

**Report of Director of Environment and Housing**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016**

**Subject: Leeds Parks Trust**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. Parks and green spaces are a key factor in making Leeds an attractive place to live, visit and work. There are around 69 million annual visits each year with major benefits for health and general wellbeing. Good quality parks and green space also benefit the local economy by encouraging businesses to invest and people to live in the surrounding area.
2. Local communities already make a significant contribution to improving parks and green spaces across the city. Volunteers provide practical work each year equivalent to around 109 full-time equivalent staff. This includes over 50 'friends of' groups, over 50 'in bloom' groups, and a number of sites which now have community partnership agreements in place which enables groups to look after sites independently.
3. There are good examples where donations from businesses and philanthropic giving have made an important contribution to transforming facilities available to people who visit. Franklin Windows Ltd donated a conservatory which is now in place at Golden Acre Park; the Ziff Foundation provided a generous donation which enabled improvements to Tropical World; and a bequeathment has been promised to Lotherton Hall. The Parks and Countryside service has also been approached by people who intend to leave some money in their will to other green spaces.
4. There is an opportunity to promote and facilitate a charitable fund that encourages donations to deliver improvements in parks and green spaces. Leeds Community Foundation is an independent charitable foundation who has proposed to work in

partnership to establish a named fund which they would manage and administer. This would enable the potential to reach new donors and take advantage of available expertise in fundraising and marketing as well as providing a means of giving for parks and green space improvements managed independently of the council. It is proposed that this fund would be named the 'Leeds Parks Trust'.

5. The purpose of this fund would be improvements to parks and green space, and in particular fulfil the aspiration for all 62 community parks in Leeds to meet Green Flag criteria by 2020. It is anticipated that the Leeds Parks Trust would support projects both capital and revenue to deliver improvements to a wide range of facilities, features, signage as well as support 'friends' groups, education and learning. This will particularly benefit the inner city, by creating new funding opportunities for the improvement and development of local green space within these areas which tend to receive less funding from development agreements
6. The fund would be able to accept donations from a number of sources such as individual donations, fund raising activity by individuals or local groups, via a legacy, philanthropic giving or local businesses demonstrating corporate social responsibility. In each case funds could be earmarked for a particular park or green space if desired. Establishing a fund in this way enables tax efficient giving so that for every £1,000 individual cash donations of £250 tax could be claimed back and allocated to the fund.
7. It is recognised that establishing the Leeds Parks Trust will take time and legacies for example can take many years before coming to fruition. It will also be important to establish a website and undertake marketing and communications activity to promote awareness of the fund. In order for Leeds Community Foundation to establish and administer the Leeds Parks Trust in the way described will clearly involve some cost. It is proposed that initially a management fee of 15% will be levied against all donations which would be reviewed after 6 months in light of activity and subject to a maximum cap on larger donations relating to actual costs. This will be set down within the agreement before embarking on this scheme.

## **Recommendations**

8. It is recommended that Executive Board:
  - Give approval to enter into an agreement with the Leeds Community Foundation to establish a Leeds Parks Trust to maximise opportunities for charitable giving and legacies, along with support from local businesses and other organisations.
  - Note that the Chief Officer Parks and Countryside is responsible for implementing this recommendation ahead of a planned launch in April 2017.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to enter into an agreement with the Leeds Community Foundation to establish a Leeds Parks Trust to maximise opportunities for charitable giving and legacies, along with support from local businesses and other organisations.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Parks and green spaces are a key factor in making Leeds an attractive place to live, visit and work. They provide places for relaxation and escape, for recreation and exercise as well as help to build a sense of community. The council manages almost 4,000 hectares of parks and green space, which includes 7 major parks, 62 community parks, 95 recreation grounds, and 155 hectares of local green space. These parks and green spaces provide a wide range of good facilities for all who visit including play areas, playing pitches, tennis courts and a wide network of paths and trails.
- 2.2 In Leeds, from the latest parks survey, 96% of residents visit a park with 45% visiting most days or once or twice a week. There are around 69 million annual visits with the top 3 reasons to visit as follows:
- To get some fresh air
  - To go for a walk
  - Enjoy the beauty of the surroundings
- 2.3 All of these reasons to visit have significant benefits to health in terms of a positive impact on mental health and general wellbeing. There is a wide network of parks and green spaces across the city, free to access which encourages and enables people to enjoy these benefits.
- 2.4 Good quality parks and green space benefit the local economy by encouraging businesses to invest and people to live in the surrounding area. They make an important contribution to social cohesion, and there are around 800 events held in parks each year, from large events like the West Indian Carnival and bonfire night, to sporting, charitable events and a significant number organised by the community.
- 2.5 It is important that the quality of parks and green space improves in order to continue delivering these benefits. A key target in the Parks and Green Space strategy is for all 62 community parks to reach the national Green Flag standard by 2020 based on field based criteria against the standard known as the Leeds Quality Park assessment. In 2015, 52% of community parks reached the standard and the following pictures illustrate some of the features and facilities that people can enjoy.

	
<p>Pudsey Park</p>	<p>Woodhouse Moor</p>
	
<p>Cross Flatts Park</p>	<p>Meanwood Park</p>

2.6 The level of capital investment required to meet and sustain the LQP standard to 2020 for all community parks (including fixed play) is estimated at around £8 million, or £1.3m per annum. Funding for capital improvements in parks is largely opportunistic, relying heavily on section 106 planning gain which usually means that funds can only be allocated where the development has taken place.

### 3 Main issues

3.1 Local communities already make a significant contribution to improving parks and green spaces across the city. Volunteers provide an estimated 29,000 volunteer days each year, equivalent to around 109 full-time equivalent staff. This includes over 50 'friends of' groups, over 50 'in bloom' groups, in addition to work placements, community payback, youth rehabilitation and corporate volunteers all of whom conduct practical work on a range of different sites. A number of sites now have community partnership agreements in place which enables groups to look after sites independently whilst ensuring that safety and public liability obligations are met. The Leeds Parks and Green Space Forum, established in 2012, aims to engage more local people in caring for parks and green spaces and to support voluntary groups that care for green spaces in Leeds, as well as raise funds for the benefit of parks and green spaces and their users. An example of the transformation that a combination of investment, volunteering and community engagement can bring is Middleton Park, which has been transformed with the

help of Wades and the Friends Group, from an underutilised park, suffering from anti-social behaviour, to its proper place as one of the great parks of Leeds.

- 3.2 In addition, there are already good examples where donations from businesses and philanthropic giving have made an important contribution to transforming facilities available to people who visit. Franklin Windows Ltd donated a conservatory which is now in place at Golden Acre Park along with a recently extended patio area as illustrated below.



- 3.3 The Ziff Foundation provided a generous donation which enabled improvements to the Tropical World crocodile enclosure and new aquariums, which together with the new conservatory café extension have considerably improved the visitor experience. These improvements are also illustrated below.



- 3.4 A bequeathment has been promised to Lotherton Hall for use of education purposes and the service has been approached by people who intend to leave some money in their will to other green spaces.

- 3.5 Parks and green spaces are non-statutory, yet invoke a passionate response. There are already strong bonds between the public and their favourite park and this provides an opportunity to promote and facilitate a charitable fund that encourages donations to deliver improvements in parks and green spaces. Such an approach would embody the idea of civic enterprise where the council becomes more enterprising; businesses and partners more civic; and the public more engaged.

- 3.6 Leeds Community Foundation is an independent charitable foundation that connects national and local donors to community groups and charities in and around the city. It connects people who want to make a real difference to the city and in 2015 distributed £4m in grants to over 400 groups, who in turn helped over 24,000 people. Leeds Community Foundation relies on the generosity of businesses and individuals, who care about their city and who want to 'give something back'.
- 3.7 The proposal is to establish a named fund managed and administered by the Leeds Community Foundation (LCF). This would enable giving for parks and green space improvements managed independently of the council without the need to set up a charitable trust as the LCF charity number would be used. Creating a partnership in this way would also increase the potential to reach new donors and take advantage of available expertise in fundraising and marketing. It is proposed that this fund would be named the 'Leeds Parks Trust' and could be set up quickly without the need for significant start-up costs or complex, legal documents. LCF would handle financial and administrative management, promote grants and assess eligibility.
- 3.8 The purpose of the Leeds Parks Trust would be for improvements to parks and green space, and in particular fulfil the aspiration for all 62 community parks in Leeds to meet the Green Flag criteria by 2020. All funded works should demonstrate a measurable improvement when assessed against the Green Flag award criteria which are summarised as follows:
- **A welcoming place** - how to create a sense that people are positively welcomed in the park
  - **Healthy, safe and secure** - how best to ensure that the park is a safe and healthy environment for all users
  - **Clean and well maintained** - what people can expect in terms of cleanliness, facilities and maintenance
  - **Sustainability** - how a park can be managed in environmentally sensitive ways
  - **Conservation and heritage** - the value of conservation and 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
- 3.9 It is anticipated that the Leeds Parks Trust would support projects both capital and revenue to deliver improvements and include some of the following examples:
- Planting or improving horticultural features
  - Play equipment, skate parks, teen shelters
  - Access improvements
  - Improvements to heritage features such as bandstands
  - Signage and interpretation
  - Outdoor sports facilities e.g. tennis courts or bowling greens

- Nature conservation
- Education, knowledge and skill development e.g. apprentices
- Support for 'friends of' groups

3.10 The fund would be able to accept donations from a number of sources summarised as follows:

- Individual donations which could be earmarked for a particular park or green space
- Fund raising activity by individuals or local groups with a particular interest in a park or green space
- Via a legacy where for example a particular park or green space has meant a lot to someone throughout their life
- Philanthropic giving such as the example highlighted above at Tropical World
- Local businesses wishing to demonstrate corporate social responsibility

3.11 Where donations have not been specifically earmarked for a particular park or green space, there is the potential to create new funding opportunities for the improvement of parks and greenspaces within areas which benefit less from development agreements, particularly within the inner city. This will be one of the criteria that the board will consider when assessing how to distribute funds.

3.12 It is recognised that establishing the Leeds Parks Trust will take time and legacies for example can take many years before coming to fruition. It will also be important to establish a website and undertake marketing and communications activity to promote awareness of the fund. As all funds will be raised under the Leeds Community Foundation charity number, then LCF will take a keen interest in ensuring that messages are consistent with their brand as well as ensuring financial procedures are adhered to. Subject to approval, the intention is to launch the Leeds Parks Trust in April 2017 and use the nationally promoted Love Parks Week in July to further raise awareness.

3.13 It is important that the council as landowner (or managing authority) for nearly all land likely to be in receipt of grants gives consent for any proposal on council land. This is to ensure that any spending is appropriate for the type of park and green space and that any longer term maintenance issues can be taken into account.

3.14 It would be necessary to set up a panel in order to make decisions on allocation of grants from the fund. The Leeds Community Foundation, who is experienced in these matters, will advise on the relevant arrangements including representation.

## **4 Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1 The Leeds Parks and Green Space Forum support and have been an advocate in establishing the Leeds Parks Trust. The Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum

is a voluntary organisation made up of individuals, groups and organisations interested in enhancing the green spaces of Leeds. Members include 'friends of groups, 'in bloom' groups, environmental charities and resident associations.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 An equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening has been completed. The screening noted the proposal is to establish a named fund managed and administered by the Leeds Community Foundation (LCF). Analysis of the latest resident survey results generally show Parks and Countryside performing well in the view of its customers in all equality and diversity areas. The key findings noted that local communities already make a significant contribution along with good examples of donations that have already taken place. It also noted that the fund would support improvements to a wide range of facilities and features in parks and green spaces. Actions noted include promoting awareness of the fund and the opportunities it provides and establishing a suitably represented panel to take decisions on allocation of funds.
- 4.2.2 The Leeds Parks Trust aims to generate new funding opportunities for the improvement and development of parks and greenspaces in some of the most deprived areas in Leeds.

## **4.3 Council policies and best council plan**

- 4.3.1 The proposals in this report support the Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 and in particular a more enterprising council, working with partners and businesses who are more civic; and a more engaged public. It also contributes to the aspiration that 'there are high quality buildings, places and green spaces, which are clean, looked after, and respect the city's heritage, including buildings, parks and the history of our communities' as part of the overall aim that 'all Leeds' communities will be successful'. The proposals contribute to the Best Council Plan outcomes to 'enjoy happy, healthy, active lives', and 'enjoy greater access to green spaces, leisure and the arts' and also priority 20 'enhancing the quality of our public realm and green spaces'.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 The proposal is to establish a named fund managed and administered by the Leeds Community Foundation (LCF). This would enable giving for parks and green space improvements managed independently of the council without the need to set up a charitable trust as the LCF charity number would be used. Creating a partnership in this way would also increase the potential to reach new donors and take advantage of the expertise in fundraising and marketing. It is proposed that this fund would be named the 'Leeds Parks Trust' and could be set up quickly without the need for start-up costs or complex, legal documents. LCF would handle financial and administrative management, promote grants and assess eligibility.
- 4.4.2 Establishing a named fund in this way enables tax efficient giving. This means for example that individual cash donations can be gift aided meaning that for every £1,000 donated £250 tax could be claimed back and allocated to the fund. Gifts

can also be in the form of shares, land, property or any other asset that produces a regular income all of which can be made in a way that reduces capital gains tax. Companies can also take advantage of tax-effective giving by deducting the amount donated when working out profits for corporation tax purposes.

- 4.5 In order for Leeds Community Foundation to establish and administer the Leeds Parks Trust in the way described will clearly involve some cost. It is usual practice amongst charitable organisations to charge an administration fee between 10% - 20%. It is proposed that initially a management fee of 15% will be levied against all donations which would be reviewed after 6 months in light of activity, subject to a cap on larger donations which relate to the actual costs. There is also likely to be a one-off cost of around £20k for legal, marketing and development work. Future marketing costs will be supported by the fund.

#### **4.6 Legal Implications, access to information and call In**

- 4.6.1 The Leeds Parks Trust would be a named fund managed and administered by the Leeds Community Foundation (LCF). LCF is a registered charity (no. 1096892) and a company limited by guarantee (no. 04443312), governed by a board of trustees from public, private and third sector backgrounds. LCF undertake all the administrative duties involved in running a fund: accepting donations and claiming back any necessary tax; inviting applications from groups; undertaking assessments and due diligence; presenting assessed applications to donors for approval; issuing grants; managing the ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes and reporting back on progress. A mechanism will be developed whereby donations can be restricted to a particular park or project and/or whether a proportion of every gift may be top-sliced to give a contribution to all parks/green spaces.
- 4.6.2 There are no issues identified with access to information and the report is subject to call in under the council's constitution, rules and procedures.

#### **4.7 Risk management**

- 4.7.1 There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report. Leeds Community Foundation (LCF) is well established and a catalyst for positive change in Leeds. During last year distributed £4m in grants to over 400 groups, who in turn helped over 24,000 people. There are rigorous and comprehensive processes in place to ensure due diligence in administering funds and ensuring that they reach those who need it most and has the biggest possible impact. Financial contributions are in proportion to the size of the fund and start-up costs are modest.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 A named fund managed and administered by the Leeds Community Foundation (LCF) would enable giving for parks and green space improvements managed independently of the council. Creating a partnership in this way would also increase the potential to reach new donors and take advantage of available expertise in fundraising and marketing. The fund would be able to accept donations from a number of sources such as individual donations, fund raising

activity by individuals or local groups, via a legacy, philanthropic giving or local businesses demonstrating corporate social responsibility. The purpose of the Leeds Parks Trust would be for improvements to parks and green space, and it is anticipated that the fund would support projects both capital and revenue to deliver improvements to a wide range of facilities, features, signage as well as support 'friends' groups, education and learning.

5.2 Having a charity (Leeds Community Foundation) run the Leeds Parks Trust means that donations are eligible for Gift Aid of 25% of the donation. This means that for individual donations (excluding businesses), the admin fee is less than the Gift Aid therefore will not reduce the value of the donation itself.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 It is recommended that Executive Board:

- Give approval to enter into an agreement with the Leeds Community Foundation to establish a Leeds Parks Trust to maximise opportunities for charitable giving, legacies along with support from local businesses and other organisations.
- Note that the Chief Officer Parks and Countryside is responsible for implementing this recommendation ahead of a planned launch in April 2017.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.