



TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:	Parks and Open Spaces Service
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Policy context:	

SUMMARY

This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with details of the resources and performance levels of the Parks and Open Spaces Section. The report covers the scope of the many aspects of maintenance and tasks undertaken by the service. It provides comparison figures with other providers and details the role of the Friends of Parks in the help they provide in maintaining their local parks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

REPORT DETAIL

BACKGROUND

The Parks and Open Spaces Service provides a range of services that when combined provide the management and maintenance of the parks in Havering. All of these services are required to work together in order to provide a quality park service. These services are delivered through a number of specialist operatives using a wide range of technology and mechanical equipment. The Parks and Open Spaces Service are supported through a network of “Friends” of parks.

The Open Space Service was asked to attend the Overview and Scrutiny following questions from Councillors of the committee, who requested details concerning the frequency of inspections and grounds maintenance tasks such as hedge cutting, litter collection, emptying dog bins and shrub bed maintenance. Further requests were made on issues surrounding lake cleansing programmes, tennis court maintenance and dog problems.

This report looks to place all of these items into the context of the service, whilst providing the detail required by the Councillors. The report does not provide detailed information on individual sites but looks at the resources and service standards being applied to the parks as listed at Appendix 1. Further the report uses information from the London Parks Benchmarking Group to undertake cost analysis of Havering's Grounds Maintenance Service as compared to the other authorities who provided information to the Comparison Project.

SCOPE OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED

The Parks and Open Spaces Service deliver the following services;

- Park Management and administration
- Parks Development
- Grounds Maintenance
- Park Maintenance
- Heritage and Landscapes
- Parks Protection
- Locking and unlocking parks
- Park Event Management
- Parks Projects
- Allotment Management
- Grass Cutting and Shrub Bed Maintenance to Homes in Havering sites
- Grass Cutting to Streetcare sites
- Rural Public Rights of Way Management and Maintenance

The role of each of these services is looked at in detail later in this report.

NB The Parks and Open Spaces Service does not manage trees in parks, this service is managed through Streetcare's Tree Maintenance Team and delivered through a specialist Arboricultural contractor under a corporate tree contract.

THE SITES COVERED BY THE SERVICE

There are 101 parks demographically spread across Havering that are maintained by the service. The sites range from small formal urban gardens and parks to very large country parks. The list of sites maintained by the Parks and Open Spaces Service is detailed in Appendix 1.

RESOURCES USED TO DELIVER THE SERVICES

Budget

The detailed revenue budget for Parks and Open Spaces is at Appendix 2

External Funding

The following schemes have been awarded external funding in 2012.

Raphael Park	Heritage Lottery Fund	£1,700,000
Raphael Park	Veolia	£ 200,000
Raphael Park	Environment Agency	£ 30,000
Langtons Gardens	Heritage Lottery Fund	£ 180,000
Bedfords Park Walled Garden	Big Lottery	£ 270,000
Bedfords Park Walled Garden	Veolia	£ 50,000
Britans Playing Field	Fields in Trust	£ 9,000
Britans Playing Field	Veolia	£ 25,000
Park Lane Recreation Ground	Fields in Trust	£ 9,000
Park Lane Recreation Ground	Veolia	£ 25,000
Total		£ 2,498,000

Comparative Costs

The cost of delivery of grounds maintenance for 16 other local authorities has been detailed in a report by the London Parks and Open Spaces Benchmarking Group. The costs are set out at Appendix 3.

Staffing

There are 85 FTE members of staff and 44 seasonal staff employed by the parks service, who are used to maintain the parks. Full staffing structures are detailed in Appendix 4.

Service Functions and Standards

Park Management and Administration

The senior Park Management are responsible for the organisation and strategic direction of the service. Undertake budget management and coordination and service delivery of the Parks Service.

Parks Protection

The Parks Protection Service is responsible for reducing anti-social activities in the parks and enforcing the bylaws. Thereby ensuring the parks are safe for the public to use.

In 2011 the Parks Protection Service undertook the tasks below.

General Patrols	Public Calls	Byelaw Offences	Verbal Warnings	Written Warnings	Prosecutions	Arrest / Ejections
3700	657	904	214	220	5	1

Emergency Service Partnership Working

Metropolitan Police Service – Safer Neighbourhood Teams

The Parks Protection Service share local intelligence with Romford Police Intelligence Unit and Local Safer Neighbourhood Teams, the partnership between both services is developing and is going from 'Strength to Strength'. Prior to the formation of the Parks Protection Service in 2011, Local Safer Neighbourhood Teams were inundated with members of the public complaining of ASB and various other offences taking place within parks.

London Ambulance Service.

The Parks Protection Service have secured an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and ongoing training through the London Ambulance Service. All officers are first aid trained and attend regular refresher training. We are currently in the process of developing a partnership approach to medical emergencies that occur within Havering's Parks and Open Spaces by responding to calls for assistance and ensuring that the ambulance service are able to gain access to parks and locate casualties quickly.

London Fire Brigade

The Parks Protection Service responded to 114 reported fires in 2011 across the borough's green spaces. These include unauthorised BBQ's and camp fires. As a result of immediate response and excellent knowledge of the grounds the team were able to respond, locate and extinguish small fires very quickly to prevent an escalation therefore protecting the park environment and park users. This information is shared with the Fire Service.

Locking and unlocking parks

This service is managed through the Parks Protection Service and takes place 365 days of the year in line with the times as set out in the Parks byelaws. In case of people being locked in there is an officer on call through the contact service available until 11pm daily. The Park lockers send a text the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at the end of their shift to confirm all of the parks are locked.

Parks Development

The Parks Development officers undertake monitoring of approximately 10% of works carried out by grounds maintenance, including sports facilities inspections such as tennis courts. The courts at Broxhill Park, Hylands Park and Raphael Park are all maintained by Tennis clubs

The Parks Development Officers organise and co-ordinate repair works, they liaise with the Parks Friends groups, undertake consultations, deliver minor park improvement projects. They annually deliver the Green Flag programme. They undertake Health & Safety checks and deal with public correspondence. They annually undertake the Quality and Value assessment of the parks.

Lake inspection, is carried out during site visits and is shared by Parks Development, Grounds Maintenance and Parks Protection officers where appropriate. The inspection of rivers is carried out by the Environment Agency and a Senior Engineer from Streetcare who is responsible for the maintenance of waterways.

Grounds Maintenance

Undertake all of the tasks to maintain the parks and open spaces

This includes the tasks for which information was requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Litter and other debris removal such as broken glass

Grass cutting

Tree/bush/hedge pruning

Litter and dog bins collection

Grass Cutting and Shrub Bed Maintenance to Homes in Havering sites

Grass Cutting to Streetcare sites

A more detailed list of the tasks carried out by the grounds maintenance service and the frequency that tasks are undertaken is set out at Appendix 5.

Park Maintenance

The team of two Parks maintenance operatives undertake play equipment checks and repairs, repairs to pathways, gates, fences, signage; benches litter bins, dog bins, repairs and replacement of padlocks. These are specialist multi-tradesmen and have a mobile vehicle specifically adapted to assist them in carrying out their maintenance tasks.

Heritage and Landscapes

The management, maintenance, development and promotion of Havering's historic landscapes buildings and structures. Including; advice on major restoration programmes, the organising of events such as Open House and liaison with many Friends groups who are friends of a historic building or parkland/garden.

Park Event Management

Authorising and letting areas of parks for a wide range of events, from Fair grounds and large fetes to the family fun days, fun runs and private function. Evaluating event risk assessments, negotiating booking fees, liaising with other areas of the council and external agencies that need to know the events are scheduled. Provide the public with advice on booking events.

Parks Projects

Parks Projects are delivered by a number of officers and one consultant who is paid from the project funding. The current list of projects is;

Raphael Park - HLF Stage 2

Langtons Gardens - HLF Stage

Broxhill Park – Development of Sports Park

Bedfords Park Walled Garden – Development of growing area

Projects soon to be set in motion are;

Central Park – Landscaping

Brittans Playing Fields - Play area, outdoor gym, signage and furniture

Park Lane Recreation Ground - Play area, outdoor gym, signage and furniture

Allotment Management

An officer co-ordinates the allotment improvement projects and attends regular meetings with the allotment stewards to discuss their requirements.

Rural Public Rights of Way Management and Maintenance

Arranging for cutting and clearance of Rural Public Rights of Way. Dealing with the many disputes concerning access to the Rural Public Rights of Way.

Friends groups involvement in parks maintenance

Havering parks and Open Spaces has a very good relationship with a large number of Friends groups across the borough. Working with the Friends groups in 2008 Parks Managers pioneered the Official Friends of Parks status which has proved very successful and has strengthened the working relationship between the council and many Friends groups. The Parks Service is still working to develop and improve the working relationships with the Friends groups and to help coordinate the delivery of a number of project and provide support to the groups. The full list of the activities of the Parks Friends groups is at Appendix 6.

Performance Awards 2012

The list of performance awards are at Appendix 7

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Legal implications and risks:

There are no legal implications from this report.

Financial implications and risks:

This report presents a summary of the resources and performance levels for the Parks and Open Spaces. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the service revenue budget. Appendix 3 provides a comparison of spend with some other London authorities. There is no other specific financial comment.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no HR implications arising directly as a result of this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

The Council is committed to the personal safety of its residents and officers. All reasonable steps are taken to ensure that these groups (including children and vulnerable adults) are able to use the Borough's parks safely, and criminal offences will be prosecuted wherever possible.

In order to address current equality issues the Parks and Open Spaces Service is are planning new disabled loos at Raphael Park in 2013.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The London Parks Benchmarking Group Comparison Project 2012

List of Parks and Open Spaces

Appendix 1

A12/Whitelands Way Bund
Abbey Wood Open Space
Bancroft Chase Playsite & Open Space
Bedfords Park
Bretons Outdoor Recreation Centre
Brittons Playing Field
Brookway Playsite
Broxhill Centre
Central Park
Chelmsford Avenue Playsite
Chudleigh Road Open Space
Clockhouse Gardens
Collier Row Green Link
Collier Row Recreation Ground
Cornflower Way Open Space
Coronation Gardens
Cottons Park
Cranham Playing Fields
Dagnam Park
Duck Wood
Elliot Playing Fields
Faringdon Avenue Open Space
Fielders Sports Ground
Fir Wood
Fleet Close
Forest Lodge Site
Gaynes Parkway
Gidea Park Sports Ground
Grenfell Park
Hacton Parkway and Playsite
Hall Lane Mini Golf Course
Harold Wood Park
Harrow Lodge Park
Hatters Wood
Havering Country Park
Havering Playing Field
Havering Village Green
Havering Well Garden
Haynes Park
Hood Walk Playsite
Hornchurch Country Park
Hylands Park
Jutsums Recreation Ground
Keats Avenue Playsite
King Georges Playing Field
Langtons Gardens
Lawns Park
Lessa Sports Ground
Lilliput Road
Lodge Farm Park
Lodge Lane PS
Long Wood
Louis Marchesi Playsite (Maybank)
Mardyke Adventure Playground and Open Space
Myrtle Road Chatteris Avenue Open Space
New Road
Noak Hill Sports Ground
North Hill Recreation Ground
Oldchurch Park
Painsbrook Adventure Playground
Painsbrook Open Space (Paines Meadow)
Painsbrook Way Open Space
Park Lane Recreation Ground
Parklands
Priory Road Open Space
Queens Theatre Grounds
Rainham Creekside Pathway
Rainham Recreation Ground
Raphael Park
Rise Park
Romford Ice Rink
Romford Library Gardens
Rush Green Open Space
Sage Wood
Sheffield Drive Open Space
Shoulder of Mutton Wood
Spring Farm Park
St Andrews Park
St Edwards Church
St Helens & St. Giles Churchyard
St Neots Adventure Playsite
Stirling Close
Stratton Wood
Sunflower Way Flood Lagoon
Suttons Parkway
The Chase
The Dell
The Glen Playsite Rainham
The Glens Elm Park
Tyle Green Open Space
Tylers Common
Upminster Hall Playing Field
Upminster Park
Westlands Playing Field
Whybridge Close
Windmill Field

Appendix 2

Parks and Open Spaces Budget 2012/13

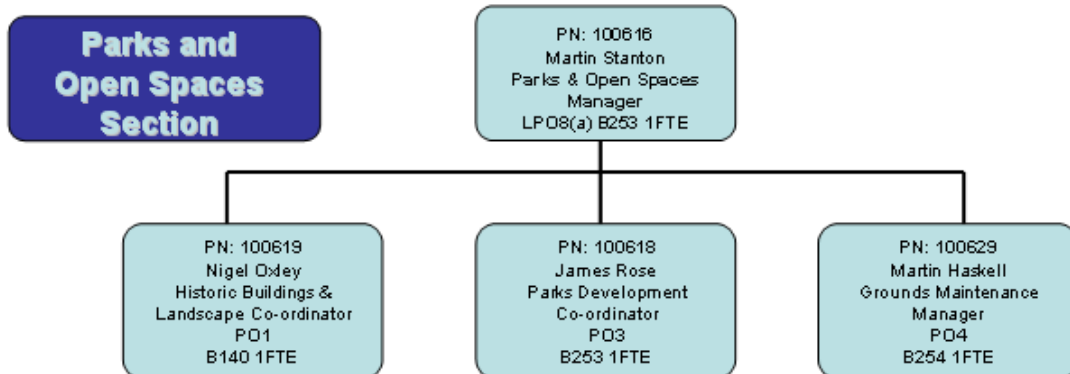
	Budget	Central Recharges	Adjusted Service Budget
Parks Management	£692,240	£459,770	£232,470
Parks Properties	£131,650	£117,700	£13,950
Parks Protection Service	£223,950		£223,950
Parks Maintenance Fitter (Play areas)	£83,170	£19,960	£63,210
Events	£6,970	£5,880	£1,090
Allotments	£9,170	£0	£9,170
Heritage	£107,020	£6,820	£100,200
Countryside Management & PRoW	£234,170	£48,480	£185,690
Grounds Maintenance Management	£157,450	£3,030	£154,420
Grounds Maintenance Parks	£1,654,020	£143,220	£1,510,800
Grounds Maintenance Homes in Havering	£428,040	£17,690	£410,350
Grounds Maintenance Streetcare	£522,040	£12,950	£509,090
Parks and Open Spaces Income	-£284,495	£0	-£284,495
	£3,965,395	£835,500	£3,129,895

Comparisons of Expenditure with other London Authorities

	Cleansing	Security	Horticultural	Sports	Play Facilities	Total	Area of parkland	Spend per Ha	Population	Cost per person per Ha
<i>London</i>	<i>£10,001,508</i>	<i>£8,202,846</i>	<i>£36,124,728</i>	<i>£4,960,910</i>	<i>£2,319,623</i>	<i>£61,609,614</i>			<i>6175104</i>	
<i>Inner London</i>	<i>£7,683,602</i>	<i>£4,972,839</i>	<i>£15,245,864</i>	<i>£1,836,105</i>	<i>£893,237</i>	<i>£30,631,646</i>			<i>2764010</i>	
<i>Outer London</i>	<i>£2,317,906</i>	<i>£3,230,007</i>	<i>£20,878,865</i>	<i>£3,124,805</i>	<i>£1,426,386</i>	<i>£30,977,969</i>			<i>3411094</i>	
City of London (City Gardens)	£16,000	£0	£1,000,000	£0	£32,000	£1,048,000	313	3346	7185	£0.46574
London Borough of Islington	£871,384	£400,486	£579,827	£86,075	£137,265	£2,075,037	1474	1408	175797	£0.00801
London Borough of Bromley	£0	£400,000	£4,500,000	£0	£60,000	£4,960,000	2996	1656	295532	£0.00560
Westminster City Council	£200,000	£350,000	£1,500,000	£0	£60,000	£2,110,000	2219	951	181286	£0.00524
London Borough of Southwark	£627,966	£396,280	£1,381,795	£99,600	£0	£2,505,641	2996	836	244866	£0.00342
London Borough of Lambeth	£924,467	£284,675	£974,256	£133,572	£19,057	£2,336,027	2694	867	266169	£0.00326
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames	£0	£0	£1,700,000	£0	£0	£1,700,000	3707	459	147273	£0.00311
London Borough of Wandsworth	£752,230	£0	£1,357,450	£343,070	£0	£2,452,750	3518	697	260380	£0.00268
London Borough of Sutton	£190,000	£0	£1,590,600	£115,000	£93,900	£1,989,500	4354	457	179768	£0.00254
London Borough of Newham	£442,996	£569,218	£693,003	£128,921	£34,232	£1,868,370	3879	482	243891	£0.00198
London Borough of Brent	£27,584	£227,444	£1,458,398	£322,114	£50,000	£2,085,540	4363	478	263464	£0.00181
London Borough of Waltham Forest	£36,251	£479,252	£474,445	£112,817	£211,923	£1,314,688	3892	338	218341	£0.00155
London Borough of Redbridge	£300,000	£90,000	£1,050,000	£100,000	£75,000	£1,615,000	5834	277	238635	£0.00116
London Borough of Bexley	£331,766	£320,000	£588,095	£89,077	£49,529	£1,378,467	6452	214	218307	£0.00098
London Borough of Enfield	£201,000	£50,000	£1,265,000	£275,000	£200,000	£1,991,000	8090	246	273559	£0.00090
London Borough of Havering	£11,722	£120,000	£958,739	£466,658	£67,793	£1,624,912	11969	136	224248	£0.00061
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority	£80,951	£181,600	£585,626	£0	£0	£848,177	0			

All figures supplied from the London Parks Benchmarking Comparison Project 2012

Parks and Open Spaces Staff structure charts January 2012



Appendix 5

A Selection of some of the main Grounds Maintenance Tasks and Frequency of Operation for Parks

Task	Frequency
Litter picking across site	Twice weekly
Hardstanding Sweeping	Twice weekly
Litter bin emptying – high*	Daily
Litter bin emptying – med*	Three times each week
Litter bin emptying - low	Weekly
Dog bin emptying	Weekly
Shrub pruning	Once annually
Hedge cutting – Formal	Three times annually
Hedge cutting – Semi Formal	Twice annually
Hedge cutting informal	Once annually
Shrub bed weeding	Fortnightly March - October
Tree pruning	As and when required
Grass cutting – Fine turf	Three times weekly in growing season
Grass cutting - Sports pitches	Weekly in growing season
Grass cutting – amenity grass	Fortnightly in growing season
Grass cutting - verges	Once every four weeks in growing season
Grass cutting - meadows	Half of meadow cut annually
Opening/Closing park	Daily
Play area inspections	
Independent play area inspections	Annually
Weeding hardstanding	Every four weeks
Rose bed pruning	Spring and autumn
Install annual summer bedding	Annually
Install annual spring bedding	Annually
Winter pitch marking	Weekly (during playing season)
Summer pitch marking	Weekly (during playing season)
Cutting cricket table	Twice weekly
Pest and disease control of fine turf	Four times during the playing season
Grass Edging	Every two weeks
Wild flower meadows	Half of meadow cut annually
Toilet cleaning	Daily or hourly (dependent on day and season)
Check /clean benches	Monthly
Check and remove graffiti	Daily/weekly
Remove epicormic growth	Annually

* Frequency can become weekly during the winter

NB There are parks that have frequencies of maintenance at variance to those listed above for a number of reasons that are specific to individual sites.

Appendix 6: The Friends of Parks Activities

Park	Official Friends Status 2012	Year Formed	Achievements	Aims for potential projects
Friends of Cottons Park	Yes	2002	Obtained funding for park improvements for playsite and signage through Annual family funday	More skate equipment, community garden and events
Friends of Dagnam Park		2003	Regular litter picking event	Fencing and signs. Community events.
Friends of King Georges Playing Field	Yes	2004	New Riverside path	Funding for small events. New footpath construction. Refurbishment of toilets
Hylands Park Action Group	Yes	2004	None	Small community events. Park furniture improvements
Harrow Lodge Conservation Group	No	2000	Regular working groups in around lake Previous contact with Veolia for lake improvements.	Funding for de-silting of lakes and other improvements to lake.
Friends of Bedfords Park	Yes	2004	Regular practical work parties	For improvements to the redundant historic Walled Garden and possibly re open the area as a community/educational resource
Friends of Clockhouse Gardens	No	2004	Veolia, Awards For All funding achieved for landscaping, story telling area and duck feeding area	New and refurbishment works in the Gardens Planting of more shrubs and flowering plants
Friends of Raphael Park and Lodge Farm Park	Yes	2004	Assistance with Green Flag. Regular litter picking event. Annual Family Fun Day	Work with Council to develop HLF bid for Raphael
Friends of Langtons Gardens	Yes	2006	Working groups in gardens. Fund raising through events.	Raising funding for restoration and new works in the Gardens

Park	Official Friends Status 2012	Year Formed	Achievements	Aims for potential projects
Friends of Harold Wood Parks	Yes	2005	Assistance with consultation with play area, ball court and various green flag improvements. Funded equipment at Painsbrook. Bulb and shrub planting	GP to update
Friends of Upminster Park	Yes	2006	Frequent gm assistance – litter picking, weeding & planting. Organised bulb planting and fun-day	Crazy golf course!
Friends of St Andrews Park	Yes	2006	Litter picking. Liaison with local school to design logo. New gates design Annual family funday	Improved landscape and security.
Friends of Havering Country Park	Yes	2007	Regular work parties, organised bat walks, fundraising through events. Grassroots funding for refurbishing pond and installing furniture	Improved maintenance and security, reduce anti-social behaviour, more park furniture,
Friends of Lawns Park	Yes	2006	Litter Picking Assisting with development of play site and ball court	Work with Council for Green Flag works
Friends of Rise Park	No	2010		
Elizabeth Road Tenants Association (Brookway)	No	2000		
Havering atte Bower Conservation Society		2008	Bulb Planting and Horsemans Sunday event	Install new village sign

Performance Awards 2012

Customer Satisfaction Rating

In 2012 the Parks and Open Spaces Service has a Customer satisfaction rating of 72%. This figure has been steadily increasing year on year for the last 5 years.

Green Flag Award 2012

The Parks and Open Spaces Service retained the eight Green Flags that were awarded for

- Bedfords Park
- Cottons Park
- Harrow Lodge Park
- Hylands Park
- Lawns Park
- Lodge Farm Park
- St Andrews Park
- Upminster Park

London in Bloom 2012

London in Bloom 2012, Havering's Parks were awarded the following

London City Award (We have only reached Silver in the past 4 years)		Silver Gilt Award
Country Park of The Year	Hornchurch Country Park	Gold Award
Large Park of The Year	Bedford's Park	Gold Award
Park of The Year	Lodge Farm Park	Silver Gilt Award
Small Park of The Year (Silver last year)	Langton's Gardens	Silver Gilt Award
London in Bloom Biodiversity Award		1st place (second year running)
London in Bloom Allotment Award		2nd place