

PARK MANAGEMENT PLANS

Head of Service/Contact:	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	Annex 1 - Poole Road Visitor Survey Annex 2 - Long Grove Park Visitor Survey Annex 3 - Poole Road Management Plan Annex 4 - Long Grove Management Plan Annex 5 - Poole Road Action Plan Annex 6 - Long Grove Action Plan
Other available papers (not attached):	None

Report summary

This report presents the Committee with five-year park management/action plans for Long Grove Park and Poole Road Recreation Ground, and the results of the recent visitor surveys for both parks.

Recommendation (s)

- (1) To receive and note the results of the visitor surveys for Long Grove Park and Poole Road Recreation Ground.**
- (2) To receive and approve the 2018- 2023 park management plans and the actions set out for both Long Grove Park and Poole Road Recreation Ground.**

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 This report links directly to the Council's key priority of keeping our Borough clean and green by providing quality parks, nature reserves and other public spaces that are safe, pleasant and well maintained.

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- 1.2 The Community and Wellbeing Committee has a target to approve park management plans for Poole Road Recreation Ground and Long Grove Park.

2 Background

- 2.1 Although Epsom Common Nature Reserve has held Green Flag status since 2007, it was not until 2012 that we made the decision to apply for Green Flag Awards for Ewell Court Park and Nonsuch, followed by Alexandra Recreation Ground and Rosebery Park in 2013.
- 2.2 In 2016, the Nonsuch Park Joint Management Committee took the decision to switch from the Green Flag Award to the South & South East in Bloom Award.
- 2.3 The objective of the Green Flag Award scheme is to encourage the provision of good quality public parks and green spaces managed in environmentally sustainable ways.
- 2.4 Due to financial and manpower constraints not all parks are entered in to external award schemes. However, it is our intention that all major parks will have a management plan and benefit from the same standard of maintenance as those that hold the award.
- 2.5 At the heart of any application for a Green Flag Award is a management plan. As well as documenting the balance between all the priorities and policies that apply to a particular site, it identifies the contribution the green space is making towards the Council's wider strategic aims.
- 2.6 For the purposes of the Green Flag Award the park management plans run for a period of five years before they are fully updated. However, if changes or challenges occur which influence the way we manage the parks, the plans can be amended throughout the term to ensure they are useful, working documents.
- 2.7 Our methodology for creating the plans starts with conducting a visitor survey so that we can obtain feedback from both users and non-users of the park.
- 2.8 Non-user feedback helps determine what stops people from the using the park and can provide ideas for encouraging certain groups to visit parks in the Borough.

3 The Visitor Survey

- 3.1 The visitor surveys for Poole Road Recreation Ground and Long Grove Park were conducted during October 2018.

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- 3.2 When we launch a park visitor survey, the survey is available to complete over a period of two to three weeks. Throughout this duration, the Rangers distribute post-card size fliers that invite people to take part in the survey online. The fliers are hand delivered to strategic locations near each park, such as libraries, schools etc. In addition, paper copies of the survey are hand delivered to 1200 households near each park. The response rate for returned paper surveys for Poole Road was 26% and for Long Grove, 19%. The online returns for Long Grove Park were 11% and for Poole Road 27%. The top age group returning surveys were in the 35-44 age bracket for both parks.
- 3.3 The results of the surveys (attached at **Annex 1 and 2**) indicate some key themes, most notably the desire for more flower/shrub beds, play facilities and increased security. A recurring theme amongst all the park surveys we have conducted to date is the need for toilet facilities.
- 3.4 In general, the respondents to both surveys were satisfied with the overall upkeep of the park and in particular the maintenance of the grassed areas.
- 3.5 The results of both the surveys show that most people visit on foot, which reveals that these spaces are well used by the local community.
- 3.6 The top reason for visiting Long Grove is to use the play facilities and Poole Road, to go for a walk.
- 3.7 The Streetcare Manager would like to thank the Ranger Service, and the Consultation Team for their hard work in preparing, distributing and analysing the results of the visitor surveys.

4 The Park Management Plans

- 4.1 In line with our target under this year's Service Delivery Plan, we have produced park management plans for Poole Road Recreation Ground (see **Annex 3**) and Long Grove Park (see **Annex 4**) along with Action Plans which have been informed by the results of the visitor survey (see **Annex 5 and 6**).
- 4.2 The Park Management Plans set out the history of the park and then go on to explain in more detail how the park is managed on a daily basis covering the criteria set out in the Green Flag Award Scheme.
- 4.3 Action plans are largely driven by the results of the visitor survey. The plans cover a five-year period with annual reviews and updates. The primary purpose of the action plan is to ensure that targets are focussed and objectives stay on track.

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- 4.4 Some of the items on the action plans are aspirational and require significant capital or external investment. We feel that it is important to include these ideas so that they can be considered for any internal or external funding opportunities that become available.
- 4.5 The action plans also explain why some actions are not achievable. A good example of this is the provision of toilet facilities in parks. This request always features highly on visitor surveys and feedback from Green Flag judges, but is costly to provide. However, on occasions it may be possible to re-open toilets that already exist in the park if this is linked to the provision of a café facility, which will take on the responsibility for their upkeep.

5 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 5.1 All actions stated in the park management plans include an awareness of current funding constraints.
- 5.2 Where items cannot be completed due to manpower resources or funding, this is explained.
- 5.3 There is a significant amount of officer time dedicated to producing, distributing and analysing the visitor surveys and in the production and updating of the park management plans.
- 5.4 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

6 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 6.1 Other than general maintenance liabilities, there are no further implications arising from this report.
- 6.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** There are no legal issues arising from this report.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 At present, neither Poole Road nor Long Grove Park have an established 'Friends of' Group, however, both Parks have very active Park Communities in particular hirers of the Harrier Centre at Poole Road and staff at Southfields School and Cherry Field Nursery based in Long Grove Park.
- 7.2 Throughout the course of the year, Officers have worked with all stakeholders to understand their issues, concerns and aspirations for future management of these important green spaces.
- 7.3 A key objective for the Ranger Service over the course of the coming year is to encourage general park users to become actively involved by forming a recognised 'Friends of' group for both Poole Road Recreation Ground and Long Grove Park.

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8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 There is risk of not being able to complete tasks set out in the action plan section of the parks management plan. However, annual updates are provided to ensure that tasks are monitored and solutions can be found where possible to keep on track.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to receive and note the results of the visitor surveys for Long Grove Park and Pool Road Recreation Ground.
- 9.2 The Committee is requested to receive and approve the 2018- 2023 park management plans and the actions set out for both Long Grove Park and Poole Road Recreation Ground.

Ward(s) Affected: Court Ward; Ewell Court Ward;