

Additional Paper for 6th July 2017

Potential to review the Council's Grounds Maintenance and Parks & Open Spaces Service

Potential Implementation 2018

Potential Savings £50,000+

1. Present Situation

The Council owns, manages and maintains 13 parks covering over 33 hectares of land, the full list including facilities is attached. This is in addition to Brocks Hill Country Park which covers 30 hectares and its facilities are summarised and set out below. The Council is also responsible for maintaining 38 open spaces across the borough, a list of which is attached. These parcels of land have come into the Council's ownership over many years and through many differing arrangements and sources.

2. Brocks Hill Country Park – Summary

Facilities

- Amphitheatre,
- Two children's play areas, with a variety of play equipment
- Two ponds
- Orienteering course
- Human Sun Dial
- Den building area
- A range of sculptures across the country park

Activities:

- Butterfly /Bat walks
- Pond dipping
- Bees, Butterflies and moth surveys
- Nature walks

Users include:

- Specific groups: – Buggy Fit, Tai Chi group, Little larks, nursery groups, play schools, private dog walking companies, school self-led trips
- Local Residents and visitors to the area: - Adults and children, dog walkers, Volunteers, Family picnics

Maintenance:

Maintenance of the park is mainly the responsibility of the Park Warden (salary £29k, this includes on-costs) although some of the Park Warden's time is spent at other green and open sites across the borough e.g. Fludes Lane and Pochin's Bridge. The Park Warden's work includes implementing the Country Park management plan including Meadow Management, Conservation and Biodiversity work.

There is also support from the Depot Ground Maintenance team at Brocks Hill for larger mowing and strimming work (calculates to approx. £4,500pa)

Volunteering hours at Brocks Hill

It is worth noting that last year the total volunteering hours given to Brocks Hill was over 3,500. If paid at £8 per hour this equates to £28,000, not to mention the social and mental health benefits gained by the participants from volunteering in their community.

General maintenance for the play equipment (inspections, replacements, upgrades)

This equates to around £2,000 p.a. A substantial amount of money is needed to ensure the play equipment meets appropriate H&S standards

3. Total Grounds Maintenance Resources

Staffing

The Council employs a total of ten staff on its Grounds

Vehicles

The Grounds team use the following vehicles:

1 Fiat Ducato low bed

1 Transit tipper

1 Holland tractor

1 small McCormick Tractor

1 sit on mower

4. Options

The total cost of the Grounds Maintenance service is £339,000 per year and the Council spends approximately £3,500 per year of revenue expenditure on maintaining equipment in the parks.

It is estimated that approximately £50,000+ per annum could be saved if members were for example to agree to more infrequent cuts.