

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 MARCH 2013

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b><i>PROVIDE AND MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY PARKS AND OPEN SPACES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES - UPDATE</i></b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b><i>ALL</i></b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b><i>KEVIN ADDERLEY, INTERIM STRATEGIC DIRECTOR, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT</i></b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b> <i>(Defined in paragraph 13.3 of Article 13 'Decision Making' in the Council's Constitution.)</i>	<b><i>NO (delete as applicable)</i></b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides a summary of progress in the provision of the Parks and Countryside Service to provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with the local communities. Members are asked to note the report.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 This report has been requested as part of the work programme for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Plan for 2012/13 includes the goal to 'Provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with the local communities with a specific focus on improving the Council's Parks and Countryside Service with the targets to increase the number of parks attaining an agreed quality standard from 12 to 13 by 2012/13 and to deliver the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Programme 2012/13.

2.2 A report was taken to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2012 detailing the progress of the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Programme. In summary the staff have worked hard and well over the summer to maintain and improve the performance of the new service and ensure it is value for money. They have achieved the best quality standards ever achieved in the Wirral as can be seen by the Service's Green Flag and other quality awards. This year has been the most successful year yet with 16 of the borough's open spaces having received a national quality award and 14 the Green Flag Award, exceeding the Corporate Plan Goal. The awards are a sign to visitors that the park is well-maintained, well-managed and has appropriate facilities for the local community. Uniquely Wirral has a national first - Wirral's Hilbre Island is the only island in the country to hold a Green Flag.

2.3 These Green Flag awards could not have been achieved without the partnership working with friends groups, volunteers and other community organisations assisting and supporting their local parks teams to achieve the required standards. The Parks and Countryside Service actively support all friends and voluntary groups who play a key and active role and are also a vital link with the local community. They make an invaluable contribution to park life through local events and activities, task days, and with their contributions to management plans and other long term projects for their local parks. This year there have been 3 new Friends groups making a total of 46 Friends of Parks Groups on the Wirral. They are making an outstanding contribution to the decision making processes and the standards of parks and open spaces throughout the service.

**This year Wirral's Green Flag Parks are:**

1. Ashton Park
2. Wirral Country Park
3. Thornton Hough Village Green
4. Birkenhead Park
5. Coronation Gardens
6. Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve
7. Eastham Country Park
8. Royden Park
9. Hilbre Island Local Nature Reserve
10. Vale Park
11. The Arno
12. Bidston Hill
13. North Wirral Coastal Park
14. Meols Park

Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm has earned a Green Flag Community Award, which recognises high quality green spaces that are managed by voluntary and community groups.

Birkenhead Park has retained its Green Heritage status in addition to its Green Flag Award.

2.4 Key projects still to be completed in the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Programme Asset Management Work stream are the purchase of the necessary plant and equipment and vehicles, the implementation of the depot strategy, the ICT strategy and the tree management programme. These were awaiting the capital programme decision and will be planned for implementation in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.

2.5 There have been regular meetings with Trade Union representatives to discuss working practices and the implementation of the Parks and Countryside improvement programme. A range of new working practices and hours have been introduced. Following discussions with the Trade Union representatives agreement has been reached, and a 12 month pilot started in May 2012 with a change in working practices for all gardeners, supervisor gardeners and Deputy Area Managers (except the staff who work in the cemeteries as their work is evenly distributed throughout the year).

The key advantages are:

- the introduction of annualised hours with the lengthening of the hours worked at the service's busiest time of the year has ensured that the standard of the parks and countryside has increased;

- reduction in time taken for lunch breaks to half an hour;
- Friday afternoon working to prepare parks and other areas for increase in use over Weekends;
- flexible working across areas;
- agreement to work in rain/wet conditions to minimise any loss of productivity due to weather which has been especially useful this last year.

There have been staff consultation meetings on the new working patterns and staff ideas have been sought on for income generation and savings. At present there are key projects on Income Generation and Marketing, Re-Allocation of Land-use, Events, Volunteers and Education. These are key staff led projects that will ensure the engagement, sustainability and value for money of the service going forward.

- 2.6 The draft plan for the 10 year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework for Parks and Countryside has been drafted to the new agreed timeframe with the final plan to be agreed in December 2013.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 The progress and timescale for the completion of the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Programme is dependent on the Council's financial situation.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 No other options have been considered as part of this report.

### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Wirral residents were consulted on the future for the Parks and Countryside Service as part of the 'What Really Matters' budget consultation.

### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 6.1 Volunteers are involved in many aspects of the Parks and Countryside Service including the many Friends Groups detailed in the report.

### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 7.1 The progress and timescale for the completion of the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Programme is dependent on the Council's financial situation with the Asset Management Workstream dependent on the capital programme.

### **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

### **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

**10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

**12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

12.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

**13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 This report is provided for Member’s information.

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**APPENDICES**

None.

**REFERENCE MATERIAL**

*(Include background information referred to or relied upon when drafting this report, together with details of where the information can be found. There is no need to refer to publicly available material: e.g. Acts of Parliament or Government guidance.)*

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

Council Meeting	Date

## Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit (from May 2012)

### Section 1: Your details

**EIA lead Officer:** Bill Cooper

**Email address:** [williamcooper@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:williamcooper@wirral.gov.uk)

**Head of Section:** Mary Bagley

**Chief Officer:** Kevin Adderley

**Department:** Parks and Countryside

**Date:** 28/02/12

### Section 2: What Council proposal is being assessed?

Provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with the local communities (update).

**Section 2b:** Will this EIA be submitted to a Cabinet or Overview & Scrutiny Committee?

Yes

If 'yes' please state which meeting and what date

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 12 March 2013

Please add hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published on the Council's website (see your Departmental Equality Group Chair for appropriate hyperlink)

**Section 3: Does the proposal have the potential to affect.....** (please tick relevant boxes)

- √ **Services**
- √ **The workforce**
- √ **Communities**
- √ **Other** (please state eg: Partners, Private Sector, Voluntary & Community Sector)

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 4.

**None** (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to [equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk) for publishing)

**Section 4: Does the proposal have the potential to maintain or enhance the way the Council .....** (please tick relevant boxes)

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- √ Advances equality of opportunity
- √ Fosters good relations between groups of people

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 5.

**No** (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to [equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk) for publishing)

**Section 5:**

**Could the proposal have a positive or negative impact on any of the protected groups (race, gender, disability, gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership)?**

**You may also want to consider socio-economic status of individuals.**

**Please list in the table below and include actions required to mitigate any potential negative impact.**

<b>Which group(s) of people could be affected</b>	<b>Potential positive or negative impact</b>	<b>Action required to mitigate any potential negative impact</b>	<b>Lead person</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
All nine protected groups	Positive potential impact - on physical and mental health due to opportunities for exercise, access to nature and relaxation.  Every person kept physically active for their life saves on average £40,000 to £50,000 in health service costs.	N/A	M Bagley	2013-2015	Reduction in Council budgets will increase the need for partnership working. Officer resources are required for developing partnership management of sites. This would be subject to partners having

					sufficient capacity and funding.
Socio-economically disadvantaged people	Positive potential impact - accessibility of local green and open spaces to provide affordable and accessible days out, places to exercise and relax and places to enjoy a 'staycation' for those unable to afford to go away on holiday particularly impacts on people on lower incomes.	N/A	M Bagley	2013-2014	As above



**Section 5a: Where and how will the above actions be monitored?**

In reports summarising parks user surveys – addressing both feedback from and response to the surveys.

**Section 5b: If you think there is no negative impact, what is your reasoning behind this?**

N/A

**Section 6: What research / data / information have you used in support of this process?**

Natural England – Green Space Access Research Summary  
Natural England – Health and Wellbeing Position Statement  
Wirral Council Parks and Countryside User Survey 2012

**Section 7: Are you intending to carry out any consultation with regard to this Council proposal?**

Yes

If 'yes' please continue to section 8.

If 'no' please state your reason(s) why:

(please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to [equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk) for publishing)

## **Section 8: How will consultation take place and by when?**

The draft 10 Year Wirral Green and Open Space Strategy will be subject to public consultation in Summer 2013, details of which are to be finalised.

Before you complete your consultation, please email your preliminary EIA to [equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk) via your Chief Officer in order for the Council to ensure it is meeting it's legal requirements. The EIA will be published with a note saying we are awaiting outcomes from a consultation exercise.

Once you have completed your consultation, please review your actions in section 5. Then email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to [equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk) for re-publishing.

## **Section 9: Have you remembered to:**

- a) **Add appropriate departmental hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published** (section 2b)
- b) **Include any potential positive impacts as well as negative impacts?** (section 5)
- c) **Send this EIA to [equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk) via your Chief Officer?**
- d) **Review section 5 once consultation has taken place and sent your completed EIA to [equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk) via your Chief Officer for re-publishing?**