

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: POLICY and RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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**TRANSFER OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES TO TOWN
AND PARISH COUNCILS**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide an update on the transfer of parks and responses to the request for a 75% contribution to grounds maintenance; and to consider the future programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the position on the responses to the request for 75% parks grounds maintenance contributions be noted.
- (2) That the virement of £55,320 from the capital allocation for Works at Red Lane to enable the transfer of the Vivary Way MUGA to the preferred location in Alkincoats Park, be approved.
- (3) That meetings be held with town and parish councils during the summer to discuss the outstanding transfers of parks and related matters and the future programme.
- (4) That a report be submitted to the Committee following the meetings.

REASON

To continue the programme of transfers to town and parish councils.

Parks

1. This part of the report sets out the position on transfers of the parks and also the related question of parish and town council responses to the request from the Council to meet the 75% reduction in grounds maintenance in 2019/20. The request was made to parish and town councils on 26th September. Some have not yet agreed their budgets and precepts at the time of writing and any updates will be reported at the meeting.

2. Members will be aware that the transfers of **Letcliffe Park, Victory Park and Valley Gardens** to Barnoldswick Town Council were completed in April 2018. The Town Council has agreed to fund the 75% reduction in grounds maintenance. The Council's Grounds Maintenance Team is continuing to undertake that work.
3. In connection with the transfers it was agreed with the Town Council that on a transitional basis Pendle would continue:
 - to pay the utility bills;
 - not to charge for the inspection and maintenance of the play areas, MUGAs and skate park within the parks;
 - to manage the sports pitches in Victory Park and offset the income from hirings against the grounds maintenance contribution;
 - to manage the pavilion;
 - to retain and utilize the R&M budgets liaising with the Town Council as appropriate;
 - to reimburse the cost of public liability insurance.
4. These were agreed to preserve equity across the board pending movement on the transfers of the other parks. As legal owners parish and town councils should ultimately take on responsibility for all costs but it would be inequitable to expect those taking the first transfers to do so whilst it may be some time before other transfers take place. Clearly however the Council would not wish this transitional arrangement to continue indefinitely and will need to review it in advance of setting its budget for 2020/21.
5. Members will also be aware from the report to the last meeting that it is expected that the transfer of **Barrowford Memorial Park** and Pendle Heritage Centre to Barrowford Parish Council subject to a new lease of the Heritage Centre is on course to be completed in March. Barrowford Parish Council has agreed to fund the 75% reduction. The Council's Grounds Maintenance Team will continue to undertake that work. The same transitional arrangement as above will be offered to the parish council.
6. It is understood that Colne Town Council will be considering this week whether to take a transfer of **Alkincoats Park** during 2019/20. Timing will probably mean that it will ask the Council to continue to do the grounds maintenance for around the first six months of 2019/20 and will pay the 75 % contribution for this period. It is also understood that for the longer term it will seek tenders for the grounds maintenance work rather than simply asking the Council's Grounds Maintenance Team to continue doing it. If an external contractor were appointed to undertake the work then that would raise a further question as to a contribution from the Council to the town council for part of the cost.
7. A related issue concerning Alkincoats Park is the transfer of the Vivary Way MUGA into the park. The Colne and District Committee have looked at several options and wishes to proceed with moving it to a location adjacent to Park Way. This is however £55,320 above the originally budgeted cost.
8. The Committee is asked to consider funding the gap by approving virement from the capital budget for works at Red Lane. This is £100,000 but it is now clear that no more than £40,000 will be required. An alternative to do this would be to ask the Council to agree a supplementary capital estimate.
9. A verbal report on the Town Council's decision will be given at the meeting.
10. Trawden Forest Parish Council has agreed to fund the 75% grounds maintenance contribution for **Ball Grove Park**. It is not yet in a position to say when it might take a transfer.

11. A formal response is awaited from Nelson Town Council in respect of the 75% contribution for Marsden, Walverden and Victoria parks. Informally it is understood that the Town Council does not yet feel in a position to take transfers of the parks.
12. The Town Council considers that it should not in any event pay towards the grounds maintenance of that part of Victoria Park which lies within Barrowford. For 2018/19 Barrowford Parish Council made a payment for this on a voluntary basis and is willing to do so again for 2019/20 though it is not committing to the principle of responsibility.
13. The decision of Brierfield Town Council is that it will not pay the 75% contribution for **Heyhead Park** but will continue to make the 50% contribution. The impact will be that the Council will reduce the level of maintenance carried out accordingly. It is understood that the Town Council does not yet feel in a position to consider a transfer of the park.
14. A formal response on the 75% contribution is awaited from Earby Town Council and Kelbrook and Sough Parish Council in respect of **Sough Park**. It is understood that they do not yet feel in a position to take a transfer of the park.

Future programme

15. The transfer of the parks is the remaining significant item in the current programme. As will be evident from the above there is still some way to go on that. The Committee may however wish to give initial consideration to what might be included in the next phase of the programme.
16. Items which have been mentioned previously but which have not been pursued are
 - Town centre sweeping
 - Local car parks
 - Cemeteries
 - Colne Market
 - Colne Municipal Hall
 - Sports pitches and playing fields provision
 - Picnic sites
17. The Committee may also wish to examine the possibility for some services of an agency arrangement with a town or parish council rather than outright transfer.
18. Attached are the terms of reference of area committees which include a range of services which arguably could be undertaken locally by a town or parish council rather than the area committee.
19. This is clearly relevant to the continuing financial challenge facing the Council. It is also pertinent in the context of the current electoral review of the Council. If the Boundary Commission determines a considerably smaller council size which will lead inevitably to a reduced number of wards which in turn have implications for present area committee boundaries, then the Council will need to review the number of area committees and their role.
20. The content of the future programme will of course require considerable preparatory work on financial and practical feasibility and detailed discussion with the town and parish councils. Meetings with them during the summer following the all- out elections in May would seem to be appropriate.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy:	The continuing development of the transfer and devolvment of services facilities to town and parish councils is a fundamental feature of the Council's Strategic Plan.
Financial:	Contributions from town and parish councils will offset the 75% reduction in the parks' grounds maintenance budget in 2019/2020. Further discussions with them will focus on the future programme and related financial arrangements.
Legal:	None arising from the report.
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.

APPENDIX

Area Committee Terms of Reference.