



## London Borough of Enfield

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<b>Report Title</b>	Parks Management and Biodiversity
<b>Report to</b>	Environment and Climate Action Scrutiny Panel
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2024
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy
<b>Executive Director / Director</b>	Cheryl Headon, Acting Director of Leisure, Parks and Communities
<b>Report Author</b>	Marcus Harvey <a href="mailto:Marcus.harvey@enfield.gov.uk">Marcus.harvey@enfield.gov.uk</a>
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	Cockfosters, Ridgeway, Whitewebbs
<b>Classification</b>	Part 1 Public

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide an update on Parks Management and Biodiversity, including toilet cleaning & signage, Café in parks, grass cutting, the move to tennis courts booking systems, illegal tenting and fishing at Groveland's Park, Parks and verges management.

### **Background and Options**

#### **Toilet Cleaning provision within Parks**

There are currently 12 toilet block facilities within our parks and open spaces for public use. These toilets are cleaned and inspected by the parks front line and supervisory teams. This arrangement allows for ownership within the parks workforce and equally encourages speedier responses to defect and damages within the facility.

Cleaning is performed based on anticipated use, with a minimum cleanse of once per day, the consumables are restocked during this process, with a sign off sheet to validate the task has been completed. The quality control aspect of the cleaning is also completed once per day.

The Parks service is presented with behaviour issues within the toilet facilities which impact on the condition of the facility. Issues relating to damage and defect is reported to our property colleagues, who hold the responsibility for the infrastructure aspect of the facility. The Service Level Agreement with our property colleagues outlines response times linked to the severity of the issue.

The parks service works with internal and external stake holders in a group known as the Public Protection Safety Group (PPSG). This group shares issues and trends in behaviours and is the correct platform for Parks colleagues to raise issues linked to toilets and Public Safety. This sharing of information has led to successful intervention and issue resolution.

The toilets are closed an hour before park closing times throughout the year.

### **Park Tennis Courts**

In 2022 the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) introduced a £30m fund to improve the quality of local authority owned park tennis courts within Britain. The “Renovation Fund”, which is part funded by Government and the LTA Tennis Foundation, aims to tackle poor quality or unplayable courts, and facilitate growth in tennis participation.

Enfield Council was successful with a bid to the Renovation Fund, securing £588k from the LTA, with the Council providing £55k of match funding. The funding was secured for the following 12 sites and 39 courts listed below:

- Albany Park – 3 courts
- Arnos Park – 4 courts
- Craig Park – 3 courts
- Durants Park – 3 courts
- Groveland’s Park – 2 courts
- Hazelwood Rec – 3 courts
- Jubilee Park – 4 courts
- North Enfield Rec – 3 courts
- Oakwood Park – 6 courts

- Ponders End Rec – 1 court
- Pymmes Park – 3 courts
- Town Park – 4 courts

Unfortunately, the LTA did not grant funding for the 10 tennis courts within Bush Hill Park, due to the number of courts requiring work and the cost the renovations required to bring each of the courts back up to an acceptable standard.

The courts at Firs Farm Recreation Ground (4 courts) and Broomfield Park (6 courts) were not included in the bid as they have either been constructed or reconstructed relatively recently and remain in very good condition.

The programme of works has varied from site to site, but has included resurfacing, tree root removal, fence and gate repairs, application of an anti-slip colour coating, installation of new nets, and the installation of a pin-code access system. The main construction works were completed in December, although the application of the anti-slip colour coating will be completed at six sites when the weather improves this spring.

As a condition of the grant from the LTA, pin-code access systems have been installed at all the sites that are part of the funded programme. This is consistent with the systems that have been in successful operation at Broomfield Park and Firs Farm for the last couple of years.

The system requires users to prebook a court/s via the LTA's ClubSpark's booking system. When booked, users are provided with a code that they type into their court's pin pad on arrival and the system provides access to the court for their booking. The system ensures that users can book a court at a convenient time knowing it will be available when they arrive, which the LTA's research has shown as a barrier to participation for some users at sites where no booking system exists. If a resident does not have access to the internet at home, they can either contact the Parks Business Unit via the telephone to book or access the internet via one of the Council's community buildings.

Courts can be booked free of charge Monday to Friday from 9am – 5pm, and for £5.50 during the evening or weekends (£8.40 for floodlit bookings at Firs Farm and Broomfield). A condition of the LTA funding is that there must be sustainable revenue generated from the tennis courts to enable them to be kept to a good standard once refurbished.

Booking information and participation data will allow the monitoring of court utilisation within the borough and enable the Sport & Leisure team to support tennis growth and development moving forward. The pin-code access system will also help ensure the courts remain available for their primary purpose and help prevent them being for other

activities such as cycling or dog training, which we are aware has happened on some of the courts.

A further condition of the LTA grant funding has been the appointment of a tennis operator, who will organise free social tennis at all sites, provide coaching, organise tennis leagues and help develop tennis in the borough. A preferred tennis operator is in place and contracts are being finalised. As part of their bid the preferred operator will pay the Council an annual management fee that will be held in a sinking fund and provide a sustainable funding model for the courts moving forward to keep them in good condition and therefore encourage usage of them.

### **Parks, grass and verge management**

All parks and verge maintenance and management are undertaken through an in-house provision. The verge maintenance and associated management became an in-house provision in 2021.

In principle the borough is split into eastern and western geographical areas due to the location of the depots, Pymmes Park Depot located in N9, and Trent Country Park Depot located in EN4.

The work schedules for both parks and verge maintenance are presented to the maintenance team members in thirteen four weekly schedules. The schedules are orientated around land characteristics and both verge and park content. For parks as the grass cutting season depletes, the introduction of sport pitch maintenance increases, alongside woodland management. For verges, this will be seen as a period of performing edging works to provide delineation of the verges, and equally any hedge maintenance will be performed.

This provision ensures that all aspects of maintenance are programmed in, allowing for suitable preparation.

April 2024 will see the service begin to operate as a municipal function, we have been able to introduce this change by increasing both supervision and operational management by a hundred percent. As a result of this increase, we have been able to reduce areas of geographical responsibility for the supervisory element of the service, and they will take on the responsibility of the parks, open spaces, and verge maintenance within the geographical space.

To support the service performance further we are working towards the introduction of the work schedules in a digital format. This introduction will ensure that any missed tasks are reprogrammed for completion, and that the missed activity is published on the service web page to allow for improved customer relationship management and transparency. As well as informing our customers, the technologies will be able to

distribute Ad-hoc works to our teams based on their location and skill set, reducing disruption and improving on response times, there is also the benefit of idle time reduction through real time instructions to our work force.

The technologies are anticipated to be operational within the service by mid-May 2024, with a full time role responsible for the management and analysis of the works schedules, and ensuring the software becomes embedded in the service.

General amenity grass within our parks and open spaces is cut on a fifteen-day schedule, and our sport pitch grass is cut at an increased frequency of five days, which allows for a safe and appropriate surface for play. The variance between frequency, is linked to use and equally allows for a balanced approach towards our environmental commitments, through reducing machinery use and waste generation.

April 2024, see the introduction of an increased Country Side (CS) agreement with Natural England, this agreement enforces sound land management practices and supports enhancing biodiversity through the completion of land-based management practices.

The original agreement was linked to five parks and limited in scope, through a rigorous feasibility review, this has been increased to eighteen parks. The full listing is detailed in table 1.

<b>Sites included in the Countryside stewardship April 24 Onwards</b>			
Albany Park	Boxers Lake	Forty Hall	Groveland's Park
Broomfield Park	Hillyfields	Montague Recreation Ground	Bury Lodge
Durants Park	Firs Farm	New river loop	Oakwood Park
Prince of Wales Park	Pymmes Park	Trent Park	Town Park and Old Loop
Whitewebbs	Wilbury Way		

Table 1. CS agreement April 2024

The CS agreement identifies parcels of land within each space and provides an expected management approach, this also relates to engineered or natural water assets within the spaces. Natural England, as part of the quality assurance mechanisms, will perform an annual audit of Enfield's performance, which provides a focus for the service to deliver.

### **Illegal Fishing and overnight camping (Groveland's)**

Fishing is permitted at Groveland's Park during the day, providing the individual has a current licence and returns the fish to the waterbody. Our Bye Laws do not permit overnight camping within any park.

The organisation has commenced with a new contract in relation to waste management and the enforcement of FPN's linked to littering. Colleagues responsible for this contract have agreed that frequent visits to sites, through this mechanism is available for Summer 2024, the summer being the significant period when overnight camping occurs. With the support of the revised contract and increased supervisory / management within the parks service, there will be an increased focus on the control and removal of overnight camping and inappropriate behaviours linked to fishing within the areas where this is permitted.

This approach will be the first option in relation to this issue, due to the heritage and characteristic of Groveland's Park, the service is reluctant to install signage over the current provision.

Oakwood Park, Trent Park, Town Park and Whitewebbs Park, each have a café building/ structure and outdoor seating area. These four park cafés were under contract to a single tenant. Following default on rental payment, forfeiture of the four park café premises was issued on the 12th of September 2023.

Park Cafes being a key area of demand for communities, their closure is an inconvenience for community and park users. As such and following the forfeiture notices, Enfield Council began a submission process for new operators for the park cafes.

### **Submission Evaluation Process**

A brochure of the four park cafes (along with three other culture venues) was created with submission and application guidance, including how each submission would be evaluated; this was released 09<sup>th</sup> October 2023 (Appendix 1). This brochure was advertised on the Enfield Council website, on posters outside each of the four park cafes (with QR and web links to the full brochure), as well as emailed to any interested parties who contacted property or commercial services.

The initial deadline of 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023 was extended by a week to 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023 5pm, as feedback from multiple businesses requested an extension. Applicants could apply for multiple cafes, but the submission would be evaluated independently for each location, as they were not offered as a batch.

Following the deadline, the initial evaluation process was followed with up to 8 officers from key departments (property, commercial services, and parks) evaluating the submissions on pre-determined areas of assessment with clear marking guidance

(Example shown in Appendix 2). Each area was given a score 1-5 and the weighting of that area automatically calculated the score for that criterion, as well as the overall score.

The overall scores were then averaged, and the top scorers for each culture and park café were invited to an in-person evaluation panel.

The in-person evaluation panel had set criterion to be evaluated against; attendees were invited to provide a food presentation, a bid presentation bringing their proposal to life, and a Question-and-Answer portion, with questions asked about their bid presentation. On the panel was the Director of Parks, Leisure and Culture, commercial services representations, and property colleagues.

After evaluation, all applicants were notified of the outcome of their submission on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Successful applicants were notified, and next steps provided (heads of terms, site visits etc). Those who had not been successful were notified and anonymised scores provided so applicants could see how their submission scored on the different criteria areas in comparison with other bids with further feedback offered on their submission should it be requested.

### **Post Award Process**

S.123 notices advise the public that the council will be disposing of some open space to a third party. This allows for any interested parties to object and for all objections to be duly considered and responded to prior to disposal. For the café properties, S.123 Notice procedures and timelines have been followed for the park café properties. Due process for contract drafting is being followed.

### **Trent Park Café**

The successful proposed operator for Trent Park Café is a family owned, independent café founded by an Enfield based husband and wife team.

### **Oakwood Park Café**

The successful proposed operator for Oakwood Park is an Enfield based Cycling Charity that has been dedicated to promoting cycling, wellbeing, and healthy eating events in Enfield.

### **Whitewebbs Park Café**

The successful proposed operator for Whitewebbs Park Café is an Enfield based father and son team who have been together in business since 2009.

### **Town Park Café**

The successful proposed operator for Town Park Café is a wife and wife team, local to Enfield and a start-up business for this opportunity.

### **Submission Evaluation Process**

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The initial deadline of 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023 was extended by a week to 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023 5pm, as feedback from multiple businesses requested an extension. Applicants could apply for multiple cafes, but the submission would be evaluated independently for each location, as they were not offered as a batch.

As the extended deadline passed, 42 applications had been received for review; 21 applications for Trent Park Café, 12 for Town Park Café, 7 for Whitewebbs Park café, 4 for Oakwood Park Café, and 10 for the other culture venues advertised within the brochure.

Following the deadline, the initial evaluation process was followed with up to 8 officers from key departments (property, commercial services, and parks) evaluating the submissions on pre-determined areas of assessment with clear marking guidance (Example shown in Appendix 2). Each area was given a score 1-5 and the weighting of that area automatically calculated the score for that criterion, as well as the overall score. This process was condensed into eight working days to evaluate all 42 submissions.

The overall scores were then averaged, and the top scorers for each culture and park café were invited to an in-person evaluation panel, scheduled for the 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. These applications were also sent to finance colleagues for credit checks and company history vetting to assure that they were credible with adequate cashflow for the acquisition of the sites.

Up to 50 points were available at the in-person evaluation panel, as such whilst the top 3 scorers were to be invited, where there was a difference of 50 points or over between the second and third scoring business, the third place was not invited to panel as it wasn't thought to be fair to invite them to an in-person panel when they couldn't have been awarded.

The in-person evaluation panel had set criterion to be evaluated against; attendees were invited to provide a food presentation, a bid presentation bringing their proposal to life, and a Question-and-Answer portion, with questions asked about their bid presentation, how they are securing their capital for investment etc (Appendix 3). On the panel was the Director of Parks, Leisure and Culture, commercial services representations, and property colleagues.



After evaluation, all applicants were notified of the outcome of their submission on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Successful applicants were notified, and next steps provided (heads of terms, site visits etc). Those who had not been successful were notified and anonymised scores provided so applicants could see how their submission scored on the different criteria areas in comparison with other bids with further feedback offered on their submission should it be requested.

### **Post Award Process**

S.123 notices advise the public that the council will be disposing of some open space to a third party. This allows for any interested parties to object and for all objections to be duly considered and responded to prior to disposal. For the café properties, S.123 Notice procedures and timelines have been followed, and Investment proposals for the sites are in review and the contract drafting is with the legal department within Enfield Council. The sites have required clean up and waste removal which has been completed. The successful applicants have been offered a Tenancy at Will until 13th March 2024, after which should no legal challenge be raised, a longer-term lease will be offered.

### **Trent Park Café**

For Trent Park Café, the top four were invited as two had the same score for their initial submission. The successful bidder, represented by Bidder 19 had the highest overall score and so was offered the Tenancy at Will, with the aspiration of offering a longer-term lease should there be no legal challenge from the previous tenant.

The successful proposed operator for Trent Park Café is a family owned, independent café founded by an Enfield based husband and wife team.

**Trent Park Final Scores**

	<b>Submission Score</b>	<b>Panel Score</b>	<b>Final Total Score</b>
<b>Bidder 19</b>	339.17	44.80	<b>383.97</b>
<b>Bidder 6</b>	314.17	32.60	346.77
<b>Bidder 12</b>	308.33	31.00	339.33
<b>Bidder 21</b>	308.33	29.80	338.13

### **Oakwood Park Café**

For Oakwood Park Café, the top two were invited (as the third place was over 50 points below second place), with Bidder 1 being offered the tenancy at will, with the aspiration of granting a longer-term lease should no legal challenge be issued by the previous

tenant. Unfortunately, after meeting with the winning bidder to propose next steps and contract terms, the bidder was not able to commit to the rent agreement set out for the location in the brochure and declined the offer to proceed. As the score between Bidder 1 and 3 for this lot was quite significant, a brochure for Oakwood Park Café was created, and sent to unsuccessful bidders that had gone to panel, which had the same or higher final score as Bidder 1 for this lot (303.87). These 13 who scored the same, or higher, were emailed the brochure and asked to express interest in Oakwood Park Café. Of those who responded, the highest scoring was offered Oakwood Park Café tenancy at will, represented by Bidder 9 for Town Park Final Scores.

The successful proposed operator for Oakwood Park is an Enfield based Cycling Charity that has been dedicated to promoting cycling, wellbeing, and healthy eating events in Enfield.

#### Oakwood Park Final Scores

	Submission Score	Panel Score	Final Total Score
<b>Bidder 1</b>	266.67	37.20	<b>303.87</b>
<b>Bidder 3</b>	246.67	18.00	264.67

#### Whitewebbs Park Café

For Whitewebbs Park Café, the top two were invited to an in-person evaluation panel, with the successful bidder, represented by Bidder 3 below, proceeding with the Tenancy at Will, with the aspiration of granting a longer-term lease should no challenge be presented by the previous tenant.

The successful proposed operator for Whitewebbs Park Café is an Enfield based father and son team who have been together in business since 2009.

#### Whitewebbs Park Final Scores

	Submission Score	Panel Score	Final Total Score
<b>Bidder 3</b>	313.33	37.60	<b>350.93</b>
<b>Bidder 4</b>	271.67	37.20	308.87

#### Town Park Café

For Town Park Café, the top three scorers were invited to an in-person evaluation panel, with the winning bidder, represented by Bidder 4, being offered Tenancy at Will with the aspiration of granting a longer-term lease should no legal challenge be raised by the previous tenant.

The successful proposed operator for Town Park Café is a wife and wife team, local to Enfield and a start-up business for this opportunity.

<b>Town Park Final Scores</b>			
	<b>Submission Score</b>	<b>Panel Score</b>	<b>Final Total Score</b>
<b>Bidder 4</b>	310.00	38.80	<b>348.80</b>
<b>Bidder 9</b>	285.00	23.80	308.80
<b>Bidder 7</b>	274.17	28.20	302.37

### **Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies**

These projects are closely aligned with Priority 1 of the Council Plan, which aims to enhance biodiversity and protect our parks, open spaces, woodlands, watercourses, wetlands, trees and shrubs. By improving biodiversity, reducing the impact of pollution and flooding and encouraging people to spend more time in Enfield's parks and open spaces they also contribute to measures in the Council's Climate Action Plan, Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Blue and Green Strategy.

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### **Appendices**

None