

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Open Green Spaces – Update</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 24 November 2014
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Well-maintained public open spaces contribute to the strong sense of satisfaction and enjoyment residents enjoy from their environment. In turn this makes the borough an attractive place to live, work and enjoy recreation and contributes to the health and well-being of residents. A more responsive grass cutting and grounds maintenance service based on resident preferences and priorities, supports this ambition.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee note the interim results of the public consultation on Open Green Spaces.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

At its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July, this committee considered a report outlining some of the challenges that the service had experienced as a result of specific weather conditions which caused unusually high levels of vegetation growth. The committee asked for a report to be brought back in the Autumn on progress. Although the consultation does not end until December, this report gives an update on the consultation to date.

As part of the process of learning from this year's experiences, and feeding into the review of grounds maintenance service provision, the Council is conducting a consultation with residents about Open Green Spaces. This consultation is running from 17 October to the 12 December 2014.

## **Background**

During the spring and summer of 2014 Wokingham Borough Council experienced a substantial increase to the workload to its Parks & Open Spaces service, which is responsible for maintaining more than 3.5 million square metres of grass in areas such as parks, sports pitches, cemeteries and verges.

This increase in demand was due to the specific warm and wet weather conditions which persisted during that time and which caused an unusually high level of vegetation growth. This in turn resulted in a backlog of both planned and reactive work building up within the Parks & Open Spaces service.

## **Analysis of Issues**

A key element of our work to improve the resilience and flexibility of the service was to consult with residents about their experiences of using the service and their views on how best to maintain our parks and open spaces. This consultation (also attached) began on 17th October 2014 and runs for eight weeks until 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

As of the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014 there have been 153 responses to the consultation. Some key early learning from responses to the consultation includes:

- 50% of respondents think that organisations/groups that regularly use open spaces (such as sports pitches) should be able to help contribute to more maintenance in times of high demand, with 35% of respondents thinking that they shouldn't.
- 63% of respondents support an approach where the council can amend the frequency of its work to provide more cuts in particular areas whilst reducing the work in other areas, with 29% not supporting this approach.
- 81% of respondents are happy for certain areas to be given preference in times of high demand, with 15% stating that they did not support this.
- 34% of respondents have cut/mowed a public space in their area.
- In terms of what would encourage local residents or groups to help maintain open green spaces, 62% think equipment would help, 47% think that training would help, 77% think that permission would help, and 79% think that volunteer schemes would help.

We also asked residents about their satisfaction with the information they received about the maintenance of open green spaces, and their overall satisfaction with the service. Unsurprisingly for a service that has gone through some recent challenges, 46% of residents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the information they receive from the Council, and 55% are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the overall service they receive from the Council in maintaining its parks and open green spaces.

This information is extremely useful and will be feeding into the review of service

provision. It will not only help in determining how future contracts might run but will inform how greater flexibility could be achieved within the current contract.

Once the consultation and review are complete a further update can be brought back to this Committee.

<b>Contact</b> Josie Wragg	<b>Service</b> Environment
<b>Telephone No</b> 974 6002	<b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:josie.wragg@wokingham.gov.uk">josie.wragg@wokingham.gov.uk</a>
<b>Date</b> 11 November 2014	<b>Version No.</b> 2



## Maintaining Our Open Green Spaces Consultation

Wokingham Borough Council is responsible for maintaining more than 3.5 million square metres of grassland, trees and hedgerows in areas such as parks, sports pitches, cemeteries and verges.

Our service is currently provided under contract by an external supplier and in recent months has come under pressure due to warm and wet weather that has led to faster than expected growth across the borough.

We do not have extra funding to allocate to this service, however we are reviewing how best to provide the service in for residents within the limited resources available.

### Current use of open green spaces

Q1 What types of open green spaces do you visit / use and how often?

	Every day	Every week	Few times a month	Occasionally	Never
Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sports pitches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's play areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cemeteries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local green space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Responsibility

Q2 Are you aware that different organisations are responsible for maintaining open green spaces across the borough?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Q3 Do you think that organisations/groups that regularly use open spaces (such as sports pitches) should be able to help contribute to more maintenance in times of high demand?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If yes, which

### Flexibility

Q4 Would you support an approach where the council can amend the frequency of its work to provide more cuts in particular areas whilst reducing the work in other areas?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

### Priority areas

Q5 Would you be happy for certain areas to be given preference in times of high demand, such as this year

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Q6 If yes, could you rank the area below in order of importance to you

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sports pitches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's play areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grass verges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cemeteries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local green spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Working together

Q7 Have you ever cut/mowed a public space in your area?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If yes, which

Q8 Do you think any of the following would encourage local residents or groups to help maintain open green spaces?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Equipment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Permission	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends Groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer Schemes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any other suggestions (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Current Perceptions

Q9 Overall how satisfied are you with the information you receive from the Council about the maintenance of open green spaces in the borough

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

Q10 Overall how satisfied are you with the condition and the maintenance of open green spaces in the borough

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

Q11 Do you have any other comments you wish to make on this service?

## Demographic questions

Q12 What is your age?

18 or Under

19-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 and over

Q13 Are you male or female?

Male

Female

Q14 What is your postcode?

Q15 How long have you lived in the area

Q16 Do you live in:

Owner occupied property

Social housing

Private rented accommodation

Other, please specify

Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation