

Report of: Report of the Chief Officer Parks and Countryside

Report to: The Outer West Community Committee – Calverley & Farsley; Farnley & Wortley; Pudsey

Report author: Mike Kinnaird 3957459

Date: 28th January 2015

For decision

Parks and Countryside Area Delegation Information for West Outer

Purpose of report

1. The attached report illustrates information relating to the West Outer area in support of proposals to delegate the development and horticultural maintenance of community parks, cemeteries, recreation grounds, urban woodland, natural areas and local green space to Community Committees.

Recommendations

- Members are requested to provide feedback on the proposed information provided by January 30th and agree the methodology.
- To note that subject to Executive Board approval it is anticipated that these arrangements will commence in April 2015 using the current priorities as a baseline.

Main issues

2. The Parks and Countryside service provide annual reports to Community Committees highlighting issues relating to the community green space function, focussed around community parks. In future it is proposed that the following is further delegated to Community Committees and reviewed annually:
 - To include the horticultural maintenance of community parks, cemeteries, recreation grounds, urban woodland, natural areas and local green space as part of the area delegation
 - To delegate investment decisions on these sites to help achieve and sustain Leeds Quality Park standard
 - To delegate resource priorities for these sites using the parks asset register to determine resource requirements and the impact of any proposed changes

Corporate considerations

a. Consultation and Engagement

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.

b. Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

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

c. Council policies and City Priorities

3. The contents of this report set out how the Executive Board requirements can be met by taking a proactive approach to involve and engage Community Committees in matters relating to community parks.
4. The information within the report contributes significantly to the sustainable economy and culture city priority plan.

d. Resources and value for money

5. 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.

6. 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.
7. 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.

e. Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

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

f. Risk Management

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

Conclusion

10. In summary it is proposed that the horticultural maintenance of cemeteries, recreation grounds, natural areas and local green space is included as part of the area delegation, in addition to community parks. Investment decisions on community parks, recreation grounds, natural areas and local green space to help achieve and sustain Leeds Quality Park standard will be delegated to Community Committees. Furthermore, resource priorities for each Community Committee will be delegated using the parks asset register to determine resource requirements and the impact of any proposed changes. The environment subgroup would discuss priorities with Parks and Countryside officers in order to determine recommendations for decision by each Community Committee. Priorities would be determined from April of each year and reviewed once in order to plan any changes for the following year.

Recommendations

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Background information

- None