

Meeting:	Environment and Economy Sub-Committee
Date:	29 November 2005
Subject:	Public Green Spaces Review – Progress Report
Responsible Officer:	Director of People, Policy and Performance
Contact Officer:	Ed Hammond (x5205)
Portfolio Holder:	Environment and Transport Education and Lifelong Learning
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part 1

## **Section 1: Summary**

### **Decision Required**

That Members note the progress of the Public Green Spaces Review.

### **Reason for report**

At their meeting on 10 October, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed a recommendation on the item “Principles of Scrutiny” that regular progress reports on reviews be formally submitted to sub-committees as a standing item.

### **Benefits**

It is critical to maintain careful oversight and management of all review project plans. This report will potentially improve communication not only within the

council (both officer and political groups) but will also keep residents informed and potentially engaged. Consideration of this report will mean that the review's work so far can be examined and challenged against the scope agreed at the meeting on 26 September.

### **Cost of Proposals**

There are no costs associated with this progress report.

A breakdown of the costs incurred so far on the review is provided at paragraph 2.16.

### **Risks**

If the sub-committee does not note this report:

- (1) The sub-committee would not be fully exercising its responsibilities in overseeing the review.
- (2) The review would not benefit from the external challenge which discussion of this report will provide.

### **Implications if recommendations rejected**

The "Principles of Scrutiny", agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, would be undermined

The review would not be able to progress effectively.

## **Section 2: Report**

### Brief History

- 2.1 At its meeting on 10 March 2005 the Environment and Economy Sub-Committee considered its work programme for the coming year and agreed to conduct a review into "Parks and Gardens Maintenance".
- 2.2 At a subsequent meeting on 8 June 2005 agreed the membership and broad focus of the review group, and further agreed that the scope should be submitted to September's meeting of the Sub-Committee for formal approval.
- 2.3 The scope of the review was agreed by the Sub-Committee at the last meeting on 26 September. It is attached.

- 2.4 This review is being carried out concurrently with the review into Tourism in the light of the time constraints imposed because of the local council elections in May 2006.
- 2.5 This report reflects the situation on 15 November. An oral update on events from 15 November to 29 November will be provided at the meeting.

#### Gathering of Evidence

- 2.6 The group has already carried out a number of the actions listed in the scope.
- 2.7 **Analysis of the existing strategy and consultations** has taken the form of a number of interviews with key officers by Cllr Arnold, assisted by the Scrutiny Officer. The results from these interviews will be fed into the recommendations.
- 2.8 **Benchmarking** – the group has visited parks in Hillingdon, Brent and Ealing to establish best practice and has also visited parks in Harrow to compare our provision with our neighbouring boroughs. Additional desk-based benchmarking (comparisons of strategic planning etc) has been carried out by the Scrutiny Officer.
- 2.9 **Security** – a joint meeting with the “fear of crime” review group was scheduled to go ahead on 8 December.
- 2.10 **Cycling and Facilities** – cycling and facilities were both considered at a group meeting on 2 November. Members of the group received evidence from the managing director of the British Toilet Association, Sustrans and London Play. Another meeting was scheduled for 16 November to consider booking arrangements for sports pitches and allotments.
- 2.11 **Wildlife and nature** – a meeting was scheduled for 23 November to discuss wildlife, nature and biodiversity. Groundwork, the England Biodiversity Group and the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum were invited to attend.
- 2.12 A series of focus groups were carried out over the course of November by Urban Living, to aid in the development of the Interim Sports, Recreation and Open Spaces Strategy. The Group provided input on questions and issues to be discussed and the Scrutiny Officer assisted in facilitating some of the groups. The relevant results from the focus groups will be fed both into the strategy and the group’s final report. Care will be taken to avoid any duplication.

2.13 The final report will be presented to the Sub-Committee at their next meeting in March.

#### Budget

2.14 Members made enquiries about budgeting and resources at the last meeting. A breakdown of expenses incurred so far is shown below.

2.15 Members may note the £50 payable to a trustee of London Play to attend a group meeting in early November. This was payable as a consultation fee. It was reported to the committee in September that no money would be paid to consultants. This payment was made on this occasion because it was not a significant expense and related to the gathering of important best practice evidence which it would have been difficult to acquire elsewhere.

2.16 The expenses listed below do not include money expended as a result of normal working practices, ie officer time.

Room bookings & refreshments	£100
Minibus hire (external parks visit)	£94.50
Minibus hire (Harrow parks visit)	£67.50
Attendance of witness from London Play, 2 November	£50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£312</b>

#### Project diagram

2.17 A project plan, in the form of a Gantt chart, is attached to illustrate the progression of the main strands of the review.

2.18 This chart illustrates how far key stages of the review have progressed. Time is shown along the lower axis (the chart is divided into weeks). Each separate task is divided into a distinct block.

2.19 Currently the work is being carried out according to timetable.

#### Options considered

Not applicable to this report.

#### Consultation

Not applicable to this report.

### Financial Implications

Costs associated with the delivery of the work programme will be met from within existing resources.

### Legal Implications

Planning Policy Guidance 9 now requires Local Authorities to actively promote biodiversity when considering planning proposals. This will be considered in the review process should planning issues be discussed.

### Equalities Impact

None relevant to this update.

### Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act implications

The review will be considering security issues in parks, which will assist the Council in meeting its obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act.

## **Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents**

Scope and detailed project plan is attached at Appendix 1.  
Project plan listing tasks completed to date is attached at Appendix 2.