

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 29 JUNE 2022**

**Report title:** Reviewing the delivery of parks and trees maintenance services

**Wards:** All

**Portfolio:** Cabinet Member for Sustainable Lambeth and Clean Air: Councillor Rezina Chowdhury

**Report Authorised by:** Bayo Dosunmu: Strategic Director for Resident Services

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### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report outlines Lambeth's current approach to managing and maintain our parks and open spaces; as well as the management of trees within the public realm. A number of documents are referenced as appendices and contain more detail regarding service management and delivery.

### **FINANCE SUMMARY**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To scrutinise the existing delivery of parks and trees maintenance services and associated policies.

## **1. CONTEXT**

- 1.1 Lambeth's parks service was insourced in April 2016 and operates under the banner of Lambeth Landscapes. The service is responsible for 150 green spaces, ranging in size from Clapham Common at 81 hectares to the flower beds at the front of the Town Hall. Sites managed include all soft landscaping on Highways' land. The service operates with 68 full-time posts and 21 seasonal positions (Appendix 13).
- 1.2 The parks service is also responsible for the grounds maintenance of communal Housing land, which was insourced in February 2021. This operates via a standalone operational team of 30.
- 1.3 The tree maintenance service was insourced in April 2019 and is responsible for the direct management of approximately 40,000 trees in parks, cemeteries and on Housing and highways land; as well as tree-planting programmes and advising on the maintenance of other Council-owned trees.
- 1.4 Good quality park and tree maintenance services form a core part of Lambeth's Borough Plan, contributing to the goal of maintaining Lambeth's award-winning parks and investing in a network of green spaces to support physical activity and wellbeing. This goal sits within our big ambition of making Lambeth a place people want to live, work and invest in.
- 1.5 The main underlying legislation governing Lambeth's parks service and tree policies are:
  - a. Commons Act 1899
  - b. Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Order 1967
  - c. Rush Common Act 1806
  - d. Local Government Act 1972
  - e. Open Spaces Act 1906
  - f. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
  - g. Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
  - h. Highways Act 1980
  - i. Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984
  - j. Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
  - k. Compensation Act 2006
  - l. Plant Health Act 1967
  - m. Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - n. Environment Act 1995
  - o. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
  - p. Town and Country Planning Act 1990, part viii, Chapter 1 (Trees)
  - q. Environment Act 2021.

## **2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS**

- 2.1 It is proposed that Overview and Scrutiny Committee investigate the delivery of services relating to the management of parks, open spaces and trees; with this including examination of policy and procedural documents. The investigation will then result in a series of recommendations.
- 2.2 Numerous studies (see Background information for a few examples) have proved the positive impact on health and wellbeing arising from time spent in parks and open spaces and the importance of green space, particularly within an urban environment, heightened during the Covid-19 lockdown periods. Previous resident surveys have identified that our parks and open spaces are used by around three-quarters of residents; and in the 2021 survey, parks were identified as

the best thing about living in Lambeth. It is therefore essential that the Council ensures it is delivering appropriately for its residents.

- 2.3 Trees bring a multitude of benefits for urban residents, including carbon absorption, improving air quality and mitigating the heat island effect. However, they also present significant risk if large branches or entire trees fail. Since bringing the service in-house it has become clear that many of our trees have not been appropriately managed in the past, which has caused the premature death of many mature specimens. Significant numbers of mature trees are also being felled to enable housing and commercial developments to take place and new tree-planting has not been keeping pace with felling in recent years.
- 2.4 So, it is important that policies relating to the management of risk and planting trees are reviewed.
- 2.5 Since the service was insourced officers have attempted to use existing accreditation and benchmarking schemes to enable assessment of the service. In 2020 Lambeth was ranked as the highest performing parks service in London in the Good Parks for London report (Appendix 1); and was ranked second in the 2021 report. Green Flag is a national accreditation scheme for parks and has been secured for 19 of our sites and we have a clear plan to secure accreditation for a total of 33 sites by 2026. In 2021 Lambeth secured 26 Gold and Silver Gilt awards through London in Bloom, the highest for any borough. The service also holds Bronze accreditation under the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme and Van Excellence accreditation.
- 2.6 Both services are steered by Five-year Strategic Plans (Appendices 2 and 3) covering 2020-2025, a Biodiversity Action Plan (Appendix 4) and a Pollinator Action Plan (Appendix 5). Day-to-day management of open spaces is governed by a Grounds Maintenance specification (Appendix 6) and individual site management plans (sample in Appendix 7). Three parks are managed by community organisations (The Rookery by Streatham Common Co-operative (SCCoop), Myatt's Fields Park by Myatt's Fields Park Project (MFPP), with Streatham Vale Park in transition, by Streatham Youth and Community Trust (SYCT) – see the Background information section for links. The management of six other open spaces is overseen by partnership arrangements (Brockwell Park Strategic Partnership Board, Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee, Hillside Gardens Park and Palace Road Nature Garden Partnership Board, Larkhall Park Partnership Board and Ruskin Park Partnership Board).
- 2.7 At present, a Tree Management Policy (Appendix 8) sets out how the service operates in general terms. A Tree Risk Management Policy (Appendix 9) will be published by the end of July and details how works will be prioritised in line with current best practice in order to minimise risk; and a draft Tree Planting Strategy (Appendix 10) is close to completion and will dictate priorities for forthcoming tree-planting schemes.

### **3. FINANCE**

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.2 Financial considerations are detailed in Lambeth's budget reports and investment in parks is driven by the Parks Capital Investment Plan 2020-2025 (Appendix 11).

### **4. LEGAL AND DEMOCRACY**

- 4.1 There are no specific legal comments arising from this report.
- 4.2 There were no further comments from Democratic Services.

## 5. CONSULTATION AND CO-PRODUCTION

5.1 No consultation has taken place in the production of this report. An annual parks users survey is undertaken and the 2020 survey documents are included as Appendix 12. Many of the decisions taken regarding the management of parks are undertaken in a consultative manner through formal Boards or liaison with stakeholder groups, or community-based steering group for capital projects.

## 6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The main risks that impede on the successful delivery of these services are:

**Table 1 – Risk Register**

Item	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Control Measures
1	Injury and death, or damage to goods and property, from falling trees or boughs	2	8	16	Sufficient operational staffing; prioritised inspection regime; staff training; effective monitoring equipment; adequate risk management policies and procedures
2	Failure to meet commitments on tree-planting	2	4	8	Procurement arrangements; funding; staffing and project management
3	Lack of resourcing for parks leads to downward spiral of neglect, reduced use and increased anti-social behaviour	2	8	16	Increased income; opportunities taken to reduce costs; budget shortfalls addressed

### Key

<b>Likelihood</b>	Very Likely = 4	Likely = 3	Unlikely = 2	Very Unlikely = 1
<b>Impact</b>	Major = 8	Serious = 4	Significant = 2	Minor = 1

## 7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed as the report is for information. Parks and open spaces are generally accessible to all. Accessibility audits have been undertaken recently for 12 of our largest parks and these contain a number of recommendations which will be implemented as funding allows. The audits have been shared with the relevant stakeholder groups.

## 8. COMMUNITY SAFETY

8.1 Not applicable for this report. Community safety issues in parks are being addressed through the corporate Safer Spaces project; the parks lighting review and delivery under the Safer Streets 3 Funding.

## **9. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environmental**

- 9.1 Not applicable for this report. Our parks and trees deliver a wide range of environmental benefits and contribute towards addressing the climate and ecological emergency.

### **Health**

- 9.2 Not applicable for this report. As noted above, parks and trees make a significant contribution to positive health and wellbeing, particularly in an urban environment.

### **Corporate Parenting**

- 9.3 Play spaces and sports facilities in parks contribute towards providing a safe developmental environment and health benefits for all of Lambeth's children.

### **Staffing and accommodation**

- 9.4 Not directly applicable, however the Committee may wish to scrutinise depot and accommodation arrangements as detailed in Appendix 13.

### **Responsible Procurement**

- 9.5 Not applicable for this report.

## **10. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 10.1 Not applicable.

## AUDIT TRAIL

Name and Position/Title	Lambeth Directorate	Date Sent	Date Received	Comments in paragraph:
Councillor Rezina Chowdhury	Cabinet Member for Sustainable Lambeth and Clean Air	16.06.22	20.06.22	Approved
Bayo Dosunmu, Strategic Director	Resident Services	16.06.22	17.06.22	Approved
Venetia Reid-Baptiste, Director of Environment and Streetscene	Resident Services	14.06.22	15.06.22	Throughout
Andrew Ramsden, AD Finance	Finance and Property	14.06.22	15.06.22	3
Andrew Pavlou, Legal Services	Legal and Governance	14.06.22	14.06.22	4
David Rose, Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	14.06.22	15.06.22	Throughout

## REPORT HISTORY

<b>Original discussion with Cabinet Member</b>	Ongoing
<b>Report deadline</b>	21.06.22
<b>Date final report sent</b>	21.06.22
<b>Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?</b>	No
<b>Key decision report</b>	No
<b>Date first appeared on forward plan</b>	N/A
<b>Key decision reasons</b>	N/A
<b>Background information</b>	<a href="#">Lambeth Constitution</a> <a href="#">Lambeth's Culture 2020 report</a> <a href="#">Lambeth's Parks Capital Investment Plan 2014</a> <a href="#">Commons Act 1899</a> <a href="#">Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Act 1967</a> <a href="#">Local Government Act 1972</a> <a href="#">Open Spaces Act 1906</a> <a href="#">Health and Safety at Work Act 1974</a> <a href="#">Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999</a> <a href="#">Highways Act 1980</a> <a href="#">Occupiers' Liability Act 1957</a> <a href="#">Occupiers Liability Act 1984</a> <a href="#">Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976</a> <a href="#">Compensation Act 2006</a> <a href="#">Plant Health Act 1967</a>

	<p><a href="#"><u>Environmental Protection Act 1990</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Environment Act 1995</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Town and Country Planning Act 1990, part viii, Chapter 1 (Trees)</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Environment Act 2021</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Space to Thrive – a rapid review of the benefits of parks and green spaces</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Nature report: <i>Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing</i></u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>How Green Spaces Can Improve our Wellbeing</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Green Space is Good for Mental Health</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Green Spaces Aren't Just Good for Nature, they Boost our Mental Health Too</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>SCCoop (re. management of The Rookery)</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>MFPP (re. management of Myatt's Fields Park)</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>SYCT (re. management of Streatham Vale Park)</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Brockwell Park Strategic Partnership Board</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee</u></a></p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p>	<p>Appendix 1 – Good Parks for London report 2020</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Strategic Plan for Parks 2020-2025</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Strategic Plan for Trees 2020-2025</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Biodiversity Action Plan 2019</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Pollinator Action Plan 2021</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Lambeth Landscapes' Grounds Maintenance Specification 2021</p> <p>Appendix 7 – sample park management plan</p> <p>Appendix 8 – Tree Management Policy</p> <p>Appendix 9 – draft Tree Risk Management Policy</p> <p>Appendix 10 – draft Tree-Planting Strategy</p> <p>Appendix 11 – Parks Capital Investment Plan 2020-2025</p> <p>Appendix 12 – Parks User Survey 2020 report and response</p> <p>Appendix 13 – Lead Members and Officers Organogram</p>