Parks Task Group
- Draft Report -

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Overview & Scrutiny Committee
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“What is a park and what is its purpose?

“Park” is a generic term for open ground used for recreation, some formal, some less so.

It would include play areas with play equipment mainly for use by children up to mid teenage, tranquil areas for sitting and relaxing, reading or taking refreshment, places of multiple formal and informal activity and also areas of more open and less obviously managed land now known as country parks.

What the definition does not include is open countryside and public highways and footpaths where a relatively small group of the overall population including walkers, cyclists and horse riders enjoy unrestricted access to their chosen recreational activity which we have in abundance in Wyre.

Looking back to my childhood during the war in north London, the town “rec” as it was universally known with its peak capped “parky” was a wonderful place of meeting friends and enjoying hours of improvised games. I was also lucky enough to have open fields not far away for more adventurous and exciting times; what freedom!

I will ever be thankful for the foresight of the benefactors of Blackpool who made possible the haven known as Stanley Park.

It is worth recalling that not only is there a first class cricket ground attached where my friends and I would cycle to in the summer to watch Lancashire in the days of Cyril Washbrook and Brian Statham but a complete athletics track together with tennis courts, bowling greens, boating lake and café not to mention magnificent formally laid out flower gardens and much else. What more could one want?

Most towns had their “Stanley Park” in one form or another and they were a statement of civic pride and the need for all people to enjoy physical activity in a beautiful setting. Big city parks departments vied with each other for prizes at Chelsea for the best displays and perhaps still do.

In Wyre we have nothing on that grand scale but we are fortunate to have a varied selection of open spaces for public use throughout the Borough including a wonderful sea front in Fleetwood with bowling greens, pitch and put, boating lake and family areas not to mention the more formal Memorial Park which is receiving a much needed makeover.

Towns and villages have a variety of smaller playgrounds, soccer and cricket pitches for public hire and simply maintained pocket parks with no activity other than respite.

Many public parks lost their way in the 70’s when metal railings were removed in the name of openness and the park’s superintendent was made redundant. As a result, parks were taken over by hooligans . . . . . . . .”

Cllr Roger Brooks
This very personal reflection on the meaning of the word “park” might be seen as a rather romantic recollection of a by-gone era, but it does raise important questions about what we want from our parks in 2013 and beyond, and how we encourage the public to make the most of the wonderful facilities that Wyre provides.

The task group’s Scoping Document (Appendix 1) defined the purpose of the review as being,

“To ensure that the council’s parks are fully developed as a community asset, fit for purpose in the 21st century and beyond”.

The review focused on how the public’s use of parks might be increased, through an effective parks service in collaboration with local communities, to meet the needs of the residents of Wyre. The task group maintained this broad perspective of the borough’s parks and deliberately avoided any focus on specific local issues that might act as a distraction and ultimately reduce the impact of the review.
The objective of the review, as specified in the scoping document, was “to identify possible areas for improvement and service development”.

## Aims of the Review

1. To identify areas of good practice
2. To understand Wyre’s current provision of ‘Traditional’ and ‘Pocket Parks’
3. To understand the current costs of parks in Wyre
4. To understand the varying needs of different communities (e.g. urban and Over Wyre)
5. To identify who uses the parks and for what purpose
6. To assess the extent of anti-social behaviour in parks and what additional steps can be taken to reduce it
7. To identify whether there are any additional funding streams that should be pursued
8. To identify whether there are other agencies or organisations who might be able to contribute expertise and fresh ideas
9. To identify new ways of working with our communities to increase engagement in municipal areas and develop community pride, including the role of Friends Groups

As can happen during reviews such as this, when further evidence becomes known during the course of the inquiry, the aims that were identified at the start are not always those that would be identified, with hindsight, should such a review be repeated; it quickly became clear that officers and others involved in the development and management of parks are already highly effective at delivering a valued parks service and they know better than anyone about identifying additional sources of funding for example.

The primary aim that emerged very early on in the task group’s work was to highlight areas of good practice across the borough. This was particularly the case where the local community was heavily involved in the maintenance and promotion of the park, and where such an example could be held up as a model of good practice. Consequently this review is rather more a celebration of the borough’s parks, and rather less an analysis of how the service might be improved.
The group’s activities included:

- Reviewing previous reports and documentation
- Consideration of the cost of running the parks service
- Consulting with the relevant portfolio holder, council officers and ward councillors
- Interviewing witnesses at task group meetings, including representatives of Friends’ Groups and similar
- Site visits to seven of the borough’s parks

The task group took the decision not to involve park users and non-users directly in the review, although a number of community groups were involved by way of invitation to task group meetings.
Mark Billington made a presentation to the task group which provided members with a wealth of essential background information, covering:

- Details of the council’s parks and open spaces
- Details of facilities available (including play areas, skate parks, bowling greens, sports pitches)
- Parks maintenance
- Parks development
- External funding
- Wyre in Bloom
- Green Flag Award
- Memorial Park, Hawthorne Park, Marine Gardens
- Future Challenges

**External Funding**

The Marine Gardens playground scheme was part-funded by the Lancashire Play Builder Fund (LPBF), overseen by Lancashire County Council. £47,000 of funding was secured, matched by the Council, with a total investment of £126,000.

Memorial Park also secured £47,000 LPBF funding to develop a scheme with a woodland theme, matched by the same amount from the Council.

£750,000 of external funding secured for ‘other improvements’ included funding for Hawthorne Park and Memorial Park.

**Budget**

The 2012-13 budget for parks shows that Wyre’s parks and open spaces are managed and maintained by an in-house service costing £1.3m per annum.

**Green Flag Award**

The Council has two parks that have achieved the national Green Flag Award\(^1\), the Wyre Estuary Country Park having had this for five years and Hawthorne Park since 2011. The Green Flag is awarded annually, so long as the specified criteria are met.

Hawthorne Park’s success over the past five of six years had been down to the involvement of the local community, and is viewed as an example of best practice. The project started in 2004. The recent ‘Life in Wyre’ survey highlighted increased satisfaction with the council’s Parks and Open Spaces.

\(^1\) [http://greenflag.keepbritaintidy.org/](http://greenflag.keepbritaintidy.org/)
Challenges

There are two main challenges for the Parks and Open Spaces Team currently:

(i) the restoration of Memorial Park, Fleetwood and
(ii) securing funding to maintain play area assets.

On 2 July 2013 the Council secured £2.4m from a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund to restore Memorial Park\(^2\). The money will be used to carry out essential conservation work such as restoring the entrances, pathways, pond and pavilion, and create a five year programme of community activities to celebrate the park’s heritage and Fleetwood’s unique history.

Regarding play area assets, one option is to have fewer but better play areas in the future.

Other comments

- There are now less opportunities to bid for external funding, and there are no guarantees that any would be successful. The Parks Development Team is constantly exploring future funding opportunities.

- Friends Groups sometimes lack expertise (inevitably) and therefore need a lot of support from the council if they are to be effective. There is limited capacity in terms of the amount of time that is available to do that, although it is accepted that Friends' Groups can often access funds that the council, on its own, cannot.

- The council's main priority, at present, is to deliver the Memorial Park Heritage Lottery Funded improvements.

- Public consultations are organised for specific projects; it is thought not to be a good use of limited resources to run a public consultation about parks in general.

Mr Billington provided councillors with a list of the council’s parks, from which members identified, in consultation with Mr Billington, a list of eight parks that the task group would look at in particular.

The eight parks are:

- Catterall Playing Field
- Churchtown Playing Field
- Forton Playing Field
- Hambleton Bob Williamson Park
- Hawthorne Park
- Jubilee Gardens
- North Drive Park
- Princes Playing Field

Three other parks were identified as 'featured' parks but it was agreed that they should not be a main focus of this review as they were already well-established parks that are

widely seen as successful, namely Jean Stansfield Park, Memorial Park and Wyre Estuary Country Park.
Coast and Countryside Service

Alison Boden, Coast and Countryside Manager, gave a presentation to the task group about her work. Ms Boden has worked for the Council since March 1989 and is currently responsible for the day to day management of the Coast and Countryside Service. The team delivers annual programmes which promote the outdoors for healthy living and encourage community participation in environmental matters. The team also runs an established volunteer programme and manages the Wyre Estuary Country Park.

Events and Activities

A number of events are scheduled to take place in many parks across the borough throughout the year, often at holiday periods, in order to draw people in, residents and visitors alike.

Health and well-being is major focus, with funding secured from the Primary Care Trust (as it was) to provide Health Walks. There are also walking programmes with a wide variety of activities that are presented in the ‘Wyre Walks’ brochure.

The Garstang Walking Festival is an annual event that offers sixty activities over ten days in May, all of them led by volunteers. Similarly, all the health walks are volunteer-led.

Connectivity and Access

From a strategic point of view it is important to consider how people get access to the borough’s parks. There is a network of footpaths and it is planned that the path north from the Wyre Estuary Country Park will eventually provide access to walkers, cyclists and horse-riders the whole way round the peninsula from Blackpool to Poulton and beyond. The concept of connectivity is very important in making the coast and countryside accessible. The council is looking at how links can be made between smaller and larger parks. A bigger vision is required in order to provide paths, not only for recreation but also for people getting to work, which would have an added positive impact upon health and well-being.

Volunteers

Volunteers are used extensively and flexibly across the borough. They work closely with the community in many situations and take an informal approach with individuals and local communities, according to their needs.

The Council has a very strong volunteering record with approximately seventy involved with the countryside team and others who work at the Marine Hall and with the Sports Development Team. The volunteers receive training to ensure that they are
knowledgeable in what they are doing, which means that they can operate as "mobile information points" for visitors to the parks. The support of volunteers is an on-going priority for the council.

Most volunteers are within the 50-80 age-range, although there are also Teen Rangers (14-25 years) and Stanah Squirrels (8-14 years).

Other comments

When asked how the task group might add value to the council’s parks, Ms Boden said that it was important to maintain a strategic approach. Not every park needed or could afford all the same play equipment, for example, and it was a question of providing such facilities ‘across the borough’. There was some scope for increasing the community’s interest and involvement via Friends Groups, for example, but it was often a specific situation or complaint that gave local communities sufficient strength of feeling to organise themselves in that way.

In Ms Boden’s opinion, the increased use of parks by the public is dependent upon people feeling proud of their parks and being encouraged, or almost ‘given permission’, to use them as they saw fit. It is also important that people feel safe both in the park and getting there, hence the relevance of effective connectivity.
Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan is one of 35 Groundworks that are part of a national federation.

Groundwork has four departments:

- **Communities** – with emphasis on working with communities to develop and support their own facilities
- **Landscape Design and Build** – consultation with the local community must have been undertaken and completed prior to Groundwork’s involvement to design and build, and there must be community buy-in
- **Employment and Skills** – Prince’s Trust volunteers and ex-offenders are often employed once suitably trained and with appropriate supervision
- **Sustainability** – providing advice to organisations on reducing the carbon footprint and reducing fuel bills

Groundwork has a large number of volunteers in Wyre, all of whom require support, training and guidance. Volunteers are used in a wide variety of settings, including specific Volunteer Days for a particular task to be undertaken (e.g. counts of flora and fauna).

Groundwork coordinates and supports Volunteer Rangers. The organisation also provides advice about establishing and facilitating Friends Groups, often in conjunction with Lancashire County Council. In addition, Groundwork is very experienced at bidding for funding and assistance can be provided to applicants. This process is usually undertaken in partnership with a community group or a council; Groundwork had a proven track record and has been successful with 50-60% of its bids.

Groundwork is good at facilitating direct consultation with communities. Events and activities are often run in order to draw people into parks and open spaces, although that is always done with the intention of Groundwork withdrawing eventually and leaving the responsibility to local residents. Significant emphasis is placed on improving health and well-being, with particular attention being paid to mental health issues.

Mr Crowther responded to a number of questions raised by councillors, making the following additional points:

- Groundwork has previously received support from the Primary Care Trusts (as they used to be) and wishes to continue to encourage the use of parks and open spaces in order to improve health and well-being
- Young people do not always feel safe in parks and often do not use them as a consequence, so the provision of activities can be used to draw young people in
- The council’s ambition should be to look at the ‘less attractive’ parks and open spaces and to assess why that is so. People need to be provided with choice – parks should be properly planned, funded and supported and should encourage local people to take pride in their facilities. In his opinion, an assessment should be made of why parks were under-used and what could be done about it.

The task group noted that the council does not have evidence about how many people used certain parks and which parks are under-used.

Members also agreed that it was important for ward councillors to take a more active role in helping to set up and support Friends Groups, particularly for those parks that were under-used, but it must be remembered that most Friends’ Groups require support from the council, for which there is currently very limited capacity.
Jenie Phillips, a Trustee of Hawthorne Park, described how Hawthorne Park had been successfully developed as a “fabulous open green space for everyone to enjoy” over the past ten years.

The idea for the project was first discussed in 2003 when it was agreed at a meeting of the Wyre Strategic Partnership that the small play area, as it was then, should be improved in order to cater for the increasing numbers of families living in Thornton. Wyre Council, as the owner of the land, required that the local community be consulted about the proposal.

Meetings were held with residents, the local school, the Police, youth groups, council officers and councillors, and an ambitious plan for a Community Park with play equipment for all age groups, lawns, paths, trees and a wild life area was agreed.

A Charitable Trust was formed, some funding obtained from Wyre Council and a fifty year lease of the land agreed. Many applications for external funding were made, including successful ones to Lancashire County Council, the Big Lottery, the Lancashire Environment Fund (for paths, shrubs and trees), Rotary, local businesses, as well as generous community support.

Phase 1 was opened in July 2008, followed by Phase 2 in April 2009 and Phase 3 in May 2010.

Jenie Phillips described how an initiative that had begun as a small ‘quick-win’ project to improve the little play area costing £10,000 had become ‘Hawthorne Park for the community’ at a total cost of £480,000.

The park is jointly managed by Wyre Council and the Hawthorne Park Trust, assisted by numerous Friends of the Park who pick up litter, report problems and generally look after it.

Jenie Phillips emphasized that any funding bids needed to be supported and evidenced, for which the support of various groups, bodies, communities and individuals was absolutely essential.

Jenie Phillips drew to the task group’s attention the high cost of annual insurance for the equipment installed. The fact that the Friends’ Group were responsible for this was an inevitable consequence of being a lease-holder.
In 1985 Churchtown Village Hall was in a poor state of repair. Planning permission for certain improvements was obtained and the then-owner of the village shop and post office organised a meeting of local residents to address the issue.

A Working Committee resulted, which coordinated the work of a number of local residents who wanted to become involved, and this evolved into the current group of Trustees of the Memorial Hall. The Trustees carried out extensive fund-raising activities over many years and made significant improvements to the facilities. The three Trustees had bought the field in the early 1950s.

The field is very well used and contains one football pitch, which is not full-sized. There has been play equipment on the field from the 1970s, which was refurbished by the council some years ago. In September 2012 the equipment was deemed to be unsafe and has now been removed and returned to grass.

Following the Trust’s AGM in October 2012 a concerted publicity campaign was carried out to highlight the loss of the play equipment and to motivate local residents to consider alternatives. The local church, school, newspapers and newsletters were all used to publicise the debate.

As a result of this campaign, thirty-one local residents attended an Open Meeting held at the end of February 2013, and they set up a new Fund-Raising Committee, comprised mainly of younger members of the community. The local school, with a new Headmaster, is involved and the initiative has been further promoted in the local press, including the Parish Magazine. The new Committee considers all possibilities for raising funds, including applications for grants. One of the Trustees is also involved in the work of the Fund-Raising Committee in order to ensure that there is a link between the two bodies.

The point was made by Betty Singleton, and supported by Jenie Phillips, that constant efforts need to be made by Friends’ Groups to recruit younger people in order to help them maintain energy and enthusiasm and to bring in new ideas.

The new committee has on three occasions to date (April 2013) and local firms have been approached to assist with funding. The council has also offered its (non-financial) support.

Betty Singleton made some additional observations:

- It has not been easy
- It has been difficult to maintain a high level of enthusiasm throughout – there are inevitably troughs and peaks
- People get satisfaction from being involved
- People tend to expect others to do it all for them. Everyone needs to take on greater individual responsibility.
The Preesall Playing Field was bought by the Borough Council then leased back to Preesall Town Council. It is a large grassed area, which includes three football pitches of varying sizes.

There used to be a playground for younger children on the field and in 2006 there were concerns about the way in which it was attracting a dozen or so young people who were responsible for anti-social behaviour and damage to the field, equipment and surrounding area. Preesall Town Councillors worked closely with the local police to resolve the problem. Originally their intention was to install CCTV and high fences, but the decision was eventually taken to set up a project on the park that would divert and occupy young people rather than exclude them. ‘The Friends of Preesall Park’ emerged from this project.

The community was consulted at an early stage, a Fun Day was held on the park and further consultation took place about the emerging plan. Money was raised from a variety of sources (including Lancashire Environmental Fund grant and a s.106 payment), with £95k raised so far. Planning permission has now been obtained. It was hoped that Phase 1 would be achieved in time to hold a Gala day on the park this summer (2013).

In order to try to help manage the problem of dog fouling, there are plans to put in a path around the Preesall Playing Field, with bins and benches along it to encourage people to walk that route and, consequently, pick up after them.

It remains the case that any community involvement continues to fall upon the shoulders of a relatively small number of people, and this is one of the main challenges faced by Friends’ Groups and other similar organisations.
Task group members visited seven of the borough’s parks. The original intention was to include Hawthorne Park, Churchtown Playing Field and Preesall Playing Field in the tour, but as a result of time constraints these three parks were omitted from the itinerary as councillors had already received evidence from the respective representatives at a task group meeting.

The seven parks visited were selected in consultation with the Head of Operations, Mark Billington. They represented a cross-section of the council’s parks, each highlighting different issues. They also differed to some extent from the eight parks originally identified as others became more relevant to the review as the review progressed.

Cottam Hall, Poulton

Members were met by Jane Murray (Community Safety Officer) and Neil Greenwood (Head of Environmental Health and Community Safety). Councillors were shown a piece of barren land that was to be transformed into a community garden. It is intended that it will be used, in part at least, to help rehabilitate vulnerable people back into the community. The project is a partnership between the council, Community Payback, the Probation Service, Groundwork, the Fire and Rescue Service and the local community. Members particularly liked the partnership approach and suggested that it might be used more widely, depending upon resources.
The project is also intended to be inter-generational, with older people from the local community, many of whom might not have gardens of their own, working closely with younger residents.

This is a pilot project which, if successful would be rolled out to other areas.

There is currently no other community involvement in Cottam Hall, which is seen primarily as a large playing field.

**Kepple Lane, Garstang**

Councillors were met at Kepple Lane by Councillor Gordon Harter (Garstang Town Council), Cllr Tom Balmain (a member of the Parks Task Group and member of Garstang Town Council), and Joan Baptie, who had been very involved in the local community in Garstang for many years.

Kepple Lane Park has been developed over a number of years. Councillors were very impressed by the layout and the facilities at Kepple Lane, which had been landscaped very sensitively using natural features. The park was clean and well used, particularly at the time of the visit, by children on the playground and basketball area. There was also an area for older children which included a zip wire and a multi-use games area, all of which was of good quality and well-looked after.

Task Group members viewed Kepple Lane as an ideal potential venue for a large community event, and were surprised to hear that, whilst also recognising the significant time and energy that such an event requires, no such event has been held to date.

The task group was also made aware that dog fouling is a significant problem at Kepple Lane and they hoped that the work currently being undertaken by councillors on this subject would assist in its solution.

**Hargreaves Street, Thornton**

Hargreaves Street is a small area of open grass land without any additional facilities or equipment on it. It was not being used at all at the time of the members’ visit, and looked clean and neat.

**Wyre Estuary Country Park, Stanah**

This park is widely regarded as the jewel in Wyre’s crown, and has won many awards. Councillors visited the Wyreside Café, the new children’s playground and the outdoor performance area, and were very impressed by what they saw.

Members particularly liked the use of the ‘bark mulch’ around and under play frames.

**North Drive Park, Cleveleys**

From the evidence of the visit, this appears to be a very well-used park, with a wide variety of facilities packed into a relatively small space. The play area is dominated by
a large climbing frame. The park appears to be a significant focal point for the local residential area.

Councillors noted the fact that funding had recently been secured through 'Shaping Your Neighbourhood' to carry out some refurbishments.

**Jubilee Gardens, Cleveleys**

This is another very well-used park, offering a range of facilities, including a skate park, for all age groups. A suggestion was made that the facility might benefit from the addition of some picnic benches.

It was noted that the new pay and display car park appeared to be underused, which was perhaps not surprising as there was a car park that was free to residents with permits closer to Cleveleys town centre, making it a more attractive prospect for many. Councillors wondered whether there was scope to enter into an agreement with local businesses that patrons would get their car park fee reimbursed for using other facilities, in order to encourage greater use of the new car park. (It is accepted by councillors that comments about car parking facilities and policy are beyond the remit of this task group.)

**King George V Playing Fields, Fleetwood**

This large site was used almost exclusively as football and rugby pitches. It was possible that other facilities might be considered here, and it was noted by councillors that a certain amount of tidying up was needed where the longer grass seemed to be encroaching gradually on the maintained grass areas. It is understood that this situation has been gradually evolving over a number of months.
The site has a history of criminal and anti-social behaviour, with people often ‘hanging around’ in the vicinity of the changing room building and occasionally causing damage; the building has previously been set alight. The height of the boundary wall was such that it prevented an easy view of the changing room area from the nearby road, providing cover for those who wanted to misuse the area. Reducing the height of the wall would enable a clear view of the changing room area from the main road.

Councillors had the benefit of having an unscheduled meeting with Barrie Whittaker of Fleetwood Gym Football Club at the site. Mr Whittaker spoke very positively about the facilities. He said they were well-used by the Football Club, which runs a whole series of youth teams from Under 7s upwards.
Two members of the task group, Cllr Anderson and Cllr Walmsley, paid an informal visit to Lowther Gardens in Lytham (Fylde Borough Council), where they visited the café and spoke to the Café Manager.

A Charitable Trust has been set up, which receives grants from Fylde Council for the maintenance of the gardens and for running the Theatre.

The aim of the Friends of the Lowther Pavilion and Gardens includes securing the future of Lowther Pavilion, raising money for improvements and ultimately making it a profit-making venue.
As referred to in the Introduction to this report, the task group’s overall finding, was that the borough’s parks already offer residents an excellent range of facilities, which are well-managed and suitably developed by the council’s officers, in collaboration with local communities. In the words of the task group Chairman,

“From Day One I have been enthused by everyone I have met in connection with Wyre’s Parks; staff, community members and volunteers alike.

What is going on is of an exceptionally high standard. We are very impressed by all the work that officers and local communities are carrying out”.

Councillor Terry Lees

The task group’s conclusions can be summarised as follows:

**External funding**

The task group is impressed by the extent of external funding that has been successfully brought into the borough, despite the reduced opportunities available. Task group members are also delighted at the council’s recent successful £2.4m bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund to restore Memorial Park in Fleetwood.

**Residents’ Groups**

Councillors value the work of Friends Groups, which have been shown to be very effective indeed in maintaining and promoting the use of parks across the borough. Those at Hawthorne Park, Churchtown and Preesall are excellent examples of where the local community has played a key role in helping to ensure that parks are well used and maintained by local residents.

Councillors would welcome the increased development of Friends Groups, but fully appreciate (i) that the capacity for support that the council can provide is limited, and (ii) Friends Groups tend to emerge naturally, often as a result of a specific situation or complaint that gives residents sufficient strength of feeling to initiate some form of coordinated community action.

**Under-used Parks**

Some parks are used much more than others, depending upon what facilities the park offers. There is currently no way of knowing the precise numbers of park users, but there is sufficient anecdotal evidence for the “less attractive” parks to be identified. Task group members believe that ward councillors could play a more active role in promoting the use of parks in their area and in supporting residents to form Friends’ Groups (or similar), subject to the capacity limitations of the Parks Team.
The link between parks, activity and health and well-being is noted, although councillors feel that this is often understated in the council’s information literature. It was also noted that parks do not feature significantly in the council’s tourism and community literature, an area that could have a positive impact upon the public’s use of the council’s parks.

**Conclusions from Tour of seven of the Borough’s Parks**

Councillors were very impressed with the development of a Community Garden at Cottam Hall, which is often perceived as solely a sports field. The Community Garden will attract new people into the park and offers the opportunity for inter-generational work which is likely to have a positive impact upon the local community. Councillors welcome the stated aim of rolling the concept out to other parts of the borough, and would support that action.

The task group particularly liked the approach taken by those who had developed Kepple Lane Park, which incorporates the sensitive use of natural features and materials. This is an impressive park, with excellent information signage, which provides attractions for people of all ages. The task group would like to see Garstang Town Council and other supporters of the park consider hosting a large community event at the park, as it is ideally suited for such an event, which would attract many non-users to the park, perhaps for the first time.

The use of ‘bark mulch’ as a safety feature in children’s playgrounds was noted at the Wyre Estuary Country Park and supported for future schemes.

King George V Playing Fields, Fleetwood, was the park that perhaps offered the greatest opportunity for further development, and some comments regarding relatively minor improvements to the park were made, including:

(i) Restoring some of the longer-grassed areas to shorter grass, as it appears that over time that there has been gradual encroachment

(ii) Lowering the height of a boundary wall to improve visibility and reduce criminal behaviour
Despite this review being an overview exercise as opposed to a detailed scrutiny review, there are a number of proposals that the task group would like to make. These are only intended to complement the already excellent work that is being undertaken by officers and local communities.

The task group proposes:

**PROPOSAL 1**

That opportunities for developing Community Gardens in other parts of the borough, such as the one at Cottam Hall, Poulton, be explored. The task group recognises that this is primarily a community safety initiative which also plays a wider role in attracting people to the park.

**PROPOSAL 2**

That, in the light of the task group’s very positive experience of the involvement of Friends’ Groups in parks, other suitable opportunities to start Friends Groups be explored, subject to the council resources available to provide the required support, in order to increase the public’s use of parks.

**PROPOSAL 3**

That the council’s parks be featured more prominently in its future tourism publications.

**PROPOSAL 4**

That the link between parks and improved health and wellbeing be highlighted more prominently in the council’s tourism and community publications.

**PROPOSAL 5**

That Garstang Town Council and other supporters of Kepple Lane Playing Field be encouraged to host a significant community event at the venue, to raise the park’s profile in the wider community.

**PROPOSAL 6**

A number of relatively small enhancements should be made to some of the borough’s parks, including the use of ‘bark mulch’ in children’s play areas and the provision of picnic benches in appropriate areas (e.g. Jubilee Gardens).
PROPOSAL 7

That overgrown land at King George V Playing Field, Fleetwood should be restored as a useable part of the park.

PROPOSAL 8

That, in the light of councillors’ concerns about previous criminal and anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of the changing room block at King George V Playing Field, Fleetwood, consideration is given to making improvements to the all-round visibility of the area and, if necessary, appropriate improvements are carried out.
Responsibility for Implementing Proposals

Responsibility for implementing proposals that are agreed at Cabinet will lie with the Corporate Director of People and Places.

In addition, Garstang Town Council will be approached in relation to actions arising from Proposal 5.
There were 7 meetings of the task group, including the tour of some of the borough’s parks. Councillors attended as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meetings Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Anderson</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Balmain</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Bannister</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Brooks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor M Gandhi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor R Gandhi</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Greenhough</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Hodgkinson</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Kay</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Lees</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Martin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Moon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Treece-Birch</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor Walmsley</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

The Chairman, Councillor Terry Lees, on behalf of the task Group, would like to thank the council's officers, representatives of community groups and other witnesses for their very helpful and candid contributions to this Review. The task group has welcomed the fresh and open approach taken by those who have contributed and hopes that their work will continue to demonstrate that Wyre's parks are valuable assets that have something to offer everyone.
List of Appendices

Appendix 1  Parks Task Group Scoping Document
# Parks Task Group
## Scoping Document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review Topic</th>
<th>Parks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong></td>
<td>Cllr Lees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Membership</strong></td>
<td>Cllrs Anderson, M Anderton, Balmain (Vice Chairman), Bannister, Brooks, M Gandhi, R Gandhi, Hodgkinson, Kay, Martin, Moon, Ormrod, Treece-Birch and Walmsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officer Support</strong></td>
<td>Peter Foulsham (Scrutiny Officer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Purpose of the Review** | To ensure that the council’s parks are fully developed as a community asset, fit for purpose in the 21st century and beyond. |
| **Objective of Review** | To identify possible areas for improvement and service development |

| **Aims of the Review** | 1. To identify areas of good practice  
2. To understand Wyre’s current provision of ‘Traditional’ and ‘Pocket Parks’  
3. To understand the current costs of parks in Wyre  
4. To understand the varying needs of different communities (e.g. urban and Over Wyre)  
5. To identify who uses the parks and for what purpose  
6. To assess the extent of anti-social behaviour in parks and what additional steps can be taken to reduce it  
7. To identify whether there are any additional funding streams that should be pursued  
8. To identify whether there are other agencies or organisations who might be able to contribute expertise and fresh ideas  
9. To identify new ways of working with our communities to increase engagement in municipal areas and develop community pride, including the role of Friends Groups |

| **Methodology** |  
• Review any previous reports and documentation  
• Assess and understand the current provision of parks in Wyre  
• Interviews with witnesses at task group meetings  
• Examine the views/experience of other local authorities and community groups to see what lessons could be learned  
• Engage with residents who utilise the parks currently  
• Engage with residents who do not utilise the parks currently  
• Engage with target groups, including children and young people, families, retired people, dog walkers, artists, conservationists, etc  
• Site visits  
• Examine any other funding streams that might be available |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope of Review</th>
<th>The review will <strong>not</strong> include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A focus on specific, localised issues, including any complaints currently being independently investigated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Matters specifically related to Bowling Greens and Clubs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The current bid for funding for the Memorial Park Fleetwood</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Leisure and Culture Portfolio Holder</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Corporate Director of People and Places</td>
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<td>• Corporate Director of Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Head of Operations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Users of the borough’s parks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-users of the borough’s parks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Representatives of target groups (young people, families, retired people, dog walkers, artists, conservationists, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘Best Practice’ examples, e.g. Hawthorne Park</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Police officers, PCSOs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Other agencies/organisations who might contribute expertise and fresh ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential Witnesses</td>
<td>• Leisure and Culture Portfolio Holder</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Corporate Director of People and Places</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Other agencies/organisations who might contribute expertise and fresh ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documents to be considered</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks</td>
<td>• Focusing on local rather than borough-wide issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Publicity</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicators of a Successful Review</td>
<td>• Parks used by a greater variety of individuals and groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Additional sources of funding identified</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A parks service that reflects the needs of residents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intended Outcomes</td>
<td>• An improved parks service that meets the needs of the residents of Wyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate Timeframe</td>
<td>To be completed in 3 months (by the end of April 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Projected Start Date</td>
<td>14 January 2013</td>
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