
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks

21 April 2016

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks – Councillor Abdul Khan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Place

Ward(s) affected:

All Wards

Title:

Recommendations from the Parks Task and Finish Group of the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

At their informal meeting on 24 June 2015, the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) established a task and finish group to look at how Friends of Parks groups could be supported to make parks and open spaces more age-friendly. This report introduces the recommendations identified by the task and finish group and the reasons behind them.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks is recommended to delegate authority to the Head of Streetpride and Greenspace to incorporate the following principles into his review of the Council's existing Green Space Strategy:

- 1) To ensure that parks and open spaces are considered as the city moves towards becoming an age-friendly city;
- 2) That when resources are available, improvements to parks and open spaces should consider age-friendly requirements such as footpaths and safety/anti-social behaviour concerns;
- 3) That support networks for Friends groups are supported by the Council both locally and regionally; and
- 4) To ensure that Section 106 agreements for green spaces are more flexible as to what can be funded on a specific site.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – Age-friendly Cities Checklist

Appendix 2 – Notes from the Task and Finish Group

Other useful background papers:

None.

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes

The recommendations, but not this report, have been endorsed by the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) at their meeting on 13th April 2016

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. At their informal meeting on 24 June 2015, the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) established a task and finish group to look at how Friends of Parks groups could be supported to make parks and open spaces more age-friendly.
- 1.2. The task and finish group consisted of:
 - Cllr Bigham
 - Cllr Lakha (Chair)
 - Cllr Lapsa
 - Cllr Walsh
- 1.3. The group met on four occasions and heard information about age-friendly cities, Section 106 funding and also from representatives of two community groups, as well as visiting several park sites across the city.

2. Age-friendly Cities

- 2.1. The Health and Well-being Board supported becoming an age-friendly city at their meeting on 7 July 2014 and subsequently this was adopted as part of the refreshed Council Plan at Cabinet on 7 July 2015.
- 2.2. Members heard from Kam Kaur, the Age-Friendly Transformation Manager, as well as Anne Lakin, Chair of Coventry Older Voices, about what was happening to support Coventry becoming an age-friendly city.
- 2.3. Members heard that the top priorities for older people when it came to public spaces were accessibility, such as suitable paths and walkways, feeling safe, and access to public toilets.
- 2.4. A check list from the World Health Organization of what is involved in becoming an age-friendly city is provided at appendix 1.
- 2.5. Anne Lakin also offered to become part of the group to advise and support on age-friendly matters.
- 2.6. Public Health also contributed to the discussion. Valuing green spaces is a key priority under Marmot, creating health and sustainable communities. There is no additional funding to implement the Marmot principles and they have not had budgets for next year confirmed yet. However they are committed to working together to support the work.

3. Section 106 funding for parks and open spaces

- 3.1. Members of the task and finish group considered information about Section 106 (S106 – planning obligation) agreements for open spaces.
- 3.2. Members heard that Section 106 monies form part of planning agreements and can be designated to a variety of different capital projects such as infrastructure, education and open spaces. S106 obligations must be proportionate and related to the development and any S106 monies must be spent on projects within the area the subject of the related planning permission.
- 3.3. Members heard that most capital funding for improving parks and open spaces comes through S106 agreements and is frequently designated for children's play facilities. Members also heard that although capital funding comes through S106 agreements, the on-going revenue costs for maintenance has to come from existing Council budgets.

4. Friends Groups

- 4.1. Members heard that the Council supports around 30 Friends and community groups associated with green spaces across the city. It was explained that these kinds of groups can access sources of funding unavailable to the local authority. Examples given were Gosford Park Residents Association, who had accessed lottery funding for play equipment and Willenhall Rangers who had accessed Woodland Trust funding for tree planting.
- 4.2. Members heard about the work that community groups do in terms of supporting the community use and maintenance of the green spaces. They also heard from one of the Parks Development Officers about the support offered through the Council to community groups and friends groups.
- 4.3. Members of the task and finish group heard evidence from representatives of 2 community groups that support green spaces in their local area. Representatives from Canley Green Spaces and Allesley Green Residents Association attended the meeting.
- 4.4. Members heard about some of the issues experienced by volunteer groups, with parks and green spaces, such as anti-social behaviour and sustaining membership.
- 4.5. The representatives from the two groups found it beneficial to be able to share information and experiences.

5. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 5.1. Option 1: Do nothing
- 5.2. Members considered the information presented to them and there were areas that could be improved to ensure that parks and green spaces in the city are more age-friendly. Members also realised that there was more the Council could do to encourage and support Friends groups. By doing nothing there would be a danger that groups in the city could be excluded from parks and green spaces, so doing nothing was not considered to be an option.
- 5.3. Option 2: Recommendations

The City's Green Space Strategy was established in 2008 and provides a framework for the management and development of the City's green space until March 2018. This document is planned to be reviewed and updated.

The Cabinet Member is recommended to delegate authority to the Head of Streetpride and Greenspace to incorporate the following principles into his review of the Council's existing Green Space Strategy:

- 1) To ensure that parks and open spaces are considered as the city moves towards becoming an age-friendly city;
- 2) That when resources are available, improvements to parks and open spaces should consider age-friendly requirements such as footpaths and safety/anti-social behaviour concerns;
- 3) That support networks for Friends groups are supported by the Council both locally and regionally; and
- 4) To ensure that Section 106 agreements for green spaces are more flexible as to what can be funded on a specific site.

6. Results of consultation undertaken

- 6.1. There has been no formal consultation on these proposals.

7. Timetable for implementing this decision

7.1. The existing Greenspace Strategy was approved in 2008 and provided a framework for the management and development of the City's parks and open green spaces for a period of 10 years terminating March 2018. It is anticipated that the review of the strategy will start during September 2016 and take effect on the termination of the existing strategy on 1st April 2018 following the appropriate approvals.

8. Comments from Executive Director of Resources

8.1. Financial implications

The recommendations in this report can be met within existing budgets or when resources are available. Increasing support and capacity within voluntary organisations such as Friends Groups enables Coventry's open spaces to be sustained with reduced public resource.

8.2. Legal implications

Planning obligations imposed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 must be: (1) necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms; (2) directly related to the proposed development; and (3) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.

The Council has various powers to acquire and maintain parks and open spaces for public enjoyment, including the Public Health Act 1875, Open Spaces Act 1906 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

9. Other implications

None

9.1. How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Parks and green spaces are highly valued by the citizens of Coventry for informal recreation, sports or as venues for events and activities. Increasing access by all community groups contributes greatly to improving quality of life and addressing health inequalities in Coventry.

9.2. How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through the existing Place directorate risk profile.

9.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

None

9.4. Equalities / EIA

No equalities/ Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) assessment has been completed for this report however a full EIA will be completed as part of the Greenspace Strategy review.

9.5. Implications for (or impact on) the environment

No direct impact

9.6. Implications for partner organisations?

Officers within the City Council's Greenspace Service will continue to engage, support and work in partnership with the large number Friends of Parks and other voluntary Community Groups to improve access by all community groups to its parks and open spaces.

Report author(s): Gennie Holmes & Graham Hood

Name and job title:

Directorate:

Tel and email contact:

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer		22.03.2016	23.03.2016
Other members				
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Finance: Cath Crosby	Lead Accountant – Business Partnering	Resources	30/3/16	30/3/16
Legal: Sam McGinty	Place Team Leader	Resources	30/3/16	30/03/16
Director: Nigel Clews OBO Martin Yardley	AD	Place	13/4/16	13/4/16
Members: Cllr A Khan	Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports & Parks		05/04/2016	05/04/2016

This report is published on the council's website:
www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings