

Report of The Head of Parks and Countryside

Report to West Inner Area Committee

Date: 19th October 2011

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

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Armley Bramley & Stanningley		
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. The report provides an area profile of key assets, information on park usage and a customer based perspective of the quality of the assets and services provided.
2. It highlights the current progress towards 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. The report details capital improvements in community parks, sport pitches and fixed play in the area for the last 12 months and expected improvements in the next 12 months.
4. It gives a detailed breakdown of events and volunteering in the area.
5. It provides a perspective on actions contained in the area delivery plan.

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 West 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 needs to attain LQP standards and to retain them.

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.
- 2.2 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 over 4 million bedding plants each year, 96 allotment sites, over 800km of PROW, and 156 nature conservation sites, as well as 22 cemeteries and three crematoria.
- 2.3 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).

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.
- 2.5 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 exist and this role seeks to enhance this engagement.

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 West Inner Area Committee:

Asset	Quantity
Community parks	6
Playing Pitches:	
Football	18
Rugby League	7
Rugby Union	1
Bowling greens	5
Playgrounds	7
Multi-use games areas	3
Skate parks	1

Community Parks

- 3.2 Analysis from the 2009 residents survey was carried out relevant to the 10 community parks in the area which are;

Site Name	Annual Number of Visits	Total Annual Visits to West Inner Community Parks is 3.75m approx.
Armley Park	338,143	
Bramley Falls Wood	744,476	
Bramley Park	1,194,237	
Gotts Park	531,299	
Rodley Park Rec Ground	284,075	
Stanningley Park	648,914	

- 3.3 The residents survey provides significant insight into the users of community parks, demographics of users, how they get there and what they do. A detailed insight of each community park is given in appendix 1. The key analysis points are;

- Approximately 71% of visitors are adults with 29% children and young people.
- There are a wide range of reasons for visiting but nearly all visitors at some point go for relaxation or exercise. There is significant differences in reasons for visiting at some of the parks in the area.
- The majority of visitors travel to the park on foot (85%) of which 67% take less than 10 minutes to travel there.
- Of the 12% who visit by car 80% take less than 10 minutes to get there.
- 46% of visitors go to community parks either every day or on most days, whilst 79% go at least once a week.

- 3.4 Parks and Countryside provide annual pitch hire for sports teams in the area. 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	17
Juniors	22

Volunteering in the Parks and Countryside Service

3.5 Since the last report to Area Committees the service has focused resources for a community outreach team to increase the number of volunteers and value of activities which take place with the following key actions;

- Seeking a large increase in corporate volunteering due to enhanced marketing and communication.
- Continued and improved involvement with the many “in bloom” groups in Leeds.
- It is an ambition is to have a volunteer group for every community park.

3.6 It is estimated that volunteers across all groups contribute 84 days of voluntary work in the west inner area over a 12 month period. The table below gives details of the active groups in the area committee;

Summary of the groups who are active in the west inner area committee or who carry out work within the area;

Group Name	Number of Volunteers	Estimated Volunteer Days
Armley Common Rights Trust	5	10
Bramley Fall Residents Association	10	20
Friends of Bramley Park*	*	*
Leeds Parks Volunteers	4	78
Leeds Voluntary Footpath Rangers	6	130
Leeds Wildlife Volunteers	12	216
Total	62	540

*Note this group has only recently formed so no volunteer days are recorded.

Events

3.7 The bookings and licensing team has introduced improvements to the application process for events that occur on parks. They are providing greater assistance in helping community 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 area committee so far in 2011;

Site Name	Month	Event	Total
Armley Park	August	(16th - 18th) Breeze Event	1
Bramley Falls	January	Harriers cross country	1
	May	Airienteers	2
	July	I Love West Leeds	1
Bramley Park	July	Bramley Carnival	1
		I Love West Leeds Dance	1
Total			7

Community Parks – Leeds Quality Park Status

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 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 3.21.

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 West Inner Area Committee.

Site	Year Assessed	Welcoming Place	Healthy, Safe, Secure	Clean, Well Maintained	Sustainability	Conservation / Heritage	Community Involvement	Marketing	Meets Standard?
Armley Park	2010								No
Bramley Falls Wood	2008								No
Bramley Park	2008								No
Gotts Park	2010								No
Rodley Park Rec Ground	2009								No
Stanningley Park	2010								No

Notes – Assessments due in 2011 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, there are no parks identified that meet the Leeds Quality Park Standard in the area. This is a reduction of 1 pass since the last Area Committee report.

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	Design and Appearance	Cleanliness and Maintenance	Ease to Get Around	Range of Facilities	Horticultural Maintenance	Nature Conservation	Facilities for Families	Sports Facilities	Overall Impression
Armley Park	8.0	5.3	8.7	6.0	6.7	7.3	6.0	6.0	6.7
Bramley Falls Wood	8.2	7.8	8.9	5.6	8.0	7.9	6.9	6.2	7.5
Bramley Park	6.5	6.3	7.9	5.0	7.1	6.6	5.4	5.8	6.2
Gotts Park	8.5	8.2	9.0	6.1	8.4	7.5	6.9	7.1	8.2
Rodley Park Rec Ground	6.6	6.2	7.1	5.1	6.7	7.1	5.1	4.9	6.9
Stanningley Park	6.0	6.0	8.2	4.5	7.6	6.7	4.7	5.2	5.6

Key:

Generally meets LQP expectations	7.0 - 10	
Generally below LQP expectations	0.0 – 6.9	

This table broadly correlates with the professional audit undertaken for the Leeds Quality Parks assessment. **Error! Reference source not found.** It is noted however that both Gotts Park and Bramley Falls Wood score generally higher than the score required to meet LQP expectations. There are however issues identified with the range of facilities, facilities for families and sports facilities offered across all of the parks.

Playing Pitches

- 3.13 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 (West Inner)	2006 (West Inner)
Fair to very good	62.3%	64.4%
Poor or very poor	37.7%	35.6%

The results show a slight decrease in those rating sports facilities as fair to very good. This data is related to the table set out in paragraph 3.12.

Fixed Play

- 3.14 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 (West Inner)	2006 (West Inner)
Fair to very good	64.5%	68.9%
Poor or very poor	35.5%	31.1%

Results show a slight reduction in those who rated facilities as fair to very good.

- 3.15 The following table provides a perspective on the minimum level of investment required to achieve the LQP standard for the 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)
Armley Park	£100,000	
Bramley Falls Wood	£93,000	
Bramley Park	£178,000	
Gotts Park	£54,000	
Rodley Park Rec Ground	£106,000	
Stanningley Park	£157,479	
Total to achieve LQP	£688,479	
Average annual reinvestment		£20,868
Total reinvestment to 2020		£187,813
Overall Total Investment to 2020		£876,292

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 improvements for the next 12 months are;

- Bramley Park – Work is to start on site shortly involving; paths, rose garden, landscaping, interpretation, access controls and a new MUGA.
- Rodley Park Recreation Ground – Drainage works, reinstatement of the former bowling green area.

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. 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	7	840,000	84,000
Multi Use games Areas	3	270,000	27,000
Skate Parks	1	90,000	9,000
Totals		1,200,000	120,000

Area Committee funding for additional on site gardeners

3.19 A number of area committees provide additional funding for gardeners to increase site based presence at parks in the area.

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 data.

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.

3.20 The following table summarises actions identified in the Area Delivery Plan (2008 – 2011) and a commentary from a service perspective;

Ref.	Action	Comments
A2	Support delivery of 10 additional summer band concerts during summer 2008 within parks in Outer West.	The programme of summer band concerts continues to receive resources support from Parks and Countryside.
E8	To work towards 'Green Flag' or similar status for a park in Inner West Leeds.	Armley Park has previously attained LQP status. Investment requirements have been calculated to regain the standard.

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

PI Code	Description	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2012/13 Target
LKI-GFI / CP-PC50 / EM38	The percentage of parks and countryside sites assessed internally that meet the Green Flag criteria	23% (Target 21%)	23% (Target 23%)	26.2%	29.4%
LKI-PCP 22	Overall user satisfaction with Parks and Countryside (from the user survey)	7.37 (Target 7)	N/A	N/A	7
New	The percentage of parks and countryside community parks which meet LQP status	n/a	33.9%	40%	47.5%

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 an impact on equality and diversity. Further information is available on analysis of the residents survey 2009 specifically regarding equality issues on request.

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 more 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 The central government's Comprehensive Spending Review has had significant impact on local government budgets and it is anticipated that the budget allocation for Parks and Countryside will continue to be very challenging.

4.4.2 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.

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. The principle consultation through the residents survey to 35,000 households is scheduled to take place again in 2012.

5.4 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.

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, Inner West Area Committee, 4th July 2011
- 7.2 Annual Report for Parks and Countryside Service in West Inner Area Committee, Inner West Area Committee, 15th December 2010
- 7.3 Parks and Greenspace Strategy, Executive Board, February 2009
- 7.4 Fixed Play Strategy, Executive Board, September 2002

Appendix 1: Detailed Residents Survey Information

1.1 Total Number of Annual Visits

	Community Parks	Other P&C Sites	Total
West Inner	3,741,143	373,544	4,114,687

1.2 Reasons for Visiting – respondents select their five main reasons (The 24 choices have been grouped in this table)

Reason	Armley Park %	Bramley Falls Wood %	Bramley Park %	Gotts Park %	Rodley Park Rec Ground %	Stanningley Park %	West Inner Total %
Exercise	73	85	71	89	91	86	79
Play	36	54	45	42	55	61	48
Dog walking	18	50	29	32	45	21	31
Enjoy the surroundings	36	46	26	58	64	43	39
Family outings	41	46	26	16	55	29	32
Relaxation	82	100	75	100	55	100	94
See Wildlife	18	50	12	32	18	14	22
Sport related	32	12	12	11	0	36	17
Other	5	12	11	0	9	7	8
Events	5	4	17	0	0	4	8

1.3 Age Profile of Visitors

Site	Age 20 – 39	Age 40 – 59	Age 60+
Armley Park	42%	23%	35%
Bramley Falls Wood	32%	44%	24%
Bramley Park	42%	35%	23%
Gotts Park	43%	33%	24%
Rodley Park Rec Ground	23%	69%	8%
Stanningley Park	41%	37%	22%
West Inner Total	39%	37%	24%

How visitors get to the parks and how long it takes to get there

1.4 Visitors on Foot – Journey Time

Site	% of visitors on foot	Less than 10 mins	10–20 mins	20-30 mins	30+ mins
Armley Park	82%	58%	28%	14%	0%
Bramley Falls Wood	73%	53%	42%	0%	5%
Bramley Park	85%	63%	25%	10%	2%
Gotts Park	95%	72%	17%	6%	6%
Rodley Park Rec Ground	100%	72%	28%	0%	0%
Stanningley Park	86%	83%	17%	0%	0%
West Inner Total	85%	67%	25%	6%	2%

1.5 Visitors by Car - Journey Time

Site	% of visitors by car	Less than 10 mins	10–20 mins	20-30 mins
Armley Park	18%	100%	0%	0%
Bramley Falls Wood	19%	60%	40%	0%
Bramley Park	11%	72%	14%	14%
Gotts Park	5%	100%	0%	0%
Rodley Park Rec Ground	0%	~	~	~
Stanningley Park	14%	100%	0%	0%
West Inner Total	12%	80%	15%	5%

1.6 How long do visitors stay. (Detailed information on each community park is available on request).

Time	Summer Stay		Winter Stay	
	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday
Less than 30 Minutes	14%	19%	29%	43%
30 minutes to 1 hour	41%	51%	40%	42%
1 to 2 hours	24%	20%	18%	3%
2 to 4 hours	15%	7%	3%	3%
4 or more hours	2%	1%	0%	0%
Do not visit	4%	2%	10%	11%

1.7 How often do visitors go. (Detailed information on each community park is available on request).

	Summer	Winter
Every Day	18%	12%
Most Days	28%	20%
Once or Twice a week	33%	25%
Once every two weeks	11%	15%
Once a month	9%	17%
Seldom or never	1%	11%

1.8 Information taken from comments made in the survey.

Site	General satisfaction comments	What would make you stay longer or encourage more use	Any other comments
Armley Park	Generally satisfied comments. Basketball area needs replacing/repairing.	Café/Kiosk for refreshments. More things to do (particularly teenagers).	Several comments that they like their community park.
Bramley Falls Wood	Dog fouling issues. Lack of toilets.	No recurring themes.	~
Bramley Park	Some concerns over safety issues and anti-social behaviour. In general most facilities the park has need upgrading and improving. Regular comment about broken glass in the play area.	Refreshment facilities. Generally improved facilities and more to do.	Improved safety and facilities.
Gotts Park	No recurring themes.	Resurfacing of paths. Tidying up of woodland areas.	~
Rodley Park Rec Ground	More shrubs and flower beds. Drainage issues.	Improve the area of the old bowling green.	~

Site	General satisfaction comments	What would make you stay longer or encourage more use	Any other comments
Stanningley Park	Dog fouling. Graffiti and vandalism within the play area.	Multi use games area. Bigger play area it is often overcrowded.	~