

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: TRANSFER OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS COMMITTEE

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Report Author: Philip Mousdale
Tel. No: 01282 661634
E-mail: Philip.mousdale@pendle.gov.uk

PARKS AND RECREATION GROUNDS

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To report on the meeting with town and parish councils and their responses and to consider next steps.

RECOMMENDATION

That meetings be arranged with town and parish councils, either individually or in groups, and also involving Parks Friends' Groups.

1. At the last meeting on 7th April the Committee resolved that a meeting be held with town and parish councils with parks and recreation grounds in their areas. The meeting was held on 20th June and representatives of all the councils concerned attended.
2. For the meeting the following briefing noted was issued.

As you will know Pendle and yourselves have been engaged in a programme of transfers of facilities and services in the last few years and now we wish to look at parks and recreation grounds. There is no doubt that these are much more complex than what we have done so far.

The major element of what we spend on parks and recreation grounds is Grounds Maintenance and in total across the Borough it amounts to c£750,000 per annum.

Over the next three financial years we estimate that the Council will have to make savings amounting to £4.8million across all its services. Grounds Maintenance is one of the Council's biggest items of expenditure and there will inevitably need to be significant savings in it.

Transfers of parks and recreation gardens and/or financial contributions by town and parish councils will have to be a major element in achieving this. Without these the standard of upkeep of parks will fall dramatically.

We have identified six broad options:

- (a) The Council continues to own and maintain the parks with a significantly reduced budget;***
- (b) The Council continues to own and maintain the parks with a significantly reduced budget and with top up funding provided by Town and Parish Councils and agreements on how this is to be used;***
- (c) The Council transfers the parks to Town and Parish Councils but continues to maintain them with its significantly reduced budget and top up funding provided by Town and Parish Councils and agreements on how this is to be used;***
- (d) The Council transfers the parks to Town and Parish Councils who take over their maintenance with a tapering off grant or transitional payment from the Council;***
- (e) The Council transfers the parks to Town and Parish Councils without any funding;***
- (f) Trusts and/or social enterprise arrangements be examined involving the Council, Town and Parish Councils and potentially other interests, either for individual parks or for groups of parks;***

For all the options the potential for disposal of parts of park land with the receipts used for maintenance is being investigated. Also we are examining the legal titles to the parks and recreation grounds in particular to see what covenants and restrictions there are on use.

The possibility of moving over a period of time from one option to another can also be considered. For example start with option (b) and then move to (d), e) or (f)

We would like to hear your views on the options and any suggestions for others.

3. Representatives were asked to arrange for their councils to consider the issue and to respond with their views by early September. Definite decisions are not expected at this stage but rather indications of which options might be worth discussing further, and which might be rejected. Any other ideas or proposals have also been invited.
4. An update will be given at the meeting on the responses received.
5. In addition the potential for disposal of parts of park land with the receipts used for maintenance is being investigated; and the legal titles to the parks and recreation grounds are being examined in particular to see what covenants and restrictions there are on use.
6. The next step would seem to be meetings with town and parish councils, either individually or in groups, and also involving Parks Friends' Groups.
7. Finally the Committee is reminded that its work needs to dovetail with that of the Budget Working Group specifically on the savings which need to be made in the area of Grounds Maintenance. At a meeting of the Working Group held on 30th August a report was submitted which recommended a target saving of £200,000. No decision was taken on this and further work was requested on the detail and impact of the potential savings.

IMPLICATIONS

- Policy:** The transfer of parks and recreation grounds is a central feature of the Council's policy of devolvement of facilities and services to town and parish councils.
- Financial:** The Council has identified that significant savings need to be made in the area of Grounds Maintenance though the level of these has not yet been determined.
- Legal:** As indicated the legal titles of the parks and recreation grounds are being examined to see what covenants and restrictions may apply.
- Risk Management:** None arising from the report.
- Health and Safety:** None arising from the report.
- Sustainability:** None arising from the report.
- Community Safety:** None arising from the report.
- Equality and Diversity:** None arising from the report.