

<b>4 July 2019</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Thurrock Active Parks Programme Update</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> N/A	
<b>Report of:</b> Jahur Ali, Recreation and Leisure Manager		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Daren Spring, Assistant Director, Street Scene and Highways.		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways		
<b>This report is</b> Public		

## **Executive Summary**

Active Parks is a new programme designed to encourage residents to “get out, get active and enjoy Thurrock’s parks and open spaces”. To help achieve this, three Park Engagement Officers have been employed on a three year contract to develop a range of localised park activities that compliment and support existing parks groups and to also inform future parks investment. The plan is for the programme to be self-sustaining in the longer term, through developing and supporting community volunteers.

To date, a range of activities at different parks have been organised and programmes continue to develop in response to community need. The programme is under constant review to respond to these needs and evolves on a weekly basis.

This report highlights some of the activities held to date.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

**1.1 Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the progress of the Active Parks Programme.**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

**2.1** Three Parks Engagement Officers have been recruited to create an Active Parks Team within the Environment and Highways Directorate to support the overall parks improvement programme.

2.2 As reported on 13 July 2017 to the Cleaner, Greener & Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a cross service working group reviewed the approach to investing the £1,350,000 allocated from the capital programme for park Improvements (2017/18 to 2019/20). The group developed a methodology for prioritising investment in the parks and open spaces on the basis of the following criteria:

- Quality and value findings from the Active Place Parks and Open Space needs assessment
- Parks and Open Space public consultation
- Residents survey
- Health data
- Known operational requirements and issues
- Areas of Vandalism and Anti-Social behaviour
- Health and Safety Issues
- Physical Activity Levels (Adults)
- Deprivation

2.3 In addition, a study was conducted to identify the best ways to utilise park equipment, which identified the need for engagement staff.

2.4 The Park Engagement Team would engage with the community and “Friends of Parks” groups to inform localised planning of parks, encourage ownership and establish custodians for local parks and open spaces. This assists with reducing anti-social behaviour, re-establish parks as a go to destination and increases activity leading to improved health and wellbeing.

2.5 The council supported an external funding bid to NESTA, submitted by Friends of Hardie Park, to support and widen community engagement of volunteers in park. This was successful with the group receiving £200k to develop and support five more “Friends Of” groups across Thurrock replicating the successes of the Hardie Park model.

2.6 The Park Engagement Team would support identifying projects related to health and wellbeing and sports development for the Infrastructure Requirement List (IRL), which is used to allocate developer contributions.

2.7 The purpose of the team is to directly contribute to the Corporate Priorities of People and Place and specifically the work of Thurrock’s Health and Wellbeing Plan Goals as shown below:

- Goal 2 Healthier Environments: Objective 2A – Create spaces that make it easier to exercise and be active
- Goal 3 Better emotional health and wellbeing: Objective 3C - Fewer people will feel socially isolated or lonely.

- Goal 5 Healthier for Longer: Objective 5A – Reduce obesity / increase the number of people in Thurrock who are a healthy weight.

2.8 The Active Parks Team have a strap line of “*Get out, get active and enjoy our Parks*” with a role to:

- Engage with park users, the local community and partners to activate parks and green spaces.
- Provide support for established groups and assist with the development and delivery of current and new projects.
- Increase investment in parks beyond what the council can do by alerting interested groups to external funding opportunities and assisting with applications.
- Run free or minimum cost outdoor activity sessions with both adults and young people.
- To recruit local community volunteers, organise supervised work days and to organise and promote a wide range of events, walks and talks, workshops and a variety of volunteering opportunities.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 There are many health and wellbeing benefits associated with physical activity and these are widely documented. In addition, participation in group based activities can engage those who are isolated and help support community cohesion.
- 3.2 The Active Lives survey showed that almost half of adults in Thurrock (47.2%) are not meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines as advised by the chief medical officer in England. There are around 26,000 inactive people in Thurrock, the highest number in Essex.
- 3.3 To help get Thurrock residents active, Park Engagement Officers were recruited in March 2019. They deliver front line services in the parks and open spaces, encourage the public to utilise the free community assets such as using the outdoor gyms. They will also actively recruit volunteers to support the development of the parks and inspire the take up of other sports and recreation services.
- 3.4 There are many existing “Friends of Parks”, and community groups already running a range of fantastic activities and projects within Thurrock parks and the role of the Parks Engagement Officers is to complement these existing activities and identify gaps in activity opportunities elsewhere in the Borough.
- 3.5 To commence the programme the Active Parks Team ran activities in the Easter half term engaging with approximately 300 people. Four main activity

days were run from 11am to 4pm during the two-week break. These focused on getting the whole family involved in a range of fun sports and Easter events. These free days were held at the below venues:

- West Thurrock Memorial Ground, Grays, on Tuesday 9 April
- Grays Town Park, Grays, on Thursday 11 April
- Dilkes Park, South Ockendon, on Tuesday 16 April
- Anchor Fields Park, Tilbury, on Thursday 18 April

Other smaller April events included:

- A mini sports day at Quince Tree Park, South Ockendon, on Wednesday April 10
- Cage cricket at Grays Town Park, Grays, on Thursday April 11
- Outdoor gym session and cage cricket at West Thurrock Memorial Ground, Grays, on Monday April 15.

3.6 During the May half term over 300 people participated. Events were held at:

- Corringham Recreation Ground on Tuesday 28 May from 10.30am-12.30pm (35 Participants)
- Horndon-on-the-Hill Recreation Ground on Tuesday 28 May from 2pm-4pm (40 Participants)
- Dilkes Park, South Ockendon, on Wednesday 29 May from 10.30am-12.30pm (70 Participants)
- Delafield Road Park, Grays, on Wednesday 29 May from 2pm-4pm (30 Participants)
- Parker Road open space, West Thurrock, on Thursday 30 May from 10.30am-12.30pm (20 Participants)
- West Thurrock Memorial Ground on Thursday 30 May from 2pm-4pm (65 Participants)
- Orsett Heath on Friday 31 May from 10.30am-12.30pm (20 Participants)
- Grays Town Park on Friday 31 May from 2pm-4pm (30 Participants)

3.7 In addition to the school holiday activities, the Team ran a range of daytime activities designed for all sections of the community to encourage them to *“get out, get active and enjoy our parks”*. The intention is to establish what the local community would like to do on a regularly basis and then kick start that activity. Once established, to then look to support local participants to take over the programme and self-manage with the support of the team. This way the team can then move on to another park and start another programme with the aim of eventually being a borough wide programme.

3.8 The team recognise that things will work differently in different parks and will need to have flexible programmes which can be adapted to suit local circumstances. By way of example, for the period of June to July the Team will be focusing on the parks below but this may change depending on demand.

## Active Parks Outline Programme - June/July 2019

<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Mon</b>	9.00-10:30	Grays Town Park	Ladies session*
	9.30-10.30	Grays Town Park	Outdoor Gym Club*
	11.00-14.00	Elm Road Open Space	Outdoor Gym Club*
	13.00-14.30	Grays Beach	50+ Activities*
	15.30-17.00	Grays Town park	Multi- Activity depending on participant choices *  *linked to Grays Big Local
<b>Tues</b>	9.00-10:30	Parker Road Open Space	Post school drop off activities for parents
	12.00-14.00	West Thurrock Memorial Ground	Multi activities depending on participant choices. Also providing opportunities for local sheltered housing and local Businesses lunchtime activities.
	12.00-14.00	West Thurrock Memorial Ground	Outdoor Gym Club
	15.30-17.00	West Thurrock Memorial Ground	Multi- Activity depending on participant choices
<b>Wed</b>	9.00-10.30	Dilkes Park	Post school drop off activities for parents*
	9.30-10.30	Dilkes Park	Outdoor Gym Club*
	12.00-14.00	Lakeside	Multi activities depending on participant choices.
	18.00-20.00	Orsett Recreation Ground	Multi activities depending on participant choices.  *Linked to Friends of Dilkes Park
<b>Thurs</b>	9.00-10.30	Corringham Recreation Ground	Post school drop off activities for parents
	12.00-14.00	Corringham Town Park	Activities for those retired
	15.30-16.45	Horndon on the Hill	Multi activities depending on participant

		Recreation Ground	choices*  *Linked to Horndon on the Hill Community Forum
<b>Sat</b>	First Saturday of the month	Orsett Heath	Superhero Fitness ages 3-7*  *Linked to Thurrock Play Network

3.9 The team have been consulting with community groups/ local forums and children to design and improve play areas in parks and open spaces. Dilkes Park fencing has been installed, play equipment for the Purfleet and Horndon Recreation ground has been finalised and installation will be completed before the summer.

3.10 The service is new and will evolve to meet the communities' needs through consultation. For example, at events the team take time to chat to local people to see what type of activities they would like organised and if they would like to be involved in volunteering to help. In addition, the press releases associated with the programme asks residents to email [sports@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:sports@thurrock.gov.uk) with their ideas about what park activities should be organised.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 To Inform Members of the Greener Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee of progress to date.

#### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

5.1 N/A

#### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

6.1 Please see section 2.7.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**  
**Senior Management Accountant**

This project is funded from £300k of s106 funding (£100k over 3 years) plus any additional donations that are received. The project will break even as any money not spent on staff costs will be spent on project work and activities within the parks. In addition, the Parks Engagement Officers are also able to signpost community groups to grant funding opportunities and assist with bid

writing with the aim of bringing in extra money to parks to benefit the whole community.

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**  
**Assistant Director of Law & Governance**  
**& Monitoring Officer**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**  
**Community Engagement and Project Officer**

This programme positively affects members of the Community in that activities are free and accessible to all members of the community. Similar such activities help to bring communities together and assist with cohesion.

## 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

This programme supports Section 17 activity to drive down ASB and support the community. The staff will work closely with enforcement colleagues to report and tackle negative issues.

## 8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Cleaner Greener Update to Cleaner, Greener & Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee report 13 July 2017.

## 9. Appendices to the report

None

## Report Author:

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