

Parks and Open Spaces

Our Strategy for Barnet 2016-26

Appendixes to Strategy Document - Appendix G



Appendix G

Future challenges

G.1 Future funding

Since the advent of the 'austerity economy' central government grant support for local authorities has been consistently reduced. The total council budget for 2015/16 is £293 million.³³

Between 2015 and 2020, further savings of £69 million will be identified. The Parks service will make a contribution to this savings target by reducing revenue spend on the delivery of front-line services and by introducing further efficiencies.

G.1.1. Income from parks

The income generated by the parks service is currently derived from a number of sources.

Table G.1 - Parks income 2015/16 by source	
Source: Greenspaces and Streets Departmental Budget 2015	
Charging for services	£250,000
Income from concessions	£585,505
Contributions from other services (eg. Health)	£498,000
Grants from Agencies, the National Lottery, etc.	£280,000

The service has an income target for each of the years 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. Further income generation is an obvious way to offset the impact of significant reductions in revenue funding.

Many parks in the UK now generate income from events and concessions. As the NESTA 'Re-thinking Parks' report suggests, 'it is acknowledged that income generating activities have become an increasingly contentious issue in some areas'.³⁴ Residents can be significantly impacted upon by large events and infrastructural damage to parks can result from events attracting significant numbers of people and involving large vehicles and machinery. The day to day enjoyment of spaces by every day visitors can be disrupted for a long enough period of time for this become a reputation management issue for councils. The organisational cost of setting up and running events and 'making good' after they have finished can be more considerable than anticipated.

³³ Barnet Corporate Plan 2015-20

³⁴ NESTA/HLF/Big Lottery (2013);Re-thinking parks, page 21

Barnet's Events in Parks Policy (2012) proposes that the policy should:

- enable local events for local people.
- make better use of parks and open spaces.
- generate income which will contribute to the overall budget for improvement to parks.
- look at introducing private events which will also contribute towards the income targets for greenspaces.

In Barnet, there are conditions that limit the extent to which parks can be developed for large-scale events. Barnet is an outer London borough and in the absence of a well-established major event, it might be difficult to attract an audience to the borough. Despite its size and overall level of provision, Barnet has no metropolitan scale parks (i.e. parks over 60 hectares). Most well-known park events in London take place in Metropolitan-sized parks such as Hyde Park, Finsbury Park, Victoria Park and Crystal Palace Park. As a consequence, it is likely that parks events in Barnet will be more locally focused, delivering community outcomes rather than revenue to support service delivery.

Barnet also generates income from concessions such as cafés, ice cream vans and a variety of other professional users. While an investment programme in parks might generate a further

appetite for concessions, it is not anticipated that income generated will significantly exceed current levels and the capacity of parks to support these types of commercial activity is limited.

The 'Re-thinking Parks' report identifies a number of other income-generating activities, including:

- income generation through investment
- income generation through taxation
- income generation through ecosystem services

These income generation options are considered in more detail in the context of future funding and governance in Appendix I of this strategy.

G.2 Current and future demographics

Sections B.6 of this strategy describe the current demographics of Barnet and identify future population growth across the borough. This population growth is significant for open space provision because population growth will be concentrated in specific areas of the borough and will consist of higher density housing where people will have limited access to private space of their own. As a consequence, it is likely that demand for parks and open spaces will be increased in these parts of the borough.

In this strategy, the demand placed upon parks by an increasing population has been used as one of the criteria by which the value of an individual open space is assessed.

G.3 Climate change and green infrastructure

Barnet needs to be climate change resilient and parks and open spaces will play a significant role in supporting this resilience through mitigating against flood risk, moderating temperatures, absorbing atmospheric pollution and CO₂. Barnet also needs to conserve and protect its natural greenspaces and biodiversity across the borough from impacts of development and from the effects of climate change.

A green infrastructure-based approach will strengthen the effectiveness of the borough's approach to climate change resilience.

The borough's Infrastructure Plan (updated 2011) addresses green infrastructure from a mono-cultural perspective in the context of flood risk mitigation.

The Mayor's Green Infrastructure Task Force will report in the autumn of 2015 with recommendations incorporated into the London

Infrastructure Plan 2050. Borough infrastructure plans will follow the lead established through the over-arching plan for London.

Emerging policy on green infrastructure includes the assessment of the value of outputs that high quality parks and open spaces can deliver for the economy, communities and for the environment. Section 4 of this strategy describes two approaches to calculating this value (TIMM and Natural Capital Accounting). Although these methodologies have not been used in this strategy to calculate the value of parks and open spaces, they could be used to calculate these values in future in the context of emerging policy around future funding and governance. Section 10 of this strategy discusses ways in which these accounting methods could be used in future to support decision making around future funding.

G.4 Barnet's service delivery model for parks and open spaces

Barnet currently manages its parks and open spaces through a direct service organisation embedded within the Greenspaces and Streets Department. The department delivers parks and open spaces services in accordance with the principles set out in the Streetscene Management Agreement 2015-20. Specifically with regard

to parks and open spaces, the agreement cites the Environment Committee's Commissioning Plan: 'Barnet is seen as a national leader in developing attractive suburban parks with its communities that promote health and wellbeing, conserve the natural character of the area, and encourage economic growth.'³⁵

The Commissioning Plan sets out a number of additional targets for 2019/20 including increasing resident satisfaction for parks to 80%, working with partners to secure investment in new public spaces and building stronger local communities by promoting volunteering and other forms of community engagement.

The commissioning plan also proposes the development of an alternative delivery model for parks and open spaces delivering significant savings by 2019/20 while whilst improving performance and overall quality.

Appendix E of this strategy describes the process by which parks asset data has been captured through a survey process. This section also suggests ways in which this data could be used by the parks service to enhance efficiency of service delivery with the objective of improving performance and overall quality.

Asset data has also been used to develop a quality and value assessment of the borough's parks and open spaces assets. This data has been used to inform the principles of a capital investment strategy for the borough that is described in Appendix H of this strategy.

For this investment to be future-proofed and given revenue savings targets for the parks services between 2015 and 2020, consideration must be given to funding and governance models that can deliver a revenue stream that can sustain the enhancement in quality delivered by a capital investment programme. Appendix I of this report considers these models in detail.

Continuing management by Greenspaces and Streets is one of the six options considered in Appendix I. Whichever of these options are developed and implemented, a number of principles should underpin any alternative delivery model to ensure that the objectives of the Commissioning Plan are met:

- the service needs to be design-led in order to deliver the positive outcomes that parks can deliver for communities and individuals

³⁵ Barnet Council Environment Committee Commissioning Plan 2015-20; Page 9

- the service needs to be performance focused, using technology to increase efficiency and manage delivery and assessing performance against defined indicators, related to outcomes
- the service needs to be community-focused in order to capture and develop the participation of communities in decision-making around the management and development of parks and open spaces
- the service needs to be pro-active and responsive, grasping opportunities to improve service delivery and infrastructural quality whenever possible
- the service needs to be excellence-focused, working actively to deliver the aspiration to make Barnet a national leader in developing attractive suburban parks

For more information please visit: <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk>.

If you would like to request this consultation in an alternative format please e-mail @barnet.gov.uk
or phone 020 8359