

BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW



PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MR.T.ROBSON, TOWN CLERK

REVIEW COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR W. WATERS (CHAIRMAN)

COUNCILLORS MRS S.A.FLEETHAM, J.C. CULINE AND J.E. PLEWS

OFFICERS:

MR.G.NICKLIN, ACCOUNTANT

MR J.A.CLAYTON, SUPERVISING OFFICER

MR M.A.FOXTON, SENIOR GARDENER

MR A. FRANKS CONSULTANT

MR E. HUGHES AND MR P. HEATH, PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES

OUR CURRENT POSITION

THE MISSION STATEMENT

The Council consider its main purpose is to ensure that the Community of Spennymoor can democratically voice its opinion and that the Town Council can support the carrying out of those views and contribute towards the well being of the community, the economy and regeneration, all at an economical cost.

AIMS FOR THIS SERVICE

The Council's principal aims and objectives in providing the service of parks and recreational areas are:-

1. To provide a Park, (containing gardens, sports amenities play and grassed areas) along with various other play areas and open spaces for the recreational and spiritual benefit of the Community.
2. To encourage the Community to make maximum use of the facilities available.
3. To provide gardens and floral displays to promote the Town centre and outlying areas.
4. To assist with the overall plan of Town centre Regeneration and Promotion.

DESCRIPTION OF THIS SERVICE

The provision and maintenance of Parks and recreational areas as detailed in Appendix 1.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following performance indicators are currently in place:

- i) Income and Expenditure Actuals/Budgets
- ii) Number of people using the park and its facilities
- iii) Cost per resident

CONSULTATION

In order to seek a consensus from the community as to whether Council Taxpayers value the provision of this service and would like the Council to continue to provide this Service in its current form a 'sample survey' of local residents was conducted. The number of respondents to the survey was approximately 24%. Due to the fact that the response to the questionnaire was low at 24% the Council Members agreed to call on households to broaden the level of feedback.

In order to ensure a wider view of the value of the Parks and Recreation Service, employees within the Council and Councillors were individually canvassed as to their views of the service being provided.

1. RESULTS FROM SURVEYS

Refer to the results obtained from user feedback forms.
(Appendix 2)

Review and analysis of questionnaire responses (information held on file)

Refer to the summary of results obtained from Specific questionnaires completed following Constituent and Councillor contact.
(Information held on file)

Survey specific to Playground Equipment. (This survey has recently been initiated; as yet there are not sufficient responses from which to draw conclusions.)

2. CONSULTATION WITH EMPLOYEES AND THEIR TRADE UNION

Staff and union representatives were consulted. All were unanimous in their view that the provision of a Parks and Recreation Service provided a facility benefiting the community.

3. CONSULTATION WITH COUNCIL MEMBERS

All Council Members were consulted and were unanimous in their view that the provision of a Parks and Recreation Service provided a facility to be of overall benefit to the community.

COMPETITION

Is the service – Efficient?

The Council considers that in general the service is efficient but recognises that opportunities may exist to improve. To this end, and as part of an ongoing strategy, the allocation of manpower resources employed in providing this service is being analysed.

A sample of labour analysis forms is attached see Appendix 3 (held on file)

Is the service – Effective?

The service effectively delivers the opportunity for members of the Community along with visitors to the area to keep fit by using the facilities available, relax within the tranquillity of garden areas or to have fun with their children at one of a number of play areas.

Is the service – Economical?

The service requires subsidy as can be seen from the financial data given below.

It should be noted that costs of Administration and Supervision are not apportioned to this service. Systems are now in place to monitor the supervisory and direct labour time attributed to this service. In recent years facilities in Jubilee Park have been expanded requiring an additional member of staff, which is the main reason for cost increases.

FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

	Y/E 98/99	Y/E 99/00	Y/E 00/01	BUDGET Y/E 01/02
	£	£	£	£
Income	1,537	1,734	5,958	5,160
Expenditure *	139,165	142,791	179,581	203,420
Net Cost	137,628	141,057	173,623	198,260
Net Cost per resident **	7.24	7.42	9.14	10.43

* Excludes any apportionment of Supervisory or Administration costs.
A detailed breakdown of the summarised financial information is held on file.

** Based upon approximate population of 19,000

COMPARISONS - COMPARATIVE DATA-DECEMBER 2001

	<u>SPENNYMOOR</u>	<u>SEAHAM</u>	<u>PETERLEE</u>	<u>GREAT AYCLIFFE</u>
No. of Parks	1	4	1 main 2 subsidiary	4
No. of Play Areas	9	4	7	5
Monitoring arrangements	Daily/weekly programme	Weekly recorded inspections	Inspected daily	Inspected daily Rolling programme
Would consider imposing different charges to non-residents	Yes	No	Yes	No
Improvement Programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Performance Indicators Established	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not specific to this service
Income	£5,958 for 2000/1	£13,400 for 2000/1	£5,500 for 2001/2	Not supplied
Cost Per User	Not available for each Activity (see below)	See B.V.P.P	See B.V.P.P	Not supplied
Net Cost of Service	£173,623 for 2000/1	£280,435 for 2000/1	£309,000	Not available
Cost Per Resident	£9.14	£12.00	£13.73	Not available
Population	19,000	23,365	22,500	27,000

It is the Council's opinion that it would not be Best Value to provide this information.

The cost of administration to capture relevant data would outweigh the benefit receivable.

CHALLENGE

A purpose of Best Value is to challenge the status quo. The Review Committee began by challenging the way that the service is currently provided and considered the following challenging questions:-

1. *Is the provision of this service a statutory obligation?*

~~YES~~ / NO

2. *Does the Council need to provide this service?*

Whilst there is no statutory obligation to provide this service the Committee unanimously agreed that it should be continued for the following reasons:-

- (a) The provision of Parks and Recreational Areas are clearly in demand by members of the Community as can be demonstrated by the statistical information gathered.
- (b) It is the Council's policy to provide the Service at "reasonable prices" i.e. it is regarded as a community service.
- (c) The Service is accessible to all members of the Community. The Jubilee Park is a focal point for a number of organised annual events and offers a variety of sports and leisure activities. In addition to the park a number of children's play areas and football fields are spread around the Township.

3. *Areas of innovation and emerging trends which have been identified include :-*

The play habits of the young change with fashion. The Council issues feedback forms to users of facilities, which are monitored. The Council, having instituted this system, is better able to provide for the changing needs of the public.

The Council has also initiated a survey directed at the young regarding playground equipment. (See sample survey form on file)

4. *How does the service contribute (directly or indirectly) to the Council's Statement of Purpose and other associated aims?*

The Council provides the service as a recreational facility for the well being of the community.

5. *The following possible areas of improvements / enhancements have been identified.*

- (a) More up to date playground equipment
- (b) Increase the usage of facilities available.
- (c) Look to reorganise the staff structure to make economies. (see action plan)
- (d) Initiate a time management system to better monitor the annual workload.

6. *Why is the service provided by the current provider and in the current way / form?*
The service is performed “in - house” for the following reasons:-

- (a) A clear demand for this service exists. The Council are extremely proud of the quality of service it provides and the workforce who are directly involved in its provision.
- (b) The Council is unanimous in its wish to maintain the employment of its multi-skilled well-trained workforce.
- (c) The Council believes it is best placed to continue to provide and whilst a full specification of the annual workload has been drawn up has decided not to seek tenders from external sources.

7. *Should the Council consider externalising the service provision?*

As previously mentioned the Council does not consider externalisation to be in the public interest.

The Council are proud of the high quality of service it provides and are unwilling to see a diminution of this standard for a possible small economic gain which could ultimately result in increased administration charges.

OVERVIEW – STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT.

(i) *Does the service meet the Council's current aims/objectives*

YES / ~~NO~~

The review Committee was unanimous in their opinion that the service was meeting set aims and objectives whilst at the same time recognising opportunities to improve in the areas of efficiency and economy.

The Committee noted that since the introduction of Best Value, systems and procedures had been implemented to better monitor:-

- (a) The way in which the service is being provided
- (b) Use of manpower resources
- (c) Customer feed-back

(ii) *Service Expansion/Contraction*

The Council believes that demand for Parks and Recreational facilities will continue with the Council monitoring the changing needs of its public.

(iii) Does the Council consider the provision of the service to be a strategic priority?

YES / ~~NO~~

The Council is committed to enhancing the quality of life of its residents and intends to maintain the service provision and to make any necessary improvements as identified in this Best Value Review.

The Council believes that the implementation of the recommendations following the Best Value Review will positively impact upon the service areas of quality efficiency and financial performance.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT – ACTION PLAN

The Review Committee takes opportunity to point out that certain areas, identified as potential weaknesses, were improved upon during the course of the Review process.

- Inspection surveys
 - Logging of manpower resource usage(supervisory and direct)
 - Customer feed-back on quality
 - Restructuring of manpower resources. The cost effectiveness of the staffing structure in force for many years was challenged. Restructuring was undertaken during the year resulting in financial and administrative savings. The Town Clerk's report of a confidential nature is on file.
 - Establishment of a rolling Capital programme
 - Direct constituent and Councillor contact to discuss services. (information held on file)
 - Installation of crazy golf to satisfy public demand.
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1. Continue to promote public feedback
 2. Continue to expand/change facilities according to public demand
 3. Promote the Bowling facilities at Jubilee Park for National competition
 4. Look to make economic efficiencies by 2% in the year 2002/3 any efficiency realised will be used to expand and or enhance the current service.
 5. Reduce participation in outside competitions (Northumbria in Bloom) thereby saving costs.
 6. Look to make improvements of the playgroup facility in Jubilee Park to attract more users.
 7. Improve the play areas for pre-school children. (Following recommendations resulting from The survey)
 8. Install a picnic area and new security measures within Jubilee Park to satisfy a proven demand, expressed during consultation.
 9. Provision of Refreshment kiosk/vendor to satisfy proven demand.

APPENDIX 1

AREAS UNDER REVIEW

Jubilee Park

Open Spaces

Rear of Clyde Terrace
Wood Street, Middlestone Moor
Albion Street, Middlestone Moor
Byers Green
Tudhoe Moor
Kirk Merrington
The Dene
Tudhoe Village

Churchyards

St.Paul's)	regarded as a statutory duty to maintain
Holy Innocents)	
St.Charles, Tudhoe Village)	non-statutory i.e. community service
St.Peter's, Byers Green)	

Play Areas

St.Paul's Close
The Garth , rear of Clyde Terrace
Wood Street, Middlestone Moor
Constable's Garth, Byers Green
Football Field, Byers Green
Blue House Estate, Kirk Merrington
Tudhoe Moor
Oval Park
The Dene

Football Fields

Jubilee Park
High Whitworth
Middlestone Moor
Kirk Merrington
Tudhoe

APPENDIX 2.

SPENNYMOOR TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICE AND AMENITIES FEED BACK FORMS

REVIEW OF COMPLETED FORMS AS AT 31st MARCH 2001

NUMBER OF FORMS RECEIVED 123

ACTIVITY

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
All Weather Surface	26	11	1
Bowls	33	7	0
Tennis	23	5	0
Crazy Golf	52	3	2
Football	14	12	1

GENERAL COMMENTS RECEIVED

JUBILEE PARK IS A CREDIT TO THE TOWN COUNCIL AND ITS STAFF

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- SKATE PARK
- BOUNCY CASTLE
- FAIRGROUND STYLE SLIDE
- ROUNDABOUT
- TEA ROOM
- PUTTING GREEN