

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SAFETY IN PARKS

CULTURE & LEISURE (COUNCILLOR PETER BRADBURY)

AGENDA ITEM: 4

Reason for this Report

1. To update Cabinet on current activity and future plans in response to a motion passed at the Council meeting on 21st October 2021.

Background

2. The motion passed called on the Council to bring forward a report within four months of the meeting, requesting Cabinet to;
 - Continue to look at ways during the budget process to increase funding in park safety and support staff and Friends Groups going forward.
 - Consideration of a policy on where and when it is appropriate to continue to introduce lighting in parks, and what consultation would be undertaken to identify any paths that need lighting.
 - Consideration of whether when serious vandalism occurs in parks the Council should, after seeking advice from the Police, offer a reward, where appropriate for information which leads to arrests.
 - Proposals to undertake a meaningful consultation with local communities on whether or not to return to locking parks at night.
3. The Council recognises the important role that its parks and green spaces play in the environmental, economic, and social well-being of our city and the contribution that they make to the health agenda. The benefits of health and social factors have been very evident throughout the pandemic.
4. Our residents tell us that they love Cardiff's parks and green spaces, and Capital Ambition sets out the Council's commitment to work in partnership with communities and public sector partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. The role of communities in the management and development of our parks and green spaces is also recognised, underlined by a

commitment to grow, and support the network of 'Friends of Parks' and volunteer groups.

Community Engagement

5. Community Engagement in parks is led by the Council's Community Park Ranger Team. The team perform a wide and diverse role part of which is the support of the Council's network of constituted Friends Groups and the volunteer workforce. The Community Park Ranger Team have management responsibility for 65 Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC's), 11 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), 4 Local Nature Reserves, 2 Country Parks and 1 Designated European Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The team is also responsible for the management of the Council's Woodlands which extends to 256 hectares, Roath Park Conservatory and is engaged in service level agreements with internal stakeholders for the delivery of services which include the day-to-day operation of the Radyr Weir Hydro Scheme and management of the Cardiff Bay Wetlands and Timber Recycling function on behalf of Cardiff Harbour Authority.
6. The service operates on a shift basis, seven days a week, to meet service demand. The current staffing establishment stands at 12.4 FTE. The team is led by a Conservation & Community Development Manager, supported by a group of 5.4 FTE Community Park Rangers, 2 FTE Countryside Rangers, 2 FTE Woodland Rangers, all of which are base budget funded. A Trainee Community Park Ranger post was created in 2021/22, over a three-year term, aligned to the workforce and succession plan for the service, this post is funded through external grant sources.
7. The service also hosts the Local Nature Partnership, and a Co-ordinator post is currently funded up until 31st March 2022, through grants allocated under the Welsh Governments Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being Scheme (ENRaW) and the Local Places for Nature grant scheme and via the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). Discussions between the Council and the WCVA about grant funding for 2022/23 and beyond are on-going.
8. Partnership working is fully embedded within the Community Park Ranger service and in addition to the support provided to the network of constituted and emerging Friends Groups and volunteers there is a broad range of mainstream work activity with a wide and diverse range of organisations. Details of the constituted and emerging Friends Groups, which totals twenty-nine is set out in Appendix A and details of organisations that the service partners with, which totals thirty-two together with the purpose / activity is set out in Appendix B.
9. Project management and development is central to the role of the service who act as applicant, partner organisation and support grant applications made by third parties. Appendix C details the live projects that the service is currently engaged in, their purpose, value, and the lead organisation / grant recipient. The total value of current live projects exceeds £1,600,000.

10. The number of volunteer hours that the service generates is significant, in 2017/18 this stood at 17,149 and in 2018/19 the number of hours increased to 20,488. In 2019/20 19,111 hours were recorded, the onset of the pandemic contributed to a reduction when compared to the previous financial year, with much reduced activity in the final quarter when take up decreased owing to the impacts of the pandemic. In monetary terms the value of volunteer hours for 2019/20 when applying the National Living Wage equated to £157k.
11. It is important to recognise that the work of constituted Friends Groups and volunteers can not only improve the local environmental quality but can also engender a sense of ownership which can lead to reductions in vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
12. Emerging from the pandemic there is an increasing interest from individuals in participating in volunteering activities. This has been highlighted recently through the Coed Caerdydd project, public consultation exercise which closed in October 2021 and resulted in 554 expressions of interest in getting involved in tree planting and aftercare. The extent to which volunteering and wider community engagement places maximum demand on the service will be determined by the recovery from the pandemic.
13. The Council's Parks Service has also been active in supporting volunteering and work experience opportunities for individuals within the homeless community. While the Pandemic has had an impact on participation in this area, there is an opportunity to build on the work undertaken to date and widen opportunities through the recovery process.
14. There is also a significant and growing interest in the nature agenda, this is evidenced by the declaration by Welsh Government of a nature emergency in June 2021 and followed by that of Cardiff Council in November 2021. The Council's Community Park Ranger services are the Council's service delivery lead in this area and are critical to the response required to the halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity.

Safety In Parks

15. The responsibility for ensuring the safety and enjoyment of the Council's parks and public open space provision rests with the Urban Park Ranger service. This service also operates on a seven days a week basis, to meet service demand.
16. The Urban Park Ranger service performs a wide range of functions that include patrolling, byelaw enforcement, litter collection and graffiti clearance, visual playground inspections and repairs, emergency call out, delivering public awareness and engagement events, liaison with the Council's Community Engagement and Partnerships Team, Outreach Team in Housing & Communities and liaison with South Wales Police, South Wales Ambulance Service and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

17. The importance and value of our parks and green spaces has become very evident during the pandemic, as has the role of the Urban Park Rangers who, are the readily identifiable front facing members of staff present in our parks. From the onset of pandemic, the Council's Urban Park Rangers developed closer working relationships with South Wales Police which resulted in enhanced sharing of information / intelligence and the establishment of joint patrolling and enforcement activity linked to the identification of hot spot areas across the city.
18. In recognition of the important role that the Urban Park Ranger service plays, permanent base budget revenue growth of £112k was allocated for the financial year 2021/22 and this has enabled the creation of four new posts raising the staffing establishment to 14 FTE. The establishment comprises of four supervisors, one of which is in a senior role, and who take responsibility for leading daily shifts on a rotational basis. The remaining structure comprises of 9 Urban Park Rangers and 1 Trainee Urban Park Ranger post on a three year - fixed term basis, aligned to the workforce and succession plan for the service.
19. Although the service operates on a peripatetic model, the increase in FTE has enabled enhanced locality working and whereby at a supervisory level, officers now have responsibility for geographical areas of the city aligned to the seven South Wales Police sector areas.

Issues

20. Parks provide a quiet environment for residents, free from the traffic, infrastructure, and busy day-to-day life prevalent across the remainder of the city. However, it is recognised this environment can also provide opportunities and space for anti-social behaviour and criminal activity outside the line of sight of residents, particularly after dark. Evidence suggests parks situated closer to the city centre will also be more at risk to the challenges of anti-social behaviour and crime linked to the night-time economy.
21. Recent events and acts of anti-social behaviour / criminal activity in Bute Park, other areas of parkland within Cardiff and elsewhere throughout the United Kingdom have given rise to concerns from users and have resulted in requests for lighting to be installed. The provision of lighting can improve safety and increase confidence for after dark / night-time users.
22. A multi-agency Task and Finish Group has been established in order to address the concerns held about safety in Bute Park, a wide range of actions have been taken and others are planned, which include.
 - Installation of CCTV Cameras (Scheduled for January 2022)
 - Installation of CCTV by the proprietors of Pettigrew Team Rooms
 - Establishment of the Pettigrew Team Rooms as a designated 'Safe Space' under the Safe Spaces Initiative, a partnership with FOR

Cardiff and businesses across the city and whereby anyone feeling intimidated, at risk or scared can take refuge.

- The delivery of public awareness events in partnership with South Wales Police promoting the safety of women and girls and the 'Lives Not Knives', anti-knife campaign.
 - The relaunch of and campaign to increase the membership and activity of the Friends of Bute Park group which has resulted in 41 new individuals joining the organisation from July 2021. The group have been undertaking vegetation management works within anti-social behaviour hotspot areas over the autumn / winter period.
 - The Cuppa with a Copper Initiative that has seen four sessions held since August 2021. The sessions which are publicised through social media channels by the Council and South Wales Police are rotated at park café venues and are designed for the sharing of information and intelligence. The sessions are led by South Wales Police, the Bute Park Ranger is also in attendance.
 - Options for anti-social behaviour detectors are being explored to address anti-social paraphernalia hotspots in the park.
23. Current lighting provision in our parks and wider green corridors is limited to 31 named sites from a total of 503, covering an estimated 10,090 linear meters from an estimated total of 150 linear kilometres, equating to 6.7% of provision.
24. The majority of lighting provided is whereby adopted highway paths cross parkland and feature as part of wider street lighting infrastructure. Only one park, Gorsedd Gardens, in the Cathays ward benefits from full lighting.
25. The Council's Community Safety Team and South Wales Police have been successful in securing Safer Street funding from the Home Office and £432k has been secured in the current financial year to support targeted provision in Butetown and Grangetown, linked to crime prevention. Provision for lighting in parks does not meet the current grant criteria, however future funding rounds may bring opportunities for such provision.
26. There are a number of factors that impact on the Council's ability to increase lighting provision within its parks and green spaces, these include capital and on-going revenue expenditure, the availability of existing infrastructure in the form of a ducted power supply, the presence of mature trees and their extensive root systems and negative impacts on wildlife and their habitats.
27. A scheme is being developed by the Transport Planning Policy & Strategy Group, within the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate and as part of the development of the Cycle Superhighways Programme. The scheme under Active Travel funding sees proposals for the installation of

lighting linked to the upgrading of Cycleway 4 which extends from Sophia Gardens, through Pontcanna Fields, along the River Taff to North Cardiff.

28. Integral to the development of the proposals above will be an assessment of the environmental impacts on the parkland that the route plans to transverse. The Transport and Infrastructure arm of WSP UK limited have been commissioned as lighting design consultants for the scheme and are determining options for provision. The work being undertaken and learning gained can be used to inform future policy and design.
29. The Council recognises the importance of public safety and is supportive of the introduction of lighting schemes, particularly for active travel, relating to commuter routes through its parks and green spaces and areas of high footfall. In considering a policy on where and when it is appropriate to continue to introduce lighting into parks the key factors for determination should be.
 - Level of use (Frequency, Duration and Total Use Metrics)
 - Type of use (Purpose & Demographic)
 - Connectivity (Neighbourhood & City Wide)
 - Environmental Impacts
 - Equality Impacts
 - Management Information (Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour Statistics)
 - Condition Assessment of Existing Infrastructure
 - Future Proofing
30. Consultation will also be a key feature, internally and externally involving local communities, local and city-wide stakeholder groups and agencies.
31. The motion called on the Council to consider whether when serious vandalism occurs in parks and, after seeking advice from the Police, offer a reward, where appropriate for information which leads to arrests.
32. Current arrangements see South Wales Police through Crimestoppers, formerly the Community Action Trust offering rewards for information and intelligence which leads to the arrest and conviction of individuals and in relation to serious crime. This is a well-established partnership arrangement and enables people to come forward anonymously with information in the fight against crime and the protection of local communities.
33. It is not commonplace for Local Authorities to offer rewards, however there are no restrictions that prevent them from doing so. The merits of such a scheme are not self-evident and may raise issues as to the integrity and validity of information provided. There is, at present, no budget allocation for such a provision.
34. The motion also called on the Council to undertake meaningful consultation with local communities on whether or not to return to locking parks at night.

35. At present there are two sites that have not returned to a park locking regime post pandemic, Parc Cefn Onn in the Lisvane Ward and Roath Park in the Cyncoed Ward (inclusive of Roath Pleasure Gardens in the Plasnewydd Ward).
36. Community engagement in park locking exists and, over time a number of Park Watch Groups have been established in partnership with the Council, whereby by constituted Friends of Groups and individual volunteers undertake unlocking and locking activity. This activity is supported by the Urban Park Ranger Service and, at present eleven groups are in operation, across the city.
37. In light of the motion, it is proposed that a consultation exercise involving the users / stakeholders and local ward member in Lisvane, in respect of Parc Cefn Onn and the local ward members for Cyncoed and Plasnewydd for Roath Park and Roath Pleasure Gardens, respectively is conducted in February 2022.
38. Management capacity within the Park Ranger service has reduced over time. A Parks Community Liaison Officer post and an Anti-Social Behaviour Case Worker post were held on establishment but were deleted in financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11, respectively, as a consequence of savings targets at the time.
39. It is recognised that any new resource demands linked to community engagement and safety in parks, will apply further pressure on budget provision which is already subject to significant constraint.
40. In addition to the demand factors as set out within this report that have potential to impact on budget, there are further current and emerging budget pressures within the parks service.
41. A sum of £50k, through Financial Resilience Monies was allocated in the 2020/21 financial year, to address the challenge that Ash Die (Hymenoscyphus fraxiineus), the most significant tree disease to affect the United Kingdom since Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970's, poses. An Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP) is in development and the funding made available will enable the progression of a risk based and targeted programme for the removal of diseased trees.
42. The replanting costs associated with the ADAP can be mitigated to a certain extent through Coed Caerdydd project funding. However, its completion and implementation will still represent a significant financial pressure. One-off external funding via the Welsh Government Green Infrastructure Grant was secured in 2020/21, to support the purchase of arboricultural plant used in felling operations, however there are no current external funding streams available to support investment or delivery of the ADAP.
43. The potential consequences of Ash Die Back, current controls and management actions are captured on the risk register for the Economic Development Directorate.

44. A further emerging pressure that impacts on a number of areas across the Council, including the parks, highways and housing service relates to the treatment of weeds throughout its estate. Early indications from the Council's specialist weed control contractor suggest an increase in the costs of herbicides employed. The value of the increase has yet to be determined, however it is anticipated that it will be significantly in excess of inflation.
45. Consideration of reducing demand / service provision in other parts of the parks service, to mitigate demand in the areas set out within this report may need to be considered.
46. Critical to achieving savings elsewhere within the service, through staffing reductions and reductions in transport related expenditure, will be the removal of features that generate demand, including shrub beds, hedges, and spring / summer bedding displays.
47. The Council continues to be active in identifying and securing external funding that supports community engagement and safety in its parks. Such opportunities are, in the main project based, over a fixed term and do not support on-going revenue expenditure, particularly mainstream staffing.

Scrutiny Consideration

48. The Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee are due to consider this item on 19 January 2022. Any comments received will be circulated at the Cabinet meeting.

Reason for Recommendations

49. To respond to the items included within the motion passed at the Council Meeting on 21st October 2021.

Financial Implications

50. The report updates on activity relating to community engagement and safety in parks. Additional financial implications are not identified but reference is made to various budget pressures within the service and budget constraints in taking any new proposals forward.
51. This may partly be addressed through external grant funding opportunities which will be actively sought, but these are not confirmed at this time. In addition, the service will look to identify potential efficiencies to release revenue funding and mitigate against existing and future pressures.
52. The existing revenue budget for the Parks service is £5.8 million which currently supports a total establishment of 140 FTEs.

Legal Implications

53. The Public Health Act 1875, Open Spaces Act 1906, and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provides Local Authorities with wide powers to provide facilities to maintain and manage its recreation grounds and public open spaces. Furthermore, local authorities now have a general power of competence under s.24 of the Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021 do anything which an individual may do. This power enables the Council to do something for the benefit of the authority, its area, or person present or residing in its area in any way whatsoever, subject to the limitations in the Act. Where the authority proposes to undertake consultation, it raises a legitimate expectation that such consultation will be carried out on all the issues relating to the matters raised, and in a proper manner.
54. The decision about these recommendations has to be made in the context of the Council's public sector equality duties. The Council also has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, Councils must in making decisions have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics. The Protected characteristics are age, gender reassignment, sex, race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion, or belief – including lack of belief.
55. When taking strategic decisions, the Council also has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage ('the Socio-Economic Duty' imposed under section 1 of the Equality Act 2010). In considering this, the Council must take into account the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers ([WG42004 A More Equal Wales The Socio-economic Duty Equality Act 2010 \(gov.wales\)](#)) and must be able to demonstrate how it has discharged its duty.
56. An Equalities Impact Assessment aims to identify the equalities implications of any proposed decision arising from this report, including inequalities arising from socio-economic disadvantage, and due regard should be given to the outcomes of the Equalities Impact Assessment.
57. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ("the Act") places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales – a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and is globally responsible.
58. In discharging its duties under the Act, the Council has set, and published wellbeing objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the national wellbeing goals. The wellbeing objectives are set out in Cardiff's Corporate Plan 2018-21:

<http://cmsprd.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Corporate-Plan/Documents/Corporate%20Plan%202018-21.pdf>

59. The wellbeing duty also requires the Council to act in accordance with 'sustainable development principle'. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Council decision makers must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, the Council must:

- Look to the long term.
- Focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems.
- Deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well-being goals.
- Work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions.
- Involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them.

The decision maker must be satisfied that the proposed decision accords with the principles above; and due regard must be given to the Statutory Guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers, which is accessible using the link below:

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/statutory-guidance/?lang=en>

60. The Council has to be mindful of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards when making any policy decisions and consider the impact upon the Welsh language, the report, and Equality Impact Assessment deals with all these obligations. The Council has to consider the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how this strategy may improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales.

HR Implications

61. Any proposals to review the staffing establishment to address capacity will be subject to the usual processes which include the application of the Council's Job Evaluation, post creation and recruitment processes. Where appropriate trade union consultation will be required.

Property Implications

55. There are no specific property implications in respect of the Community Engagement & Safety in Parks report. Where there are any property transactions or valuations required to deliver any proposals, they should be done so in accordance with the Council's Asset Management process and in consultation with Strategic Estates and relevant service areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the current activity, projects and plans relating to community engagement and safety in parks, as detailed within the report.
2. Note the content of the report and consider as part of the 2022/23 budget proposals.
3. Through the work being undertaken on the Cycle Superhighways Programme and the learning and operational experience gained from the Cycleway 4 project, authorise officers to develop a policy and design guide document to inform the future provision of lighting in parks.
4. Through Welsh Government Active Travel Funding, authorise officers to continue to submit bids that provide lighting in our parks.
5. Authorise officers to conduct a consultation exercise for the return of a locking regime for Roath Park, inclusive of Roath Pleasure Gardens and Parc Cefn Onn.

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Neil Hanratty Director of Economic Development
	14 January 2022

The following appendices are attached:

Appendix A - Parks Friends Of Groups

Appendix B - Community Park Ranger Service – Partner Organisations

Appendix C – Community Park Ranger Service – Live Projects