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**Report of the Head of Parks and Countryside**

**Meeting: South Inner Area Committee**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

**Subject: Annual Report – for Parks and Countryside Service in South Inner Area Committee**

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

Beeston & Holbeck  
City & Hunslet  
Middleton Park

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

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**Executive Summary**

This report examines the opportunities to further develop the relationship between the Parks and Countryside service and the South Inner 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 community parks. 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 South Inner 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 South Inner Area Committee:

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
Community parks	6
Playing Pitches:	
Football	26
Gaelic Football	1
Rugby League	6
Bowling greens	13
Playgrounds	16
Multi-use games areas	4
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.

#### ***Community Parks***

- 3.4 Analysis from the 2009 residents survey has been carried out relevant to the 6 community parks in the area which are;
- Cranmore Recreation Ground
  - Holbeck Moor
  - Hunslet Moor
  - Cross Flatts Park
  - Hunslet Lake

- Penny Pocket park

Comparisons to the 2009 city wide data are shown;

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2009 (South Inner)</b>	<b>2009 (City Wide)</b>
Male	38%	38%
Female	62%	62%

<b>Age Profile</b>	<b>2009 (South Inner)</b>	<b>2009 (City Wide)</b>
20-39	32%	35%
40-59	42%	37%
60+	26%	28%

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>2009 (South Inner)</b>	<b>2009 (City Wide)</b>
White	82%	91%
BME	18%	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 is also fairly consistent with the city wide statistics. There is a higher proportion of people in the sample from black and minority ethnic communities.
- 3.6 The total number of visits to community parks in the area is 1.8 million each year from residents, and 93% either walk or cycle to the park. The average across the city is 75%, so this represents a higher proportion who adopt healthy means to get to the park. The top 5 reasons for visiting are as follows:

<b>Reasons for Visiting</b>	<b>2009 (South Inner)</b>	<b>2009 (City Wide)</b>
Get some fresh air	46%	54%
For a walk	38%	44%
Visit the play area	34%	34%
To keep fit	25%	~
Attend events	20%	~
Children/Family outing	~	27%
Enjoy flowers / trees	~	25%

Trends are broadly similar to those across the city. The slight difference being the fourth and fifth most popular reasons for visiting community parks.

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

<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	<b>2009 (South Inner)</b>	<b>2006 (South Inner)</b>
Satisfied or very satisfied	51%	57%
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	22%	15%

From the data a reduction in satisfaction can be seen. There is a slight increase in the level of dissatisfaction over the period.

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 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 summary of these assessments for the South Inner Area Committee.

Site	Year Assessed	Welcoming Place	Healthy, Safe, Secure	Clean, Well Maintained	Sustainability	Conservation / Heritage	Community Involvement	Marketing	Meets Standard?	Estimated Investment value to meet LQP Standard
Cranmore Recreation Ground	2009								No	£234,811
Cross Flatts Park	2007								No	£19,000
Holbeck Moor	2009								No	£43,300
Hunslet Lake	2007								No	£98,500
Hunslet Moor	2009								No	£331,198
Penny Pocket Park	2008								No	£5,450
										£732,259

**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 meets the Leeds Quality Park Standard in the area, none did so in the previous report. The investment needed in order to achieve LQP standard is indicated for each park.

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 each park, 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
Cranmore Recreation Ground	Insufficient Data									
Cross Flatts Park	1,081	7.0	6.6	7.9	5.5	7.5	6.8	6.2	6.5	6.7
Holbeck Moor	352	7.8	6.4	9.2	6.0	8.2	7.7	6.8	7.8	7.6
Hunslet Lake	Insufficient Data									
Hunslet Moor	Insufficient Data									
Penny Pocket Park	Insufficient Data									

**Key:**

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

3.13 The table shows residents scored the parks in general in the good category across all questions. There are however issues identified across all parks for the range of facilities which are scored consistently lower than other categories.

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

- Cross Flatts Park – Improvements to the play facilities with the inclusion of a new activity trail. Outdoor gym equipment installed.
- Holbeck Moor – Improved pathways around the bowling green areas.
- Hunslet Lake – Improvements to footpaths. New fencing installed. Work to remove hard standing around the former pavilion completed.

**Playing Pitches**

3.15 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 (South Inner)	2006 (South Inner)
Good or very good	32%	57%
Very poor	11%	3%

The table shows a reduction in residents who felt facilities were good or very good along with an increase to those who thought they were very poor. Works completed in the area since the survey are;

- Kings Fields – upgrading of the 2 football fields with installation of drainage and pitch resurfacing.
- Middleton Sports Centre – phase one of a three stage development completed with the installation of drainage.

### **Fixed Play**

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

<b>Rating facilities for children</b>	<b>2009 (South Inner)</b>	<b>2006 (South Inner)</b>
Good or very good	27%	41%
Very poor	26%	11%

Results show a reduction in those who rated facilities as good or very good. A corresponding increase in those who rated facilities as very poor is shown. Along with the play area improvements within community parks the following sites in the South Inner area are scheduled for improvement;

- Beggars Hill Recreation Ground - funding secured for new play area.
- Grove Road Recreation – funding secured for new play area.

3.17 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**

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

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	Area Well Being capital funding allocated towards outdoor improvement projects - Beeston Community Football Scheme (£10k). Trim Trail and fencing installation works have been undertaken using Intensive Neighbourhood Management funds to Holbeck Moor	Completed
	Support provided to 'In Bloom' and 'Friends of' groups across Inner South Leeds	The service continues to provide dedicated officer support to local in bloom groups
	Physical improvement projects to neighbourhood problem sites - Groundwork to undertake greenspace master planning exercise for Middleton	Completed



### **Customer and community engagement**

- 3.19 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 <sup>1</sup>	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

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<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
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