



An Inquiry Report of the:
Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee

Funding of Parks

April 2018



Cardiff Council



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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

Parks and Green Spaces are important to Cardiff; they shape our City, bringing green and blue landscapes into built up areas and providing a haven for residents, visitors and wildlife. They are an important economic asset, improving the quality of life, attracting visitors, students, companies and investors, and helping to showcase Cardiff during major events. They are part of our collective heritage; as John Ridgewell, Chair of Green Spaces Wales, highlights: *'these important and significant municipal possessions have been nurtured over years, handed on from one generation to the next and allowed to mature— civic pride nay, in the case of our capital city, national pride, is manifest in how they look.'*

This Inquiry is a timely assessment of how, with Cardiff Council facing £91 million savings over the next three years, we can continue to provide excellent Parks and Green Spaces. Our Inquiry has found a huge willingness, across the diverse groups that use our Parks and Green Spaces, to contribute and work in partnership to maintain and improve our Parks. This is evident in the existing excellent partnership working between our dedicated Parks staff, Friends Groups and wildlife organisations and in the responses received from sports pitch user representatives, who are keen to have conversations about how to work together effectively.

With the overall savings required of local authorities, it is clear that non-statutory services such as Parks have to work hard to find income sources and efficiency savings. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the Inquiry, giving their time, views and expertise on how we can keep our first rate Parks and Green Spaces by generating income and reducing costs in ways that do not lower standards or adversely affect the experience of Park users. It can be done, as other cities across the U.K. have demonstrated. I hope that this report will help to kick-start and shape the debate about which approaches are appropriate for Cardiff.

I would like to thank my fellow task group Members, Councillor Iona Gordon and Councillor Gavin Hill-John, for their hard work and willingness to think creatively to assess and find solutions. Special thanks are also due to our Principal Scrutiny Officer, Angela Holt, whose dedication, enthusiasm and support ensured we had access to

timely, relevant and quality information to enable us to successfully undertake our Inquiry.

As part of the Inquiry process, we asked John Ridgewell, Chair Green Spaces Wales, to cast a 'critical friend' eye over our main findings; I am delighted that he found the report to be '*a comprehensive and in depth analysis of the issues*'. Following this, I am pleased that the report and its recommendations received the unequivocal support and endorsement of the whole Committee.

The recommendations of this report, if accepted, will help this Council and partners to work together to improve the future security of funding for Parks and Green Spaces in Cardiff, ensuring future generations benefit, as we do, from these important assets.



Councillor Nigel Howells
Chair, Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To investigate how best to increase the sustainability of funding for Parks in Cardiff by:
 - Exploring how best to increase income generation by Parks, including considering commercialisation, events, sponsorship and alternative funding models
 - Exploring how best to reduce costs of managing and developing Parks by improving operational efficiencies, utilising work undertaken by the service area, informed by action planning, and service reviews undertaken as part of the Infrastructure Alternative Delivery Models work stream, i.e. consideration of statutory and non-statutory service provision, scale, volume and quality of service provision and partnership working
 - Utilising the lessons learnt regarding funding of parks in comparable cities across the UK
 - Examining Parks funding models successfully used elsewhere across the World to test whether these are transferable to Cardiff.

- To gather stakeholders views with regard to the above, including customers, partners, third sector organisations and relevant Cabinet Members and Cardiff Council officers.

- To make evidence based recommendations to improve the future security of funding for Parks in Cardiff in a time of austerity.

Members of the Task & Finish Group were:

- Councillor Nigel Howells (Chair)
- Councillor Iona Gordon
- Councillor Gavin Hill-John

HEADLINE FINDINGS

- HF1. Cardiff's Parks and Green Open Spaces are special and of value to residents, visitors, biodiversity and the economy of Cardiff:
- They enable residents and visitors to connect with nature, which is important for mental health and wellbeing; this is even more important in an urban environment, where connection to nature is typically low
 - Several Cardiff Parks and Green Open Spaces contain protected wildlife species
 - Parks boost the economy, as evidenced in this Committee's previous report '*The Economic Role of Parks*' 2009
 - A recent Cardiff Civic Society survey found respondents rated parks as the most important element affecting their quality of life
 - The 2017 Ask Cardiff survey found parks and open spaces in Cardiff scored the highest levels of satisfaction (79%).
- HF2. The Parks Services has reduced costs by 24% over the last four years and has worked hard to increase income, with existing budget figures showing an 18.6% increase in income.
- HF3. The amount of income generated by Parks is not reflected in full in the Parks Services budget. If it were, the amount of income generated in 2017/18 would be over £3 million, equating to 44% of the Parks Services budget.
- HF4. The Council has committed to doing all it can to keep Cardiff's Parks great. It now needs to decide on the purpose and focus of the Parks Service, setting out a vision for Parks Services and a framework that shapes the scale and scope of income generation and cost reduction. This will need to be communicated to staff, partners and residents to ensure there is shared understanding of expectations.
- HF5. There is scope for the Parks Service to generate even more income. There are many possible means of generating income from Cardiff's Parks. The decision on which options to choose needs to be guided by their fit with the stated purpose and focus of the Parks Service, coupled with consideration of a range of factors

including: the anticipated amount of income generated; the ease of generating income; the level of resources required; the impact on existing services; and the level of risk. Income will need to be raised from a range of sources to provide a sustainable solution to meet the gap in resources caused by the need to meet other budgetary pressures.

- HF6. To maximise the effectiveness of an income generation strategy, Parks would benefit from using the capacity and expertise of other areas of the Council and partners that already use a commercial approach, for example strategic estates, marketing and events and the RSPB, who have indicated their willingness to assist. This additional support would enable the Council to build on the successes of income generation to date and to utilise all viable options.
- HF7. There is limited potential to reduce costs further, given the significant work already undertaken by Parks staff to achieve reductions to date. At this stage, additional savings will result from an aggregation of marginal gains, unless whole areas of work cease in their entirety, which would significantly affect the Council's ability to maintain Cardiff's parks to their current standard.
- HF8. There are known pressures on the Parks Services budget arising from:
- a. The Parks Service pays the Council's Central Transport Services (CTS) to maintain their fleet of vehicles for a specified cost per annum. The Parks Service carried out a vehicle rationalisation, reducing the number of vehicles requiring CTS maintenance, which reduced costs by £40k per annum; the Council accepted this as a saving in 2015/16 and reduced the Parks Service budget accordingly. However, CTS has not reduced the amount it charges Parks for vehicle maintenance, leading to an additional pressure on the Parks Services budget.
 - b. The Parks Service budget currently uses £336,400 per annum from Commuted Sums. If this level of spend is maintained, the existing Commuted Sums will be fully spent out by 2019/20. The amount of new commuted sums (from 2016 onwards) is significantly lower than £336,400.

KEY FINDINGS

Strategic Context

KF1. This Administration's key strategic policy document, Capital Ambition, states that *'This Administration knows how much our residents value our city's parks, and we will do all we can to keep them great in the face of budget cuts.'*

KF2. The Corporate Plan 2018-2021 sets out two specific commitments in relation to Parks, as follows:

- a. *Establish a more strategic approach and develop a programme for allocating capital contributions designed to deliver improvements to our parks and green spaces*
- b. *Work with our network of 'Friends of' and volunteer groups to engender a sense of ownership within local communities in the management and development of our parks and green spaces, and to secure improvements in local environmental quality.*

What has been done to manage Parks' budget?

KF3. The Parks Service has significantly reduced costs over the last four years, making bigger cuts than other service areas, with a 24% reduction in budget from 2013/14-2017/18. There has been a differentiation of cost reduction across the Parks service, with the biggest contributions coming from: Grounds Maintenance (£584k), Strategy, Design & Land Management (£353k), Park Keeping (£256k) and Management & Support (£255k). As a percentage of budget, the biggest contributors have been Strategy, Design and Land Management (56%), Management and Support (39%), the Nursery (29%) and Park Keeping, which is the budget for Park Rangers (25%).

KF4. Parks staff and managers have worked together to develop service action plans, which include income generation schemes. The Parks Service has increased income over the last 4 years, with the existing budget for Parks Service showing an increase in income of 18.6% (£411,000) from 2013/14 -2017/18, equating to 30% of the Parks budget in 2017/18.

KF5. Several staff have been able to implement income-generating schemes, with notable successes by staff at the Council's nursery, Roath Park Conservatory, Bute Park, Grounds Maintenance and the arboriculture teams. Other staff, such as the Community Park Rangers, made several suggestions to this Inquiry about income-generating options they believe to be workable. This indicates a willingness and ability to engage with and adapt to a more commercial approach.

KF6. The main areas that have contributed to the increase in income to date are:

- a. Bute Park – increase in income from events held in Bute Park, with the monies generated ring-fenced for use in Bute Park as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant criteria (£141K)
- b. Council Nursery - winning the Cardiff BID contract for floral displays and increasing overall plant sales (income increased from approximately £3k in 2013/14 to £73k in 2017/18, with a further contract in 2018/19 to supply the Vale of Glamorgan Council with bedding plants, net worth circa £8k)
- c. Roath Park Conservatory – increasing visitor numbers, training sessions and plant sales (income increased from approximately £5k in 2013/14 to £63k in 2017/18)
- d. Grounds Maintenance - winning sports turf maintenance work with Newport Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council and providing a 'buy-back' service to some Cardiff bowling clubs, including, in 2018/19, Whitchurch bowling club (£40k approximately).
- e. Tree Maintenance – winning business from private clients and internal service areas.

KF7. However, the Parks Service budget does not include all the income generated by Parks. If the income generated from concessions in Parks and work undertaken for the Highways Department is included, the income raised by Parks in 2017/18 is £3,034,442, which equates to 44% of Parks budget. This brings Cardiff close to the accepted best practice of Nottingham City Council's Parks Department, which meets 50% of its budget via income generation.

What more can be done to increase the sustainability of Parks' budget?

KF8. The Inquiry explored several means of generating income and reducing costs, used by other local authorities and agencies. The Inquiry found many of the reducing costs mechanisms have been used by the Council, with limited scope to reduce costs further without reducing significantly/ ceasing certain Park services. The Inquiry found that many of the generating income mechanisms have potential.

KF9. None of the mechanisms is enough on its own to be the sole solution; it is clear that a number will be needed. The decisions on which to choose need to be guided by their fit with the stated purpose and focus of the Parks Service, coupled with consideration of a range of factors including: the anticipated amount of income generated; the ease of generating income; the level of resources required; the impact on existing services; and the level of risk.

KF10. The table overleaf summarises the findings on each mechanism, with more details provided in the main body of the report. This shows that the following are either highly likely (a-e) to deliver savings/ generate income or have potential (f-q):

- a. Reduce running costs of assets
- b. Maximise benefits from concessions in parks
- c. Apprenticeship scheme
- d. Increasing concessions in parks
- e. Corporate volunteering
- f. Land management
- g. Social enterprise cafes
- h. Reductions in bedding plants & replacing with wildflower meadows
- i. Sports Pitches - fees and charges and grounds maintenance
- j. Events
- k. Sale of staff expertise, crops and produce
- l. Advertising and sponsorship – with caveat that unpredictable
- m. Donations
- n. Use of buildings and assets
- o. Endowments and trusts
- p. Grants
- q. Alternative Funding models

Mechanism to generate saving/ income	Highly Likely	Potential	Minimal £
Reduce Costs			
Asset Management			
• reduce running costs of assets	✓	X	X
• maximising benefits from concessions in parks	✓	X	X
• land management	X	✓	X
• buildings and facilities within parks (social enterprise cafes)	X	✓	X
• moving all allotments to full self-management	X	X	✓
Operational Changes –			
• reductions in bedding plants and replacing them with use of wild flower meadows	X	✓	x
• changing horticultural standards to deliver better biodiversity	x	X	✓
• changing horticultural standards re sports pitch maintenance	X	X	✓
• reducing grass cutting	X	X	✓
• replacing annual planting schemes with perennials	X	X	✓
• prioritising maintenance on greatest need/impact on Council priorities	X	X	✓
• Reductions in services (play area and toilet provision)	X	X	✓
Rethinking staffing levels/ costs –			
• apprenticeship scheme	✓	X	X
• reducing management tiers	X	X	✓
• cutting administrative staff	X	X	✓
• recruitment freeze	X	X	✓
• introducing larger seasonal staffing to replace core workforce	X	X	✓
• introducing role flexibility.	X	X	✓
• reducing IT/communications systems updates	X	X	✓

Mechanism to generate saving/ income	Highly Likely	Potential	Minimal £
Generate income:			
Fees and charges, including:			
• Concessions in parks	✓	X	X
• Sports Pitches	X	✓	X
• Events	X	✓	X
• Admissions & Membership	X	X	✓
• Car Parking	X	X	✓
Commercialisation of operations			
• Sale of staff expertise	X	✓	X
• Sale of crops and produce	X	✓	X
Advertising & Sponsorship	X	✓ but unpredictable source of income	X
• Corporate volunteering	✓	X	X
Donations	X	✓	X
Use of Buildings and Assets	X	✓	X
Endowments and Trusts	X	✓	X
Grants	X	✓	X
Alternative Funding Models.	X	✓	X
Disposal and capital receipts	X	X	✓

KF11. Members found that, whilst some resources would be required to implement the following mechanisms, they are **highly likely** to deliver a saving or generate income.

Mechanism to generate saving/ income	What is Required?
Reduce running costs of nursery	Parks and Energy Management staff time to apply for WG grant as soon as possible. Savings of c. £3-5K p.a.
Maximising benefits from existing concessions in parks	Strategic Estates officer time – already in place.
Apprenticeship scheme	Parks & HR staff time to liaise with RSPB and develop scheme.
Additional concessions in parks	Parks, Strategic Estates & Marketing officers' time – appraise possibilities re more concessions in parks. Member decision on which concessions to implement.
Corporate volunteering	Ongoing support of Parks staff to RSPB and corporate organisations. Generate contributions of c.£10,000 p.a.

KF12. Members found that significant additional resources would be required in order to implement most of the mechanisms found to **have potential** to deliver a saving or generate income.

Mechanism to generate saving/ income	What is Required?
Land management	Significant parks officer time to liaise with RSPB/ Innovate Trust/ Sports organisations - complex discussions and due diligence checks - will require legal officer input.
Buildings and facilities within parks (social enterprise cafes)	Significant parks and corporate officer time. Willingness of other organisations to be involved.
Reductions in bedding plants and replacing them with use of wild flower meadows	Member decision re nature/ look of parks in Cardiff. Liaison with Friends Groups and other stakeholders.
Sports Pitches	Member decision re charging junior clubs. Member decision re investment in sports facilities, followed by Member decision re increasing fees for adults.
Events – wider range of smaller events across parks	Parks officer time to liaise with other organisations to arrange events. Parks officer time to be at events, even if run by other organisations.
Sale of staff expertise	Senior Member and Officer discussions at regional level and with PSB partners. More internal resource will be required if decide to increase income from tree management and/ or landscape design. Officer time to market services.

Mechanism to generate saving/ income	What is Required?
Sale of crops and produce	Officer time re marketing/ sales re nursery Investment in equipment re firewood and parks officer time to develop and implement sales & marketing plan Investment in Forest Farm re products (eggs, honey)
Advertising & Sponsorship	Officer time – Parks and Marketing. Caveat that Members recognise that this is an unpredictable source of income
Donations	Officer time to develop crowd funding site Install collection points in parks Parks officer time to liaise with RSPB and other events partners
Use of Buildings and Assets	Officer time to increase courses and room hire Significant officer time to undertake full appraisal, develop and implement business case re Forest Farm and Roath Park Conservatory shop/ catering/ visitor centre. Significant investment if business case proven.
Endowments and Trusts	Significant officer time to develop and pilot model.
Grants	Officer time to work with partners to access grants
Alternative Delivery Models.	Officer time to work with FAW and to respond to emerging proposals.

KF13. In addition, the Inquiry found the following specific requirements:

- a. It is critical that the monies raised from additional concessions be ring-fenced for spending in Parks and Green Spaces.
- b. Parks staff should have responsibility for delivering growth in concessions; the current system (whereby income from concessions goes to a corporate pot) acts as an unintentional disincentive for staff to use their initiative.
- c. It is essential that a thorough appraisal of possible additional concessions (*such as mobile food outlets, zip wires, high ropes, point-to-point, visitor centres, cafes, shops, a beach in Cardiff Bay and animal petting areas*), is undertaken to decide which ones to pursue.
- d. With regard to larger events, more support would be required from the Council's Events team, to successfully attract and run more large events.

Park Rangers

KF14. Cardiff has an urban and community park ranger service, which is highly valued by third sector partners, voluntary groups and Friends Groups. The Urban Park Rangers are key to coordinating work with other public sector partners to tackle anti-social behaviour and enforce byelaws, for example dog fouling, in the urban parks. The Community Park Rangers work in the parks and green spaces around Cardiff, such as the Wenallt, Forest Farm, Cardiff Wetland Reserve and Hailey Park and coordinate the work of Friends Groups and partners, leveraging in volunteer hours and other funding.

KF15. The Park Ranger service leads to successful partnership working to maintain and enhance parks and also to hold events that raise awareness and generate income, such as:

- a. Innovate Trust Green Days
- b. Buglife 'Urban Buzz'
- c. RSPB TAPE event
- d. Wildlife Trust - Pop-Up Garden.

KF16. Members of the Task Group met with the urban and community park ranger teams and were impressed by their work, knowledge and obvious commitment to their role. Members heard from external witnesses that the reduction in park rangers a few years ago had a noticeable impact on the delivery of services; Members could see that the remaining officers were working above and beyond the requirements of their roles, in order to meet the shortfall and maintain the high quality of Cardiff's parks.

KF17. The Inquiry notes that park rangers are fundamental to the success of Cardiff's parks, working in partnership with key agencies to keep Cardiff's parks safe, to raise awareness and generate income, as well as leveraging in a significant volume of volunteer work, ensuring it is structured and meaningful. Members heard from Friends Groups that, if park rangers were cut, they would not be able to continue with the work they do.

Friends Groups

KF18. Friends Group add significant value and make a difference to Parks by their contributions, both in terms of tasks undertaken and in terms of monies raised to invest in parks. Friends Groups raise monies via subscription/membership fees, obtaining sponsorship, applying for grants, selling plants, receiving donations, sourcing trees and plants for free etc. Friends Groups that become charities can access more funding streams.

KF19. Members heard that Friends Groups feel they could take on more tasks, and thus relieve pressure on Council staff, if they had the right training and if there was more staff to support them initially. Friends Groups also stated that Cardiff Council could promote their work more clearly on the Council website, providing a clearer link, photographs, and videos of the work they do.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members recognise the valuable role Parks and Green Spaces play in providing physical and mental health benefits for citizens and visitors to Cardiff, as well as their integral role in the historic heritage and economy of the city. In order to ensure Parks and Green Spaces are able to continue to perform these roles at their current level, and having considered the evidence presented during the Inquiry, Members recommend that:

- R1. Cabinet agrees a clear vision statement for the Parks Service that defines its purpose, focus and direction and thereby determines the scale and scope of required income generation and cost reduction.
- R2. The vision statement for Parks Services, and consequent scale and scope of required income generation and cost reduction, reflects the impact of the reduction in available Commuted Sums for Parks Services and that a plan be put in place to mitigate the impact of this reduction.
- R3. Cabinet tasks officers to undertake an options appraisal of the potential mechanisms to generate income and reduce costs, with the evaluation criteria to include: the fit of the mechanism with the agreed vision statement for Parks Services; anticipated amount of income generated; ease of generating income; availability of resources required; impact on existing services; and level of risk.
- R4. Cabinet tasks officers to use the evidence provided by this Inquiry to inform the options appraisal of the mechanisms identified as able to deliver savings/ generate income.
- R5. Cabinet tasks officers to develop a detailed plan for implementing the preferred mechanisms identified by the option appraisal that sets out the resources identified to achieve implementation and resultant timescales.

- R6. Cabinet, ahead of the options appraisal as a matter of urgency, tasks officers to expedite the application for Welsh Government grant funding for energy efficiency measures at Bute Park nursery.
- R7. Cabinet ensures that any additional concessions in Parks are of a high standard, sustainable and add to the reputation of Cardiff's parks.
- R8. Cabinet tasks officers to liaise with the sports pitch users' representatives that responded to this Inquiry expressing an interest in taking on responsibility for grounds maintenance and land management, with a view to establishing viable key holder agreements, leases and/ or asset transfer arrangements that deliver savings/ generate income for Parks Services.
- R9. Cabinet considers smaller events utilise sites throughout the city, including school sites subject to the approval of their governing bodies, taking into account sustainable travel plans, hard surfaces/ standing and utility requirements.
- R10. Budget realignment takes place as a matter of urgency to ensure that the Parks Services budget reflects the true position in terms of income generated and costs incurred, to include:
- a. The income earned from concessions in Parks goes into the Parks budget, rather than the central corporate pot
 - b. The costs incurred by undertaking works for Highways are reimbursed to the Parks budget
 - c. The charges from CTS reflect the work undertaken and the reduction in the number of Parks vehicles.
- R11. There are no further cuts to the park keeping budget (which covers the park ranger services) and that the Cabinet identifies mechanisms to increase the budget available to park rangers, as their services are vital to ensure Cardiff's parks are safe, secure, well managed, inclusive and of a high quality for the residents and visitors to Cardiff. Members are particularly mindful that park rangers enable Friends Groups to contribute thousands of hours of volunteer time and expertise, which is critical to sustaining the excellence of Cardiff's Parks and Green Spaces.

R12. A communication plan be developed and implemented to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the vision and direction for Parks Services amongst staff, partners, businesses and residents.

R13. In order to develop the vision statement, deliver agreed recommendations and any other work arising from the agreed vision statement, Cabinet ensure that the Operational Manager time available for Parks is increased, along with other resources as required.

The Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee invites the Cabinet to accept the above recommendations and in their response, detail the work to be undertaken for those recommendations that are accepted, the resources identified to deliver these and the timescales for implementation. Where any recommendations are rejected, the Committee asks that the Cabinet Response details the reasons for this and any proposed alternative approaches.

VALUE OF PARKS

1. Members heard that there is clear evidence of the value of Parks to wildlife, residents, visitors, businesses and local communities. This is in terms of rare species, biodiversity, well-being, physical and mental health, quality of life, economic opportunities for businesses that use parks, and economic benefit to those who own property near to parks, where property prices increase.
2. Members heard from many witnesses that Cardiff's parks and green spaces are special, with protected wildlife, such as otters, hazel dormouse, crested newts, Radyr Hawkweed and others. Witnesses stressed the need to ensure that these are protected and that the parks and green spaces are managed to promote biodiversity.
3. Members heard from the RSPB that urban parks and green spaces can encourage and enable people to connect with nature. Their research has shown that connection to nature is particularly important for children for the following reasons:
 - **Education** – *“First-hand experiences...can help to make subjects more vivid and interesting for pupils and enhance their understanding...[and] could make an important contribution to pupils' future economic wellbeing and preparing them for the next stage of their lives.”*
 - **Health and wellbeing** – *“Children increase their physical activity levels when outdoors and are attracted to nature...”*
 - **Personal and social skills** – *“Experience of the outdoors and wild adventure space has the potential to confer a wide range of benefits on young people... Development of a positive self-image, confidence in one's abilities and experience of dealing with uncertainty can be important in helping young people face the wider world and develop enhanced social skills.”¹*
4. Recent research by the RSPB² shows that Wales has a lower connection measure score than London. This demonstrates both that urban areas can achieve connection

¹ *Every Child Outdoors* (2010) RSPB report: available from [rspb.org.uk/childrenneednature](https://www.rspb.org.uk/childrenneednature)

² *Connecting with Nature* (2013) RSPB report: available from [rspb.org.uk/connectionmeasure](https://www.rspb.org.uk/connectionmeasure)

via green spaces and that there is still work to be done in Wales; Cardiff's city parks are important to assist in this.



5. Members heard from the Cardiff Civic Society that:

'In a busy world, the opportunity to unwind in our central green heart is important beyond measure...International studies also highlight that urban green space reduces stress, anxiety and depression. Green space also improves air quality, alleviating respiratory problems such as asthma.'

6. The Council's Ask Cardiff survey 2017 found parks and open spaces in Cardiff had the highest levels of satisfaction (79%) of all services surveyed. Similarly, the Cardiff Civic Society found that:

'In a survey carried out by the organisation, our unique and irreplaceable parkland was cited as the single most important element to the quality of life in the city.'

7. In 2009, an Inquiry of this Committee found clear evidence of the contribution of Parks to the local economy³. Witnesses to this Inquiry agreed with this, citing events such as TAPE in Bute Park, which had 74,000 visitors and led to water taxis having their busiest day to date.

³ 'The Economic Role of Parks' (2009): Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee

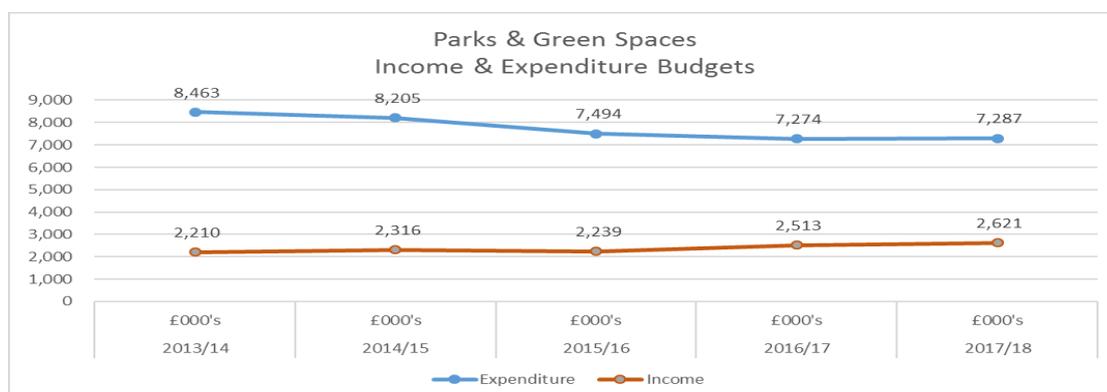
PARKS BUDGET

8. The tables below illustrate that the Parks Service has reduced costs overall by 24% over the last four years. The biggest reductions were in Grounds Maintenance (£584k), Strategy, Design & Land Management (£353k), Park Keeping⁴ (£256k) and Management & Support (£255k). As a percentage of budget, the biggest reductions have been in Strategy, Design and Land Management (56%), Management and Support (39%), the Nursery (29%) and Park Keeping (25%).

Parks & Green Spaces							
Net Revenue Budget 2013/14 > 2017/18							
Division	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Budget Change	
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	%
Management & Support	658	555	475	399	403	(255)	-39%
Parks Management							
Grounds Maintenance	2,898	2,636	2,584	2,298	2,314	(584)	-20%
Nursery	262	247	199	197	186	(76)	-29%
Arboricultural Services	452	501	498	472	528	76	17%
Park Keeping	1,004	1,018	737	747	748	(256)	-25%
	4,616	4,402	4,018	3,714	3,776	(840)	-18%
Parks Development							
Strategy, Design & Land Management	631	587	476	334	278	(353)	-56%
NHLF Bute Park	114	92	66	71	77	(37)	-32%
Playgrounds	162	180	168	194	183	21	13%
	907	859	710	599	538	(369)	-41%
Flatholm	72	73	52	49	49	(23)	-32%
Total - Parks & Green Spaces	6,253	5,889	5,255	4,761	4,766	(1,487)	-24%
	Annual Reduction £	(364)	(634)	(494)	5	(1,487)	
	Annual Reduction %	-6%	-11%	-9%	0%	-24%	

⁴ This is the budget for Park Rangers

9. Members heard that, over the same time, the Parks Service has increased income generated by £411,000, raising 18.6% of the budget.



10. Members heard that staff and managers have worked together to develop service action plans, which include plans to generate income. The increase in income over the last four years has largely come from:

- Bute Park – *increase in income from events held in Bute Park, with the monies generated ring-fenced for use in Bute Park as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant criteria (£141K)*
- Council Nursery - *winning the Cardiff BID contract for floral displays and increasing overall plant sales (income increased from approximately £3k in 2013/14 to £73k in 2017/18)*
- Roath Park Conservatory – *increasing visitor numbers, training sessions and plant sales (income increased from approximately £5k in 2013/14 to £63k in 2017/18)*
- Grounds Maintenance - *winning bowling green maintenance work with Newport Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council (£31k)*
- Tree Maintenance – *winning business from private clients and internal service areas.*

11. Over the course of the Inquiry, Members heard that Parks had successfully won additional work for 2018/19, including a contract to provide bedding plants to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, with a net worth of circa £8k, and work to maintain Whitchurch bowling club green.

12. Members found that not all the income raised by Parks goes into the Parks Service budget. For example:

- income from concessions in parks goes to a central corporate budget, in line with a decision taken by Cabinet on 12 November 2015⁵
- work undertaken on behalf of the Highways service area is absorbed within the Parks budget.

13. If these two income sources are added to income generated, the amount generated in 2017/18 is over £3 million, equating to 44% of the Parks Services budget. This brings Cardiff close to the accepted best practice of Nottingham City Council's Parks Department, which meets 50% of its budget via income generation.

14. The main sources of income projected for 2017/18 are:

- Other income⁶ - £972,574
- Fees and Charges - £338, 591
- Commuted Sums - £336,400
- Rents - £196,397
- Government Grants - £97, 611
- Sales - £74,511.

15. Members sought assurance that the external sources of funding are secure longer term. Officers advised that the Cardiff Harbour Authority grant is subject to potential reductions, with negotiations due with Welsh Government, but that the Parks element of the grant will be only marginally affected. However, there is concern about the Commuted Sums element of income, in that Parks use £336,400 per annum from Commuted Sums and, if this level of spend continues, the existing Commuted Sums will be fully spent out by 2019-20; the amount of new commuted sums, from 2016 onwards, is significantly lower than £336,400.

16. Officers also highlighted to Members that another pressure on the Parks Services budget arises from charges from the Council's Central Transport Services (CTS) not being re-aligned to reflect a reduction in the Parks services fleet of vehicles. In 2015/16, the Parks Services carried out a vehicle rationalisation, reducing the number of vehicles

⁵ 'Review of Non Operational Estate' report to Cabinet 12 November 2015

⁶ Monies received from: *Cardiff Harbour Authority, Housing Revenue Account, the Council's capital programme and Bute Park reserve*

requiring CTS maintenance; the consequent saving of £40k was accepted in 2016/17 and the Parks budget reduced accordingly. However, CTS have not reduced their charge to Parks, leading to a pressure of £40k on Parks budget.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND PURPOSE

17. The Administration's key strategic policy document, Capital Ambition, states that:

'This Administration knows how much our residents value our city's parks, and we will do all we can to keep them great in the face of budget cuts.'

18. The draft Corporate Plan 2018-2021 sets out two specific commitments in relation to Parks, as follows:

- *Establish a more strategic approach and develop a programme for allocating capital contributions designed to deliver improvements to our parks and green spaces*
- *Work with our network of 'Friends of' and volunteer groups to engender a sense of ownership within local communities in the management and development of our parks and green spaces, and to secure improvements in local environmental quality.*

19. In meetings with the task group, Councillor Bradbury, (Cabinet Member - Culture & Leisure) was clear that, with the overall reduction in local authority funding, he wanted to protect Cardiff parks and not oversee a management of decline. He believes that in order to generate monies to invest in parks:

'We need new approaches and to change the focus of the conversation to what we can make happen, how we can be more commercial and get money to invest. This will require tough decisions; we will need local ward Members to get behind these approaches... We need to have investment, for example in changing rooms' facilities. We need to look at each part – trees, sports etc. – to see what they can generate/ how they can reduce costs. I want officers to be open, not tell me what they think I want to hear, but tell me what the options are – nothing is off the table for discussion.'

20. Councillor Bradbury highlighted that the key point is to maximise income generation possibilities and ring-fence the monies generated for use in Parks in order to minimise cutbacks.

21. Parks officers expressed their willingness to work more commercially and highlighted that they would benefit from being able to increase available capacity to work on this by accessing officers with relevant expertise and skills based in other parts of the Council. Councillor Bradbury stated that the recent move of Parks to the Economic Development directorate should help this, as Parks will be in same directorate where the Council's commercial expertise is located and this should boost use of their expertise.
22. There was recognition from external witnesses that moving to an income generation approach will require a cultural shift; the RSPB highlighted that they are used to having to adopt a range of approaches to raise income and are happy to work in partnership with the Council to share their knowledge and experience.
23. Given the range of income generation possibilities, Members discussed with witnesses how best to focus officer time and resource. Members recognise that income generation mechanisms need to be appraised to see which are achievable and offer the best return for the resource invested. Members discussed with witnesses the need to agree how much more income is needed, as this will shape the scale of income generation.
24. Witnesses also raised with Members the need to clarify the purpose of the parks service going forward, for example:
- Is it to work with partners to maximise grants?
 - Is it to boost volunteer hours?
 - Is it to trade and compete with the private sector?
 - Is it to build on opportunities that come along, picking up bits and pieces?
 - Is it to focus on events and marketing and sponsorship opportunities?
25. Members agree that income generation mechanisms need to align to the vision for Parks in Cardiff and that a discussion is needed to clarify the acceptable scope of income generation in Cardiff.

INCREASING INCOME

26. To place the discussion on income generation in context, Members wished to understand what other local authorities are achieving. Members heard that several Councils have adopted approaches to generate income and/ or are developing Parks Income Generation strategies e.g. Manchester City Council and Bristol City Council. Nottingham City Council is recognised as the leader in this field, generating 50% of its annual budget from commercial income:

Nottingham City Council's Parks and Open Spaces Team generates 50% of its annual budget from commercial income. Through actively pursuing all sources of income including sponsorship, hosting events, running ancillary services such as Pitch and Putt, Boating lakes and issuing fishing licences, Nottingham generate their income directly as an 'in-house' service. It uses external contractors to deliver car parking, cafes and mobile catering services and has used income from these to improve playgrounds and leisure facilities. The Council has taken a flexible approach to managing its crown green bowling greens, giving the clubs the keys to the greens so that they can use the facilities whenever they want. They have also generated income from Nottingham in Bloom via sponsorship of traffic islands, parks and competitions.

27. The Inquiry looked at examples of how other Councils have increased income from Parks, using the following categories, some of which come from the APSE '*State of the Market Survey 2017: LA Parks & Green Spaces Services*', with other examples from North America and Australia:

- Fees and charges, including:
 - Concessions in parks
 - Sports Pitches
 - Admissions, Membership and Car Parking
 - Funded and ticketed events/ bars
- Commercialisation of operations
 - Sale of staff expertise
 - Sale of crops and produce
- Advertising & Sponsorship
 - Increasing Corporate Volunteering

- Donations
- Use of Buildings and Assets
- Disposal and capital receipts
- Endowments and Trusts
- Grants
- Alternative Funding Models.

28. Parks already use several of these mechanisms to generate income; Members explored with witnesses whether these could be increased and added to, to push income generation above the 44% of budget already achieved. Members found that none of these approaches on their own provides certainty of income to meet the gap in resources, caused by the need to meet other budgetary pressures across the Council. A summary of the findings for these mechanisms is provided below, with more information available upon request.

Fees and Charges

Concessions in parks

29. Income can be generated from concessions⁷ in parks, for example: *cafes/ restaurants, vending machines, gift shops, mobile caterers, ice cream vans, pitch hire, cycle hire, boat hire, land train, deckchair hire, fishing rights, green gym or sports instruction businesses, mini golf, tennis courts, bowling greens, pony rides, corporate facilities (conference, banqueting and meeting rooms), education centres and permanent/ seasonal fair grounds.*

30. In Cardiff, the Council earns income from concessions in Roath Park, Llandaff Fields, Victoria Park and Bute Park. The Strategic Estates team manage concessions and the income earned goes to a central budget for re-investment across the council property portfolio. Members heard from officers that they recognise the importance of effectively managing concessions, to ensure maximum benefit is realised, both financial and investment in refurbishing and creating facilities.

⁷ A concession is an agreement which allows an external organisation to promote and sell goods and services on your site

31. Several witnesses highlighted opportunities for earning more income from concessions in parks, by having more concessions in the most popular parks, where the high footfall would make these sustainable, and by enabling concessions in other parks and green spaces where there are currently none. The following possibilities were raised with Members:

- Build a new facility at Roath Park, on an Invest to Save basis, such as a café;
- Rent space to zip wire and high ropes companies, in high footfall parks where this would not affect '*listed parks*' status;
- Enable other sporting uses in parks, such as point-to-point;
- Build a new facility at Forest Farm, on an Invest to Save basis, such as a café, visitor centre and/ or shop;
- Enable more mobile food outlets in a wider range of parks;
- Install a beach at Cardiff Bay
- Have an animal petting area/ city farm at Forest Farm.

32. Officers emphasised the need to remember that the income from some concessions, such as ice cream vans, can fluctuate and therefore caution should be exercised to avoid relying solely on this income to balance budgets. Officers also pointed out that some parks would not be suitable for some concessions, either because they are listed parks or because they have no access to services such as water and toilets.

Sports Pitches Fees and Charges

33. The Council earns circa £70,000 a year from adult sports clubs use of sports pitches, as well as professional dog walkers' and fitness trainers' fees and charges. Members heard from several sports users that the scope to increase income further by raising fees and charges for adult users is limited, given the poor condition of pitches and changing facilities:

'..pitch maintenance does not meet the requirements of users'

'The current level is, to say the least, unsatisfactory'

34. Officers estimated that there is a £2million backlog of improvements required to pitches and changing rooms. Several witnesses stated that, if improvements were made, there would be scope to increase fees and charges. An officer highlighted that a wider

strategy regarding sports is required, with investment, which would then lead to an increase in sports bookings, and therefore income, over time.

35. Several external sports organisations suggested introducing charges for junior sports groups that use pitches:

'Junior Football should pay a contribution in particular as they play on Saturday mornings and on occasion cut up the pitches for the paying Adult game'

'We would suggest charging all users/sports teams, including junior leagues.'

36. Members heard from several sports organisations that they would be interested in holding conversations with the Council about having either a key holder agreement, lease or asset transfer arrangement. The Council already has key holder agreements in place with some sports pitch users. Members heard that key holder agreements are useful for single use pitches, as is asset transfer; for multi-use sites, it is possible to use leases, although care needs to be taken regarding disposal of public space rules and regulations. These arrangements can help sports organisations to access funding and increase the chance of investment in pitches and facilities. This links to the points made later in this report, point 98, regarding the possibility of transferring grounds maintenance responsibilities to sports clubs.

37. During the Inquiry, Members heard that a gym company is interested in locating gym containers in parks and that officers are liaising with the company to explore how much income this could raise.

38. However, Members heard that not all park users are in favour of parks becoming 'sports hubs':

'I am not in favour of parks being changed into sports hubs as a solution to save money/create income, as it can create problems with floodlighting, rubbish left behind by some pitch users, increased car traffic, etc. and can be counterproductive re parks that also have conservation projects and it removes areas then from general public use and thus reduce general public use. Many local clubs attached to parks nowadays have members from all over the city; therefore, possible lack of community involvement/ownership as many are there just to play a sport/train and leave.'

Admissions and Membership Fees

39. Members explored the idea of admission and/ or membership fees with witnesses.

Friends Groups explained that many of their groups already charge a membership or subscription fee, at an appropriate level, with the monies raised used to support improvements in parks. As such, there was not much support from Friends Groups for this mechanism to be extended, with one representative clearly stating that they were not in favour of admissions fees.

40. It is recognised that charging admissions is not always practical, particularly for sites with multiple entries and exits. The Prosperous Parks website⁸ highlights that:

'Visitors are likely to show resistance to having to pay for a facility which was previously free. It can be easier to introduce entry fees if the park has recently been upgraded and/or restored. New attractions and facilities such as a sculpture park, an educational centre or formal gardens are also likely to enable the introduction of entry charges. This is because visitors will be paying to access new and/or improved facilities, which could not have been provided if the site was free to access.'

41. The Nesta 'Rethinking Parks' project included Heeley Park in Sheffield, where the team explored and developed 'a subscription society, a community giving project that hopes to engage with and to involve our local community in the life and the future of our park. Without that involvement and support, the future maintenance and development of this (and many other) green spaces is not certain.'⁹ Nesta evaluated the lessons learnt from this project as:

⁸ The website is available at: http://prosperousparks.com/funding_details.html?r=1&h=&a=4

⁹ Nesta Blog 23 Feb 2016

Heeley Park, Sheffield – Lessons Learnt	
Pros	Cons
<p><i>‘Early subscriptions over the first six months, matched with earned income and donations from local businesses have tracked our projections closely, though we are revising our expectations down as we move forward.’</i></p> <p>A subscription model is a viable option to deliver long-term support and engagement and a portion of the income required to deliver independent, high quality maintenance.</p> <p><i>‘Heeley People’s Park subscription scheme has shown people will donate on an ongoing basis to their local park; demonstrating that it’s not just flagship parks that can tap into people’s willingness to give.’</i></p>	<p><i>‘With hindsight, such a radical departure from what folks are used to was bound to take time to sink in and the message to embed - we should have been more cautious with our projections.’</i></p> <p>Don’t enter into this lightly or underestimate the work to engage and hold on to your subscribers – it is an investment for the long term, probably the income generated is not and should not be the primary reason for doing it.</p> <p>No business should count on one source of income alone anyway, but this could be a potentially important part of the revenue stream.</p>

Charging for car parking

42. Prosperous Parks highlight that car parking fees are sometimes a useful way of generating income, although the amount generated will need to be weighed against the impact on visitor numbers and the costs of collecting the fees. They also highlight that: *‘Car parking fees do not penalise visitors who arrive by other forms of transport, and often encourages alternative and more sustainable modes of transport.’*
43. Bristol Council charges car park fees at several of its parks and open spaces and, as part of its budget for 2018/19, is considering increasing charges and levying new charges at additional sites.
44. In Cardiff, there are car park charges in place in Heath Park, Sophia Gardens, Pontcanna Fields and Llandaff Fields. The monies raised do not go to Parks but to the Network Management section of Cardiff Council, to meet their costs, as they are responsible for ensuring the correct Traffic Regulatory Orders are issued, white-lining, ensuring broken machines are fixed and collecting monies.

45. Members heard that, theoretically, it would be possible to increase monies raised by car parking charges, by increasing fees, charging at additional sites and/ or charging for parking at one-off events held in parks and open spaces. However, Members heard that this would most likely prove to be contentious, attracting adverse publicity and consequential reputation damage as well as discouraging use and affecting residents who live nearby, who may suffer from increased residential parking:

'In my opinion, it would be a mistake to charge for car parking. If we started charging at parks in residential areas, for example where many matches played, I think this would result in people parking in the residential area and that would cause more problems. The parking enforcement officers focus largely on the city centre, where the need is greatest.'

Councillor Bradbury – Cabinet Member Culture & Leisure

46. Sports Clubs also highlighted the impact car parking would have on their sustainability:

'Charging for car parking would have an adverse impact on the club's future - players train twice a week, and play at weekends. A charge for car parking would deter many players from playing for our club.'

Events

47. Cardiff has many years' experience of holding events in its city centre parks, with Bute Park and Sophia Gardens hosting the majority of events. Parks officers receive support from the Council's Events team, which takes the lead on major events in parks, but relies on its own staff to promote and run smaller events. Parks managers stated that they would welcome more support in attracting and running additional large events.

48. Events in Bute Park¹⁰ generated approximately £115,000 in 2017/18, whilst events in other parks across Cardiff raised £43,000, doubling the income they raised in 2016/17. Income generated from events in Bute Park is ring-fenced to be spent on Bute Park, in line with Heritage Lottery Fund grant conditions.

49. Members heard that Coopers Field, in Bute Park, is at saturation point and cannot sustain more events without risking damage to the area. Witnesses highlighted the need to use local parks for events, as appropriate, rather than rely solely on the city centre

¹⁰ This includes Sophia Gardens

parks. Officers also drew attention to forthcoming work in Pontcanna Fields to provide infrastructure for events.

50. Several witnesses to the Inquiry highlighted the need for the Council to balance holding events in parks to generate income with its duty of care for parklands and existing park users. However, wildlife charities emphasised that the Council could expand events to include a wider range of smaller events, in suitable venues, as long as these did not disturb the wildlife e.g. Hallowe'en Walks and arts and crafts courses. They highlighted that they have successfully held large and small events in Cardiff Parks that have raised awareness and generated income, such as the Buglife Cymru's 'Urban Buzz', RSPB 'TAPE' and 'In the Eyes of the Animal' events and the Wildlife Trust's Pop-Up Garden in Bute Park.



51. Members heard from sports organisations that contributed to the Inquiry that they had no issues with more events being held in parks, as long as these dovetailed with the primary function of sports pitches/ playing surfaces.

52. However, officers highlighted that successfully attracting and running smaller events would require additional resource, as existing capacity is fully utilised, particularly at the weekends and early evenings, when most of these events would need to be held in order to maximise income.

53. Members also heard that it was important that events recover the costs associated with event delivery: for major events, this includes transport plans, road closures, health and safety assessments and cleansing. Officers also stressed that events income fluctuates due to factors outside the Council's control, such as touring schedules.

54. Having discussed the above with witnesses and looked at evidence of events income provided by Financial Services, Members concluded that, whilst there is scope to earn more income from events, it will not be enough on its own; other income generating mechanisms will be required.

Commercialisation of operations

Sale of staff expertise

55. The Parks Service currently raises income by selling its staff expertise to internal service areas, other local authorities and external organisations, for example to maintain sports turf, such as bowling greens and cricket squares, tree management surveys and works and landscape design.

56. Theoretically, there is potential to expand the sale of staff expertise, by widening the client base. However, in tree management and landscape design, this would require either: a reduction in existing services, to free up staff capacity; or the recruitment of additional capacity if the additional income earned would warrant this.

57. Officers also raised the possibility of increasing regional working, citing examples such as Shared Regulatory Services as areas where this has worked. Councillor Bradbury agreed that there is a need for regional solutions. Officers suggested that this would require a senior level conversation with neighbouring local authorities and Public Service Board partners, to tease out income generation and savings opportunities across the region regarding parks and open spaces.

Sale of crops and produce

58. The Parks Service already raises some income by selling plants, honey, woodchip and firewood. Members heard that there is definite potential to expand sales in the following areas:

- a. Plants could be sold to more public sector partners and neighbouring local authorities.
- b. Even more plants could be sold via existing outlets, such as Roath Park Conservatory and by publicising nursery services to businesses in Cardiff.
- c. As part of a wider business plan for Forest Farm, it may be viable to keep bees and chickens and sell honey and eggs.
- d. Some arboriculture waste is suitable to be sold as firewood, rather than biomass fuel, increasing income by circa £77 per tonne. There is currently 500 tonnes of suitable wood stored at Forest Farm. This approach would require an initial investment to purchase appropriate machinery.
- e. Wood currently coppiced is left on site; however, this wood could be used for arts and crafts courses.

Advertising & Sponsorship

59. The Prosperous Parks website highlights that parks and open spaces attract a breadth of visitors, which can make advertising on them appealing to businesses. Advertising can be placed on or in the following: *park leaflets; park newsletters; hoardings; parking tickets; signage boards; website; toilets; and hard surface stencilling (known as clean advertising)*.

60. With regard to sponsorship, responses to the APSE survey¹¹ indicate that 48% of parks obtain some income from sponsorship of activities, buildings, objects or areas of the park. Prosperous Parks list the following ideas as things to sponsor: *bird and bat boxes; sports facilities (e.g. tennis courts); buildings (e.g. community centre); exhibitions; flower beds and borders; nature trail; formal gardens; lakes; sponsor a position (e.g. park warden); park benches and other furniture; playgrounds; and the whole park.*

¹¹ *State of the Market Survey 2017: LA Parks & Green Spaces Services - APSE*

61. Members explored the work to date in attempting to raise income from advertising and sponsorship in parks. Members heard that officers have worked to develop a marketing prospectus across all parks and liaised with potential sponsors but without success. Since then, a small amount of income has been raised via sponsorship, for example, Riveria Travel sponsored the RHS show, and HSBC undertake corporate volunteer days.

62. Prosperous Parks states that *'Attracting income from advertising requires parks to go out and market themselves. It can often be beneficial to target specific types of businesses who sell products and services relevant to the activities and locality of the park. For example if you own a boating and sailing lake it will be worth targeting outdoor sports retailers and manufacturers.'* Members note that work is ongoing to develop sponsorship opportunities at Forest Farm, via local businesses who have a connection to the area.

63. With regard to sponsorship, the Prosperous Parks website states that:

'In trying to attract sponsorship, parks need to answer the question "As a business why should I sponsor your site?" The answer could include:

- "It will help to address your Corporate Social Responsibility." - Sponsorship could include corporate volunteering on site, for example a hedge-cutting day.*
- "It will expose your business to more (and/or new) customers." - It helps to have some facts and figures about your site, such as number of visitors, most popular attractions and key events.*
- "It will improve your brand perception." For example a local business sponsoring a playground is likely to enhance its image.'*

64. Members heard that Bristol City Council is taking a lower key route to raising income from advertising and sponsorship, for example by levying advertising charges for promotional banners in parks.

65. Members conclude that, whilst there is potential if the right sponsor can be found, this form of income generation is unpredictable and therefore any monies that come from this source should be seen as a bonus rather than being relied upon as part of an income generation strategy.

Increasing corporate volunteering

66. The RSPB explained that they currently work in partnership with Manchester City Council to help manage Manchester parks' through corporate volunteering workdays.

RSPB & Manchester City Council Corporate Volunteering

- 2 - 3 corporate workdays are hosted annually in the city's parks.
- Groups of 15 - 60+ staff complete a range of habitat management tasks.
- Companies typically pay up to £500 per workday or £70 per head.
- Total income currently received in Manchester is £2k - £3k p.a.

67. Having undertaken some initial work in Cardiff, they believe there is significant potential to engage up to five large companies in Cardiff to complete at least four workdays a year each in Cardiff's parks. This is likely to achieve an income of circa £10k p.a. RSPB estimate that this model and potential income would take 2-3 years to achieve.

Donations

68. Members heard that the RSPB and other wildlife organisations offer the opportunity to donate for people attending their events in Cardiff. The RSPB explained that sometimes they split these donations with other organisations involved in the event, for example at the TAPE event held in Bute Park, they split the donations received with the arts organisation that created the installation.

69. Members heard that, in Scotland, there is a specific crowdfunding page, called 'My Park Scotland'¹², which provides an easy route for people wishing to donate to their parks. There are several other examples of successful crowdfunding sites for donations for parks, including Ealing Hive, Leeds Park Fund, London National City Park and Bournemouth Parks Foundation.

Bournemouth Parks Foundation 'Gateway for Giving' - has proved that people are willing to donate to public parks and is projecting donations of £46,000 per annum by 2020.

¹² Available at: <https://www.mypark.scot/>

70. Bournemouth Parks Foundation has trialled digital methods of allowing donations, through the NESTA Rethinking Parks project, designing and constructing two installations – a talking parrot and a talking bench – to enable people to donate whilst they are in the park, rather than having to remember at a later point. These also allowed for coin donations, next to the installations. The trial found that digital contributions were less than coin contributions, with the talking parrot raising £4,000 in a few months. Further research found that many park users did not trust cashless donations:

“We’ve realised that we’re still on the cusp of digital giving and interaction, and perhaps need to develop trust in the applications we apply technology to. One way to address this is to use an online giving platform that people are familiar with.”¹³

71. In North America, where there is culture of philanthropic giving, many parks have donations schemes, raising significant sums:

Vancouver - Gifts for Parks - high level of public and business participation. In 2003, it raised around \$3 million in donations, with donors purchasing park amenities such as benches, trees, fountains, picnic tables and sculptures. Donations are accepted on a 10-year contract during which time the board guarantees to repair or replace an item if it is damaged.¹⁴

72. Members heard that more donations are received where they are clearly marked as contributing to a specific project or activity as contributors can see what their donation will deliver. The RSPB believe the Council could do more to capitalise on donations at events; they were clear that they would be willing for the Council to have donation points at RSPB events held in Cardiff parks and that they would share their expertise in enabling donations. Members heard donations could be increased by: clearly stating who the donations are going to and why; and having multiple points to enable visitors to exercise choice about who and what to donate to.

¹³ We Rethought Parks: Bournemouth Parks Foundation Nesta 2016. Available at www.nesta.org.uk/growing-parks-innovation/bournemouth-parks-foundation

¹⁴ Taken from research report for ‘The Economic Role of Parks’ (2009) Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee Report

Use of Buildings and Assets

73. This category covers income generated from using buildings and assets in a different way e.g. commercial activities provided in-house, renewable energy, accessing statutory environmental funding, ecosystems and biodiversity funding.
74. Members heard that, currently, Parks earn income from its buildings and assets by renting office space at Forest Farm and running educational and training courses at Forest Farm, Cardiff Bay Wetland Reserve and Roath Park Conservatory.
75. During the course of the Inquiry, Members heard several suggestions from internal and external witnesses about ideas to capitalise on the use of Parks buildings and assets, including:
- Expanding the number and range of training courses offered and charging appropriately
 - Operating arts and crafts courses, such as photography and willow- making, where these can deliver a profit
 - Marketing facilities to increase usage, for example room hire, educational visits and training courses
 - Delivering catering services in-house, rather than via concessions.
76. Witnesses also stated their willingness to work together to access biodiversity funding on a partnership basis; some of these funds are only available to third sector organisations but require access to Council parks and open spaces.
77. Members are aware that a draft business plan has been prepared for Forest Farm, illustrating possible ways of capitalising on this venue, for example as a Country Park, animal petting farm, social enterprise, café etc. The Community Rangers team highlighted that they believe offering visitors to Forest Farm a shop/ visitor centre would increase income generated and that the Council could explore opportunities to develop a social enterprise to enable this development. This could include selling produce such as honey, eggs and firewood, and offering camping facilities.

78. Members also heard that other local authorities, such as Newport Council and some councils¹⁵ in the north of England, have accessed Heritage Lottery Funding to enable restoration and improvements to their Victorian conservatories. Cardiff benefits from the Victorian conservatory in Roath Park and Members heard that Parks could offer additional activities, such as catering, weddings and other events, if the conservatory was extended. Work has previously been undertaken investigating the feasibility of this.

79. Members explored the possibility of generating income by hiring or letting bowling pavilions but heard from officers that these would generate limited income.

80. Finally, Members heard that it was important to ensure that lease conditions for concessions in parks are met, so that financial payments are received on time and required investments in refurbishing and/ or creating facilities are delivered.

Disposal and capital receipts

81. Disposal of land generates a one-off capital receipt. Currently, this capital receipt would go into the central corporate pot rather than being ring-fenced for parks, and it is not clear whether this money would be routed back to Parks.

82. Officers explained that, in the past, small parcels of land have been identified that could be sold, where these are peripheral to the purpose of parks. However, Councillor Bradbury, Cabinet Member Culture & Leisure, stated that he would prefer a commercial approach to be taken to generate income, rather than selling land. Officers highlighted that a proposal to sell park land in Bristol had provide controversial and had not been a success.

Endowments and Trusts

83. Several English local authorities have explored the use of endowments and trusts, which are common methods used in North America to provide funding for parks. In November 2017, after three years development, consultation and planning¹⁶, Newcastle Council decided to set up an independent Charitable Parks Trust to run the City's parks

¹⁵ Including Warrington, Hull and Blackburn with Darwen Councils

¹⁶ With partners The National Trust, Social Finance and Heritage Lottery Fund

and allotments. Under this arrangement, the Council will make a £9.5million revenue contribution to the Trust over the first 10 years of operation, giving it time to raise enough money to become self-financing. Information released about the Trust shows that:

Newcastle Charitable Parks Trust¹⁷

- Parks will remain free for residents and visitors to use.
- The Council will still own the land, and the Charitable Parks Trust will legally protect it.
- A TUPE process will see existing Council parks staff transferred over to the new Charitable Trust.
- The Parks Trust will have a Communities Group, to enable the community to participate and ensure there is a strong voice from within communities.
- The Parks Trust will be able to establish new income streams not available to the Council, using its resources in ways the Council cannot, and recycle income back into the estate, purely for the benefit of the parks and allotments.
- Residents, allotment holders, Friends of parks and volunteers will continue to enjoy their activities as they do now. Over time, as the Parks Trust establishes itself people can expect to see new activities in parks. There is also the opportunity to increase the number of allotments.

84. In Sheffield, the Council are working with the National Trust, NESTA, Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery to develop an endowment model. It aims to attract contributions from the health sector, philanthropists and corporate partners. Currently, it is forecast to provide c. £10 million, meeting the cost of parks operations.

85. Another suggestion for endowments is shown below:

One suggestion from an academic based in Liverpool is to approach Liverpool's "two top-flight soccer teams ... to provide endowments to fund the management of the city's soccer fields over a given period. This would potentially decrease the costs to Liverpool City Council of managing these sites, would provide a much-valued resource for local teams/communities, and would provide positive public relations for both clubs" (Mell, 2015) This is presented as an extension of the existing community outreach sponsorship and philanthropy currently operated by both teams.

86. Officers explained to Members that if an endowment/ trust model was felt to be worth trialling in Cardiff, it would require additional capacity to be identified to work up the idea and put it in place.

¹⁷ <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/news/future-newcastles-parks-decided>

Grants

87. Currently, parks officers and Friends Groups access a number of grants for use in Cardiff's parks, including Heritage Lottery Funding and the Single Revenue Biodiversity Grant from Welsh Government. Friends Groups' representatives explained that applying for grants is a time-consuming process, both in terms of finding an appropriate grant that matches parks' locations and habitats and in terms of completing the grant application process. They stated that they would welcome more support from the Council in finding and applying for grants but recognised that the park rangers, who currently support them, do not have the capacity to take on further work. The Community Rangers also highlighted that they would welcome more corporate support, to assist Friends Groups in finding and applying for grants. There was recognition of the need to share information and advice between Friends Groups and the Council to increase the amount of income from grants.

88. The Community Rangers explained that they used to get woodland management grants from Natural Resources Wales but these are no longer available. Some external witnesses stressed that they would be willing to work in partnership to apply for grants that the Council on its own is not able to access.

Alternative Delivery Models (ADMs)

89. In addition to the work detailed elsewhere in this report, the Inquiry heard that further work is underway in Cardiff to explore ADMs, as follows:

- a. Working with Football Association of Wales to develop a plan re ADMs for football sites.
- b. A local ward Member in Llandaff North is looking to establish a charitable trust to help fund projects/ items for Hailey Park.

Alternative Funding Models

90. In North America, there are several other models used to fund parks, including bonds and Business Improvement Districts. The use of 'conservancies' is also prominent, for example Central Park Conservancy in New York.

<p>BIDS - Bryant Park, Manhattan - charge a service fee to local businesses and property owners through a BID scheme. In 2000, the BID raised \$750,000 towards the total maintenance and management budget of \$2.0 million. The Bryant Park BID mechanism provided secure and sustainable finance specifically for the park, ensuring its continued high quality, which contributes to higher local property prices.</p>	<p>Park Improvement District – Bloomsbury London - as part of Rethinking Parks, piloted approach but were not able to progress their idea of a Parks Improvement District. However, the projected impact (£1.2 million revenue per annum) was significant and worthy of further experimentation in another geographical area.</p>
<p>Bonds - in the USA, constituents can vote to allow Local Authorities to issue bonds as another method to fund green spaces. Local Authorities can receive loan funding from bonds that can be repaid over a period of up to 30 years. Repayments can be funded through property taxation commercial revenue streams and general taxation or sales tax.</p>	<p>The Local Government Act 2003 introduced prudential borrowing powers. The act also gives opportunities for councils to issue bonds for capital projects.</p>

91. Many North American cities use locally raised taxes, either across the whole city (Seattle) or for specific locations where property values are increased due to nearby parks facilities e.g. Central Park in New York, Hudson River Bay Parks, some parks in Philadelphia. Whilst English and Welsh local authorities have a much more limited ability to impose additional local taxes, this has taken place in some locations:

A recent report proposes a “Park Levy”. (Drayson, 2014). The rationale is that access to well-maintained green spaces and attractive outlooks across parks are desirable, yet available only to those who can afford a property close to a park – these people benefit disproportionately from local authority spending on municipal green spaces and should therefore under the ‘proximate principle’, contribute more to the cost. A system like this was implemented in 1991 for properties adjacent to Wimbledon Common and Putney Common in southwest London and has generated significant sums for upkeep and maintenance of the commons.

92. In 2015, an evaluation was undertaken of parks revenue strategies across Western United States, with a view to identifying approaches capable of replication in San Jose Parks Department, which is where the author worked.¹⁸ San Jose had already adopted

¹⁸ Pinkston, Beth, "Identifying and Evaluating Revenue Strategies for Parks and Recreation Departments across the Western United States" (2015). Master's Projects. 414. http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_projects/414

several techniques to raise income and needed to boost these, having set a goal to increase cost recovery to 40%; as at 2015, it had reached 39%.

93. The survey focused on grants, corporate sponsorships, naming rights, donations and contracting out to private or non-profit organisations. Most of these are covered earlier in this report, with the exception of naming rights. The findings of the study are copied below:

City	Example of Naming Rights
San Francisco, CA	AT & T has a naming right over the ballpark stadium
San Diego, CA	Qualcomm has a naming right with a stadium
San Diego, CA	The San Diego Sports Arena was renamed the Valley View Casino Center. The casino is owned by the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians, and San Diego is expected to receive \$157,000 over the first five years of the naming right agreement.

Naming Rights Strengths
The ability to lease park spaces and the roofs of maintenance buildings to cell phone carriers. This can be a good partnership that does not come with too many obligations.
Allowed for some sufficient financial amounts and opportunities for one-time projects.

Naming Rights Weaknesses
Caution against having a name associated with the department that does not align with the department health/wellness mission or vision.
If you do not have staff solely dedicated to pursuing these strategies, they are just a component of multiple staff responsibilities, and they do not get the necessary attention to be successful
Not a reliable source for ongoing programs
Can be politically contentious.
There are often limited staff resources and not all staff are trained to follow or monitor grant strategies

REDUCING COSTS

94. As with Income Generation, the Inquiry looked at examples of how other Councils have reduced costs re Parks Services, using the following categories, most of which come from the APSE '*State of the Market Survey 2017: LA Parks & Green Spaces Services*':

- Asset Management
 - buildings and facilities within parks (cafes, bowling greens, etc.)
 - maximising benefits from concessions in parks
 - moving allotments to self-management
 - land management
 - reducing running costs
- Operational Changes –
 - changing horticultural standards to deliver better biodiversity
 - changing horticultural standards re sports pitch maintenance
 - reducing grass cutting
 - reductions in bedding plants and replacing them with use of wild flower meadows
 - replacing annual planting schemes with perennials
 - prioritising maintenance on greatest need/impact on Council priorities
 - Reductions in services (play area and toilet provision)
- Rethinking staffing levels/ costs –
 - reducing management tiers
 - cutting administrative staff
 - recruitment freeze
 - introducing larger seasonal staffing to replace core workforce
 - apprenticeship schemes
 - introducing role flexibility.
 - reducing IT/communications systems updates

95. Members explored the above options with witnesses and found that significant work has already taken place in many of these categories, thus reducing the potential for further reductions, without significantly changing the scale and nature of park services. A summary of findings is provided below, with more information available on request.

Asset Management

96. Members heard that, by 2016, half of local authorities had sold parks and green spaces or transferred ownership or management to community groups or trusts (*State of UK Public Parks 2016, APSE, cited in Guardian article September 2016*), including moving allotments to self-management. This picture continued into 2017, with 35% of

respondents to an APSE survey stating that their council had transferred park assets to community management/ ownership in the past two years, as follows:

What elements have been transferred to community management/ownership?	
Buildings	78.3%
Playing fields	56.5%
Parks	34.8%
Play areas	21.7%

'State of the Market Survey 2017: LA Parks & Green Spaces Services'

97. Members explored the possibility of transferring assets with witnesses and heard that:

- Asset transfer of bowling clubs - not likely to work in Cardiff, due to the impact on the sustainability of bowling clubs. However, officers could investigate hiring/letting pavilions if time was freed-up from other tasks.
- Moving all allotments to full self-management - not feasible in Cardiff.
- Work is underway to ensure the Council is maximising the benefit from concessions' leases – both in terms of financial benefit and in terms of delivering investment in refurbishing facilities and creating facilities.
- Some witnesses felt there was potential in setting up social enterprise cafes, similar to those run by the Innovate Trust in hubs in Cardiff and in Barry.

Land Management

98. In terms of land management, several sports pitch users stated that they were open to a conversation regarding taking on grounds maintenance, either for an agreed fee or as part of a mid/ long term lease of pitches, with sports clubs carrying the burden of maintenance costs. This would be easier to achieve for single use pitches than multi-use pitches, as noted at point 36 of this report.

99. Members heard that the RSPB already manages land on behalf of the Council, at Flatholm. The RSPB stated that they are often approached to take over land but are not

able to take up most of these offers, as the land does not fulfil its strategic objectives. They clarified that a priority area for the RSPB is to increase urban engagement opportunities and that they would therefore be open to a conversation with the Council, on the understanding that a sustainable financial package would need to be in place and that the process would require complex, lengthy discussions and due diligence checks. They stressed that it would have to be the right pieces of land – *‘the RSPB looks beyond simply purchasing land and fencing it off as an isolated haven for wildlife. It is now looking to deliver conservation on a landscape level.’*

100. Another example of land management raised with Members is the Innovate Trust scheme in Porthkerry Park, Barry, where volunteers manage a cottage garden and allotment, thus reducing land management costs to Vale of Glamorgan Council; Innovate Trust are in the process of adopting the land. Members wondered whether Innovate Trust could manage a piece of land in Cardiff, either as above, or in three-month blocks with park rangers detailing tasks. This would have the benefit of volunteers being able to display their abilities and hard work; it may be possible to take on a larger piece of land if it is for conservation purposes, as it would require less intensive management than a cottage garden and allotment.

Reducing running costs

101. Members heard that work is underway to reduce the running costs of Parks buildings, particularly the nursery that has a high energy usage. An endotherm heat transfer scheme is currently being trialled at the nursery and the Council’s energy management team has worked with our energy management partner, Engie, to undertake an energy audit. This identified that it should be possible to reduce electrical costs further, by installing energy efficient lighting and photovoltaic arrays. It is estimated that energy conservation measures at the nursery could lead to between £3k-£5k per annum saving, on top of the savings already realised by the Endotherm heat transfer scheme. Currently, the Council can access Welsh Government Refit Programme loans, which enables energy conservation measures to be put in place at no cost to the Council. The next round of bids is due to be submitted shortly and it

seems likely that the nursery would stand a high chance of being successful, given the work already undertaken by Engie and the Energy Management team.

102. Members heard that Bournemouth Council installed a biomass boiler in its nursery, which uses arboriculture waste from its parks and green spaces. Members were interested in whether this would be a viable option in Cardiff or whether it would be more profitable to sell our arboriculture waste as firewood. Advice from the Council's Energy Management team highlighted that there can be issues with biomass boilers (in terms of ensuring that the wood fuel is sufficiently dry as well as longer term maintenance costs) but that this may be an option worth exploring further. A Parks officer also highlighted the time taken to feed a biomass boiler might mean that the costs were prohibitive.

Operational Changes

Horticultural standards to deliver better biodiversity

103. Officers explained to Members that work has been undertaken to assess where it is possible to change horticultural standards to deliver better biodiversity and that this has been implemented. They did not feel that many savings remain to be realised by this route.

Horticultural standards re sports pitch maintenance

104. Members heard from officers and sports pitch users that it would difficult to change horticultural standards re sports pitch maintenance as any operational reductions in sports pitch maintenance would adversely affect health and safety of players and officials, potentially leading to legal action. With regard to rugby, respondents highlighted, if pitch maintenance standards were reduced, it could lead to cancellation of games, leading to sanctions from WRU:

'We are obliged to comply with WRU standards. These include safeguarding the health & safety of players and match officials. If maintenance standards were to fall, this could lead to the need to either the cancellation of games (e.g. if a pitch is waterlogged, grass is too long - which could

lead to us as a club to being sanctioned by the WRU), or serious injury to players/officials which could lead to legal action.'

105. One rugby club suggested allocating additional pitches, in existing grassed areas, to reduce the burden of pitch repair by providing more pitches for rotation. Officer advice is that this approach is unlikely to deliver savings and may increase costs, as there would be a greater area to maintain. A rugby club also highlighted that it may be cost-effective to provide rugby pitches closer to their clubhouse in a '*more manageable, smaller and more compact area*' and stated that '*We feel as a rugby club that between December and February we could cope with reduced grass cutting*'.

Reducing grass cutting

106. With regard to reducing grass cutting, Members heard that an APSE seminar presentation (*Bernard Sheridan, February 2016*), stated that grass mowing often represents around half of a local authority's grounds maintenance costs, with each cut costing £20-30k. Reducing grass cuts is good for sustainability and biodiversity but long grass cutting requires the following:

- Investment in the right machinery and composting facilities
- Good PR campaign to bring communities on board and reduce complaints
- Native wildflower planting/ sowing, to avoid areas looking abandoned and to promote biodiversity
- Vigilance and timeliness to avoid fire risks in dry conditions.

107. Members heard that a citywide audit identified areas in Cardiff to trial for a one-cut regime. This has been implemented, along with a communications campaign to explain the financial and biodiversity benefits to residents. Members heard from several external witnesses, including some Friends Groups, that they would welcome an extension of the reduced mowing regime; Heath Parks Friends Group stated that they felt that another 20% of the park could move to a reduced mowing regime.

108. Officers told Members that reducing mowing further would require the Council to reach a decision on what is felt to be an acceptable level of maintenance and then to ensure an appropriate communication programme with residents to explain the benefits.

109. In terms of reducing costs, reduced mowing would generate some savings but these would be offset by the initial outlay to purchase enough appropriate mowers able to deal with longer grasses. If the aim is to increase biodiversity benefit, then additional machinery will be needed to collect and remove cuttings from site.

Replacing bedding plants with wild flower meadows

110. Officers highlighted that, to generate savings, this would require a significant change to the nature of Parks in Cardiff. Members heard from Friends Groups and wildlife charities that they were supportive of replacing bedding plants with wildflowers, given the biodiversity benefits. There was recognition that this approach would be easier to adopt in less formal parks, such as Hailey Park that already has some wildflower meadows, but Members heard from Roath Parks Friends Group that they would support replacing some of the existing rose-beds¹⁹ with wildflower planting.

111. Sports pitch users that responded to the Inquiry stated that they were content for changes to be made to incorporate wildflower meadows, provided these did not affect sports usage.

Other operational mechanisms

112. Officers explained to Members that some mechanism for reducing costs are not thought to be suitable for Cardiff, either as they have already been tried unsuccessfully or because they require significant change to the service currently provided:

- Replacing annual planting schemes with perennials
- Prioritising maintenance on selected parks only
- Reducing play areas and/ or toilet provision.

Rethinking staffing levels/ costs

113. From studying the Parks budget figures, Members were aware that the Parks Services had already made significant savings by reducing staffing costs, with an

¹⁹ Roath Park Friends Group recognise the need to maintain the memorial rose beds; there are other rose beds that could be changed.

additional £141,000 savings accepted for 2018/19. Staffing savings to date have been achieved by reviewing and reducing management tiers, reducing administrative staff, reducing the number of frontline staff, altering patterns of working, creating roles that are more flexible and increasing volunteering. A review of grounds maintenance working hours was underway at the time of the Inquiry, with a view to creating efficiencies.

114. Members heard from Friends Groups and other external witnesses that the staff reductions to date, in particular in the teams that they interface with the most (rangers and horticultural staff), have had a noticeable impact, with a reduction in horticultural knowledge and expertise, less staff to enforce byelaws, such as dog fouling, and less staff to undertake weekend activities.

115. Witnesses to the Inquiry highlighted that there may be an opportunity to develop further apprenticeship schemes in the Parks Service. The service already runs a number of schemes but does not currently have apprenticeships in the rangers' teams. The RSPB stated that they offer internships and are currently:

'in the early stages of looking into apprenticeships that may be applicable in Cardiff; we would have to investigate this and plan it carefully as we offer high quality placements and we would need to maintain this quality – we would need park ranger input to achieve this successfully. Looking at how best to use the apprenticeship levy.'

116. Officers informed Members that, in their view, a recruitment freeze would not provide a sustainable funding solution; neither would reducing IT and communication systems updates.

PARK RANGERS

117. Members heard that the Council's urban and community park ranger services work with a wide range of groups and volunteers, tackling anti-social behaviour and engaging and inspiring people to enjoy and access their environment. Both teams lever in volunteer hours and funding.

118. All the external witnesses that Members spoke with highlighted the valuable role played by the rangers:

'Their expertise and knowledge is critical to helping visitors make the most of the parks'

'Park rangers know the sites really well and have good links with the Friends Groups'

'Their passion and networking knowledge is immense'

119. The Community Park Rangers take the lead in working with Friends Groups:

Enabling Friends Groups

- Rangers bring the tools and equipment to enable the Friends work to happen – including vans to take away cuttings.
- Rangers schedule the work parties of Friends Groups to ensure they can provide cover and bring the right tools and equipment.
- Rangers help when establishing Friends Groups – need rangers to provide support and guidance to emerging volunteers.
- Rangers come with wealth of knowledge and experience that they share with volunteers, including young people via Welsh Bacalaureate and Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

120. Members heard that the rangers service has led to successful partnership working to maintain and enhance parks, such as the Innovate Trust Green Day's scheme and RSPB gardening volunteer days. It has also led to events being held that raise awareness and generate income, including Buglife Cymru's 'Urban Buzz', RSPB TAPE event and the Wildlife Trust's Pop-Up Garden in Bute Park. The breadth of the rangers work can be seen in the comments below:

'Park Rangers produce event booklets and this has helped us to reach new people.'

'Park rangers are helpful and give advice on walks and permissions and indemnities needed.'

'We work with them to ensure there is no damage to parks/ trees when put in place attractions such as TAPE in Bute Park'.

'Need their input to make corporate volunteer days a success'

'Need them to ensure meaningful opportunities and tasks [for volunteers] – not tokenistic'

121. Several witnesses mentioned that the reduction in park rangers means that the remaining rangers are coping with additional work:

'Sense that they are massively stretched – trying to cover so much – good that can work in partnership with them – can't take over from them but can help and contribute e.g. RHS show garden'

' with the cuts to urban rangers, the community rangers have had to take on more work and they are now overloaded – it is difficult to schedule Friends work, as there are not enough park rangers to cover the number of weekend activities'

122. Several Friends Groups representatives highlighted that, if the ranger service was cut further, Friends Groups would not be able to carry on the work they currently do. They also highlighted that volunteer rangers would be unlikely to work in Cardiff, due to the high level of commitment this would require and the fact that *'Most of the people who already volunteer in Cardiff already volunteer on several things and would not have the time to take on the work involved in doing this.'*

123. Members of the Task Group met with the urban and community park ranger teams and were impressed by their work, knowledge and obvious commitment to their role. Members could see that, following the recent reductions, the remaining officers were working above and beyond the requirements of their roles, in order to meet the shortfall and maintain the high quality of Cardiff's parks.

FRIENDS GROUPS

124. Members invited representatives of Friends Groups to meet with them and tell them about their experiences and views. Members heard how Friends Groups raise monies for their parks and the work they do, adding value and making a difference by their contributions:

Examples of contributions made by Friends Groups:

- Membership/ Subscription fees and donations.
- Bid for and awarded grants, including HLF and those available to charities.
- Huge number of volunteer hours, over 20,000 hours per annum, with work done by work parties.
- Have obtained sponsorship for tree labels
- Grant to fund Bee Friendly plants
- Sourced funding for 250 trees
- Sourced free scalplings for footpaths
- Sell plants and organise walks
- Have improved signage, lighting and access in Cefn Onn.
- Hands on work, such as a sensory garden and wider park and woodland maintenance
- Liaise with other partners, such as Keep Wales Tidy to organise litter picks, and RSPB and Buglife to run wildlife schemes.

125. Friends Groups talked about their experience of membership/ subscription fees, highlighting the need to be inclusive, pitching the fee at a level appropriate to the area where the park is located. Roath Park Friends Group have introduced a 'membership for life' for households, which has proved popular as it means householders do not have to renew every year.

126. Friends Groups highlighted the need to promote membership via Facebook, websites, emails, open days etc. They feel that Cardiff Council could promote their work more clearly on the Council website. Whilst information is available on the website, it requires clicking through four levels; Friends Groups would like there to be a tab straight under the Parks heading and for the information to include photographs and videos of the work undertaken.

127. In terms of generating more income, Roath Park Friends Group highlighted that, by becoming a charity, they have been able to access more sources of funding. Other Friends Groups stated that, by having a Green Flag, they are able to access a broader range of grants. Many of the Friends Groups access C3SC courses on finding and applying for grants and share information with one another, via the Friends Forum. However, they stressed that searching for and applying for appropriate funding is time-consuming and bureaucratic; whilst rangers assist where they can, Friends Groups are aware of their heavy workloads and would welcome more support from other parts of the Council if this was available.

128. Friends Groups representatives also highlighted that they would be willing to take on more complex work to free up resources but recognised that they would need some training to be able to do this and would still require staff support, at least initially.

SPORTS PITCHES IN PARKS

129. Cardiff Council's outdoor sports provision includes the following pitches in parks:

- 81 Full sized Football Pitches
- 37 Full sized Rugby Pitches
- 42 Mini Football Pitches
- 11 Cricket Tables
- 35 Baseball Diamonds

130. The Council charges sports pitch users in return for maintaining sports pitches to a 'fit for purpose' standard in order that fixtures can be played. Members heard that there has been a freeze on pitch hire charges for the last three years, with mini and youth pitch hire being free since 2012/13; this freeze in charges is continued into 2018/19.

131. In addition, the Council has responsibility for maintaining associated pavilions and changing rooms; Members heard that there is a £2 million backlog of repairs. In 2017/18 and 2018/19, there has been some investment to address this, with recognition that more works are needed.

132. Members heard that, using grant funding and/ or section 106 monies, new 3G pitches have been provided at Heath Park, Trelai Park, Grange Gardens and The Marl, in Grangetown.

133. Members heard that a review of sports pitches has led to a rationalisation of provision and the introduction of various alternative delivery mechanisms, which has reduced the number of venues managed. This includes:

- The development of a hub for cricket provision within the City Centre Parklands, at Blackweir/Pontcanna & Llandaff Fields, and the removal of satellite sites e.g. Caedelyn Park and Riverside Playing Fields.
- The total closure of sites / changing pavilions, e.g. Heol y Delyn, Sanatorium Road Playing Fields and Greenway Recreation Ground.
- Key holder agreements being established across a wide range of sites, which have secured savings e.g. Cath Cob Recreation Ground, Riverside Playing Fields, Rumney Recreation Ground, Waterhall Park, Poplar Park, Sevenoaks Park, Jubilee Park, Canal Park and Thornhill Recreation Ground.

134. Members heard that a typical winter weekend fixture programme can exceed 7,000 participants with an estimated 210, 000 participants per year. This demonstrates that sports pitch users are a key user of Cardiff's parks and open spaces and, as such, Members sought their views on how best the Council can work to improve the sustainability of funding for Parks, in a time of austerity. A survey was emailed to sport pitch user representative groups, with responses received from Cardiff University, Cardiff Combination Football League (Adult) and Chairperson of Pontprennau Pumas Junior and Mini Football Club, Llandaff RFC and Rhiwbina RFC.
135. Respondents to the survey gave their views on possible operational changes, such as reducing grass cutting, changing planting displays, changing horticultural standards, as well as their views on ways of generating income from Parks. These responses are incorporated in the relevant sections of this report; in summary, respondents stated that they were open to operational changes and/ or income generation as long as these did not interfere with or adversely affect the usage of sports pitches and that there was discussion with them prior to any changes being introduced.
136. Respondents to the survey also gave their views on how they felt the Council could reduce the costs of managing and maintaining sports pitches and Parks in general. Several respondents mentioned that they would be interested in holding conversations with the Council about having either a key holder agreement, lease or asset transfer arrangement. Members heard that key holder agreements are useful for single use pitches, as is asset transfer; for multi-use sites, it is possible to use leases, although care needs to be taken regarding disposal of public space rules and regulations. These arrangements can help sports organisations to access funding and increase the chance of investment in pitches and facilities.
137. With regard to increasing hire charges, respondents highlighted the difficulty in doing this given the poor condition of changing rooms and facilities and competition from other providers. Several external sports organisations suggested introducing charges for junior sports groups that use pitches.
138. Finally, some respondents stated that they would welcome dialogue with the Council regarding how best to address the poor condition of changing rooms and facilities.

INQUIRY METHODOLOGY

M1. The Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee applies a project management approach to its inquiries; including mechanisms to consistently prioritise topics suggested for scrutiny, scoping reports and project plans. The aim of these is to ensure there is a dialogue with the services involved in the scrutiny process with the ultimate aim of improving overall service delivery and enabling effective scrutiny.

M2. Members held four meetings to hear from the following Council officer witnesses:

- Councillor Peter Bradbury – Cabinet Member (Culture & Leisure)
- Jon Maidment – OM Parks, Sports and Harbour Authority
- Rosie James – Principal Landscape Officer
- Kathryn Richards – Head of Culture, Venues and Events
- Helen Thomas – Strategic Estates Manager
- Steve Morris – Parks and Sports Development Manager
- Urban Park Rangers Team
- Community Park Rangers Team

M3. Members also held four meetings to hear from the following external witnesses:

- Steve Bool – Heath Park Friends Group & Chair of Friends Forum
- Penny Bowers – Hailey Park Friends Group
- Gerald Bradnum – Roath Park Friends Group
- Tony Cousins – Cefn Onn Friends Group and Coed y Felin Friends Group
- Lucy Curtis – Innovate Trust Green Days project manager
- David Hughes – Roath Park Friends Group
- Daniel Jenkins-Jones – RSPB
- Rose Revera – Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales
- Carolyn Robertson – RSPB.

M4. Members invited written submissions from partner wildlife organisations and sports pitch users and received responses from the following:

- Buglife Cymru
- Cardiff Civic Society
- Cardiff University – Sports Development Officer
- Cardiff Combination Football League (Adult) and Chairperson of Pontprennau Pumas Junior and Mini Football Club.
- Llandaff Fields Hub Committee
- Llandaff RFC

- Rhiwbina RFC.

M5. In order to inform the Inquiry, desk-based research was undertaken into Income Generation and Cost Reduction approaches taken elsewhere in England and Wales, as well as other mechanisms being used with regards to creating alternative approaches to funding parks. A review of approaches taken in the United States of America and Australia was also undertaken and used to identify areas to explore with witnesses and via desk based research. The desk based research, coupled with evidence from internal and external witnesses, was used to identify suitable findings from the Inquiry.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without modification. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet / Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal power of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. standing orders and financial regulations; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To scrutinise, measure and actively promote improvement in the Council's performance in the provision of services and compliance with Council policies, aims and objectives in the area of economic regeneration.
 - Cardiff City Region City Deal
 - Inward Investment and the marketing of Cardiff
 - South East Wales Economic Forum
 - Economic Strategy & Employment
 - European Funding & Investment
 - Small to Medium Enterprise Support
 - Cardiff Harbour Authority
 - Lifelong Learning
 - Leisure Centres
 - Sports Development
 - Parks & Green Spaces
 - Libraries, Arts & Culture
 - Civic Buildings
 - Events & Tourism
 - Strategic Projects
 - Innovation & Technology Centres
 - Local Training & Enterprise

- To assess the impact of partnerships with and resources and services provided by external organisations including the Welsh Government, joint local government services, Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies and quasi-departmental non-governmental bodies on the effectiveness of Council service delivery.

- To report to an appropriate Cabinet or Council meeting on its findings and to make recommendations on measures, which may enhance Council performance or service delivery in this area.

Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee Membership



Councillor Nigel Howells
(Chairperson)



Councillor Saeed Ebrahim



Councillor Iona Gordon



Councillor Gavin Hill-John



Councillor Thomas Parkhill



Councillor Adrian Robson



Councillor Adbdul Sattar



Councillor Ed Stubbs

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