


<p><b>London Borough of Hammersmith &amp; Fulham</b></p> <p><b>COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY &amp; ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday 27 March 2019</b></p>	
<p><b>AN OVERVIEW OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES</b></p>	
<p><b>Report of the Director for Transport, Highways, Leisure and Parks – Mahmood Siddiqi</b></p>	
<p><b>Open Report</b></p>	
<p><b>Classification:</b> For review and comment</p> <p><b>Key Decision:</b> No</p>	
<p><b>Consultation:</b> N/A</p>	
<p><b>Wards Affected:</b> All</p>	
<p><b>Accountable Director:</b> Director for Transport, Highways, Leisure and Parks – Mahmood Siddiqi</p>	
<p><b>Report Author:</b> Ian Ross – Parks Manager</p>	<p><b>Contact Details:</b> <a href="mailto:Ian.Ross@rbkc.gov.uk">Ian.Ross@rbkc.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Parks@lbhf.gov.uk">Parks@lbhf.gov.uk</a></p>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Council has 54 parks and open spaces and 4 cemeteries that it directly manages. These range in size large open spaces such as Wormwood Scrubs to large parks such as Bishops Park and Ravenscourt Park to small open spaces such Marcus Garvey Park. Two of the 4 cemeteries managed by the Council are outside the borough in the London Borough of Richmond.
- 1.2. The Parks team is made up of 3 full-time equivalent (FTE) officers: 0.5 FTE Parks Manager (shared with The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea); 2FTE Parks Officers (each covering roughly half the borough); 0.5FTE Service Support Officer (shared with The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea).
- 1.3. Income from parks and open spaces is generated from a variety of sources, not all of which are managed by the Parks team – these include events and funfairs, outdoor sports bookings, café leases, etc.

- 1.4. Grounds/landscape maintenance of parks and open spaces is undertaken by Quadron Services t/a Idverde (referred to as Idverde throughout the rest of this report). Their current contract commenced in 2008 and runs until 2021. Maintenance of buildings in parks and open spaces is undertaken at the present moment by Amey as part of the Council's facilities management contract.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. The Committee is requested to review and comment on the contents of the report.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

### **3.1 Stakeholder Management:**

We have many stakeholder groups within the borough. Some of these are formalised groups now operating as charities (e.g. Friends of Brook Green) and some of these are more informal groups or 'off-shoots' of other organisations such as residents' associations.

All formalised groups are asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Council; this is currently under review with a view to being issued as the current one is over 5 years old.

Working with stakeholder groups has many benefits including getting a 'local' view on what sites are used for and an increasing number are supporting the Council by applying for external funding to deliver improvements on individual sites. However, supporting them at times, with only a small team, can often lead to frustration that we are not able to proceed as promptly with somethings as they would wish.

### **3.2 Events and Funfairs in parks and open spaces**

Most events that occur in parks and open spaces are overseen by the Councils Event team who liaise closely with the Parks team. These events vary in size from large public events such as Boat Race or Fireworks (both managed/overseen by the Events team) to small community charity events. Each event goes through an internal consultation process to ensure it is suitable for the requested location and that various statutory requirements are met (licensing, food safety, health and safety, etc.).

The Events team also oversee funfairs in parks and open spaces (again liaising closely with the Parks team). Only a small number of funfair operators are permitted within the borough and the sites used are Shepherds Bush Green, Ravenscourt Park, Eelbrook Common, Parsons Green and Normand Park. None of the income generated from these goes directly into the parks budget.

In addition to above, the Parks team do gain a small(is) income from the two Farmers Markets that now operate in the borough's parks at Bishops Park and South Park. Additionally, income is also generated from the community room in Bishops Park although this primarily off-sets the running costs.

### **3.3 Outdoor Sports Bookings**

Outdoor sports bookings are managed on behalf of the Council by our grounds maintenance contractor Idverde. The fees and charges associated with outdoor sports bookings continue to be set and approved by the Council through the same process that all other fees and charges are set.

Our pricing structure is such that in-borough 'state' schools are offered a different/cheaper rate to out-of-borough 'state' and private schools.

Officers are working on a report/policy at the moment to see how we can better support in-borough 'state' schools and organisations based with the borough to access the outdoor sports facilities within the borough.

Within their remit for outdoor sports bookings, they also monitor pitches/areas being used for organised sports have been booked. Until recently, they also collected income on tennis courts from casual users – this has since been automated through a Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) software programme/app.

Currently, income from outdoors sports bookings is more than £500,000 so is a major income stream for the Parks team.

### **3.4 Parks and Open Spaces Strategy**

The current Parks Strategy expired at the end of 2018. Officers will shortly commence work (with colleagues in Planning Policy) to start work on a new one. The strategy will identify areas of open space deficiency with the borough but also set policy for the management of parks and open spaces both from a practical and strategic management basis but also from a planning perspective.

It should be noted that as well as Council managed parks and open spaces the strategy also covers non-Council managed sites from a planning policy perspective.

### **3.5 Deeds of Dedication**

When the current administration was first elected in 2014, Officers were asked to look at options for providing more robust protection to the borough's parks and open spaces. A Parks Commission was formed and chaired by Cllr Guy Vincent. Their recommendation to Cabinet was that a Deed of Dedication be pursued for sites where appropriate (i.e. not already benefitting from appropriate covenants) with Fields in Trust a national green space organisation.

This recommendation was approved by Cabinet in December 2017. The first Deeds of Dedication were recently signed, these were for Lillie Road Recreation Ground and Wendell Park. Officers are now working on the next phase of sites, which will include Ravenscourt Park.

The Deed of Dedication for sites where it is adopted means there is an additional and independent approval system independent of the Council for activities not included as permissible within the deed.

### **3.6 Grounds/Landscape Maintenance contract**

Since 2008 maintenance of parks and open spaces has been undertaken by Idverde. There are three elements to the contract: parks, open spaces and cemeteries; landscaped areas on housing estates; and Wormwood Scrubs

The contract covers all aspects of grounds/landscape maintenance from cleansing/litter picking (open spaces such as Brook Green, Shepherds Bush Green are cleansed by Serco under their contract with the Council) to grass cutting to horticultural maintenance (rose, shrubs, etc.) to sports pitch maintenance to grave digging.

In addition to above Idverde also support the Parks team in delivering volunteering opportunities across the borough. This is primarily through companies wanting to discharge their Corporate Social Responsibility. This has allowed work that may not otherwise be done to be undertaken e.g. repainting of the railings around Bishops Park (this project remains ongoing). In calendar year 2018 we had 7,882 volunteer hours in the borough's parks and open spaces.

The current contract runs until March 2021 and Officers are now starting to decide for procuring a new contract.

### **3.7 Safety in parks and open spaces**

Safety in parks and open spaces is primarily the remit of the Parks Police Service. They work from 7am until 10pm in winter and 11pm in the summer.

There work includes providing a uniformed presence as well bye-law enforcement, dealing with anti-social behaviour, dog fouling/litter enforcement/education and gate locking.

Additionally, they also assist at major events put on in the borough's parks and open spaces and with major incidents that may occur as part of the Council's major incident response.

The service are also first responders for the London Ambulance Service and have been responsible for saving a number of lives over the years.

### **3.8 Site management challenges**

Managing a large number of sites with varied uses always bring challenges.

By their nature some sites are suitable for more formal activities and other less formal activities. While will where possible seek to accommodate as many activities as possible this is not always feasible, and, on such occasions, this is addressed through targeted signage and additional patrols from Parks Police.

On a different note, another challenge we are starting to see more of is pests and diseases affecting planting and trees. There has been a significant proliferation in pests and diseases over the last 10 years affecting a variety of species. One of the most notable in our parks and open spaces has been the Box Tree Caterpillar, which is slowly decimating box trees across the borough and London now. It is likely we will see more pests and diseases emerging in the coming years and this could affect the landscape and planting in parks and open spaces in the future.

### **3.9 Liaison with other departments**

The work of the Parks team is very wide and cuts across a large number of other Council departments.

Through the course of this report our work with the Events team and Parks Police Service has already been referred to.

We also work closely with colleagues in:

- Planning (commenting on planning applications and assisting with open space policy information)
- Property and Facilities Management (assisting with the management of leases and managing the large portfolio of building we have in parks and open spaces)
- Highways (providing advice on planting schemes and through their monitoring of trees in parks and open spaces)
- Communications team (for promotion of the service, website and press releases)
- Community Safety (problem solving anti-social behaviour problems)
- Support services such as Finance, Legal, IT, Procurement, etc.

### **3.10 Green Flag Award**

The Council currently holds 15 Green Flag Awards, the sites being:

- Bishops Park and Fulham Palace
- Brook Green
- Frank Banfield park
- Furnival Gardens
- Hammersmith Park

- Hurlingham Park
- Marcus Garvey Park
- Margravine Cemetery
- Norland North
- Normand Park
- Ravenscourt Park
- South Park
- St. Peter's Square
- William Parnell Park (Pineapple Park)
- Wormholt Park

For this coming year we have entered St. Paul's Gardens and Wendall Park

Green Flag Award is judged against 8 criteria and is a national benchmark for quality and management of parks and open spaces. Sites are formally judged every other year and mystery shopped in the intervening year. A formal submission needs to be made for each site every year including having an up to date management plan and responding to the judges' feedback from the previous year.

### **3.11 Infrastructure**

The Parks team are responsible for all infrastructure within parks and open spaces – bins, benches, boundary fences/railings, playground equipment, footpaths, building, etc.

Monitoring this alone takes up a significant amount of time and effecting repairs is not always possible quickly due to the small team we have and budgetary pressures.

Having a mechanism for carrying out small-works repairs is something we are considering for the procurement of any new grounds/landscape maintenance contract.

Much of the infrastructure within parks and open spaces is now aging so an asset management strategy will need to be developed in the next year or two, so a planned replacement/refurbishment programme can be put in place (this could form part of any new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy)

### **3.12 Playgrounds**

There are currently 36 playgrounds across 25 parks and open spaces. All playgrounds are inspected daily as part of the Council's grounds/landscape maintenance contract and then on a quarterly basis by an independent inspector.

Like infrastructure, many of the Council's playgrounds are starting to age and a more formal strategy for managing their replacement will be needed. We

currently have playground refurbishment projects ongoing at Eelbrook Common and Hammersmith Park.

### 3.13 Staffing

The Council's Parks team is small with a very large and varied remit. As well as parks and open spaces they also cover cemeteries and many of the elements highlighted in this report within them.

Being a small team is challenging at times especially trying to juggle the conflicting needs of our customers, dealing with enquiries, monitoring a large and specialised contract, working with stakeholders and colleagues, and monitoring and arranging repairs of infrastructure.

### 3.14 Budgets

The budget for parks and open spaces is divided into three main elements:

- General parks budget
- Playground repairs
- Tree inspection and maintenance

The main element of the general parks budget is made up of payments to Idverde for the grounds/landscape maintenance contract.

After salaries, council internal charges, depreciation, etc. there is just over £100,000 of 'flexible' budget to cover repairs and replacement of bins, benches, boundary fences/railings, footpaths, building, planting/site improvements, etc. This equates to just under £2,000 per financial year.

## 4. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name and contact details of responsible officer	Department/ Location
1	Cabinet report: <a href="#">Protecting the borough's parks and open spaces</a>	Ullash Karia – Head of Leisure and Parks <a href="mailto:Ullash.Karia@rbkc.gov.uk">Ullash.Karia@rbkc.gov.uk</a>	Council website
2	Parks and open spaces files	Ian Ross – Parks Manager <a href="mailto:Ian.Ross@rbkc.gov.uk">Ian.Ross@rbkc.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Parks@lbhf.gov.uk">Parks@lbhf.gov.uk</a>	Leisure and Parks