

BRIEFING NOTE

FOR THE ATTENTION OF:
Environment Forum

For Comment

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**Subject / Title: Parks Management
and Maintenance**

Ward(s): All

Date: 23rd February 2023

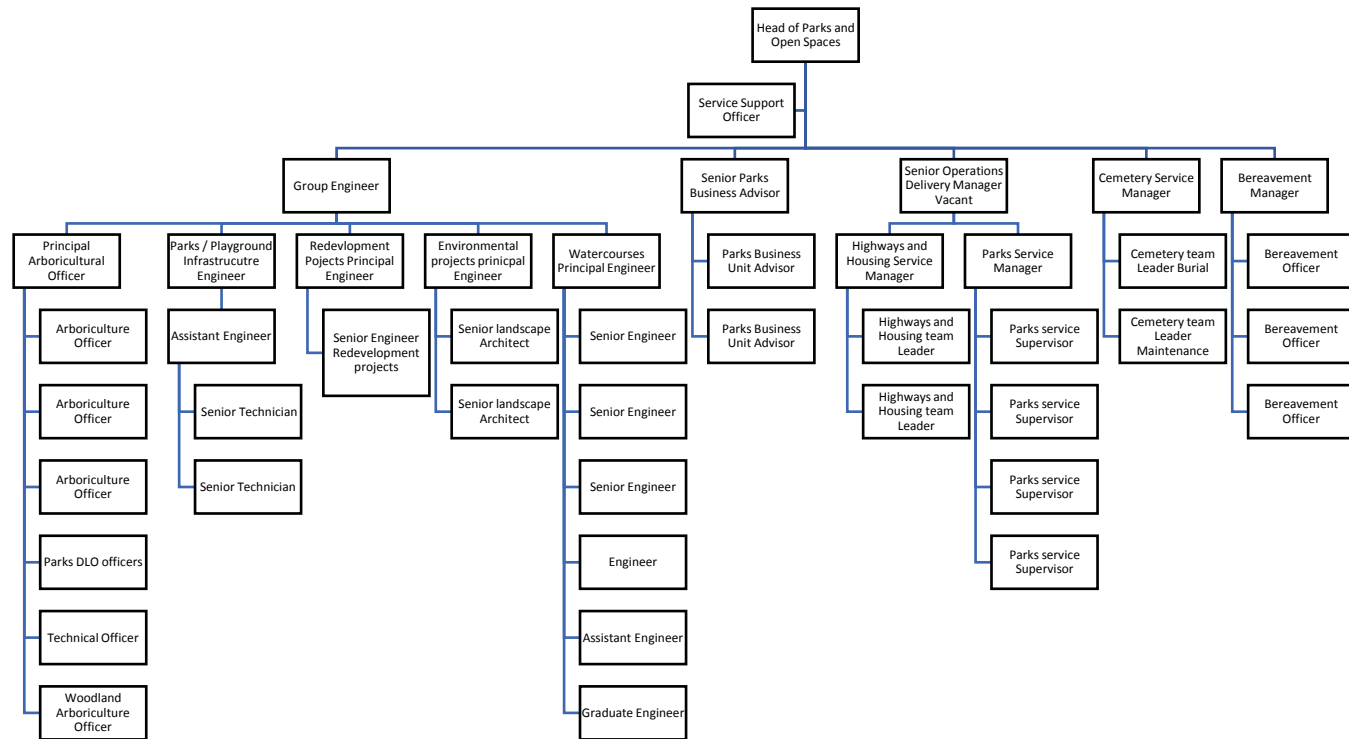
Background

Parks maintenance and management within the borough is provided through an in-house service provision, operating through a distributed model. A distributed model indicates that a proportion of the parks are maintained through mobile teams, and the remainder through staff continually based at a site providing maintenance.

In October 2022, the redevelopment team which includes watercourses, arboriculture, play infrastructure and project team joined the parks and open spaces services, in January 2023 the bereavement team also joined the service.

The revised structure offers opportunity for the service to improve on the delivery of capital projects through the consideration of future maintenance responsibilities. Furthermore, joining the officers responsible for the blue and green assets allows for an improved response to issues and at the same time enhances service delivery.

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Parks and Open Spaces Structure February 2023.

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Update

Service review

The Council's transformation team and an external consultant have been performing a review of the operational performance and methodology for the parks service since October 2022.

As part of the review the work programmes for the service have been updated, and are based on thirteen four-week periods for the year, outlining seasonal tasks for the front-line teams to complete. While the programme provides direction for the front-line teams, there is anticipated creep within the work programmes due to the seasonal variances. As well as the review of the work programmes, quality control for both supervisors and managers will be introduced during spring 2023, allowing for improved forecasting of works and effective service delivery.

The review offers the possibility of publishing the work programmes and schedules on the Council's website.

Waste Management

We are currently working with Goodparksforlondon, an organisation which supports the capital and its parks professionals, on our waste management options.

A recycling pilot scheme is currently underway within four parks, Albany, Bush Hill park, Pymmes and Broomfield. Working in conjunction with the friends of the parks eight recycling bins have been installed, and the generated waste collected is introduced into the recycling waste stream.

At the time of the report no data regarding quantity and contamination rates were available. If the scheme is successful, the scheme will be expanded further.

Solar powered bins have been installed at Town Park, Chase Green and Jubilee park. These bins have an increased capacity than the standard bins within our parks, equally the solar panel on the bin operates a ram to compress the waste and notify the team via SMS when it requires emptying. The larger capacity and notification system supports results in a reduced emptying frequency for the team.

Later litter clearances will be introduced in spring and continue throughout the summer months. The resource will operate until the park closing times, and will undertake both emptying of bins and litter picks, to reduce the duration front line

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staff spend during the mornings to clear and manage waste, allowing for a better focus on alternative maintenance tasks.

Grass cutting

Tractor operations on general amenity grass areas will be reduced from a weekly to a fortnightly cut during 2023. This will be reviewed throughout the season to ensure that it is not creating any issues for our park users, grass sport surfaces will remain on the weekly frequency to ensure a high standard play surface.

The reduction in frequency, provides the service with capacity to undertake further tractor operations, including maintenance of the borough's rural road network and public rights of way, equally allowing for improved renovation works to sport surfaces at the end of the season.

In response to 2022's extreme weather and subsequent grassland fires additional cut and collect machinery has been procured, allowing for increased management of conservation grass areas. Conservation grass areas within parks will be reviewed and where they offer little bio-diversity value, we will return them to amenity grassland.

Country Side stewardship – Natural England

The team have been working with representatives from Natural England to review the countryside stewardship for Enfield. The original agreement covered hedge and grassland management, and focussed on five sites, Forty Hall, Hillyfields, Oakwood, Trent and Whitewebbs.

Natural England are supporting a feasibility study to review the opportunity of increasing the scheme and associated landscape management throughout the borough. The feasibility is due to commence in Spring 2023.

Alternative land management options

In 2022, public engagement was undertaken in relation to the introduction of grazing cattle for grassland management. Overall response to the proposal was well received, though this method of land management was acknowledged as a significant change to the characteristics of the boroughs parkland.

There remains an appetite to introduce this scheme, though a full review of the benefits and risk is being completed, providing there is a balance and the controls required can be achieved, realistically this will be introduced in 2024.

Lawn Tennis Association funding application

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We are awaiting the results on our application to resurface the tennis courts within the parks. The funding application, if successful will allow for surfaces (asphalt) to be improved and redundant courts reintroduced for play.

There is no match funding required for this application, and the Lawn Tennis Association are supportive of the application in principle based on the success of both Firs Farm and Broomfield.

Friends Group

Since October 2022, the parks team have been hosting surgeries with the friend's groups monthly. This programme of meetings was introduced to improve the resolution of local and historic issues within the parks, and allow for the quarterly cabinet member meeting with the groups to be more focussed on strategic issues.

Event days known as 'big digs' have been delivered by the parks team throughout 2022, and will continue during 2023. These events see the parks service staff and volunteers undertake maintenance tasks together, based on the volunteer's suggestions, so far, we have worked on the herbaceous border at Broomfield, walled garden at Forty Hall and wildflower meadows at Firs Farm.

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