

[These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee
Scheduled to be held on the 31 January 2017]

Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

29 November 2016

Present: Councillor S Day (Chair),
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, N Craven, D Drummond,
NJ Huscroft, D McMeekan, A Newman and P Oliver.

CL25/11/16 Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors J Cassidy, K Lee and EN Darke,
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Tourism.

CL26/11/16 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes Members reported.

CL27/11/16 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no Declarations of Interest or Dispensations reported.

CL28/11/16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 October 2016 be confirmed
and signed by the Chair.

CL29/11/16 Excellent Parks Project - Progress Report

The Sub-Committee received a report on progress of the Excellent Parks Project relating to
the parks within the Borough identified for improvement, together with the key aims and
objectives highlighted since last reported in March 2015.

Jerry Dronsfield, from the Horticulture and Parks Team, attended the meeting to give a
presentation and he was accompanied by Paul Youlden, Sport and Leisure and Steve
Bishop, Cultural Services.

It was recognised that North Tyneside Parks had always been well loved places within their
local communities. Over the years it was acknowledged they required significant
investment to improve their appearance and purpose. Parks played a significant role in
creating an attractive and vibrant place to live, work and visit; were important to the local
and regional economy, improving the health and wellbeing of local communities; and
providing an important role in the Borough's past and future society and heritage.

The Excellent Parks Project based on the success of the Rising Sun Country Park model,
identified four parks for improvement namely - Killingworth Lakeside; Wallsend Parks;

Northumberland Park; and Souter Park / Churchill Playing Fields, and was set up to ensure parks were at the centre of the Authority's larger vision to encourage and support ownership and involvement by the local community, in providing a range of improvements and facilities in the Borough maximising the potential of parks assets for residents, businesses and visitors.

The main focus for improvements was Wallsend Parks and Northumberland Park, identified under North Tyneside Council's Green Space Strategy as most in need of restoration and investment. Heritage Lottery Grant Funding 'Parks for People' was secured towards restoration of the Wallsend Parks in 2010 and Northumberland Park in 2012. The parks required the introduction of facilities expected by modern day visitors if they were to retain current users and attract new audiences vital to their success and future sustainability. The improvements included better access and modern visitor facilities, the restoration of lost ornamental features, improved footpaths, and enhanced definition of the water courses. The improvements had resulted in the parks being better connected with the local environment to attract a wider audience of users. Killingworth Lakeside Park and Souter Park had received smaller scale improvements which enabled significant developments to both parks.

In terms of investment, approximately £7.6 million in the Wallsend Parks and £5.2 million in Northumberland Park was allocated for regeneration of the parks'. Showcasing the parks from an education perspective had proved successful by encouraging learners to return with deeper connections, pride and ownership of their local green spaces together with attendance at events in parks leading to an increase in visitor figures year on year.

It was recognised that much of the regeneration of the parks could be directly attributed to the many parks volunteers who supported the Authority in its delivery of the parks project, together with their contributions in providing a wealth of educational experiences to help showcase the many outdoor learning activities and events on offer.

The presentation gave Members an opportunity to hear how the Excellent Parks Project had progressed and how the parks were delivering the outcomes for the Authority's 'Our North Tyneside Council Plan'. Also how the project met the key aims as set out in "Healthy Parks, Healthy People, Healthy Communities", in the Parks Strategy for North Tyneside 2011-2021.

Following the presentation, Members of the sub-committee asked a series of questions of officers. During questioning members examined:-

- a) the way in which S106 monies would be used in the improvement of designated flood areas, drainage of footpaths, play areas and biodiversity plans;
- b) the security measures in place for parks in order to control anti-social behaviour and how the parks were monitored;
- c) the scheme in place at Northumberland Park that dog walkers voluntarily keep their dogs on leads;
- d) how the Council could raise awareness about the dangers of feeding the swans that frequented Killingworth Lakeside and other water courses within the borough's parks, by re-instating signage and raising awareness through the Council's 'Our North Tyneside' magazine circulated to residents of the borough, and possibly by contacting local schools;
- e) the feasibility of introducing wood burning facilities in parks on a commercial enterprise basis, which was previously found too expensive to operate.

The Chair thanked officers for attending the meeting and welcomed the ongoing development of the Excellent Parks Project plans and the potential economic benefits.