

Report back from Park Friends Forum 23/09/17

Steve Munby, cabinet member for parks talked about future of parks: latest info.

LCC have secured money for next 3 years. Steve emphasised practical approach working with Friends groups. Work in progress, step by step. No sell off of parks. Nothing without Friends agreement.

Issues: how can we increase income from parks and how can we use resources better. Human resources paired to the bone, because of cuts. (This in itself can hinder progress as less can be done).

Trusts model: looked at but unlikely to work. Newcastle and Sheffield have tried this and it is not working. Mostly because it a) involves great deal of bureaucracy b) no money comes with it. E.g. National Trust .. have no money to inject.

So not one centralised approach: look at different parks. Starting with Croxteth. Expensive to run but also great potential. Out to procurement at present. Not sell off but lease so Council working with Friends can retain control.

Also looking at Calderstones and working closely with Friends of Stanley to look at future of Stanley. Idea of stakeholder model. Could lease out to managing agent but Friends groups, council etc would oversee in Stakeholder model.

Other ways of increasing income. Look at concessions in park- ?increase income from these and from events. Some businesses using park (e.g. military fitness) without paying. Some empty buildings in parks could be better utilised. Need to work more closely with Culture and Premises management.

Council have found some money to invest in new businesses in parks. Watch this space.

Capital expenditure: have secured additional Section 106 funds which can be spent on parks and green spaces. Friends Groups can make recommendations via local councillors. Going to improve drainage in some parks (will improve amenities and reduce maintenance costs).

Other things include:

Create green corridors: keen. Also improve access to/information about Loop Line underused (doesn't come under parks currently)

Increase Green Flag parks (Princes never had one before but who knows?). the procedure itself involved taking a fresh look at the park.

New park walk (Woolton woods to Allerton towers) launched on Saturday 23 Sept

Bins: this has been mired in red tape. Now not going for super bins but 2 bin compartments (what are they?) and will be consulting Friends soon about location.

Glendales contract ends soon. May take this back in house: same staff but easier to integrate into neighbourhoods.

Tourism and public profile. Recognise that online profile of parks is minimal. Very short of capacity. Ideally take on apprentices, not only to work in parks but work with parks online and publicity. Look at improving transport links to parks.

Response to Steve was overall positive. After he had gone Robert Lee from Birkenhead park spoke, and he was more cautious. He mentioned the need to have a vision for the parks, whereas Steve's was a more practical approach.

The government has just published a paper on parks:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-select-committee-report-the-future-of-public-parks>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-pledges-500000-for-new-action-group-to-grow-future-of-public-parks>

Friends Form suggested there should be a local Parks Action Group as suggested by govt paper. My feeling is that the door is open from Council for closer working with Friends. Friends also emphasised that they can help council by e.g.: working in parks, getting money in by bids etc and they are very keen to help and support.