



Environment Committee

14 March 2019

Title	Ceasing Parks Locking
Report of	Chairman of the Environment Committee
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix 1 - Parks and open spaces - Crime ASB and the locking of parks
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Summary

In November 2018 as part of the Implementation of the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy the Committee were asked to consider the ceasing of parks locking. The Committee requested that the Strategic Director: Environment develop and bring back to the Committee proposals setting out individual site basis prior to any implementation and present the proposals to a future meeting of the Committee.

This report sets out the full list of the affected parks.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Committee agrees to cease locking the phase 1 sites.

2. That the Committee agrees to the completion of a consultation exercise for the phase 2, the results of which will be reported to a future meeting for decision.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

1.1.1 This report sets out the information as requested by the Committee on the 28 November 2018.

1.1.2 The ceasing of parks locking is part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and offers a £75,000 annual saving, which forms part of the £200k "Additional savings from 2018/19: Alternative savings provision for £200k of original £900k target for changes to refuse collection. Full-year effect from service".

1.2 Locked Parks

The table below sets out a list of all the parks included in the parks locking across the borough;

Phase	Park Name	Address	What is locked	Comments
1	West Hendon Pavilion	Goldsmith Avenue	Check the pavilion is locked	Park is not locked it is just a building check
1	Lyttelton P/F Toilets*	Kingsley Way N2	Park Toilets	Park is not locked it is just toilet locking here so no change to safety in the area
1	Tudor Sports Ground	Clifford Road, New Barnet	Overhead barrier only	Height barrier can be kept locked like other parks.
1	Dame Alice Sports Ground	Chandos Ave N20	Car park	
1	Friary Park Toilets*	Friary Road N20	Park Toilet and x1 gate	Park is not fully locked so no change to safety in the area
1	Oak Hill Park	Parkside Gardens EN4	Car park only	
2	Fairway Playground	The Fairway Mill Hill NW7	Park Gates	
2	Stonegrove Park	Park Grove Edgware HA8	Park Gates	
2	Rushgrove Park	Rushgrove Ave NW9	Park Gates	
2	Greenhill Gardens	Great North Road, EN5	Park Gates	
2	Highlands Gardens	Leicester Road, New Barnet	Park Gates	
2	Brunswick Play Ground	Brunswick Cres N14	Park Gates	
3	Edgwarebury Park	Edgwareberry Lane HA8	Park Gates	
3	Stonyfields Park	Fairmeed Cress HA8	Park Gates	
3	Deansbrook Play Ground	Off Deansbrook Road HA8	Park Gates	

3	Malcolm Park	Malcolm Cress NW4	Park Gates	
3	Kara Way Play Area	Campion Terrace NW2	Park Gates	
3	Childs Hill Park	Nant Road NW2	Park Gates	
3	Basing Hill Park	Wayside NW2	Park Gates	
3	Princess Park	Oakfields Road NW11	Park Gates	
3	Old Court House Rec	Manor Close, High Barnet	Park Gates and car park	
3	Ravenscroft Gardens	Wood Street, High Barnet	Park Gates	
3	Barfield Ave Play Area	Barfield Ave N20	Park Gates	
3	Swan Lane O/S	Woodside Lane, N20	Park Gates	
3	Cherry Tree Woods	Summerlee Ave N2	Park Gates and toilets	
3	Victoria Park	Ballards Lane N3	Park Gates and toilets	

* An alternative locking arrangement for the toilets is required prior to implementation.

1.3 Phase 1

1.3.1 The sites identified under phase 1 are parks which are only partially locked, so access is still possible through other access points. Ceasing locking at these sites would have no impact on the security or safety of the park.

1.3.2 Within Phase 1 there are two sites (Lyttleton Playing Fields and Friary Park) where it is only the toilets that are locked. It is proposed that these sites would be removed from locking once an alternative approach to secure the facilities has been arranged.

1.4 Phase 2

1.4.1 The sites identified under phase 2 were put forward following consultation with colleagues in The Barnet Community Safety Team (BCST). BCST were asked to consider each of the parks on the locking list and investigate the number of incidents of antisocial behaviour over a 12 month period, based on this exercise six parks were identified as potential pilot sites.

1.4.2 Phase 2 sites would be subject to a public consultation, with the results being reported back to a future committee for decision prior to implementation.

1.5 Phase 3

1.5.1 There are currently no proposals for the sites identified under phase 3, these sites would be considered following a review of any impacts following phase 1 and 2 and would be reported to a future committee for decision prior to implementation.

1.6 A list of the locked parks has been passed to the Police for comment unfortunately a response had not been received in time for this committee however we will ensure the information is included as part of the public consultation.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **Recommendations 1 and 2** – to ensure appropriate delivery of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy on a financially sustainable basis.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 No alternative options have been considered as the above recommendations will contribute to the delivery of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 If the Committee is minded to agree with the above recommendations then the council would cease locking all the sites under Phase 1 and measures would be considered for the toilet facilities in Lyttleton Playing Fields and Friary Park.

4.2 The council will undertake a consultation exercise on the proposed Phase 2 sites and will report back to a future committee for decision prior to implementation.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan says:-

- Barnet's Parks and Greenspaces will be amongst the best in London;
- Resident feedback consistently shows that Barnet's Park and Greenspaces are amongst its biggest assets and a strong influence for people deciding to live here;
- The Council recognises this and will continue to ensure that the Borough's Parks and Greenspaces are looked after;
- The Council will develop more innovative ways of maintaining its Parks and Greenspaces; including through greater partnerships with community groups and focus on using parks to achieve wider public health priorities for the Borough.

5.1.2 Local Plan Policy CS7 says the Council will create a greener Borough by:-

- Enhancing open spaces to provide improvements in overall quality and accessibility;
- Meeting increased demand for access to open space and opportunities for physical activity;
- By tackling deficiencies and under provision.

5.1.3 Investment in and improvement of Barnet's greenspaces to support growth and wellbeing in Barnet will also result in the delivery of a range of outcomes linked to other Council strategies:-

- Growth Strategy: creating the environment for growth;
- Regeneration Strategy;
- Fit and Active Barnet Strategy;
- Community Safety Strategy;
- Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 **Finance, Value for Money and Procurement** – The ceasing of parks locking is part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and offers a £75,000 annual saving, which forms part of the £200k Additional savings from 2018/19: Alternative savings provision for £200k of original £900k target for changes to refuse collection. Full-year effect from service”. If this proposal is not agreed, then there will a £200k budget pressure will from 2019/20 within Street Scene. This will result in a £200K overspend.

5.3 **Staffing** – Delivery of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy will require appropriate capacity and capability in the organisation; including within the commissioning arrangements.

5.4 **IT** – None at this time

5.5 **Sustainability** – The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and associated initiatives detailed in this report seek to protect, improve and enhance the natural environment of Barnet. The individual projects to be delivered during implementation of the strategy will be developed and delivered in accordance with both environmental and financial principles.

5.6 Social Value

5.6.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. The key themes within the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy are:-

- Social outcomes and benefits;
- Environmental Outcomes and Benefits;
- Economic Outcomes and Benefits.

5.7 Legal and Constitutional References

5.7.1 Local authorities have a number of different statutory powers in relation to: parks and open spaces, the purchase and maintenance of public walks or pleasure grounds under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, including wide powers to provide recreational facilities. The Open Spaces Act 1906 provides that local authorities shall hold and administer open space in trust to allow the enjoyment of it by the public and shall maintain and keep the open space in a good and decent state.

5.7.2 The Council’s Constitution (Article 7 – Committees, Forums and Partnerships) sets out the terms of reference for the Environment Committee :-

- 1) “Responsibility for all borough-wide or cross-constituency matters relating to the street-scene including parking, road safety, lighting, street cleaning, transport, waste, waterways, refuse, recycling, allotments, parks, trees, crematoria and mortuary, trading standards and environmental health;
- 2) To submit to the Policy and Resources Committee proposals relating to the Committee’s budget for the following year in accordance with the budget timetable;
- 3) To make recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee on issues relating to the

budget for the Committee, including virements or underspends and overspends on the budget. No decisions which result in amendments to the agreed budget may be made by the Committee unless and until the amendment has been agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee;

- 4) To receive reports on relevant performance information and risk on the services under the remit of the Committee.”

5.8 Risk Management

5.8.1 The management of risk is undertaken on a continual basis and reported as part of the Council’s Quarterly Performance regime and considered as part of the Performance and Contract Management Committee quarterly monitoring report.

5.8.2 Risks are managed through the project boards and are reviewed and revised at board meetings. The current key risk areas are:-

	Rating Criteria	1: Low	2: Medium	3: High
1.	Total investment required	X		
2.	Potential benefits		X	
3.	Return on investment		X	
4.	Planning	X		
5.	Political sensitivity			X
6.	Fit with corporate objectives	X		
7.	Users/DU’s impacted		X	
	Total score	12		

5.9 Equalities and Diversity

5.9.1 Under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010) the Council must, in the exercise of its functions have due regard to the need to:-

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5.9.2 Relevant protected characteristics are:- age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

5.9.3 The purpose of the initiatives described in this report is to ensure that the broad diversity

of Barnet's residents and communities continue to enjoy the benefits of these community assets and that their needs and aspirations are reflected in the provision that the Council makes.

5.9.4 Equalities Impact Assessments will be developed on a scheme by scheme basis so as to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and that the needs of the communities and groups are fully taken into account in the development of schemes.

5.10 **Consultation and Engagement**

5.11 A public petition has been created on this subject and as the time of writing this report it had reached 578 signatures.

5.12 Phase 2 sites would be subject to a public consultation, with the results being reported back to a future committee for decision prior to implementation.

5.12.1 A list of the locked parks has been passed to the Police for comment unfortunately a response had not been received in time for this committee however we will ensure the information is included as part of the public consultation.

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 [28 November 2018 Environment Committee, Item 11 - Implementation of the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy](#)

Crime and ASB in parks and open spaces

The table shows a break-down of the proportion of different crime and ASB incidents which have occurred *inside or around the vicinity of* a number of parks in Barnet during 2018.¹

Incident type	Proportion of incidents
ASB	24%
Violence and Sexual Offences	21%
Burglary	16%
Vehicle Crime	15%
Robbery	7%
Drugs	5%
Public Order	4%
Other Theft	3%
Theft from the Person	2%
Criminal Damage and Arson	1%
Other Crime	1%
Possession of Weapons	1%
Bicycle Theft	0%
Shoplifting	0%

As can be seen the most frequent type of crime/ASB incident is Anti-social behaviour, followed by Violent of Sexual Offences.

It is also of note that the density of crime taking place within parks is considerably lower than the density of crime taking place within town centre locations (e.g. High streets)

Input from Barnet police (November 2018) based on consultation with local officers and the police ASB team suggest that the locked parks with the most problematic issues are: Old Court House Recreation Ground and Friary Park (note; only one gate is locked at Friary Park). Those issues ranged from mopeds, underage drinking, noise, and taking of prohibited substances.

ASB statistics (based on ASB incidents inside or in the vicinity of parks reported to police - 12 months data 2018) show for the currently locked parks are as follows:

Park	Number of ASB incidents
Childs Hill Park	18
Victoria Park	13
Basing Hill Park	12
Edgwarebury Park	6
Stoneyfields park	6
Malcolm Park	5
Cricklewood Playground	5

¹ Based on the six largest currently locked parks (Victoria, Edgwarebury, Cherry Tree Woods, Old Court House Recreation Ground, Swan Lane Open Space and Rushgrove Park)

Cherry Tree Wood	5
Princes Park	4
Old Court House Recreation Ground	3
Swan Lane Open Space	3
Ravenscroft Gardens	3
Rushgrove Park	2
Highlands Gardens	2
Greenhill Gardens	1
Fairway Playground	0
Brunswick Crescent Playground	0
Stonegrove Park	0

The approach to locking parks in other areas

A scan of other local authority areas suggests that varying approaches to the locking of parks exist. Most areas seem to lock some parks and leave other parks unlocked. Bexley adopted a policy in 2014 of not locking any parks. This policy has remained in place to the present time. Around a similar time (2014) Enfield took a decision to cease the locking of all parks but then modified that decision before implementing it. Both Bexley and Enfield received some criticism from residents in response to their decision to cease locking parks.

Local authority	Approach to locking parks	Links
Bexley	Stopped locking parks in 2014	https://www.newsshopper.co.uk/news/11177301.Park_users_safety_fears_over_Bexley_open_spaces_being_left_unlocked/
Enfield	Took decision during 2014 to cease locking all parks, but modified the decision before implementation so that locking would continue at 13 parks	https://www.palmersgreencommunity.org.uk/pgc/newsmobile/113-parks-open-space/801-council-rethink-policy-on-overnight-locking-of-parks
Islington	Some parks locked, some unlocked	
Tower Hamlets	Some parks locked, some unlocked	

The effect of locking parks on rates of crime and ASB in parks

There does not appear to be a clear deterministic relationship between the locking status of park and the level of crime and ASB within the park. Based on the crime data for 2018 some of the parks which are currently locked have relatively low crime rates while some have relatively higher crime rates. In the same way, some of the unlocked parks have low crime rates and some high crime rates.

It has also been pointed out that the parks fencing in most locations is sufficiently low to not be a barrier to an individual who is determined to get into the park in any case.

Informal feedback from another local authority which ceased locking some parks indicate that they did not see a notable increase in crime or ASB after ceasing to lock the parks.

However, this may depend on the particulars of the location and the effect of ceasing to lock may vary from park to park. It is difficult to assess in advance what the impact would be on an individual park.

What is clear, from the experience on other boroughs is that a decision or announcement that park locking will cease is likely to result in negative feedback from residents, with some residents fearing that crime and ASB would increase as a result.

Recommendations

If a decision is made to cease locking all or some of the parks it is recommended that this be implemented in a phased fashion. Starting with the parks in the lowest crime areas and allowing sufficient time to monitor any impacts on crime and ASB levels. This would allow for both a) police and partnership interventions to focus on a park should there be an increase in crime /ASB and b) an opportunity to re-assess before proceeding to the parks in higher crime areas

If this approach were adopted, the 2018 ASB figures would suggest the below set of 6 parks as potential candidates for piloting the cessation of locking.

- Fairway Playground
- Brunswick Crescent Playground
- Stonegrove Park
- Greenhill Gardens
- Rushgrove Park
- Highlands Gardens