		317

Existing in bloom groups within the North West Outer area;

In Bloom Group	Number of Volunteers	Award Won (Yorkshire in Bloom)	Estimated Volunteer Days
Bramhope	9	Urban Community – Silver Gilt	160
Guiseley	20		400
Horsforth	22	Town – Silver Gilt	440
Otley	14	Town – Silver Gilt	280
Total			1280

Events

- 3.8 The bookings and licensing team provides assistance in helping community and other groups organise events with particular emphasise on ensuring legal and safety requirements are met but do not deter groups and organisations from organising activities. The table below shows a list of events held in the Outer North West area in 2013:

Site Name	Month	Event	Total
Cragside Rec	September	Hawksworth Wood Fun day	1
Danefield	May	Airienteers	2
	December	The Chevin Chase (Airecentre Pacers)	1
Golden Acre Park	May	Bramhope Art Exhibition	1

Site Name	Month	Event	Total
	January	PECO Cross Country (Mark Hetherington)	1
	February	St Gemma's Sponsored Dog Walk	1
	March	Comic Relief Walk	1
		RSPB Event	1
	June	Fushia Society	1
		Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust	1
		Summer Bands	2
	July	Abbey Runners	1
		Airienteers	1
		ITV Filming	1
		Rad Miller Filming	1
	Summer Bands	2	
	August	Bliss Buggy Push	1
		RSPB Event	1
		Summer Bands	2
	November	Airenteers	1
Grove Hill Park	August	Otley, Pool & Bramhope Cluster Fun Days	1
Hawthorn Cresecent POS	August	Aireborough Extended Services Play Days	1
Henshaw Oval	July	Aireborough Extended Services Play Days	1
Holt Park	August	Back Yard Breeze	1
Horsforth Hall Park	May	(29th - 14th) Funfair (Pullen)	1
	April	Airienteers	1
		St George's Day Parade	1
	June	Horsforth Gala	1
		Summer Bands	1
		Walk for Smiles 1/2 way point	1
	July	Summer Bands	1
	August	(19th - 27th) Funfair (Pullen)	1
		LCC Sports Day	1
	September	(2nd - 9th) Funfair (Pullen)	1
		Churches Together Fun Day	1
Listerhill Baptist Church Service		1	
Summer Bands		1	
November	Airienteers	1	
King George's PF	August	Matthew Norman Memorial Football	1
Kirk Lane Park	August	Back Yard Breeze	1
Lawnswood Cemetery	January	Northern Film School Filming - Julie Daysley	1
Micklefield Park	August	Aireborough Extended Services Play Days	2
Nunroyd Park	May	Airienteers	1
		Filming - Betty TV Ltd	1
	January	Ilkley Cycling Club - Cycle Race	1
	April	(14th - 30th) Funfair (Atha)	1
	June	(10th - 24th) Funfair (Atha)	1
	August	(25th - 2nd) Funfair (Pullen)	1
		Aireborough Extended Services Play Days	1
	September	(9th - 16th) Funfair (Pullen)	1
Otley Chevin	January	Airienteers	1
	February	15th Airedale Scouts Rombalds Stride	1
		Airienteers	1
	March	Airienteers	1

Site Name	Month	Event	Total
		Easter Cross	1
		Easter Morning Service	1
	April	Airienteers	1
	June	Skyrack AC - Chevin Fell Race	1
	July	Airienteers	1
		Fell Run	1
	September	Airienteers	1
	October	Halloween Run - RunSunday	1
		Hansel & Gretel Filming	1
	November	Filming - house hunters	1
October	Westgate Primary School	1	
Ridgeway Hostel	September	DragonFly TV	1
Shaw Lane Recreation	July	Aireborough Extended Services Play Days	1
Springfield Park	August	Aireborough Extended Services Play Days	1
		Back Yard Breeze	1
Well Croft	August	Otley, Pool & Bramhope Cluster Fun Days	1
West Park Playing Fields	November	X Country	1
Weston Drive Rec	July	Otley, Pool & Bramhope Cluster Fun Days	1
	August	Back Yard Breeze	1
Wharfemeadows Park	April	Kite Making Project	1
	June	Fake Fest	1
	July	Summer Bands	1
	August	Otley, Pool & Bramhope Cluster Fun Days	1
	December	ITV Filming - Emmerdale	1
Yeadon Tarn	March	LCC Sport & Active Lifestyles Run	1
	June	Summer Bands	1
	July	Summer Bands	1
		Yeadon Carnival	1
	August	Mini Breeze Event	1
Total			88

Community Parks – Leeds Quality Park Status

3.9 The Parks and Green Space Strategy approved at Executive Board in February 2009 sets out the vision and priorities to 2020. One of the key proposals contained in the strategy is the aspiration for all community parks to meet the Green Flag standard for field based assessment by 2020. The Green Flag Award Scheme represents the national standard for parks and green spaces. It has been developed around eight key criteria as follows;

- **A welcoming place** - how to create a sense that people are positively welcomed in the park
- **Healthy, safe & secure** - how best to ensure that the park is a safe & healthy environment for all users
- **Clean & well maintained** - what people can expect in terms of cleanliness, facilities & maintenance
- **Sustainability** - how a park can be managed in environmentally sensitive ways
- **Conservation & heritage** - the value of conservation & care of historical heritage
- **Community involvement** - ways of encouraging community participation and acknowledging the community's role in a park's success
- **Marketing** - methods of promoting a park successfully
- **Management** - how to reflect all of the above in a coherent & accessible management plan or strategy and ensure it is implemented.

3.10 The Parks and Countryside service reports annual performance against two local indicators based upon the Green Flag Award scheme;

- *The percentage of Parks and Countryside sites assessed that meet the Green Flag standard.*
- *The percentage of Parks and Countryside community parks which meet the Green Flag standard. Performance against these indicators is illustrated in section 3.23.*

3.11 The indicator includes an assessment of each community park which has particular relevance to Area Committee engagement. The scheme is known as the Leeds Quality Park (LQP) standard. The following table provides a current profile of these assessments for the North West Outer Area Committee.

Site	Year Assessed	Welcoming Place	Healthy, Safe, Secure	Clean, Well Maintained	Sustainability	Conservation / Heritage	Community Involvement	Marketing	Meets Standard?
Grove Hill Park, Otley	2012								No
Holt Park	2012								Yes
Horsforth Hall Park	2011								Yes
Kirk Lane Park	2011								No
Micklefield Park	2012								Yes
Nunroyd Park	2011								No
Tarnfield Park	2013								Yes
Wharfemeadows Park	2012								Yes

Key:

Meets Leeds Quality Park Standard on average for this key criteria	
Below Leeds Quality Park Standard on average for this key criteria	

- 3.12 From this table, there are 5 parks identified that meet the Leeds Quality Park, and overall, the position remains unchanged from the previous area committee report.
- 3.13 It is planned in 2014 that the process of inspection will change to ensure that all community parks are assessed annually, rather than every 3 years as at present. This will allow improvements that have been made to be reflected in the performance standards in a more immediate way.
- 3.14 Improvements to community parks taking place during 2013 are as follows:
- Holt Park – Repairs to tennis courts
 - Grove Hill Park – Improved access to the bowling green
 - Nunroyd Park – Access improvements and resurfacing
 - Wharfemeadows Park – Signage, installation of fitness equipment and wall repairs
 - Tarnfield Park – Installed Reed beds as part of pollution control with Environment Agency. New benches
 - Horsforth Hall Park – Resurfaced path, rewired café to ensure it remained open. New benches.

3.15 The following table provides a perspective on the minimum level of investment required to achieve the LQP standard for the five remaining parks. It also includes the level of reinvestment required across all the community parks in order to sustain the LQP pass up to 2020;

Site Name	Cost to Achieve (excluding fixed play)	Reinvestment (excluding fixed play)
Grove Hill Park, Otley	£35,000	
Kirk Lane Park	£88,000	
Nunroyd Park	£50,500	
Total to achieve LQP	£173,500	
Average annual reinvestment		£21,511
Total reinvestment to 2020		£150,577
Overall Total Investment to 2020		£324,077

3.16 Reinvestment levels are estimated according to the expected lifespan of equipment and infrastructure as set out below:

Description	Timescale for Recurring Investment
Signage and interpretation	5 years
Fixed play (including MUGA's/skate parks)	10 years
Bins and benches	15 years
Paths and infrastructure	25 years
Landscaping	25 years

3.17 Planned and proposed improvements for the next 12 months are;

- Grove Hill Park – Tree works, resurfacing part of bowling green and further improving access.
- Tarnfield Park – Refurbish playground
- Kirk Lane Park – Refurbish playground & New MUGA
- Nunroyd Park – Replace garage & cricket nets, path improvements.

3.18 In terms of fixed play, work has been undertaken to set out refurbishment requirements over a 10 year rolling programme in support of the outcomes of the Fixed Play Strategy. The average cost of a new playground is currently about £120k; Multi-use games areas and skate parks are slightly cheaper on average at about £90k each. The table below shows the capital investment required on an ongoing basis to fund the area committees existing fixed play sites:

Fixed Play Type	No.	Total Replacement Cost £'s	Required Average Annual Spend £'s
Play Areas	17	2,040,000	204,000
Multi Use games Areas	1	90,000	9,000
Skate Parks	5	450,000	45,000
Totals		2,580,000	258,000

Area Committee funding for additional site based gardeners

- 3.19 North West Outer Area Committee provide funding for additional gardeners within the North West Outer area. In 2012-13 funding totalling £20,113 was provided for increased onsite presence in Yeadon Cemetery and general additional presence at sites in Yeadon & Guiseley.
- 3.20 Since the introduction of site based gardeners, analysis shows that complaints to both Ward Councillors and the Parks and Countryside Service have declined on sites with increased daily presence. In addition, the service has observed an increase in the number of residents using parks and open spaces.
- 3.21 The site based gardeners increase working relationships with users, local residents and community groups. These site based staff further increase users satisfaction and support the aspiration to increase volunteer groups working within parks.

Coordinated Working with Environmental Services

- 3.22 The Parks and Countryside Service move to the Environments & Housing Directorate in 2012 has given opportunities to improve collaborative working. In particular improvements in horticultural land management, cleansing and more efficient use of resources in regard to:
- Co-ordination of weed spraying activities with the grounds maintenance contract with a consistent approach to monitoring.
 - Traffic Management arrangements co-ordinated to minimise costs and disruption of the highway.
 - Litter collection in the vicinity of community parks, and as part of normal operations site based gardeners undertake an initial litter pick of the park which is being expanded to include some areas outside the curtilage of the park. Conversely, street cleansing staff now assist with emptying litter bins in parks on a weekend when parks staff are not always present.
 - The Parks and Countryside service has a number of welfare facilities and yard space available in most community parks distributed throughout the city which has provided an opportunity for the locality based teams to use these facilities for staff welfare provision and as operational bases.

Parks and Countryside Key Performance Indicators

3.23 The following table highlights key performance indicators relevant to the service;

PI Code	Description	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Actual	2013/14 Target
LKI-GFI / CP-PC50 / EM38	The percentage of parks and countryside sites assessed internally that meet the Green Flag criteria	23% Target: 23%	26.2% Target: 26.2%	30.8% Target: 29.4%	32.6%
New	The percentage of parks and countryside community parks which meet LQP status	33.9%	38.7% Target: 40%	42% Target: 47.5%	55.0%

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Close liaison with community and ward members is already in existence, utilising a variety of mechanisms, for example through residents' surveys, multi-agency meetings and community forums. In addition volunteers, Friends of groups and local residents are regularly consulted on local projects with input on design and physical implementation of a wide range of site improvements.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 This report does not have any identified impact on equality and diversity arrangements.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The contents of this report set out how the Executive Board requirements can be met by taking a proactive approach to involve and engage Area Committees in matters relating to community parks.

4.3.2 The information within the report contributes significantly to the sustainable economy and culture city priority plan.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 As part of the wider impact on local government and the Council in particular, the Parks and Countryside service has seen a £2 million budget reduction from 2011/12 to 2012/13 and a further reduction of £0.6 million in 2013/14, with a likelihood of a minimum further 16% reduction in the next few years. In meeting these challenging budget targets the service has already undertaken a number of steps, including reducing the number of managers and back office staff as well as price increases – including removing subsidy for bereavement services and allotment provision. As previously mentioned, outdoor bowls has also been recently reviewed working with representatives from the relevant associations resulting in revised arrangements in 2014.

4.4.2 The service has also sought to be enterprising and innovative including working in partnership to develop a conservatory at Golden Acre café, Tropical World

refurbishment, sponsorship, nursery trading and increasing the level of volunteers. Agreement has been reached in principle with the Trade Unions to adopt seasonal working hours from January 2014 resulting in a saving of £140k by reducing the number of seasonal staff recruited each year whilst retaining permanent gardening staff and enabling the introduction of 6 further horticultural apprentices.

- 4.4.3 The service undertakes to sustain and develop the services provided to the public and has traditionally used a number of sources of financial support to achieve developments. These include grants from bodies such as Green Leeds Ltd, Sustrans, Natural England, National Lottery funding and developer contributions via section 106 (S106) funds.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 This report has no legal implications and is not subject to call in. There is no information which is confidential or exempt.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There are no significant risk management issues contained within the report, its conclusions and recommendations.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Community green space contributes in many ways to the delivery of the Corporate Priority Plan. They provide places for relaxation, escape, exercise and recreation. They bring communities together and make a positive contribution to the local economy, education, improve public health and well-being, and generally make a better place to live, work and visit.
- 5.2 Improvements to community parks, fixed play and playing pitches remain a priority, and there already has been investment made to deliver improvements along with further schemes identified. Issues are being addressed through the Parks and Green Space Strategy along with implementation of the Fixed Play Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy.
- 5.3 Community engagement remains a key activity for the service with regular correspondence, attendance at meetings and briefings, along with more localised consultation where required.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Area Committee is requested to note the content of the report and to communicate priorities for investment in community parks, playing pitches and fixed play facilities in light of the issues raised.

7 Background Documents

- 7.1 Area Committee Roles, Outer North West Area Committee, 4th July 2011.
- 7.2 Annual Report for Parks and Countryside Service in North West Outer Area Committee, North West Outer Area Committee, 2013.
- 7.3 Parks and Green Space Strategy, Executive Board, February 2009.