

18th March 2015

Environment Committee

**Parks Management Plans – King George’s Playing Fields,
Hutton Recreation Ground, Warley Playing Fields and
Bishops Hall Park**

Report of: *Stuart Anderson – Service Co-ordinator – Parks, Countryside,
Cemeteries & Open Spaces*

Wards Affected: *Hutton North, Brentwood South, Pilgrims Hatch, Warley*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is facing an unprecedented set of challenges. The cuts in funding and the need to reduce expenditure increases the need to review the way in which we deliver our services, and how these can be done more efficiently, but still meet customer expectations.
- 1.2 The parks and open spaces within Brentwood are without doubt some of the most highly regarded assets operated by the Council and to ensure they are not only safe to use but also well maintained it is important that there is a focused forward thinking plan in place to direct resources and highlight areas for improvements within them.
- 1.3 The provision of management plans with structured programmes for improvements for the formal open spaces will help Officers to focus and direct resources where they are needed, manage resident expectation with regard to future provision and improvements and also ensure that value for money is obtained with the works undertaken.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members approve the management plans, including works programmes, for King George’s Playing Fields, Hutton Recreation Ground, Warley Playing Fields and Bishops Hall Park.**
- 2.2 That Members delegate authority to the Head of Street Scene, Chair of Committee and in consultation with Ward Members to instigate new working practices and efficiency savings in the provision of services for football and bowls in the borough.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The Council is responsible for 15 parks, playing fields or other significant open space around the Borough.
- 3.2 The responsibilities of the Council in this area cover a wide range of features including day to day maintenance and management in addition to the long term strategic management of the sites.
- 3.3 At present there is little in the way of documented forward planning for the management of the parks and open spaces other than the Open Space Strategy, however this document failed to address site specific works that were required and focused on high level management.
- 3.4 The intention of the management plans is to identify required works and improvements to specific sites and also opportunities for either reductions in expenditure or to exploit the best use of the space and facilities within the parks and open space estate i.e. rationalisation of sports provision.
- 3.5 In addition to this the management plans will offer the opportunity for Officers to look at where resources are directed against set service standards i.e. frequency of grass cutting and to identify where partnership working may offer savings both long and short term. A good example of this is where Brentwood Rugby Football Club has taken a lease on four sports pitches at King George's Playing Fields. This agreement has not only allowed the club to access additional funding in the form of a £50,000 grant from Sport England but has also allowed enhanced maintenance to be carried out that would not have been possible within the resources of the Council. These forms of arrangements should be embraced and expanded to other clubs such as football and bowls to make best use of resources and also to release any potential savings by operating in a different model.
- 3.6 The management plans have been written following the guidance and best practice of the Green Flag Award Scheme and as such would allow sites to be entered into the programme if it was felt it offered a tangible enhancement to the profile of the site, service or reputation of the Council.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The proposal is for the Council to adopt the attached management plans and to continue to develop management plans for other key sites around the Borough.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 So that a robust and forward planning strategy can be put in place for the management of the parks and open spaces ensuring they are fit for purpose and safe for users.
- 5.2 Ensure that management plans are in place to allow robust and realistic budget setting to take place to ensure resources are allocated when and where they are needed.
- 5.3 To allow for opportunities to be identified to generate additional income or to rationalise the use of the Councils parks estate and the manner in which it is used to ensure maximum income is obtained whilst utilising the available resources i.e. sports turf provision.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 No consultation has been carried out regarding these management plans.

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 Street Scene and Environment - a clean, green and pleasant Borough.
- 7.2 Localism – to continue to work with established community groups in the parks to aid in their improvements and enhancement.
- 7.3 A Prosperous Borough – identifying where new working partnerships can be utilised involving both commercial and voluntary organisations.
- 7.4 Housing, Health and Wellbeing – ensuring parks and open spaces are inviting and usable for both social recreation but also for organised sport in promoting healthy living.
- 7.5 A Safe Borough – To ensure that sites are safe to use, free of crime and anti-social behaviour and create an inviting family environment.
- 7.6 A Modern Council – To support Officers in developing new working practices utilising latest techniques, equipment and nationally recognised practices.

8. Financial Implications

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- 8.1 The recommendations will improve the budget forecasting of the service and provide a driver to identify potential efficiencies and savings.

Legal Implications

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- 8.2 None directly arising from this report.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 8.3 The maintenance works/capital improvements identified in the management plans will ensure the ongoing improvement and maintenance and management of the site.
- 8.4 They also identify health and safety issue such as maintenance of footpaths and roadways along with asset management i.e. capital improvements to parking surfaces etc providing an improved valuation of the facility both monetary and also in public perception.

9. **Background Papers** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

None

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Draft management plans for King George's Playing Fields,
Appendix B - Draft management plans for Hutton Recreation Ground,
Appendix C - Draft management plans for Warley Playing Fields
Appendix D - Draft management plans for Bishops Hall Park.

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