



Report of the Head of Parks and Countryside

Meeting: North East Outer Area Committee

Date: 6th December 2010

Subject: Annual Report – for Parks and Countryside Service in North East Outer Area Committee

Electoral Wards Affected:

Alwoodley
Harewood
Wetherby

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available for Call
In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call In Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

This report examines the opportunities to further develop the relationship between the Parks and Countryside service and the North East Outer Area Committee.

It demonstrates how the service contributes to outcomes in the Leeds Strategic Plan.

It provides an area profile of key assets and sets out at an area level progress made in attaining Leeds Quality Park standard for parks and greenspace. It provides analysis for the area from the 2009 residents survey. It notes improvements on playing pitches.

It provides a perspective on actions contained in the area delivery plan as well as planned community engagement activities.

It sets out a programme of activities in 2011 including strategic developments, performance reporting and service planning.

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.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report seeks to further develop the relationship between the Parks and Countryside service and the North East 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 ensuring that the benefits of the revised roles are secured.
- 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 for fixed play along with progress made in this regard.

2.0 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.
- 2.2 This includes 7 major parks, 167 community parks and recreation grounds and 383 acres of local green space, 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 over 4 million bedding plants each year, 96 allotment sites, almost 800km of PROW, and 156 nature conservation sites, as well as 22 cemeteries and three crematoria.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 shows Parks and Countryside contributions to the delivery of the Leeds Strategic Plan targets and outcomes.

Description of Delegated Function/Enhanced role

- 2.4 The enhanced role for Area Committees relates to community parks provision that have a wide range of facilities, including general recreation, sports pitches, play and formal and informal horticultural facilities. The role allows for the Area Committee to influence the development of these sites and to be consulted on proposals relating to usage.
- 2.5 The practical arrangements to allow this role to be fulfilled can be summarised as follows:
 - Area Committees will receive reports on significant issues that affect more than one site
 - Area Committee involvement will be sought where matters impacting sites are of a more strategic nature
- 2.6 Where developments are less significant or only impact on one site then ward members and community groups will be informed and consulted using established procedures. It is important to note that good levels of engagement with ward members exists and this role seeks to enhance this engagement.

- 2.7 Activities likely to be brought to the Area Committees during 2011 include:
- A review of outdoor bowling greens with proposals to achieve sustainable service provision
 - A review of allotments with proposals to develop and improve provision

3.0 The Service at Area Committee Level

Area Profile of the Service

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

Asset	Quantity
Community parks	0
Playing Pitches:	
Football	10
Rugby League	1
Rugby Union	2
Bowling greens	1
Playgrounds	10
Multi-use games areas	1
Skateparks	2

Context

- 3.2 The 2009 Parks and Countryside residents survey showed that the service attracts almost 68 million visits each year from Leeds' residents alone, and that approximately 96% of these are regular park users. These range from anybody using a park for informal recreation (e.g. walking, observing nature) to people who take part in formal activities (e.g. football clubs, conservation volunteers or to attend events). The user surveys also evidenced that 10m visits are made to our green space by Young People (12-19) compared to 3.6m by Children (5-11).
- 3.3 The use of this information has been a key contributor to many successful funding bids, for example the service has made significant progress in implementing the Parks Urban Renaissance programme utilising £3.7m for improvements to 21 community parks during 2005/09.

Parks and Recreation Grounds

- 3.4 Analysis from the 2009 residents survey has been carried out relevant to the parks in the area. Comparisons to the 2009 city wide data are shown;

Gender	2009 (North East Outer)	2009 (City Wide)
Male	37%	38%
Female	63%	62%

Age Profile	2009 (North East Outer)	2009 (City Wide)
20-39	28%	35%
40-59	40%	37%
60+	32%	28%

Ethnicity	2009 (North East Outer)	2009 (City Wide)
White	92%	91%
BME	8%	9%

3.5 The gender profile is in line with results for the whole of the city and generally consistent with previous surveys that show a greater number of female visitors. The age profile shows a slightly lower trend of visits from the youngest age range with increases in the 40-59 and over 60 age groups than the city wide figures. The ethnicity statistics are in line with the city wide figures.

3.6 The total number of visits to parks in the area is 1.6 million each year from residents, and 61% either walk or cycle to the park. The average across the city is 75%, so this represents a much lower proportion who adopt healthy means to get to the park. The top 5 reasons for visiting are as follows:

Reasons for Visiting	2009 (North East Outer)	2009 (City Wide)
Get some fresh air	57%	54%
Visit the play area	46%	34%
For a walk	38%	44%
Children/Family outing	37%	27%
Enjoy beauty of surroundings	28%	~
Enjoy flowers / trees	~	25%

There is a much higher trend in the area for visiting play areas and for children/family outings than the city wide figures.

3.7 Respondents were also given the opportunity to give their views on the overall impression of the park.

Overall Satisfaction	2009 (North East Outer)	2006 (North East Outer)
Satisfied or very satisfied	63%	80%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	19%	7%

There is decreased overall satisfaction with a corresponding increase in dissatisfaction with parks in the area. Despite this the satisfaction figure is still high at 63%.

3.8 The Parks and Green Space Strategy was approved at Executive Board in February 2009 and 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

3.9 The Parks and Countryside service reports annual performance against a key local indicator based upon the Green Flag Award scheme. The indicator is stated as *'the percentage of Parks and Countryside sites assessed that meet the Green Flag standard'*. Performance against this indicator is illustrated in section 4.0

3.10 The indicator includes an assessment of each park or greenspace which has particular relevance to Area Committee engagement. The scheme is known as the Leeds Quality Park (LQP) standard. The following table provides a summary of these assessments for the North East Outer Area Committee.

Site	Year Assessed	Welcoming Place	Healthy, Safe, Secure	Clean, Well Maintained	Sustainability	Conservation / Heritage	Community Involvement	Marketing	Meets Standard?
Cranmer Bank Recreation Ground	2008								No
Moss Woods	2008								No
Scotland Wood	2008								No
The Harland Way	2009								No
The Ings Wetherby	2009								No

Notes – Assessments due in 2010 are currently taking place but have not yet been recorded in full so no data will be shown in this report.

Key:

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

- 3.11 From this table no parks identified meet the Leeds Quality Park Standard in the area. It should be noted that Lotherton Hall Estate does hold a full Green Flag Award.
- 3.12 The residents survey in 2009 enables an assessment of visitor numbers and satisfaction rating (scored out of 10) for a number of criteria for parks within the area, Scores are shown for those parks which had sufficient responses to be included and are set out in the following table;

Site	Assessment of Annual Visits ('000)	Design and Appearance	Cleanliness and Maintenance	Ease to Get Around	Range of Facilities	Horticultural Maintenance	Nature Conservation	Facilities for Families	Sports Facilities	Overall Impression
Deepdale Recreation Ground	250	5.7	5.7	8.2	4.6	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.9	5.8
The Ings Wetherby	181	7.4	6.7	8.3	5.9	7.1	6.8	6.0	7.5	7.5
Wetherby Wilderness	93	8.2	8.0	9.1	7.3	8.7	8.2	6.6	7.5	8.0
Alwoodley POS	137	7.3	7.3	9.0	5.3	7.0	6.7	6.0	6.5	6.3
Cranmer Bank Recreation Ground	84	6.7	5.7	7.7	6.0	6.7	6.0	6.0	6.7	6.4

Key:

Very Good	Over 8	
Good	6 to 8	
Fair	4 - 6	

- 3.13 The table shows that most sites generally score good or very good across all categories. Deepdale Recreation Ground has only fair scores but the survey was completed before the installation of the new play area. There are however issues identified across all parks for the range of facilities which scored consistently lower than other categories.
- 3.14 North East Outer Area Committee provide additional funding for a gardener to increase site based presence at parks in the area. The gardener covers the following sites; Wetherby Wilderness, The Harland Way and Sandringham Play Area.

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 which is backed up by the residents survey 2009 data.

The site based gardeners increase working relationships with users, local residents and community groups. The increased horticultural maintenance at these sites is reflected in improved satisfaction scores in the residents survey.

3.15 Improvements to parks during the period 2009/10 are as follows:

- Adel Woods – New barrier installed to help prevent instances of fly tipping.
- Deepdale Recreation Ground – New play area has been installed early 2010.
- The Harland Way – New benches and bins installed
- The Ings Wetherby – Installation of new improved access controls at the site.

Playing Pitches

3.16 The residents survey in 2009 allowed respondents to rate sport facilities in parks. The results are shown in the table below;

Rating of Sports facilities	2009 (North East Outer)	2006 (North East Outer)
Good or very good	40%	50%
Very poor	2%	6%

The table shows a 10% reduction in residents who felt facilities were good or very good along with a decrease in those who thought they were very poor. Works on proposed schemes within the area are ongoing.

Fixed Play

3.17 The residents survey in 2009 allowed respondents to rate facilities for children and their parents. The results are shown in the table below;

Rating facilities for children	2009 (North East Outer)	2006 (North East Outer)
Good or very good	46%	55%
Very poor	3%	7%

Results show a decrease in those who rated facilities as good or very good. There was also reduction in those rating fixed play as very poor. Play area improvements at Deepdale have been outlined above.

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 skateparks are slightly cheaper on average at about £90k each.

Links to Area Delivery Plan

3.19 The following table summarises actions identified in the Area Delivery Plan and a commentary from a service perspective.

Ref.	Action	Comments
E12	Commission £50k WBF to establish an Environmental Fund for projects to improve the environment in the north east outer area, and encourage increased community participation.	Discussions have been held with Area Management officers to provide details of a number of possible schemes to be considered.

Customer and community engagement

- 3.20 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. Officers also attend Area Committee and other meetings to consult on specific projects and schemes, for example the Parks Renaissance Programme and Positive Activities for Young People. 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.

4.0 Performance Management and Reporting

Baseline Position and key targets for the Service

4.1 The following table highlights key performance indicators relevant to the service.

PI Code	Description	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Target	2011/12 Target
LKI-GFI / CP-PC50 / EM38	The percentage of parks and countryside sites assessed internally that meet the Green Flag criteria (amended for 2007-08)	19% (Target 19%)	23% (Target 21%)	23%	25%
LKI-PCP 22	Overall user satisfaction with Parks and Countryside (from the user survey)	N/A	7.37 (Target 7)	N/A	N/A
NI 197 ¹	Improved local biodiversity – active management of local sites	45%	58%	58%	58%

5.0 Budget

- 5.1 The central Government Comprehensive Spending Review will have significant implications for local government budgets and it is anticipated that the 2011/12 budget allocation for Parks and Countryside will be very challenging.
- 5.2 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.

6.0 Equality Considerations

- 6.1 The Parks and Countryside service has recently undertaken a significant exercise to provide evidence of its performance on equality matters to the ef:fect database. An assessment of this evidence alongside that of all other service areas is currently underway to inform a decision on what level of accreditation the council will seek to achieve within the revised equality standard.

7.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 7.1 The proposals set out how the Executive Board requirements can be met by taking a more proactive approach to involve and engage Area Committees in matters relating to community parks

¹ Note that the continued reporting of NI197 is under review following the scrapping of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

8.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 8.1 The body of the report identifies resource implications with particular reference to community parks, playing pitches and fixed play facilities in the area.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Community green space contributes in many ways to the delivery of the Leeds Strategy 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.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 Community engagement remains a key activity for the service with regular correspondence, attendance at meetings and briefings, along with more localised consultation where required. The principle consultation through the residents survey to 35,000 households will take place again in 2012.
- 9.4 A programme of activities is planned for which updates and reports can be provided to the area committee to help inform, consult and influence community green space management.

10.0 Recommendations

- 10.1 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.

11.0 Background Papers

Report Title	Date
Area Committee Roles for 2008/09	Executive Board, July 2008
Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11	Full Council, July 2008
Leeds Annual Survey 2007	
Parks and Greenspace Strategy	Executive Board, February 2009
Fixed Play Strategy	Executive Board, September 2002
Local Area Agreement	Full Council, July 2008
Playing Pitch Strategy	Executive Board, October 2003

Appendix 1: Parks and Countryside Contribution to the Leeds Strategic Plan

Culture - Increased participation in cultural opportunities through engaging with all our communities.

- providing local parks as venues for local events and sporting activities

Culture - Enhanced cultural opportunities through encouraging investment and development of high quality facilities of national and international significance.

- carrying out community park improvements through Parks Renaissance
- achieving and retaining 7 Green Flag awards
- seeking to investigate the feasibility of developing a city centre park
- entry to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show

Enterprise and the Economy - Increased international competitiveness through marketing and investment in high quality infrastructure and physical assets, particularly in the city centre.

- good quality green spaces that make an important contribution to regeneration and enhance the image of a neighbourhood
- good quality green spaces that help to raise property values and build business and community confidence
- providing parks as major visitor attractions

Learning - Enhance skills of the current and future workforce through fulfilling individual and economic potential and investing in learning facilities.

- participation in the RHS Chelsea Flower Show
- developing supervision skills by training existing staff on the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) team leader course
- providing careerships for staff: enabling staff to climb the horticultural career ladder
- the career changers programme: giving mature horticultural college students the opportunity to join the organisation on sandwich courses, part-time or summer work
- 14-19 year old diplomas: enabling school children of a less academic and more practical route to education
- our apprentice programme – enabling (predominantly) young people to learn a craft e.g. foresters
- providing operational training: to national and technical standards

Learning - ...investing in learning facilities - Improve participation and early learning outcomes for children from the most deprived areas

- the 'magical gardens project' which has led to open spaces outside children's centres being transformed into 'wild worlds' for children to explore
- providing parks and green spaces as outdoor classrooms and thus a valuable resource for education, covering many subjects for all ages and abilities
- the 'playbuilder' project whereby 20 play areas will either be developed or significantly improved

Transport - Increased accessibility and connectivity through investment in a high quality transport system and through influencing others and changing behaviours.

- developing the green gateways initiative (e.g. Wykebeck Valley Way, The Lines Way, Kippax, Transpennine Trail, and Harland Way and development of the West Leeds Country Park)
- Public Rights of Way (PROW) network with links to cycling routes

Environment - Reduced ecological footprint through responding to environmental and climate change and influencing others.

- promoting the role of parks and green spaces in adapting to climate change by reducing temperature in dense urban environments and reducing surface runoff of rain water
- minimising impact on the environment by green waste recycling promoting biodiversity by active management of local sites in line with the national performance target, NI197.

Environment - Cleaner, greener and more attractive city through effective environmental management and changed behaviours.

- improving cleanliness and access to quality green spaces through the Parks Renaissance programme and endeavouring to increase the number of site based gardeners

Health and Wellbeing - Reduced health inequalities through the promotion of healthy life choices and improved access to services. Improved quality of life through maximising the potential of vulnerable people by promoting independence, dignity and respect.

- the general benefits of parks and green spaces to health, fitness and wellbeing that are well understood
- providing health walk routes and guided walks
- ranger led activities
- outdoor recreation opportunities including fixed play, playing pitches, bowling greens and golf courses
- allotment provision

Thriving Places - Improved quality of life through mixed neighbourhoods offering good housing options and better access to services and activities.

- evidence from the Leeds Annual Survey 2007, where respondents ranked parks and open spaces as the 5th most important factor in making somewhere a good place to live evidence from the Parks and Countryside resident survey last conducted in 2009 which identified that 99% of respondents believe parks and green spaces can improve the appearance of a town; 98% believe that they create a nicer place to live; 86% believe that they encourage businesses and people to locate in a town, and 85% believe that they are a focal point for communities

Thriving Places - Reduced crime and fear of crime through prevention, detection, offender management and changed behaviours.

- providing diversionary activities (BMX tracks, skateparks, multi-use games areas, teenzones, etc.) for young people
- deploying the ParksWatch team with the aim of providing a safe parks and green space environment for the community to enjoy

Thriving Places - Increased economic activity through targeted support to reduce worklessness and poverty.

- the career changers programme: giving mature horticultural college students the opportunity to join the organisation on sandwich courses, part-time or summer work
- the Kinaesthetic Learning: enabled school children a less academic and more practical route to education (now part of the 14-19 year old diplomas)
- our apprentice programme – enabling (predominantly) young people to learn a craft e.g. foresters

Harmonious Communities - More inclusive, varied and vibrant communities through empowering people to contribute to decision making and delivering local services.

- consultation through residents' surveys, multi-agency meetings, community forums, and attendance at Area Committee meetings
- consultation on specific projects and schemes (e.g. the Parks Renaissance programme, positive activities for young people, water safety, etc.)

- involving volunteers and 'friends of' groups on the design for and physical implementation of a wide range of site improvements

Harmonious Communities - Improved community cohesion and integration through meaningful involvement and valuing equality and diversity.

- providing support for 'in bloom' groups
- working with 'friends of' groups, volunteer tree wardens, and other volunteers
- promoting community cohesion through activities and events