



B O S T O N BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE (BTAC)
DATE:	29 NOVEMBER 2017
SUBJECT:	BTAC ASSETS / TOUR OF OPEN SPACES
REPORT AUTHOR:	HEAD OF TOWN CENTRE, LEISURE, EVENTS & CULTURE
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

Following a tour of BTAC public open spaces held on 27 September 2017, members requested options and costs for new play equipment and facilities and to identify any improvements in maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:

1. Consider the options outlined in this report and decide upon which options to look to progress.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To supply information to members in order to make decisions on improving and maintaining public open spaces.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None

BACKGROUND

- 1.0 Members attended a tour of public open spaces within the BTAC area on 27 September 2017 to discuss the current maintenance arrangements and to identify if any improvement opportunities may be available.

1.1 The following sites were visited:

- Broadfield Lane
- Woodville Road
- Garfits Lane
- St John's Park
- Burgess Pit
- Sheltons Field
- Central Park

1.2 Most of these sites consist of large flat open areas of grass, tree planting, benches, litter bins, footpaths, multi use goals, shelters and local equipped areas of play. The decision to provide funding support for Central Park in December 2016 saw BTAC adding the Council's most prestigious open space to its portfolio of facilities.

1.3 Following a similar tour of the BTAC area on 14 September 2016, proposed improvements covering fitness stations, basketball hoops, naturalised areas, trees and benches valued at total cost of £100,000, were then discussed at its 9 November 2016 meeting. The outcome was that Members agreed that £16,000 be set aside towards the delivery of the improvements proposed during the tour and detailed in the report.

1.4 In addition to the £16,000, BTAC has allocated £25,000 of current year's budget to spend on Open Spaces.

1.5 Members also indicated that they wished to see a reduction in the quantity of grassed areas, which are closely mown, where appropriate, by converting unused space into a more naturalised area which is allowed to grow. During 2016/17, new fruit trees plantings were established to enhance areas of Broadfield Lane, St John's Park and Burgess Pit (at a cost of £750).

2.0 OPEN SPACES IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

2.1 Members attending the tour of public open spaces within the BTAC area on 27 September 2017 discussed a number of aspects, including:

- Routine maintenance needs.
- New playground development.
- Naturalised Planting Development.
- St John's Park & Burgess Pit Fitness Zone project.
- Broadfield Lane open space development.
- Garfits Lane new sports/recreation project.

2.2 The routine maintenance and Health & Safety needs of playgrounds are assessed during weekly checks by Boston Borough Council Officers and annual inspections by both the Council's own Insurer and The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The most recent RoSPA inspection was undertaken in August 2017, and following receipt of the reports, the Council is currently seeking quotes to address the findings highlighted within them. It is anticipated that the quotes will be returned in December, and a works programme will then be prioritised against existing maintenance budgets. A number of routine maintenance needs, were also highlighted during the 27 September 2017 tour and 'Project One' (see Appendix 1), includes details of these needs and the actions taken to date.

- 2.3 The tour also discussed the addition of new playground equipment and prospective playground development projects, which are highlighted in Appendix 2, as 'Project Two', and in total would equate to an estimated £91,286 capital cost to BTAC, as yet unbudgeted.

New equipment	Total Cost to BTAC
Central Park	£61,137
St John's Park	£10,953
Garfit's Lane	£300
Burgess Pit	£13,696
Woodville Road	£2,600
Shelton's Field	£2,600
Total additional unsecured capital costs	£91,286

- 2.4 In addition to this, external funds already approved would add £93,000 to the total spend.
- 2.5 Naturalised planting developments undertaken following the September 2016 tour, in Broadfield Lane, St John's Park and Burgess Pit were well received by Members of BTAC during the September 2017 tour and it was determined that the remaining open spaces on the tour should also benefit from such planting. Officers were tasked with investigating the cost of similar schemes. This pricing work has been completed and is based on a combination of trees, wild flower/perennial plantings and labour across six sites, totalling £8,910. The breakdown of this cost is detailed in Appendix 3, 'Project Three', and it is anticipated that this project could be delivered in 2017/18.
- 2.6 The St John's Park & Burgess Pit Fitness Zone project agreed at the 31 May 2017 BTAC meeting has undergone a procurement exercise. Returned tenders were opened on 2 November 2017 and were evaluated on 9 November 2017, with Hags/SMP being the preferred bidder. The Sub Group are to meet representatives from the company at the first opportunity to finalise the project details with an aim to complete the project by the end of March 2018. This will be funded from the £41,000 previously approved.
- 2.7 The Tour included the Broadfield Lane open space development, where a new playground is proposed as part of the Waterloo Housing development. This scheme is currently being negotiated through the Council's Planning Department and is due to be delivered prior to the next construction phase of housing development starting March 2018.
- 2.8 Funding to procure a new sports/recreation multi use games facility on the Garfits Lane Playing Field. The Council has secured £73,000 for this purpose through a local Section 106 Agreement. A further report to the Open Spaces Sub Group will be submitted at the earliest opportunity, to take this project forward.
- 2.9 The new equipment will require maintenance, repairs and inspections. The additional maintenance costs will be calculated and a further report will be submitted to the open spaces sub group to establish any impact on the BTAC revenue budget.

- 2.10 The Tour also indicated a need to update and replace signage, as BTAC wishes to promote its brand in order to inform users of where their precept is being spent. This would require various signs to be replaced across its open spaces and on all play sites. This project has yet to start and is due to be worked up and developed in Quarter 4 of this financial year and will be reported to a later BTAC meeting for further consideration. A further report to the Open Spaces Sub Group will be submitted at the earliest opportunity, to assess options and associated costs.
- 2.11 At its 25 October 2017 meeting, BTAC Members also discussed Lincolnshire County Council's reduced programme of weed control on the public highway, providing only one treatment per year. Members are reminded that the Council currently delivers a package of works on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council in respect of grass cutting to highway verges and amenity areas and weed control on the public highway and footpaths within the BTAC area. The Council cuts highway verges 11 times a year and treats weeds once per year. This agreement is due to end on 31 March 2018.
- 2.12 Officers subsequently met with the County Council on 10 November 2017 and the County has indicated that our current package may be extended for 2018/19. This is very positive news, and County has subsequently advised that it intends to review its weed treatment programme and it is possible that it may revert back to two treatments per year, after next year. However, the County Council's budget will not be considered by its members until February 2018. This means that there is a risk that the budget will not be approved. It is advisable therefore for BTAC to consider setting aside an allowance to meet the potential shortfall in funding should the committee wish to support the maintenance of highway verges and weed control. It is anticipated that the allowance could be met by unallocated monies within the BTAC budget without impacting negatively on the committee's plans for development. A further report to the Open Spaces Sub Group will be submitted, once County Council budget decisions have been finalised.
- 2.13 BTAC members are asked to consider the list of improvements identified, and discuss how the costs could be met and incorporated into future budgets.
- 2.14 Members may wish to consider carrying out some further consultation with residents and organisations such as Boston in Bloom, in order to assess their views prior to undertaking any improvement works.

CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Public open spaces provide an important resource for communities to access and use offering many benefits to people who have a wide variety of needs. It is important that providers of public space protect facilities and maintain them in a safe, clean, tidy and attractive condition.
- 3.2 A breakdown of the potential improvements identified is provided in Appendices 1, 2 & 3.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs relating to the procurement of new equipment are provided in appendix 1 of the report, and total £91,286 for play projects to date and a further £8,910 for soft landscaping, if all elements were to be implemented. In addition, future maintenance provision will need to be included in ongoing budgets.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Where land and equipment is provided, there is a duty for the Council to ensure it is kept in a safe condition. The main areas of legislation related to this report are: Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure the health and safety of users so far as reasonably practicable, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Occupiers Liability Act 1957, revised 1984, RIDDOR and the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The improvements proposed will make a positive impact on the environment by providing better more attractive spaces and facilities. New exercise equipment will make available opportunities to improve the health and fitness of people who may not otherwise access such facilities.

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX 1	Routine Maintenance Undertaken During 2017/18
APPENDIX 2	Potential New Playground Development.
APPENDIX 3	Potential Further Naturalised Planting Development.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.