

REPORT FROM: Neighbourhood Services Manager

TO: West Craven Committee

DATE: 10TH May 2016

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FOR INFORMATION

Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces Update

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of current Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces work and upcoming plans/developments for West Craven.

ISSUE

To keep members up to date on what is going on in terms of Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Green Spaces, we provide six monthly reports to all Area Committee's detailing current work in addition to outlining future plans and proposed developments.

The Green Spaces section of Neighbourhood Services provides strategic, outreach and developmental work in relation to Parks, Playing Fields, Local Nature Reserves, Play Facilities, Countryside Access and Open Spaces. We continue to work closely with Environmental Services, in particular the Landscape Maintenance section to ensure that the above sites/areas are managed and maintained proactively and in line with strategic aims and objectives in general.

The report provides detail on generic Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces related work that impacts all area committees across Pendle in addition to West Craven specific developments/issues. This list is not exhaustive of all work ongoing but highlights the most significant ones at this present time.

Park Keeper Service

Unfortunately, one of the Park Keeper's, John Harper, left the authority in mid-January and as such we have been down to only the Senior Park Keeper and one Park Keeper. This has made life difficult in terms of having a presence in our Parks from the Service.

We have recently advertised for a new Park Keeper and successfully appointed Marcus Orrell who started work in early May. We are extremely happy with him and feel that he will be a fantastic addition to the team in terms of bringing in new ideas and continuing to work alongside the many volunteer groups we work with across our green space sites.

Local Nature Reserves (LNR's), Environmental Action Group (EAG) and Japanese Knotweed

LNR's come under the remit of Neighbourhood Services and as such we are endeavouring to take a more proactive approach in terms of supporting the LNR's and their respective Friends Groups and strategically managing and maintaining the LNR's in co-ordination with these groups.

We have met with all the individual LNR Friends Groups/representatives and have established a good working relationship with them over the last 12 months. The Senior Park Keeper attends individual group meetings in addition to the quarterly LNR Steering group meeting.

Annual budgets (be it fairly minimal) have been put in place for each LNR (starting from April 2016). These have been taken out of existing overall Parks budgets and are not new budgets.

The treatment and monitoring of Japanese Knotweed is undertaken by the EAG. A map has now been produced highlighting all known cases of knotweed (Public and privately owned) in Pendle. We have written to all private landowners informing them of their legal requirement to deal with knotweed on their land. A number of these have replied asking us to treat the knotweed on their land. We are still waiting on a few to come back to us.

We are also dealing with knotweed that needs to be treated in Burnley located on the border of Burnley and Pendle. The water course crosses over in to Burnley then meanders back in to Pendle. This will need treating as untreated areas can affect the effectiveness of land further downstream (in Pendle) that have been treated. We are working in co-ordination with Burnley Council to treat these areas with a view to producing a comprehensive list of knotweed treatments for 2016/17. The treatment of new and existing sites will start in earnest in May and will continue through to October.

Pennine Lancashire Playing Pitch Strategy

Three Pennine Lancashire Authorities (Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale) have come together to develop a joint Playing Pitch Strategy. The primary purpose of the Playing Pitch Strategy is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of outdoor playing pitches meet the local needs of existing and future residents within the three Local Authorities areas.

The Strategy document, associated assessment report and GIS Map have now been completed. The Strategy is scheduled to go out to public consultation soon and will last approximately 6 weeks.

Once the consultation has been done and any necessary changes made, we are hopeful that the Strategy will be approved and ratified by September 2016.

Green Flag Awards

The Council has 8 Green Flag Parks in Pendle with one of these being in Barnoldswick. This is:

- Valley Gardens (The Park has held the award for 7 years)

Applications for this year were submitted at the end of January 2016. As Valley Gardens was formally judged in 2015, it will be mystery shopped this year.

Steven Burke Sports Hub - Phase Two

We continue to work with Cycle Sport Pendle (CSP) and representatives of a local BMX Group on a potential phase two for the Steven Burke Sports Hub. Revised draft plans for phase two will include the development of a BMX Pump Track through the refurbishment of the existing off-road track, a multi-purpose tarmac area that can be used as car parking for the Cycle track and/or the new Pump track, for events and as a safe bike skills learning area for toddlers and young children. In addition, some access/traffic movement improvements have been included, e.g. passing places.

The estimated costings for phase 2 currently come in at circa £125,000.

Reports containing information on phase 2 and asking for member's approval/support of the scheme in addition to a £2,000 contribution towards the Council's match funding pot have been taken to Nelson and Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee's. Nelson Committee resolved that the proposed plans be approved and supported and that subject to match funding from Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee £2000 be allocated from their 2015/16 Capital Programme.

Initially, Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee approved the proposals in principle but could not commit £2000 towards the match funding pot as they only had £300 left in their Capital Programme but a further report was taken to the March 2016 Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee where they agreed to commit £2,000 towards the project from their 2016/17 Capital Programme. As such, we are hopeful that Nelson Committee will allocate the promised (albeit from last year's budget) £2,000 from this year's budget.

We were aware that although some consultation had been undertaken with local people this had been mainly with the local cycling fraternity (who are obviously keen on this proposed facility). As such, we carried out some further public consultation during January and February 2016 in the form of hard copy surveys and online questionnaires. This was for anyone to comment on and put forward their views but in order to ensure that local people who would be directly affected by this development were consulted, we also produced, printed and delivered approx. 350 paper based questionnaires to residents in Barrowford and the Bradley Ward in Nelson (who live within close proximity to the proposed facility).

Approximately 1,500 A5 leaflets were also delivered to a significant number of properties in Barrowford and Nelson. We obtained a very good response with 192 people completing surveys. The majority of people (178) who responded were in favour of the proposals with only a small number (13) against it. A short analysis report was produced and has been used to hone the plan/scheme in addition to it being used as evidence for funding bids in the future that appropriate consultation has taken place.

We are now looking to submit a number of funding bids over the next 6-9 months to potential funders such as:

- Lancashire Environmental Fund
- BIFFA
- Sport England
- Big Local (Bradley)
- British Cycling

In view of the transfer of services (which may include Parks and Sports facilities in future years) to Town/Parish Councils and the fact that the Council is trying to reduce costs, senior management have intimated that the future governance of the proposed facility (and indeed the existing cycle track) by an 'independent group' should be considered.

Subsequently, we will endeavour to start looking at potential options, e.g. Social Enterprise, Cycle

Development Pendle Partnership (CDPP) taking on the whole facility, etc. that could be pursued in terms of the future management of Phase 2 and the existing cycle track at Swinden.

Victory Park

A new defibrillator has been installed in the Park. The code accessible cabinet is located on the external façade of the Clubhouse building near to the public toilets. The Council worked in partnership with Barnoldswick Town Football Club, the North West Ambulance Service (NWS) and Barnoldswick Town Council to provide this valuable life-saving resource.

The NWS kindly delivered a 'how to use a defibrillator'/general CPR training session to local Sports Clubs/Teams and other people that were interested at Barnoldswick Town's Clubhouse on the 22nd April. Approximately 40 people attended this session.

There was also an article, including a photo of representatives from Barnoldswick Town and the Town Council, in the Leader Times Series on the 22nd April about the new defibrillator in the Park in addition to the new one at John Bradley Playing Fields in Brierfield.

Neighbourhood Services will manage and monitor the defibrillator in the long term to ensure that it is working to full capacity and ready to use if needed.

In the last update, repair works ordered for the Wheels Park were detailed. These repairs were supposed to take place in November 2015 but due to a number of issues, mainly conditions not being suitable to carry out the work (as the weather was very wet over the Winter) and the specialist contractor undertaking the works based in Dorset the work was not completed until mid-February 2016. Additionally, in between waiting for the repairs to be done at the Wheels Park another panel was damaged on the half-pipe. This was repaired in late April.

Simultaneously, the lighting for the MUGA and the Wheels Park was not working and as with the problems with the ramp repairs the same scenario occurred for the light repairs. Eventually, after a long drawn out process the lights were fixed in March and are now in good working order.

As a result of the poor state of the Wheels Park at this time, a number of local skaters, wheel park users and parents got together to make their feelings known about the quality of the facility and whether the Wheels Park could be upgraded or a new one built that was more fit for purpose. Subsequently, after an initial open meeting in November 2015 and an update to West Craven Committee about the outcome of the meeting, a new working group was established in early 2016 with the inaugural meeting taking place on 13th January.

It was resolved that to enable the group to move forward and apply for funding in the future, a plan including drawings and associated costs needed producing. To be able to have a proposal that was representative of what users wanted, it was decided that some public consultation should be undertaken.

It was agreed by the group that this would be done during February half term in Barnoldswick. In addition, there would be consultation carried out within the local schools either before or after half term.

Unfortunately, this never materialised and progress has come to a standstill. Hopefully, a working group meeting will be organised in the near future to pick this project back up.

West Craven Warriors have recently been given a new 3 year licence for the use of the Clubhouse including changing rooms, toilets and community room and the Rugby pitch and associated training area. This is purposefully short term due to the fact that the Park is being looked at as part

of the transfer of services work to Town and Parish Councils over the next couple of years and as such the building may eventually come under the control of Barnoldswick Town Council.

In March last year, an update was provided about traffic calming measures that had been introduced on the Greenberfield Lane access track that leads to Barnoldswick Town FC's ground as a result of concerns over speeding cars and the potential for a serious accident occurring. It mentioned that we were looking to do further work on this in the new financial year.

No further work has been forthcoming although this may need to be looked at again in view of recent complaints we have received regarding cars driving too fast and recklessly (including performing wheel spins) down the access road to the car park behind Barnoldswick Town's ground. There has been a suggestion from one complainant that a locked gate or barrier be installed at the entrance to the access road to stop antics like this. As members are aware, we have previously had problems with anti-social behavior in the main car park (which has included cars causing nuisance) in front of the Clubhouse but this seems to have reduced in recent months. Nevertheless, we would be open to discussing this issue with interested parties and Councillors in the short term to find a suitable solution.

Valley Gardens

Four new wooden sculptures have been installed in the Park. These were commissioned and funded by Valley Gardens Working Group and include a fox, squirrel, dragonfly and badger. The sculptures have been received positively by users and local people.

Two conifers have been taken out due to them being a dangerous state and the Working group continue to work on improvements to the terraced garden at the entrance off Gisburn Road.

The Council's Dog Wardens (in co-ordination with the Senior Park Keeper) have been working with local Primary Schools in Barnoldswick in relation to the issue of dog fouling in Parks. As part of the educational work, a competition was run to design some new dog fouling signs. Four winning designs were chosen which have now been manufactured with a view to installing them in Valley Gardens. We are hoping to erect the signs as part of the Summer Fayre celebrations in May.

The annual Summer Fayre has been scheduled for the 21st May 2016.

Transfer of Services to Parish/Town Councils & Dog Issues Working Group

Work is ongoing in terms of the transferring of services and facilities to Town and Parish Councils and the implementation of recommendations from the Dog Issues Working Group, specifically the implementation of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) at the Council's Cemeteries and the 47 play facilities that have recently been transferred to Town/Parish Councils.

Neighbourhood Services Officers are involved in both Member/Officer Working Groups.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None

Financial: None

Legal: None

Risk Management: None

Health and Safety: None

Sustainability: None

Community Safety: None

Equality and Diversity: None

APPENDICES

None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None