



To: The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)

Date: 8 December 2022

Subject: Greenspaces

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To consider levels of usage post pandemic and steps taken to encourage usage of green spaces and parks such as paths, lighting, and mile markers

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) is recommended to:
 - 1) Note the content of the report and the steps taken to improve access to parks and greenspaces
 - 2) Support the work of the park ranger service recognising the impact on engaging and involving the local community and volunteers in their parks and green spaces, important for on-going sustainability in a time of limited resource
 - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member

3 Background and Information

- 3.1 There is now increasing tangible evidence which demonstrates how the city's Green Spaces including all of our parks, recreation grounds, playing fields, children's playgrounds, ornamental gardens, golf courses, and woodlands directly contribute to our people's health and wellbeing. In addition to the health benefits, they help create thriving communities providing significant opportunities to develop and enhance the social, recreational, environmental, educational and economic wellbeing of our community.
- 3.2 A range of infrastructural features can typically be found within the city's parks and open spaces including hard landscaping such as footpaths, access tracks and areas of block paving as well as street furniture such as fencing, signs, stiles, seating, bins, information boards, street lighting etc. Some of the larger sites may include water features, sports changing facilities, storage for maintenance equipment, toilets, catering facilities and buildings, for instance visitor centres.
- 3.3 The City Council adopted its second Green Space Strategy in 2019. The strategy initially identified 747 individual areas of greenspace covering an area of 2002 hectares. It was recognised that many of these sites were small and offered little

amenity value. The strategy therefore focussed on individual sites greater than 0.1 hectares of which there are 650 individual sites covering 635 hectares. These varied greatly in size with the largest including Coombe Park covering 202 hectares and the War Memorial Park which approximately 48.5 hectares.

- 3.4 Two thirds of green space across the city, some 430 sites have no restrictions on public access with almost all the remainder having at least some limited public access. The sites with restricted access typically included sports clubs, allotments and school grounds.
- 3.5 It's important to recognise that greenspace can take many forms including less obvious forms such as cemeteries which also provide opportunities for quiet recreation.
- 3.6 Consultation in developing the Green Space Strategy found that the main reasons given for visiting parks and open spaces was for the fresh air, to walk and jog and to enjoy peace, quietness and relaxation. It also included seeking and being close to nature and wildlife and providing somewhere for children to play including dedicated play areas.
- 3.7 A number of barriers were also cited. These included perceptions of antisocial behaviour, and generally not feeling safe; dog fouling, poor quality or lack of facilities and some concerns around clashes with cycling and vehicles in parks.
- 3.8 Priorities suggested by the consultees listed more seats and bins; more habitats for wildlife; better control of dogs (and reduced dog fouling); better visitor facilities such as toilets and catering and more provision for young people. Other cited priorities included increased grass cutting; the repair and extended provision of paths and other hard surfaces; better maintenance of children's play areas and improved grounds maintenance
- 3.9 The most popular greenspace sites visited by those consulted are the War Memorial Park, Allesley Park, Coombe Park, Spencer Park, Longford Park, Coundon Hall Sports Ground, Lake View Park and Caludon Castle Park.

4 Covid-19

- 4.1 During the worst of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic (March 2020 – March 2022), parks across the UK were more heavily used than at any other time in recent history. In Coventry for example, the number of people using Allesley Park in the summer of 2021 resulted in Allesley Hall Drive being double-parked along its entire length for the first time ever.
- 4.2 During periods of lockdown, parks were one of the few places where the public could legitimately gather (with social distancing in place), take exercise and generally relax. For the majority of people, parks provided an opportunity to enjoy near normal existence but for some people they were especially important. This included people in heavily built up areas and without access to their own garden; parents of young children; workers in furlough and people living on their own, all of whom welcomed the chance to escape the confines of their home and get out into the fresh air, to relax in natural surroundings and take part in some reasonably safe social interaction.
- 4.3 The prohibition on travel through the worst of the pandemic meant that local green spaces were intensively used and many people visited their local parks for the first time. Often these initial visits led to people making further visits to local green spaces,

including their local park or one of the larger parks if it could be reached easily. As most parks in Coventry are freely accessible and have very porous boundaries, visitor numbers can only be judged anecdotally, however we know the use of car-parks was exceptional but even small local parks were heavily used by local residents judging by the comments from residents both at the time and since.

- 4.4 Another impact on parks during the pandemic was the closure of pubs and other social venues during lockdown. This meant that impromptu unsanctioned parties took place in parks especially by young adults who had become frustrated with staying in at home and sought opportunities to gather outdoors. Car-parks across the city became popular places for young people to gather, typically arriving in cars after dark and staying until the early hours of the morning with associated anti-social behaviour. This meant an increased need for cleansing and nuisance to legitimate park users – and people living near the parks affected. In some instances, even after lockdown and despite pubs and clubs reopening, a few car parks in green spaces across the city continue to be mis-used at night. New car-park barriers in some of the parks affected will help to reduce this.
- 4.5 The increased use of Coventry's green spaces put a huge strain on the infrastructure of the city's parks. Wear and tear in the parks had become progressively more obvious following the budget cuts introduced in 2016 with footpaths, playgrounds and street furniture showing the most obvious lack of investment.
- 4.6 The impact of the increased visitor numbers due to the pandemic led to a worsening of these effects with particular damage to footpaths and areas of soft landscape where the extra footfall led to compaction and loss of vegetation. Playground equipment and Multi-Use Games Areas (ballgame courts) also suffered with equipment becoming worn faster than usual and some features such as safer surfacing and fencing were damaged during this period due to overuse / misuse.
- 4.7 Although some remedial action was taken on the worst of the issues, the impact of the pandemic exacerbated the general decline in the appearance of the city's parks, most of which has yet to be fully addressed. Although use has diminished since the dark days of lockdown, the increased use and misuse of parks continued throughout 2022, further exacerbated by the exceptionally long and hot summer. The likelihood is that the current cost of living crisis will mean parks will be intensively used in 2023 too and hence parks will continue to suffer from increased levels of wear and tear for the indefinite future.

5 Maintenance

- 5.1 Good standards of maintenance in our parks and green open spaces is probably the most important aspect of encouraging greater use and instilling a sense of safety. The creation of an attractive green environment including appropriately mown grass; attractive well-pruned shrubs; good tree stock, minimal litter, sufficient and regularly emptied bins; prompt removal of graffiti; good quality path network and a lack of dogs' mess should be evidenced.
- 5.2 Adequate maintenance is crucial to maintain perceptions that areas are low risk and safe. Poorly maintained grounds, uncollected litter, graffiti and broken furniture etc all suggest a place is uncared for and therefore potentially unsafe.
- 5.3 As part of the Councils Medium Term financial strategy and in response to a cut in Government Grants, the revenue budget for parks was reduced by £1,000,000 which

took effect in 2016. This represented 25% of the overall budget. The budget reduction resulted in a reduction in estate maintenance including cuts to the numbers of staff carrying out maintenance with a resultant reduction in the frequency of grass cutting, reduced leaf clearance, shrub bed maintenance, path edging, the removal of seasonal floral displays, a reduction in Council-run events, a reduction in sports facilities, the removal of weekend working and cessation of night time locking of parks. In addition, tree maintenance and management and the repair and replacement of children's play facilities were also affected. The cuts also led to a reduction in basic infrastructural maintenance including repairs to footpaths and replacing street furniture such as fencing, signage and bins etc.

- 5.4 It was recognised that these service reductions would increase customer dissatisfaction, and be likely to lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour and have a negative impact on the public health agenda. Perceptions of Anti-social behaviour were seen as a key barrier in park use identified in the Greenspace Strategy development.

6 Toilet Provision

- 6.1 The provision of good and well-maintained toilet facilities within parks is important in attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer. This is reflected in consultations undertaken as part of the Greenspace Strategy development but also in wider research.
- 6.2 Toilet facilities within the city's parks and open spaces have been limited to only three sites, Coombe Abbey Park, the War Memorial Park and Allesley Park. It has been estimated that these parks receive over a million visits annually and justify the provision of toilets and are well used. Notably all these sites have staff on site.
- 6.3 Toilet facilities are expensive to construct, maintain and are vulnerable to antisocial behaviour and vandalism requiring constant inspection, repair, cleaning and locking and unlocking. Their provision is also subject to available utility access.
- 6.4 Nationally the number of toilets provided in parks has continually decreased and Coventry is no exception. For example the toilet facilities located at the entrance to Edgwick Park were taken out of action and demolished some 5/6 years ago due to antisocial behaviour.
- 6.5 The parks service have been working closely with the equalities and diversity team however on an application from the government funding for Changing Places to provide modular toilet facilities accessible for people with severe and multiple disabilities where personal care can also be accommodated. These are proposed to be located at the War Memorial Park and Coombe Abbey Park. The parks service will continue to explore and exploit all funding opportunities to provide suitable facilities in its parks.

7 Catering

- 7.1 Catering facilities are cited as a park provision which would encourage more people to visit a park and stay longer. An easy accessible place to get a cup of tea or ice cream or something to eat and somewhere pleasant to sit nearby and that offers shelter is desirable. Ideally cafés or similar facilities should include toilet provision.
- 7.2 Permanent cafes are provided at both Coombe Country Park and the War Memorial Park and a coffee van at Allesley Park was very popular during the pandemic and

reinforced the long-standing request by park users for a permanent café to be established in the park. It is subsequently intended for a mobile catering tender to be offered to include provision of hot and cold drinks and snacks and additionally ice cream provision – including those parks not currently covered by an ice cream tender.

- 7.3 The Parks Service has always been keen to provide food and drink facilities within more of the city's parks and open spaces. This has been provided to some extent by franchises being available to ice-cream vans which have permission to trade at sites with high footfall such as the Green Flag sites including Allesley Park, Caludon Castle Park and Longford Park and other popular sites such as Coundon Hall Park.
- 7.4 Although other less well used sites currently attract little interest from prospective vendors, a review of the tendering arrangements could be considered to encourage ice-cream vans and pop-up food stalls etc. to provide catering at these sites, especially where there is latent demand and hence the potential for increasing use of the parks concerned if more facilities existed.

8 Paths and access

- 8.1 Good well-maintained footpaths are recognised as being particularly important in encouraging people into parks. Paths around the boundaries of suitable parks are popular both for casual recreation and for cheap, sustainable exercise. A wider network of good paths within a park which provide access to key areas and includes accessible exit and entry points can make a park much more appealing to all users. Such paths maximise the opportunity for people to visit parks in almost all weathers and despite potential wet or otherwise poor ground conditions off the paths. This can help to provide inclusive access to people in wheelchairs and mobility scooter users, older people and park visitors with prams and push chairs as well as the ubiquitous dog walkers, joggers and other park users of course.
- 8.2 New boundary footpaths provided in Caludon Castle Park and Morris Common through the 'Coventry on the Move' programme were well received and are still well used. Similar new footpath schemes in parks are now under consideration including a footpath along the Guphill Brook and completing a boundary path around Coundon Hall Park as well as resurfacing existing paths in Gosford Park and providing a new path in St Margaret's Park.
- 8.3 Although indicative costs are prohibitive at present, there are tentative plans to create a recreational route along the corridor of the River Sowe and its key tributaries. This would link green spaces along the river and provide an 8.5 mile long footpath through many of the city's most deprived areas. A well-surfaced footpath along the river would provide a number of benefits to residents in the area (and beyond) including off-street sustainable transport and an opportunity for simple, affordable exercise and improved mental wellbeing. Details for the scheme and potential funding sources are in development.
- 8.4 Constructing new footpaths is expensive. A new Tarmac footpath in public open space can be estimated at costing upwards of £100 per square metre dependent on the cost of materials (inc. delivery), ground conditions (such as drainage / presence of trees etc.), overall access and whether the excavated material can be reused on site. Most footpaths in parks are at least 1.8m wide.
- 8.5 Resurfacing an existing footpath is obviously cheaper but even so can still cost upwards of £50 per square metre. As a result, existing paths are patched when health

and safety issues are identified but with the result that some paths in the city's parks are becoming a mosaic of various ages of Tarmac patches giving a general air of (partial) neglect.

- 8.6 Modifying access to parks has other challenges too. Access by unauthorised vehicles continues to be a problem with motorbikes etc. being able to get through gates designed to allow access for mobility scooters. Similarly, prevention of larger vehicles is becoming progressively more difficult due to the majority of the existing bollards and similar barriers to access having been installed over 10 years ago. As many were introduced at around the same time, many sites across the city are all needing replacement of the timber bollards and timber fencing at the same time.

9 Seating

- 9.1 Good seating in parks can encourage people to stay longer in a park and help visitors gain the benefits of peace and quiet and clean air, an important consideration in the urban environment. The provision of strategically placed seating along footpaths and key locations not only provides opportunities for visitors to simply stop and take a rest, encouraging relaxation and mental wellbeing but when seats are well-placed, they can also help visitors enjoy watching sport, watch children in their care playing and to experience nature as well as encouraging incidental social interaction between different park users, including those sharing a seat and people walking by.
- 9.2 The provision of high-quality seating is popular with all greenspace users. Seats that are easily accessed from the paths in a park or public space are the most popular. It is estimated that we have 250 such seats in our parks and open spaces. Many of the city's parks have seats and benches which provide a sense of local distinctiveness. These include the sky-blue benches in Longford Park whereas in Caludon Castle Park, the seats have a distinctive logo of the castle included in the legs of each bench.
- 9.3 Although every effort is made by the Parks Service to provide good quality, durable seating in most of its larger parks and open spaces, many of the seats across the city are showing their age. Seating requires ongoing maintenance and repair to ensure the benches etc. remain safe to use for as long as possible, however seats inevitably become worn or rusty or are vandalised. As a result, the practicable life span of a seat is gauged at less than 15 years before it needs replacing. Many of the benches and seats in the city are significantly older than this. Unfortunately, the cost of purchasing and installing a new seat is approximately £1350 per bench and hence it is only possible for a few of the worst of the benches to be replaced per year with consequent issues regarding the slightly shabby look of the remainder.
- 9.4 The Greenspace Service offers a 'memorial seat' sponsorship scheme which allows individuals to effectively purchase a commemorative seat at an agreed location. The sponsorship costs cover the cost of the seat and its installation. On average 5 - 10 seats are provided and installed this way across the city every year.

10 Lighting

- 10.1 Lighting, particularly along footpath networks is typically considered the key factor in improving night-time safety in parks and open spaces. Good quality lighting is often viewed as one of the most important factors in encouraging greater use of parks, especially during the winter. This can include conventional 'street' lighting using 6m columns but can also include illuminated low level bollards or similar and the use of floodlights in ballgames areas etc.

- 10.2 Lighting can clarify the layout of a park by illuminating walkways, focal points, gathering places and building entrances and these areas can then be more easily used by pedestrians, especially at dusk. Conversely by not lighting certain areas, their use at night can be discouraged.
- 10.3 Although providing lighting in parks can enhance public perceptions of safety, it may not reduce actual crime rates. Although lighting in parks reduces the risk of accidents in poor light and assists legitimate use of paths etc. after dark, streetlights can also be reassuring to young people (and others) who may then gather in lit parks after dark with a consequent risk of anti-social behaviour. Nevertheless, as lighting can increase legitimate activity of parks and provide greater passive surveillance, it can still reduce misuse and is especially beneficial when CCTV is also present.
- 10.4 The installation of lighting is expensive however and often dependant on whether there is underground power supply already present on site and what provision near to the site already exists. As a broad indicative cost (as of November 2022), the charge for supply and installation of a standard streetlamp (and lantern) and its connection to an existing supply is upwards of £2000 per column. There is also the ongoing cost for maintenance, service and repair to consider, along with whether or not it is feasible to include any new lights in the PFI scheme.
- 10.5 There are also environmental issues to consider when considering the installation of new lighting schemes in parks. These include any negative effects on local wildlife and concerns over light pollution (both locally and the wider environment). There is also the impact on climate change to consider when looking at adding to regional demands for energy. The advent of new technology such as LED bulbs and improved solar lights may reduce some of the environmental impacts however as well as practical measures such as having park lighting set to turn off at midnight for example.
- 10.6 Some of our parks already have streetlights in at least some areas. These include War Memorial Park, Longford Park, Primrose Hill Park, Gosford Green, Bannerbrook Park, Barras Heath, Caludon Castle, Eagle Street, Edgwick Park, Holbrooks Park, Moat House Park, Nauls Mill Park, Red House Park, Stoke Front, Walsgrave Village Green and part of Willenhall Wood.
- 10.7 The Parks Service are currently exploring the practicalities – and cost - of installing new lighting in Morris Common (Stoke Heath Park).

11 Signage and information Boards

- 11.1 The Green Flag award is an international system by which parks and other green spaces are assessed as to their quality. It is only by meeting a minimum standard that a park can receive an award. Coventry City Council has successfully gained Green Flag awards for 5 of its parks for over 7 years. These parks are Longford Park, Caludon Castle Park, Allesley Park, War Memorial Park and Coombe Abbey Park.
- 11.2 The award scheme sets a standard by which green spaces can be compared and is determined by set criteria. One of the key criteria is whether a park is deemed to be 'Welcoming'. One of the determining factors by which a park is considered to be 'Welcoming' is the quality of any signs or other onsite information.
- 11.3 Although 'Welcome to' entrance signs are important, a system of coordinated and complimentary signs throughout a park which are kept in good condition will provide a sense of order and clarity, reassuring visitors that the park is well cared for and

hence is well used and likely to be a safe space to visit. To achieve this, signage should be positive, informative and reassuring, encouraging people to enjoy themselves and with clear maps and similar information to encourage visitors to explore the park concerned.

- 11.4 Signage and interpretation can also be used as a tool to educate users about key elements of the park from its opening hours (where appropriate) through to its history and wildlife or other features of interest. Similarly, 'You are Here' maps in the larger parks can help visitors orientate themselves whilst noticeboards and similar features can provide contact numbers for reporting damage or other concerns (including suspicious activity) and relevant information on (for example) how to book sports facilities or any forthcoming events in the park.
- 11.5 Onsite signage and noticeboards can also provide a means by which local Friends groups with an interest in the park can inform the public about their activities and encourage new members. Signs can also provide other means by which the public can learn more about the park or report concerns, for example QR codes can link to relevant websites or web pages to enable the public to report damage or other concerns.
- 11.6 As part of the Coventry on the Move project, information boards were installed in most of the larger parks in the city. The noticeboards included a map of the park showing the route of the 'healthy walking' paths (marked with bollards at 100m centres) and sufficient space for community information relevant to the park.
- 11.7 Signs and interpretation need not be conventional. Well-designed sculpture and good use of visual arts can help inform visitors whilst adding interest and appeal to the location in their own right.

12 Biodiversity

- 12.1 Interaction with nature and natural spaces offers a variety of mental, physical and social benefits for people, ranging from stress reduction, quicker healing as well as decreasing crime and air pollution. It is important to make sure people have a chance to stay in touch with nature, and we continue to allocate space to support and encourage wildlife.
- 12.2 Many of our parks and green spaces have wild corners or features deliberately managed for nature conservation. From the 3-year rotation of cutting back riverbank vegetation (to encourage the spread of water voles) to the management of the city's ancient woodlands, it is no surprise that the city's parks and green spaces are havens for wildlife.
- 12.3 In surveys of visitors to Coventry's parks, the desire to observe and interact with wildlife is one of the most frequently expressed reasons why people choose to visit their local parks and open spaces. This is reflected in wider research which recognises an interest in and concern for the natural world as a common interest in people across the globe. Ironically however despite this apparent love for nature, biodiversity across the globe has declined faster in the last few decades than ever before. Even more surprisingly, for a nation of animal lovers, England has one of the poorest records for biodiversity. According to a study by the Natural History Museum, the UK was ranked within the lowest 10% of all nations across the globe, the worst of the G7 nations and having just 53% of native species still present in the UK as opposed to the global average of 75%. The worst area within the UK was England.

As a result a genuine means to improve biodiversity in an urban area such as Coventry is an important and significant opportunity which should not be missed.

- 12.4 It is anticipated that in 2023, the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 will become law, requiring all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain. This will generate funds for biodiversity offsetting in several instances where for example a development cannot provide the improvement on site. This effectively will provide funding for changes to existing green spaces in the city – but on condition that the changes will benefit wildlife overall. In Coventry we are already implementing this ahead of the legal requirement to do so and have already generated revenue for biodiversity net gain and are in the position to put these funds towards long term green space improvement projects.
- 12.5 Green spaces throughout the city are currently not well connected. Connectivity between green spaces enhances biodiversity by allowing different species to move and establish in new spaces. By investing in improving green spaces throughout the city and identifying ways in which to improve their connectivity, we will not only improve biodiversity but Coventry will be at an advantage when it comes to connecting sites regionally, demonstrating our place as a pioneering green city.
- 12.6 Part of the work to improve connectivity and provide biodiversity enhancements will mean providing many of the city's parks with new wildlife-friendly features such as wildflower meadows, new woodlands, hedgerows and wetland areas such as ponds etc. These will enable wildlife to become established and to travel across the city whilst enabling the public to have increased contact with wildlife.
- 12.7 The Parks Service is working in partnership with the Council's Biodiversity and Ecology team to ensure any biodiversity funds will be spent holistically, improving green spaces across the entire city and in as cohesive a fashion as possible, improve connectivity whilst improving the individual sites. This will include investment to improve the quality and diversity of wildlife habitats in public open spaces including parks, woodlands and other green spaces and also in new areas currently outside the portfolio of Parks Services.
- 12.8 It is already recognised that sites where biodiversity enhancements take place should include a means by which the public's contact and engagement with nature can be provided. In doing so public support for improved biodiversity and more 'natural' green spaces will take place. This means that new sites could become new public open spaces - but with an emphasis on biodiversity. It is consequently important to stress that any parks and other sites benefiting from new habitats for wildlife will also still be able to be used for recreation and general amenity as appropriate.
- 12.9 Through Local Nature Recovery Strategies, green spaces will be enhanced, better connected and be better able to contribute to improved biodiversity on a local and regional scale. For nature recovery strategies to be effective however, a different approach to long term management of Coventry's green spaces will be needed. This will include changes to maintenance practises which may need specialist equipment and/or contractors for its delivery. Fortunately, the biodiversity offsetting funds allow for the maintenance of biodiversity enhanced sites for 30 years. The details and costs of the new maintenance regimes are being developed.
- 12.10 The move towards having greater connectivity between the city's green spaces and more wildlife-friendly features in parks meets with one of the stated aims of the

CCC Green Space Strategy (item 6.3.7 - biodiversity and green infrastructure). Creating new woodlands and increasing tree cover generally will also help meet the goals of the Urban Forestry Strategy.

13 Presence in Parks

- 13.1 The City Council has three parks with staff routinely present on most days; namely War Memorial Park, Allesley Park and Coombe Abbey Park. The presence of uniformed City Council staff in parks gives confidence that the open space is being maintained and helps provide an added feeling of security to visitors.
- 13.2 Streetpride staff maintain the majority of the city's parks (with the exclusion of Coombe Abbey Park and assisting the site team in War Memorial Park) and their staff regularly visit the green spaces across the city, performing routine tasks including bin emptying, grounds maintenance and cleansing operations. The frequency and nature of Streetpride visits varies from site to site and across the year. Streetpride operatives wear hi-vis PPE branded with the City Council logo and drive clearly branded Council vehicles. The operatives are task orientated however and have limited time to engage with the public.
- 13.3 The Parks Service's rangers team play a vital role in the maintenance and management of many of the city's parks especially in terms of public engagement. The rangers wear a distinctive uniform and are well known to many people across the city not just because of the breadth of work they carry out all over Coventry but because their activities are often reported on their own Twitter feed which has many followers (@covparkranger).
- 13.4 The rangers are the more obvious front-facing team within the Parks Service and work closely with the public in a variety of roles. This includes leading practical tasks with volunteers such as Friends groups and Residents Associations and also with teams of corporate volunteers from local businesses who wish to carry out 'green' work in the city.
- 13.5 The rangers provide an invaluable service, engaging with community groups at all levels. They work routinely with approximately 20 groups of volunteers including old and new groups such as the Friends of the Seven Arches (formed in Summer 2022), the Hearsall Litterbusters (formed in 2020) and the Normandy Day (Peace Orchard) group (formed in 2019).
- 13.6 The rangers work with groups of volunteers in site management; includes consulting on management plans and leading practical conservation tasks. The rangers also help with events across the city, both helping deliver those organised by volunteers and those organised by other services and outside providers (e.g. The Starfish Collective). The rangers also lead their own events including the annual Bands in Parks concerts, bat walks and bird surveys. They also deliver holiday activities for children (where the rangers provide educational activities in parks during school holidays).
- 13.7 At a practical level, the rangers deliver practical conservation of many of our wild areas, ranging from cut and collect mowing of small areas of conservation grassland through to woodland management. They also provide an important role in helping maintain the city's waterways including the removal of fly-tipping and refuse from lakes, ponds and rivers and keeping the trash screens clear. The rangers also help provide access to sites for contractors, help in woodland management and the

maintenance of Rights Of Way (including bridge and boardwalk construction) and are the general go-to team for ad-hoc parks maintenance outside of contracted work or that delivered by Streetpride.

- 13.8 For a team of just four people (currently operating as a team of three due to a vacancy) the rangers perform a vital service in the management of green spaces across the council. Their adaptable role meant they were able to support ensure the delivery of PPE and other equipment during the pandemic whilst helping to maintain the parks when staff shortages were created due to Covid 19 infections. In recent weeks the rangers have been responsible for the collection of dead waterfowl from sites with potential avian influenza concerns.
- 13.9 The rangers work extensively with the Parks Development Officers who are also occasionally present in the parks, carrying out health and safety inspections and identifying opportunities for improvements. The PDOs also work closely with community groups, especially in identifying and delivering improvements in parks and other green spaces through project work.
- 13.10 The Councils event team do much to encourage a wide range of events in the parks. So far this year (2022), over 100 events of all shapes and sizes have taken place in parks across the City including our premier parks (Coombe Abbey Park and War Memorial Park). The events have included large scale music festivals, outdoor cinemas, fitness camps, running events, community events, charity walks and such like. This figure does not include additional events held for / by the City of Culture.

14 Dog Control

- 14.1 An important concern for people and a main barrier to entry for some would-be visitors to parks and open spaces are issues associated with dog control and dog fouling. The Council has done much in recent years to control dogs including the introduction of Dog Control Orders in 2015 covering its parks and open spaces which have been renewed twice, most recently in 2021. Dog control orders last for 3 years and cover many aspects of how dogs and their owners are expected to behave. Control orders include measures to prevent dog fouling and where dogs can walk on or off leads and other practical measures such as limiting the number of dogs someone can walk at the same time, excluding dogs from designated play spaces and for the order affecting War Memorial Park, specific detail about how dogs can be walked in specific areas in the park. Dog control orders are intended to ensure that users of parks and green space can coexist with dogs and their owners and have legal repercussions beyond other legislation (such as the Dog Fouling of Land Act 1996 (and its successor, the Clean Air and Environment Act 2005)).
- 14.2 The orders receive full consultation from key partners, including, but not limited to, Police, Friends of parks groups, dog owners and vets.
- 14.3 All parks and green spaces are covered by 'dog fouling' 'dogs' maximum' (6 dogs) and 'dogs on lead by direction' (this one allows the Dog Enforcement Officer to instruct a dog walker to put the dog on a lead if deemed out control)
- 14.4 All enclosed children's plays areas are 'dog exclusion'. The Premier parks have 'dog on lead' zones which are clearly marked.
- 14.5 In the last 3 years there have been 12 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for dog offences in parks and 2 prosecutions

14.6 The parks are patrolled by both the dog enforcement officers and the NEO's

14.7 The majority of complaints are for dogs off leads in designated 'dog on lead' areas and dog fouling.

15 Health Inequalities Impact

15.1 Parks and green spaces are highly valued by the citizens of Coventry and contribute greatly to improving the quality of life to those that live and work in the city, helps address health inequalities and provides valuable wildlife habitats.

A Walster, Director, Streetscene and Regulatory Services, Coventry City Council
Contact details: [Email: Andrew.walster@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.walster@coventry.gov.uk)