

Report

Report subject : Parks Management Plans
Report to : City Area Committee (Community)
Date : 15th November 2005
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1. Introduction:

- 1.1. The CAC community meeting on 13th September requested further information on how to proceed with the drawing up and collation of management plans covering the Parks service (minute 181 refers).
- 1.2. With the rise to prominence of the Green Flag scheme nationally for public parks and open spaces, it is essential that long term, adopted plans are in place if accreditation is to be sought.

2. Scope:

- 2.1. Management plans can be extremely variable in their make up. There are examples around which are very over arching, cover the whole service and which identify principles rather than anything specific. In the main these tend to be short documents. At the other extreme are very lengthy documents detailing issues down to an almost "what is going to happen on a weekly basis" level. Arguably neither approach actually achieves a great deal in terms of long term planning and management, either being too vague to be of use or too rigid and inflexible.
- 2.2. The balance is to adopt plans which are comprehensive in relevant content, thoroughly and rigorously market tested, realistic in aspiration, sufficiently detailed to give guidance and owned by all.
- 2.3. It is suggested that a standardised format be agreed to act as a template for any given plan so that all the plans follow the same process to fruition. To this end, a suggested template is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 2.4. There has to be agreed a priority listing of sites / areas of work. The following is suggested initially, in order of priority:

1 - Victoria Park	5 - Harnham Rec
2 - Churchill Gardens	6 - Playareas
3 - Queen Elizabeth Gardens	7 - Allotments
4 - Hudson's Field	8 - Bourne Hill (inc Greencroft, Wyndham Rd)

- 2.5. Whatever priority order is agreed does not mean that only one plan can be worked on at any given time. The plan would be for several to be underway but at differing stages of completion.
- 2.6. It is difficult to predict precisely how long these plans will take to come to fruition. It is intended however that within 3 years at most, all the open spaces and work areas associated with grounds maintenance be linked to a long term, adopted plan.

3. Options:

- 3.1. The preparation and completion of long term management plans covering several sites / facility areas will be a lengthy, time consuming process. There is a great deal of consultation required, evening meetings to meet various user and interest groups, collation of information etc.

3.2. There are various ways to undertake plans such as these:

- 3.2.1 Appoint a consultancy company. There are a number of companies on the market who could undertake such an exercise. Costs would obviously be influenced by the number, detail and scope of the plans. It is difficult to estimate a cost for this work but suffice it to say it will be significant and certainly the most costly option available. In addition, it shouldn't be underestimated the amount of time existing staff would need to spend working alongside the consultant in doing this work.
- 3.2.2 Utilise existing Parks staff. There are two different possibilities here:
 - 3.2.2.1. Allow the Parks Manager to carry out the work and re-align the remaining staff in the section. It is suggested that a back fill position be approved, at least for a part of the period. The implications of this option would be an almost complete stop to project work, especially the R2 programme of work. Whilst there are advantages to this route, it may not be the best use of a senior officer's time.
 - 3.2.2.2. Allow an existing, more junior officer in the Parks unit to drive the plans in conjunction with the Parks Manager. Again a partial back fill may be required if something is not to give somewhere in the unit. There is a current officer who may fit this role very well and who, if interested, could be considered. If necessary an honorarium could be considered to this officer.
 - 3.2.2.3. A back fill post to either option is likely to cost in the region of £10 - £12,000 via either a secondment, temp agency or short term contract.
- 3.2.3 Arrange a fixed contract secondment to the Parks unit from elsewhere within SDC. Initially for up to twelve months, this would be a very attractive role for somebody looking to broaden their skills and gain experience. It is likely that such an employee could be found, there are several precedents elsewhere within the running of SDC to suggest this will be the case. In order to attract the right person it is likely that a salary of up to £20,000 (including all on costs) will be required. This person would work in the Parks office in liaison with the Parks Manager.

4. Timescales:

- 4.1. It is hoped that all arrangements could be put in place to enable a start by whichever route in April 2006 to coincide with the new financial year.
- 4.2. If so, a number of plans could be available for adoption by the Committee by December 2006, in time for the budget setting meeting in January 2007. These plans would in effect go "live" in April 2007. Once a clearer picture emerges as to how long this process may take to cover all the major open spaces and work areas, a report will be presented highlighting further options.

5. Conclusions:

- 5.1. On balance it is suggested that the option highlighted at 3.2.3 above is preferred. It will bring the most equitable balance between cost, allowing the Parks unit to continue with its current workload and offering an opportunity to somebody for career development.
- 5.2. If a suitable secondment does not come forward, then the fall back position be that highlighted at 3.2.2.3 above.

6. Recommendations:

It is recommended that,

- 6.1. The development plan template highlighted at Appendix A be approved,
- 6.2. That the initial priority listing highlighted at 2.4 above be approved,
- 6.3. That option 3.2.3 be pursued to enable long term management plans to be drawn up and if approved
- 6.4. To include up to £20,000 in the 2006/07 special expense budget to cover the cost of an internal secondment.
- 6.5. That should a suitable secondment not come forward, then option 3.2.2.3 be approved with up to £10,000 made available from the special expense budget to fund a back fill officer.

7. Implications:

- 7.1. Financial: As outlined in the report
- 7.2. Legal: Nil
- 7.3. Personnel: As outlined in the report
- 7.4. Community Safety: Nil
- 7.5. Environmental: Environmental issues relating to this report will be considered as part of the plan process.
- 7.6. Human Rights: Nil

8. **Ward(s) Affected:** All in the City Area

MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT PLAN LAYOUT & CRITERIA

PARKS & OPEN SPACES - NOVEMBER 2005:

1. Formal Introduction
 - a. Site Name
 - b. Responsible Committee
 - c. Commencement Date of Plan
 - d. Life of Plan
 - e. Ward
2. Introduction to Site
 - a. Location
 - b. Size (hectares and m²)
 - c. Site Age
 - d. Layout/Facilities brief description
 - e. Current Uses
 - f. Ambience of Site
 - g. Legal Status of Site
3. History of Site
 - a. Committee Reports
 - b. Correspondence
 - c. Public Involvement
4. Current Costs of Site
 - a. Revenue Spend
 - b. Income
 - c. Capital
 - d. Source of Funding
 - e. Contract Situation
5. Analysis of Site
 - a. Strengths
 - b. Weaknesses
 - c. Opportunities
 - d. Threats
6. Wildlife
 - a. Current
 - b. Potential
7. Wild flora/fauna
 - a. Current
 - b. Potential
8. Recreational Facilities
 - a. Existing
 - b. Potential
9. Amenity Horticulture
 - a. Existing
 - b. Potential
10. Repair & Maintenance
 - a. Items
 - b. Current Condition
 - c. History
 - d. Future Timetable
 - e. Costs
11. Consultations
 - a. Officers
 - b. Councillors
 - c. Contractors
 - d. Residents
 - e. Groups (WWT, EN etc)
12. Key Issues Analysis
 - a. Achievability
 - b. Human Resource Impact
 - c. Costs - Capital & Revenue
 - d. Timing
 - e. Urgency
13. Timetable
14. Conclusion
15. Appendices