

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ACTION PLAN: SCRUTINY PANEL 1

Recommendations from Scrutiny Panel (1 – Improving the Town’s parks) completed in January 2014.

Proposed dates for monitoring implementation of accepted recommendations

Report received by Cabinet	Response received by Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Monitoring activity	Monitoring complete
12 March 2014	7 April 2014	10 November 2014	

Recommendation 1: Communication with Friends Groups is enhanced by improved links with Northampton Borough Council’s webpage and Groups’ webpages, coupled with improved communications with Enterprise Management Services (EMS); such as the of maintenance schedules for parks.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by:	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
To improve communications with Friends Groups by improving links with NBC and Groups’ webpages. Improve	The Community Development Officer/Manager will update the NBC website for the Park Management Committees / Groups / Friends Of, etc, and will including links to individual sites.	NBC Website NBC Officer Time Park Management Committees	Ongoing	Completed

communication links with EMS regarding the maintenance schedules for parks	Enterprise Managed Services (EMS) work to their contractual specification, which is output based, so there isn't any schedules except the seasonal change overs from grass cutting, shrub pruning, pitch maintenance, etc.	EMS contractual obligations	Ongoing	Completed
<p>Recommendation 2: A programme of community events is produced in association with all stakeholders, published on the Council's webpage and promoted to the community.</p>				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
To produce a programme of community events in association with all stakeholders to be published on the Council's webpage and promoted to the community.	The formation of the Parks Management Committees enables all users to be aware of future events on individual parks and promote them through their own groups to their local communities; including the use of their own individual websites. NBC Events will promote big events through the Council's website.	Management Committees NBC Officer Time NBC Website Individual Group Websites	Ongoing	Completed

Recommendation 3: Information relating to facilities available in the town's parks is accessible on the Council's webpage.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Review the facilities in the town's parks and ensure the information is accessible on the Council's webpages.	The Parks Management Committees make their own decisions on the facilities within their own local parks. These are then promoted in the same way as in recommendation 2. Abington Park , Becketts Park, Delapre Park, The Racecourse – updated on the Council's web pages www.northampton.gov.uk/parks	Parks Management Committees NBC Officer Time NBC Website Individual Group Websites	Ongoing	Completed
Recommendation 4: A uniform on-line booking process for sports pitches and events is introduced.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Implement an improved booking process for NBC's Parks and Open spaces.	Access to booking the parks facilities has been made easier by introducing online and over the phone card payments.	NLT Staff Time NBC Officer Time	Ongoing	Completed

Recommendation 5: The town's parks are clearly identifiable on Internet search engines, such as Google, and highlighted as points of interest on satellite navigation software, such as Garmin and Tom Tom.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Ensure the towns parks are identified on internet search sites.	Search engines, such as Google, are locating the parks, if searched for. The information on the webpages are kept up to date as recommendations 1 & 2	NBC Officer Time NBC Website Individual Group Websites	Ongoing	Completed
Recommendation 6: Obsolete signs, in place around the town's parks, are removed and all relevant signage and visitor information is in situ clearly visible.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Remove obsolete signs around the town's parks. Review visitor signage around the parks.	Park Management Committees are now identifying obsolete signs and requesting new or additional signs through the Community Development Officer/Manager and the Council's Partnership Unit	Park Management Committees NBC Officer Time	Ongoing	There is an ongoing plan to install welcome signs at all the town's parks and where ever else is practical, interpretation boards to be installed that identify features of the Park.

Recommendation 7: The Highways Agency and the Highways Authority is asked to update its brown tourist signage that details points of interest across the town; specifically ensuring that signage for the town's parks is clear.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
NCC Highways to be asked to update its brown tourist signs and also to increase the number of brown tourist signs to point visitors to local parks that are currently not sign posted	Park Management Committees / Groups / Friends Of, to identify areas where they would like to see brown tourist signs located. This needs to be discussed at their meetings and feedback given to the Community Development Officer/Manager	Park Management Committees NBC Officer Time NCC Highways (Funding Required)	2015	
Recommendation 8: The Scheme "Dog Watch" organised by Northamptonshire Police is promoted.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Promote the scheme "Dog Watch" Issue or fit "Dog Fouling" signs at	Park Management Committees to discuss at their local meetings on how each Committee wishes to take this action forward with the Police.	Park Management Committees / Groups / Friends Of NBC Officer Time		

parks that request them.	<p>Community Development Officer/Manager to take forward their actions</p> <p>The NBC Partnership Unit has recently fitted or given a number of dog fouling signs to Park Management Committees, who have requested them.</p>			
Recommendation 9: Cabinet is asked to ensure that where appropriate, initiatives and ideas from parks are monitored in order for them to be mirrored in others.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Cabinet is asked to ensure initiatives and ideas are mirrored in other parks	<p>The newly formed Park Management Committees all meet twice a year to discuss each other's achievements / initiatives / ideas, etc.</p> <p>Community Development Officer/Manager to take forward their suggestions.</p>	<p>Park Management Committees</p> <p>NBC Officer Time</p>		Completed

Recommendation 10: Appropriate sources of funding are identified for the restoration and contingency of scheduled monuments.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Identify funding for the restoration and contingency of scheduled monuments.				
Recommendation 11: Lighting and footpaths are well maintained in the town's parks and upgraded where necessary.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Assess lighting/footpaths in the towns parks Maintain as necessary	Most of the footpaths in the parks have recently been surveyed by NBC. There have been a large number of repairs carried out in 2013/14. The NBC Partnership Unit is responsible for the upkeep of the parks internal footpaths that belong to NBC (some of the internal footpaths are NCC). A	Park Management Committees / Groups / Friends Of NBC Officer Time		

	<p>set budget is set aside each year for the maintenance and repairs. The budget is limited, so priority must be given to footpaths that have become a potential hazard.</p> <p>The above also applies to the lighting in the parks – So belong to NBC and some belong to NCC. The ownership is normally established as and when a fault is reported by the Park Management Committee or member of the public.</p>			
Recommendation 12: Footpaths are installed in the town's smaller parks to improve disabled access.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Install footpaths in the towns smaller parks to improve disabled access	There is a set budget for maintenance and repairs to the NBC owned footpaths in the parks. There isn't a budget for new footpaths. To introduce new footpaths in to parks funding would have to be sourced. Park Management	Park Management Committees / Groups / Friends Of NBC Officer Time (Funding Required)		

	Committees / Groups / Friends Of, would need to seek grants with the help of the Community Development Officer/Manager.			
Recommendation 13: Responsibility for the bridle way that runs through West Hunsbury Country Park is clarified.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Find out who is responsible for the maintenance of the bridle way that runs through West Hunsbury Country Park	The bridle ways through the park belong to NCC (HW14, HW15 & HW13) – This can also be seen on NCC’s interactive mapping at http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/Pages/HomePage.aspx	NII	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 14: The mowing schedule for West Hunsbury Country Park and Cherry Orchard, Hardingstone, clearly states that the whole area is not to be mowed, only the informal walkways.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Review the mowing schedule for West Hunsbury Country Park, Cherry	EMS cut the grass normally from February to September, but this is dependent on the seasonal weather, as the grass	NBC Officer Time (Funding Required)		

Orchard and Hardingstone	cutting could be slightly extended or shortened. However, the EMS contract is output based and the contractors will only cut the grass when it has reached a certain length. There would be a cost to NBC should we increase the frequency of grass cutting outside of the scope of the contract. The contract is monitored by the Partnership Unit.			
Recommendation 15: The pond in Ecton Brook Pocket Park is cleaned out and the condition of other water features in the town's parks is assessed and appropriate action taken.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Review the pond in Ecton Brook Pocket Park and assess the condition of other water features in the town's parks and ensure appropriate action	Funding needs to be sourced to task Asset Management with the job to find a surveyor / consultant to carry out the necessary tests and work, if required.	NBC Officer Time (Funding Required)		

is taken.				
Recommendation 16: Where present in the town's parks, hard standing tennis courts are refurbished				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Refurbish the hard standing tennis courts where present in the towns parks	All the parks tennis courts have been refurbished this financial year (2014/15).	Partnership Unit Asset Management	June 2014	Completed Abington, Kingsthorpe Rec, Racecourse, Becketts Park
Recommendation 17 Where possible, litter and dog bins are located side by side in the town's parks.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Locate litter and dog bins side by side in the towns parks	When new litterbins are required at park locations, every effort should be made to locate them near dog bins, where practicable. Example, a play area will need a litterbin, but it would not be practicable to put a dog waste bin next to it. The dog waste bin	Park Management Committees / Groups / Friends Of NBC Officer Time (Funding Required)		

	would need to be near the park exit. It would not be cost effective to have an additional litterbin just to meet this requirement. The requests from the Park Management Committees / Groups / Friends Of would normally go through the NBC Partnership Unit.			
Recommendation 18 Bins with lids/slots are installed in some parks, such as West Hunsbury Country Park, to prevent wildlife accessing the contents of the bins.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
In relevant parks install bins with lids/slots	All litterbins that are now purchased are closed top and normally have a cigarette tray on the top. To purchase and install a litterbin costs approximately £500. EMS will only replace a litterbin, at their cost, if it has been damaged beyond repair. Funding would be required to replace any litterbins that are not damaged. Replacements for damaged litterbins are normally done	EMS Partnership Unit (Funding Required)		Enterprise to be advised that when new or replacement bins are installed they should be the Derby type.

	directly by EMS. Additional litterbin requests are managed through the NBC Partnership Unit.			
Recommendation 19: Picnic areas and permanent hard standings for BBQs are installed in some of the town's parks, together with litter bins and measures to prevent fire and damage.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<p>Install picnic areas and permanent hard standings for BBQs</p> <p>Install litter bins and measures to prevent fire and damage</p>	<p>The matter has been discussed by Park Management Committees. Some trial sites have been suggested, however not all practical due to constraints on land use. Suitable trial sites to be identified by Park Rangers over winter 2014/15 and trial to commence in Spring 2015 with a view to wider installation</p>	<p>NBC Officer time</p> <p>Materials (slabs, bins and fire protection measures)</p>	<p>Sites to be identified by 31 March 2015 for installation during April.</p> <p>Trial to be carried out April – July</p> <p>Decision about further installation during summer 2015</p>	<p>Identification of trial sites</p> <p>Installation of slabs and bins</p> <p>Completion and evaluation of trial</p> <p>Decision on whether to install areas on a wider basis.</p>

Recommendation 20 A set standards for the provision of toilet facilities within the town's parks is introduced.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Identify the set standard for the provision of toilet facilities within the town's parks.	<p>EMS are contracted to clean and maintain a cleansing standard, as per contractual agreement.</p> <p>NBC Asset Management are responsible for maintaining the infrastructure of the buildings, fixtures and fittings, etc.</p> <p>The Partnership Unit is responsible for the monitoring of the contractors cleansing.</p>	<p>EMS</p> <p>NBC Officer Time</p>		
Recommendation 21 The opening times of the toilet facilities within the town's parks are advertised.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Advertise the opening times of the toilet facilities within the town's parks	There are only three public toilets in the town's parks. Two at Abington Park and one in Delapre Abbey. The one in Delapre Abbey is managed by			Abington Park toilets

	<p>the Friends Of Delapre Abbey.</p> <p>One of the two toilets in Abington Park, near the play area, is 24 hours. The other toilets in Abington Park are near the bowling greens, which has seasonal opening hours.</p> <p>Partnership Unit are currently revising these hours and once agreed will arrange for opening times to be erected at both locations.</p>			
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Recommendation 22: A funding pot is identified to be allocated to Community Groups that maintain toilets within their local park.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Allocate funding to Community Groups to maintain toilets within their local park	Racecourse toilets, within the Pavilion are being made available to the public, being co-ordinated by the Umbrella Fair Organisation, utilising Volunteers	Umbrella Fair Organisation	End of November 2014	FODA took over the toilet facilities at Delapre Abbey

Recommendation 23 In order to make contact with the Park Rangers easier, a central office, located close to the town's Parks, or the provision of regular advertised surgeries in the park is provided.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<p>Display of contact information for Park Rangers</p> <p>Provision of regular surgeries</p> <p>Investigation into development of suitable Park Ranger Office</p>	<p>Notice boards with Ranger contact numbers have been installed at Abington Park and numbers provided on information boards at other parks.</p> <p>Rangers have begun a programme of regular surgeries and dog walker cafes around parks, details are advertised in parks and on NBC website.</p> <p>To date no suitable location of park ranger officer has been found</p>	<p>Notice boards</p> <p>Officer time</p>	<p>Boards in place</p> <p>Surgeries etc ongoing</p>	<p>Provision of boards.</p> <p>Organisation and publicity of surgeries</p>

Recommendation 24 Administrative support is provided for the Park Rangers to enable them to spend more time in the town's parks.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<p>Develop measures to allow Rangers to</p>	<p>Rangers have been provided</p>	<p>Officer time</p>	<p>Initial measures in</p>	<p>Analysis of ranger working patterns to be completed in</p>

maximise the amount of time spent on parks	<p>with remote access to emails.</p> <p>Measures to allow remote website access are being investigated.</p> <p>Tasks undertaken have been streamlined to minimise time required to be spent in office.</p> <p>Team meetings are often held in parks.</p>		<p>place Spring 2014</p> <p>Further work to streamline processes is ongoing</p>	Spring 2015.
Recommendation 25: Contact details and a report of the activities of the Park Rangers are published on the Council's webpage and promoted to all stakeholders.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Website content updated to include Ranger Contact details, information about their roles and reports of activities	Content on website updated by Rangers and Departmental web author	Officer time	By end Nov 2014	Website content updated and kept under review.

Recommendation 26 The role of the Park Ranger is clarified and details disseminated to all stakeholders.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Information on Ranger role to be added to website and shared with Park Management Committees	Details of Ranger role added to website and rangers attend management committees to give report on activities	NBC officer time	Web content to be updated by end Nov 2014 Reports to committees ongoing	Website content updated and kept under review.

Recommendation 27 The key roles of the Park Management Committees includes:

- Producing, implementing and maintaining Management and Action Plans
- Park management
- Monitoring role
- Organising events and activities
- Oversee the maintenance of parks
- Provide support to voluntary groups
- To seek and maintain funding for the parks, where appropriate, work with Friends Groups in securing external funding
- Promoting of the park and its facilities
- Create Strategies for the local management of the parks, linking to the Council’s wider policies and strategies
- Debating issues, such as how volunteers in the town’s park can work alongside the maintenance contract
- A listening role
- Intelligence gathering

The Scrutiny Panel highlights the need for meaningful and outcome driven terms of reference for the Park Management Committees and has produced a draft terms of reference, as attached at Appendix (i) for Cabinet’s consideration.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
	Each of the Park Management Committees have used the draft terms of reference as a starting point to agree their own Terms of Reference, all match very closely to appendix (i)	NBC Officer time		
Recommendation 28: In addition to Park Management Committees, an annual Park Forum is held.				
Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
	A meeting has been held with the Cabinet Member, Cllr Hallam and the Chairs of the Park Management Committees to discuss common problems and strategic issues across the parks. These meetings will be held twice yearly.			Meeting held, to continue to be held twice a year.
Recommendation 29: Membership of the Park Management Committees consists of around ten members, typically drawn from representatives from:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends Groups • Ward Councillor(s) • Parish Council representatives where appropriate • Park User Group representatives and individuals that manage areas of parks • Park users • Park personnel 				

- Young people representatives
- Representatives from Agencies
- Representative from Enterprise Management Services (EMS); for example, Manager/Team Leader
- Representative from Northampton Borough Council
- Representatives from Sports Clubs
- Residents' Associations

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
	<p>Across the Park Management Committees representation of the above groups is starting to be established.</p> <p>The police are attending meetings which is proving useful. Unfortunately Amey have yet to attend any of the parks meetings.</p>	Input from the organisations listed above		Attendance at the meetings continues to be good, a number of partners and stakeholders are attending with an interest in the parks.

Recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Recommendation 30: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Included onto the O&S Monitoring Work Programme 2014/2015	Added to the O&S Monitoring Work Programme - Overview and Scrutiny Committee	n/a	Monitoring to take place in November 2014	

