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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 10</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2009	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	Chris Smith Ext: 5924	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Review of Anti Social Behaviour in Open Spaces</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	Swadlincote, Newhall, Woodville, Church Gresley	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS07</b>

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 To acknowledge the findings of the review and approve the review action plan.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To provide Members with detail on the Review of Anti Social Behaviour in Public Open Space and seek approval for the resultant action plan.

## **3.0 Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The report outlines the background reasons for carrying out the review, the process taken to obtain information, the conclusions it reached and the Action Plan that has been developed

## **4.0 Detail**

### **Background & Evidence of Need**

- 4.1 The need for a review of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) in parks and Public open spaces (POS) was identified after a number of incidents of damage and anti social behaviour occurred in the District maintained parks and open spaces in South Derbyshire during 2007 and 2008.
- 4.2 ASB in parks and POS is a major cost to the Council and other stakeholders, it contributes to crime levels and fear of crime and is a serious impediment to improving the quality of public open space and its use by the community.
- 4.3 The review will result in a reduction in ASB in open space, which will be measured by reductions in recorded ASB, costs of repair/replacement and also officer time spent on the consequences of ASB.
- 4.4 The review will enable a proactive approach to reducing ASB to be taken, the quality and quantity of enforcement will increase, diversionary activities will be

targeted, reporting and responding mechanism will be improved. The result will be financial and officer timesavings.

- 4.5 The POS to be reviewed would be those that are in council ownership or are a historical hot spot with significant levels of ASB. ASB will include criminal damage, nuisance, litter/dog fouling. The review will consider the work of partners, staffing levels and responsibilities, park opening hours. The review will not look at public open space that falls outside of Council control or is not identified as a district priority.

### **Establishing Baselines**

- 4.6 At the initial meeting of the ASB in Open Spaces working Group a template was completed, which identified what information we would need to collect in order to establish baselines. This would help identify the types of problems that are occurring in our open spaces, the hotspots areas, the cost to the council and the police resources used. The information that the group identified is as follows:

- Cost to the District – The financial cost to the council of damage caused to property in open spaces of the past two years
- Cost and effectiveness of employing security patrols in the open spaces
- Police Statistics- Showing the calls to service at various parks and open spaces
- Perception of ASB in parks and open spaces (Police, Park staff, Public, PCSO's & Security Patrol)
- Activity levels by clubs, and organised groups
- Park Keepers reports to ASB Officer
- Staff time dealing with ASB

A communications strategy was also produced which identified the various groups of people that would need to be consulted with.

In the period after the initial meeting various officers were tasked with collating all the data as listed above. From this collection data the following conclusions were made:

### **Cost to the District**

- 4.7 Records of the cost of damage to the Council are not kept in a way that is easily accessible. Within the current system of budgets there was no way to distinguish between repairs that were done as a result of wear and tear and those that were needed as a result of deliberate Damage.
- 4.8 It is recognised that this is something that needs to be rectified, and some form of recording system for Incidents of deliberate damage to property within the parks and spaces should be developed. This would need to record the venue the damage has occurred, what the damage was and the eventual cost to repair/replace what has been damaged.

### **Security Patrols**

- 4.9 The cost of employing the security patrols during school holidays between April 2008 and March 2009 was £5688. The long term effectiveness of the security

patrols has been difficult to measure in proving that it led to a reduction in criminal damage.

- 4.10 The security patrols covered 4 urban parks of Newhall Park, Eureka Park, Maurice Lea Memorial Park and Swadlincote Woodlands and as they patrolled each of these parks each night there were still some incidents of damage occurring when they were patrolling. What is clear is that they did liaise closely with the police and frequently reported groups of young people to the police, when there was alcohol present or when there was rowdy behaviour. This however has actually resulted in an increase on police calls for service. They were effective in splitting up groups and allowing the police to confiscate alcohol. Key stakeholders were also asked of their opinion of the security patrols via a questionnaire. The Park Staff, Police and PCSO's, Neighbourhood Wardens, the public and the groups that use the park completed the questionnaire. From the responses there were mixed opinions on how effective they were mainly because the Security patrols covered 4 urban open spaces and didn't commence until 8 pm each night so many were not aware of their presence. The Park staff didn't feel that the Security patrols were particularly effective on reducing litter levels in the park.
- 4.11 It was concluded that the Security Patrols may be much more effective if the number of parks that the security patrols cover is reduced, they will have far more impact if covering just one park which is causing the most problems than splitting their time between 4 parks.

### **Police Statistics**

- 4.12 Obtaining on going police statistics and calls for service to provide a clear baseline for the level of ASB and crime at each of the open spaces has also proved very difficult. Often when crimes / calls for service are recorded for an incident at the park it can get recorded as the road that the park lies on rather than the Park itself. On the other hand it may also work the other way round if there is a crime recorded on a street outside a park, it could get recorded as an incident at the park. It is therefore impossible to gauge an accurate level of crime and ASB within the parks from purely statistical data.
- 4.13 The Partnership Analyst has been able to provide the following table showing crime and ASB recorded at or near to the parks in South Derbyshire during 2007 and 2008. However as mentioned above it is not clear whether all these crimes have occurred within the parks or just in the vicinity of the parks.

Area name	Total
Maurice Lea Memorial Park, Church Gresley	121
The Woodlands, Swadlincote	88
Eureka Park, Swadlincote	55
Newhall Park, Newhall	48
Woodville Recreation Ground, Woodville	37
Gresely Old Hall, Church Gresely	36
Salisbury Drive Recreation Ground, Midway	25
Hilton Village Hall, Hilton	19
Chestnut Avenue Recreation Ground, Midway	18
Hillside Recreation, Findern	6
Linton Recreation Ground, Linton	4
Total	457

4.14 The above table shows that there are far more crimes recorded in and around the 4 urban parks than in the rural areas. There are 40% more crimes recorded at and around Maurice Lea Memorial Park and also a substantial number recorded at Swadlincote Woodlands

4.15 The table below shows the number of calls for service received at or around the Parks and open spaces

ID	Area_name	2007/08					Total
		Theme	Crime	Other	Public Safety	Transport	
		Antisocial Behaviour					
1	The Woodlands, Swadlincote	44	17	5	15	6	87
2	Newhall Park, Newhall	34	16	12	26	2	90
3	Eureka Park, Swadlincote	19	9	6	11	2	47
4	Maurice Lea Memorial Park, Church Gresley	17	11	1	13	1	43
	Chestnut Avenue Recreation Ground, Midway	5	1		5	2	13
	Gresely Old Hall, Church Gresely	27	8	4	15	9	63
	Hillside Recreation, Findern	2					2
	Hilton Village Hall, Hilton	22	5	1	6		34
	Linton Recreation Ground, Linton	2		2	3	1	8
	Salisbury Drive Recreation Ground, Midway	17	6	3	8	2	36
	Woodville Recreation Ground, Woodville	6	5	1	10		22
	Rural	81	25	11	47	14	178
Total		195	78	35	112	25	445

## Perception

4.16 Questionnaires provided a useful of information in recognising the major issues on the local Open Spaces. Park Staff, Police, PCSOs, Park Users, local councillors and wardens were all questioned about the ASB and damage at the park which enabled the identification of key issues and hotspot areas, plus a perception of regularity of occurrences.

## Level of Use

4.17 All parks are well used by a variety of groups, organisations and members of the public, groups that use the parks include football teams, schools, walking groups, bowls clubs, dog walkers and young people playing football. Full time Park Keepers are employed in Eureka, Maurice Lea Memorial and Swadlincote Woodlands, but not in Newhall Park.

### **Park Keepers reports to Anti Social Behaviour Officer**

4.18 All the Park keepers are asked to complete reports each time an incident of ASB or damage occurs in the Open Spaces in which they work. Over the past two years sporadic reports have been received for Maurice Lea Memorial, Eureka, Swadlincote Woodlands and Chestnut Ave Recreation Ground.

4.19 It is clear that after a reminder the number of reports does increase, however maintaining a regular flow of returns is difficult. Most reports have been received from the staff at the Woodlands, as they keep a detailed diary of each incident that occurs. The incidents recorded vary greatly from litter and excessive dog fouling to damage and fire. Some Park staff feel very vulnerable at evenings, especially at Swadlincote Woodlands.

### **Staff Time dealing with ASB**

4.20 The exact time spent on cleaning up aftermath of ASB and damage is not available but most staff fed back that they do clean up litter most days. The time spent greatly varies from half an hour to several hours. The most common litter cleaned up on a daily basis, includes cans, bottles, chip and fast food wrappers and cigarette ends. The PCSO's patrol parks every day and some have formed good relationships with the park staff.

4.21 The conclusions drawn from the Establishing Baselines process are as follows:

- Although there is not a clear picture of the exact number of incidents of damage and ASB in the open spaces it is clear that there are far more problems with the 4 urban open spaces at Eureka Park, Newhall Park, Maurice Lea Memorial Park and Swadlincote Woodlands.
- Incidents of low-level ASB (ie litter and underage drinking) occur on each of these parks on a regular basis (several times a week), the incidents of damage are less regular (monthly) and occur sporadically. The most frequently damaged open spaces are Maurice Lea Memorial Park and Swadlincote Woodlands.
- The Leisure and Community Development Service need to develop a new system to collect accurate info on number of incidents of damage at each open space and the associated costs of repairing them.
- Security patrols should be considered again if damage persists in one particular park but they should be kept to patrolling one park per night.
- Vulnerability of Park Wardens to be considered and reviewed
- Very difficult to assess exact level of crime or calls for service so will be difficult to prove impact of this review using statistics. Qualitative data is more effective than quantitative data in assessing any impact.

### **Key Findings from Evidence Gathering**

4.22 Generic Issues at all Parks

- Litter is a daily problem – Especially Cans, Bottles and Cigarette Buts & food wrappers at lunch times / evenings
- Dog fouling a daily problem on all parks
- Under age Drinking – Cans, bottles,
- Smashed Glass on Play Areas / Greens / Pavilions
- Occasional (Monthly) major damage to play equipment / furniture occurs and is very expensive.
- Damage mainly occurs late summer into autumn (August – November).

#### 4.23 Park Keepers

- Don't feel ASB is getting worse but not specifically better either
- They feel vulnerable at night
- Didn't feel the Security Patrols were particularly effective
- Mixed opinion of possible Mobile park keepers
- Feel CCTV could be an effective tool in certain parks ie: Woodlands
- Would like more contact from PCSO's & Wardens
- Feel that dog fouling is getting worse
- Are not sure that losing the parks would be effective in preventing damage or ASB
- All say they record incidents of ASB in their Diaries, but don't necessarily pass this info on.

#### 4.24 PCSO / Police opinions

- Regularly Patrol Parks – on a daily basis and during the evenings
- Regularly speak with Park Keepers, some have good relationships
- Not many calls for service to the parks – 2-3 per month.
- Know a lot of the youngsters that are hanging out on the parks
- Believe litter is main problem in the parks
- Visibility into parks is very poor, especially at Eureka and Woodlands, high bushes etc mean no natural surveillance from the roads surrounding the parks

#### 4.25 Park Users

- Glass and dog fouling a regular issue at Newhall Park- especially on the football pitch
- Litter recognised as the main problem for bowls club at Eureka Park
- Damage to bowls green at Newhall (prior to Fence being installed)
- Litter and dog fouling at the Woodlands
- Occasional verbal abuse aimed at netball team at Eureka Park

The following lists the key issues on each of the 4 problematic open spaces as identified through consulting with Park staff, people who use the parks, and those that have patrolled the park.

#### 4.26 Eureka Park- Key Issues

- Litter -Cans, bottles, glass on play area
- McDonald's litter, especially passage to Belmont Street
- Cans and bottles on cascade area
- Dog fouling all over the park

- Police feel problems have decreased over last 12 months on Eureka
- Weekly damage – usually fires in bins or to minor damage to play area

#### 4.27 Maurice Lea Memorial Park- Key Issues

- Litter - cans and bottles on band stand, MUGA and bowls pavilion
- Football and bikes on bowls green
- Litter – cans and bottles & cigarettes around bowls pavilion
- Litter / broken glass in play area (in bark chips)
- Occasional damage to bowls green, Bandstand, and furniture
- Occasional graffiti on pavilion

#### 4.28 Newhall Park – Key Issues

- Damage to Bowls Green (No longer an issue) – football & bikes
- Litter around bowls Green – chip papers
- Glass, cans on play area
- Dog fouling on football pitch
- Nuisance Motorcycles

#### 4.29 Swadlincote Woodlands – Key Issues

- Weekly Damage to toilets block – Graffiti/ Fires/
- Broken glass/ damage to equipment on play area
- Dog fouling all over
- Glass on car park
- Travellers
- Graffiti on picnic tables

4.30 When looking at the key problems at the individual open spaces it was noticeable that the majority of the issues were the same at each area (ie: Litter, Cans and bottles, Underage Drinking and Dog fouling) and at the follow up action planning meeting the group decided that the actions should in the majority of cases cover all the focused parks and spaces rather than focus on individual sites. However there are exceptions for example specific actions would be required for hotspot areas that suffer continued damage i.e: The toilet block at Woodlands, The Newhall bowls green, Maurice Lea Pavilion etc.

4.31 The initial action plan was drafted by the working group at a special workshop meeting and then further discussed by the appropriate service managers.

4.32 The completed action plan is available to view at **appendix 1**

## 6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 Due to the fact that incidents of damage and the associated costs to repair were not easily obtainable, the true costs is not known, however it is likely that over two years it would run into several thousands of pounds. On top of the cost of repairing damage is the cost in terms of how much time and effort is taken by the

parks staff to clear up rubbish, pick up broken glass, repair damage greens and other tasks that are required as a result of ASB and Damage

- 6.2 The Safer South Derbyshire Partnership have built into its base budget £5,000 p.a. to be used specifically on developing the actions in the action plan. There will be no financial implications on the Council other than the reduction in costs related to dealing with anti social behaviour.

## **7.0 Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 The review and its recommendations is in line with supporting the Corporate priority of Safe and Secure and in particular the objective of achieving Safer Neighbourhoods.

## **8.0 Community Implications**

- 8.1 The more the parks and open spaces are used for organised activities and by members of the public, the less likely there is to be ASB and damage caused. More activities need to be planned for the parks and people especially young people need to be educated to take pride in their parks and open spaces

## **9.0 Conclusions**

- 9.1

## **10.0 Background Papers**

- 10.1 N/A