



Work Plan Study
on Green Space and Landscaping

**Report by the
Environmental Scrutiny Panel**

July 2011 - February 2012

Chair's Commentary/Foreword

In July of last year the Scrutiny Panel decided to undertake this study. On the face of it, Green Space and Landscaping did not sound so complicated but as the study progressed we began to realise what an interesting and complex subject we were dealing with.

We scrutinised subjects ranging from our own Parks and Planning, to problems caused by mature trees along residential streets and the impact that evergreens can have on public highways. Crime reduction designs for parks and open spaces were presented by Lancashire Constabulary Officers which was a subject close to our hearts. The interviews held, documentation submitted and the presentations received all assisted in aiding Panel members to draw the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report.

The Panel also concluded that new developments which include open green spaces and landscaped areas as part of the development should have long-term agreements incorporated within planning conditions, for the maintenance of these areas, which the developer has to undertake to do. This would ensure that the developer has an involvement in how the green space is maintained long term.

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Panel, I would like to thank the officers involved for their assistance and all outside bodies that took part.

Councillor N Pomfret
Chair of the Environmental Scrutiny Panel



Contents

Section	Page
Foreword by Chair of Panel	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Membership of the Panel	5
3. Deliberations	5
4. Findings and Conclusions	10
5. Recommendations to Cabinet	10
Appendix A - Scoping Document	
Appendix B - Work Plan Timetable	

Green Space and Landscaping

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This topic was referred to the Environmental Scrutiny Panel as a review which the Panel could undertake as a work plan study. The study began on 21 July 2011.
- 1.2 The Panel's deliberations were conducted over the course of four meetings held in July, September, October and December 2011. This involved detailed information gathering, presentations and interviews held with the following key attendees.

Preston City Council Officers –

John Gilman, Landscape Architect
Matt Kelly, Head of Parks and Horticulture
Phil Cousins, Principal Planning Officer
Ryan Arrell, Arbiculture and Greenspace Manager

Lancashire County Council Officers –

Paul Dunne, Public Realm Officer

External attendees –

Gordon Dickinson, Places for People
Inspector Andrew Procter, Lancashire Constabulary, Community Safety
Sue Slater, Crime Prevention/Architectural Liaison Officer
Doreen Wallis, Head of People and Wildlife, Wildlife Trust

2. Membership

2.1 The Panel was chaired by Councillor Nick Pomfret, the full membership being:-



Councillor Pomfret



Councillor Mrs Crompton



Councillor Mrs Brown



Councillor Buttle



Councillor Crowe



Councillor Davies



Councillor Gardiner



Councillor Hammond



Councillor Mrs McManus



Councillor Y Patel



Councillor Shamsuddin



Councillor T Thompson

3. Deliberations

3.1 The Scrutiny Panel met on a number of occasions to gather information/evidence, interview witnesses and discuss findings.

3.2 A brief summary is given below of the information produced at each meeting. Full detailed minutes can be found by referring to the links included:-

21 July 2011

The Head of Parks and Horticulture gave a presentation on various aspects of his responsibilities, insofar as they related to this study, focussing on the following areas –

- Long term maintenance
- Crime reduction and safety
- Urban coppicing and sustainability
- Landscaping design and play

He then responded to Members' questions/comments on a wide range of topics, including –

- Maintenance of disused/remote areas
- Vandalism in the parks
- Biomass and sustainability (woodchip boiler)
- Reduction in external funding streams and match funding
- Management capacity re the fund bidding process
- Prioritisation of work arising from budget reductions (parks v smaller areas, winter bedding etc)
- Epicormic growth
- Maintenance of public open space in other agencies' ownership

The Landscape Architect gave a presentation on Landscape Design and took Members through the process from brief development to project delivery. He focussed on design for play and current issues, including planting in play areas.

Officers responded to Members' questions/comments on –

- Colours used in play equipment and fencing
- Review of play scheme strategy
- Floor coverings to play areas
- The absence of deciduous trees in some areas of the city
- Fruit trees in parks

8 September 2011

Preston City Council, Principal Planning Officer gave a presentation on various aspects of the role of planning, insofar as they are related to this study. Mr Cousins outlined the processes involved in securing open spaces and landscaping particularly for developments of more than 10 dwellings and commercial applications above 1,000 sqm. He gave an example of a development where through negotiations the planning department had been able to secure open-space and a landscaping scheme as part of the application process through a unilateral undertaking of a section 106 agreement.

Members' questions/comments:-

- Reasons why developers were only conditioned to maintain openspaces and landscaping for 5-10 years.
- Ring fencing of section 106 money.
- Planting schemes in built up areas conducive to the environment
- Consulting the Lancashire Constabulary on crime and safety issues.
- Checks made on the planting schemes implemented.
- Residents making an annual payment to developer to maintain private open spaces.

The Public Realm Officer from Lancashire County Council, gave a presentation on Public Realm and on its impacts and how this is managed. Members were given details of trees on highways including the benefits and negative impacts. Details and criteria for removal and if possible replacement of trees were outlined. Paul Dunne highlighted the common complaints his department received and the process involved for new street tree planting schemes. He reported that since April 2011 there had been 90 complaints in respect of trees and as a result of these there had been 44 actions taken.

Officers responded to Members' questions/comments on –

- Dead point grass verges on pavements
- Evergreen planting
- Seasonal planting
- Leaves problems
- Drive-by inspection
- Consulting local councillors on planting schemes on highways

Preston City Council, Arboriculture and Greenspace Manager gave a presentation to the Panel on tree planting, maintenance and safety. He outlined the following areas:

- Legal Framework pertaining to Tree Management
- Tree and Woodland Strategy 2003 and it's delivery
- Partnerships
- Improvements projects
- Removal and Replacements
- Waste arisings
- Community Involvement
- Aspirations

Officers responded to Members' questions/comments on

- TPO and Priority Levels
- Crime and Disorder and Anti-social behaviour consideration
- Coppicing and potential revenue from it
- External contracts

[18 October 2011](#)

Inspector Andrew Procter, Lancashire Constabulary gave a crime overview in relation to parks. He highlighted that the crime figures did not relate to individual green spaces, only parks.

Miss Sue Slater, Crime Prevention/Architectural Liaison Officer, reported on her role at Lancashire Constabulary. She explained that in general with open spaces, once a crime problem was identified, she would be asked for advice regarding greenspace and planting to promote safety and prevent further criminal acts taking place. Miss Slater advised that most of her work was generated through the planning process and that she did not have much involvement with new green spaces when they were established as they did not require a planning application to be submitted.

Officers then responded to Members' questions/comments on issues including:-

- Crimes against homeless persons, drinking and thefts on parks.
- How architectural liaison/crime prevention became involved through the planning process.
- The role of the Crime Prevention/Architectural Liaison Officer in relation to individual, smaller developments as well as larger developments which may have a big impact on an area.
- Specimens of plants chosen according to types of developments.
- The responsibility of maintenance and highlighting of any issues in relation to greenspace and planting.
- Road accidents potentially caused by visibility issues.
- Crime Issues which relate to the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

A representative from Places for People, gave a presentation on the provision, design and maintenance of landscaped areas which were owned by Places for People. He stressed the importance of greenspace to residents. He also gave an update on the projects that Places for People had been working on. It was explained to members that the projects covered the majority of England and the organisation had properties as far as Edinburgh to the Isle of Wight. He highlighted that the area surrounding property was as important as the property itself. The meeting was then presented with examples of projects undertaken by Places for People which were the result of many consultations and design discussions with residents. Each of the projects had been given individual maintenance/management plans based upon the area, the land, the support needed, and the overall aims of the project.

Members' questions/comments:-

- Residents' roles and responsibilities in maintaining greenspaces.
- Projects specific to Preston and the surrounding areas.

- How residents' are consulted with and engaged, and how their needs and ideas are incorporated into the project design.
- How the organisation works with existing amenities and facilities.
- Concern regarding the Housing Association dealing with community issues whereby Councillors felt that it was their role to handle problems in wards.

3 December 2011

A representative from the Wildlife Trust gave an overview of the work of the Wildlife Trust in Preston. She highlighted the key projects that had been undertaken over the past 3-5 years and the success stories of the work completed. The Panel were informed that the Wildlife Trust were involved in advising, supporting and taking part in schemes suggested by local people individually or through various groups. The groups were given assistance with making bids for various grants that is available. The Trust actively encouraged Groups to take ownership of planting schemes in order to make the schemes sustainable. It was reported that the Wildlife Trust did a lot of work in partnership with the local authorities both Preston City Council and Lancashire County Council.

Members' questions/comments:-

- Access for disabled to various open spaces
- Small schemes raising public expectations
- How people in the community can get involved
- Community Food Growing Projects
- Community Enterprise

Officers of the Council presented the current budget position and outlined details of the savings to be made by the parks service. Members were asked to consider these when making the recommendations on the Work Plan Study.

Members expressed concerns about the lack of winter planting across the city and it was suggested that local communities and community groups should be encouraged to plant in empty planting beds in their areas which were no longer to be planted by the authority due to resourcing issues. It was reported that some community groups had been involved in the planting of the Guild Wheel route. There were a number of opportunities available for people to get involved in planting empty beds in their areas.

It was reported that the city wide entry into the North West Britain in Bloom competition would be ceasing after 2011. This was due to the end of three year funding, there was no further funding available to continue with the scheme. Members expressed their disappointment that the scheme could not continue during the Guild year.

4. Findings and Conclusions

1. There were issues in respect of long term developer responsibility for open green space and landscaped areas approved as part of development schemes.
2. The Panel welcomed the consultation with Lancashire Constabulary with regard to design by safety. The Panel were pleased to be informed that the Lancashire Constabulary had an input into landscaping schemes at the planning stage in order to prevent planting schemes which could attract anti-social behaviour, crime and vandalism.
3. The Panel members requested that Lancashire County Council consult district Councillors in relation to new planting schemes proposed on the highway in their wards.
4. Concerns were expressed in respect of Housing Associations dealing with issues in certain wards which needed to be referred to the Ward Councillor.
5. It was acknowledged that due to resource constraints a number of planting schemes had to be substantially reduced or stopped completely.
6. The Panel were disappointed to receive information that the North West Britain in Bloom Competition would cease in 2011.

5. Recommendations to Cabinet

1. To continue to implement “secure by design” principles for both open space schemes and when providing advice to developers as part of the planning process.
2. Where required, additional support should be sought from the Lancashire Police Architectural Liaison Officer.
3. To ensure that where appropriate, schemes are designed to maximise amenity value and community safety with minimum maintenance requirements in the long term.
4. That Lancashire County Council be encouraged to develop a sustainable tree planting policy. Priority should be given to the planting of suitable replacement trees when removing highway trees in order to main the character and environmental benefits of tree lined streets and the development of further tree lined avenues.
5. That officers liaise with social housing providers to look at partnership schemes where open space is close to social housing stock.

6. Where practical, sustainability schemes such as wildflower meadows or sustainable drainage schemes should be introduced. Where appropriate, bedding schemes should be replaced with more sustainable and less costly planting.
7. Where appropriate, highways shrub beds should be assessed for amenity value for potential removal and replacement with grass where resources allow.
8. Sponsorship options for flower bed and greenspace maintenance also encouraging organisations, community groups etc to 'take over' and maintain flower beds.
9. Ensure that as part of the Section 106 agreement, developers are required to demonstrate that an appropriate mechanism is in place to ensure that maintenance would be managed effectively in the long term. This requirement would be legally binding and could be monitored through the existing planning enforcement process.
10. Ensure that as part of the Section 106 agreement, developers provide a maximum level of long term maintenance dowry as part of a commuted sum, where the Council would become responsible for the maintenance of the green space associated with a development. This would be negotiated on a case by case depending on the size and nature of the development.

Corporate Management Team Response

Corporate Management Team appreciates the Scrutiny Panel's work and support in this important area of green infrastructure. The recommendations to Cabinet are relatively non specific and ongoing. However, most are a continuation of what has already been done whilst others such as numbers 6 and 7 will require additional funding to make any significant impact on future revenue budgets. Partnership schemes with Police, Lancashire County Council and registered housing providers can be evidenced over recent years and have delivered outstanding results eg Fishwick Bottoms Nature Reserve and the Tregeneration Scheme at North Road / Moor Lane.

Appendix A

SCOPING DOCUMENT

SCRUTINY REVIEW – Greenspace and Landscaping

1.	<u>Scrutiny Chair:</u> Councillor Nick Pomfret	<u>Contact Details</u>
2.	<u>Scrutiny Support Officer:</u> Steven Dugdale	Ex. 6834
3.	<u>Departmental Link Officer:</u> Adrian Phillips, Deputy Director Environment	Ext. 6230

1. **Which of our Corporate Priorities does this topic address?**

Safer & Stronger Neighbourhoods Priority

Link to Brighter Futures- Improving Health & Wellbeing

2. **What are the overall aims and objectives in doing this work?**

Review Landscape Design & long term maintenance provision.

Review policy and provision of highway trees & landscaping.

Review environmental sustainability.

Review role of the planning function in landscape design.

Review how crime reduction, community safety and road safety can be improved via planting schemes and maintenance regimes.

Review how planting schemes and maintenance regimes can be used to realise the economic potential in biomass.

3. **Possible outputs/outcomes to this review are:-**

Review current greenspace planting and maintenance policies.
Recommend changes and enhancements.

Provide recommendations for planting and maintenance regimes to reduce the fear of crime, increase road safety and realise any economic potential within biomass.

4. **What specific value can Scrutiny add to this work area?**
Member evaluation of current provision and resources.
5. **Duration of the Review?**
6 months (4 meetings)
6. **What category does the review fall into**
Policy Review & Policy Development
7. **What information do we need to undertake the Scrutiny Review**
Current greenspace planning, planting and maintenance policies and provision (Preston CC & Lancashire CC).

Tree planting policies.
- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 8. | <u>Who can provide us with relevant evidence?</u> | <u>What areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence</u> |
| | Preston CC Parks & Horticulture Service | Current issues relating to management & maintenance & alternative options. |
| | PCC Planning Officers & Landscape Architects | Provision, planning & design criteria and options. |
| | LCC Public Realm Officers | Current provision and maintenance & alternative options. |
| | Local police officers | |
| | Registered Social Landlords | Design and Maintenance of landscaped areas in their ownership |
9. **What processes can we use to feed into the review (site visits/observations, face to face questioning, telephone surveys, written questionnaires etc?)**
- Face to face interviews
 - Site visit and/or presentation
 - Surveys of provision and policies of other authorities.
10. **Diversity – How will we address the diversity standards in order to uphold the Council’s Single Equality Scheme?**
Any draft recommendations will have an equalities impact assessment.

Date	Officer	Job Title	Issue / Area of responsibility
21 st July 2011	John Gilman	PCC Landscape Architect	Provision, planning & design criteria. Maintainability of Design considerations etc.
	Matt Kelly	Preston CC Head of Parks & Horticulture	Current issues relating to management & maintenance & alternative options.
8 th September 2011	Paul Dunne	LCC Public Realm Officers	Highway greenspace, Trees. Current provision and maintenance & alternative options.
	Phil Cousins	Principal Planning Officer PCC Planning - Development Control	Provision, planning & design criteria
	Ryan Arrell	PCC Arboriculture & Greenspace Manager	Tree planting, maintenance & safety
18 th October 2011	Inspector Andrew Procter	Lancashire Constabulary Community Safety	Safety, Crime issues related to greenspace & planting.
	Miss Sue Slater	Crime Prevention/ Architectural Liaison Officer	
	Gordon Dickson Portfolio Manager: Green Spaces for People	Places for People Registered Social Landlord	Provision, design and maintenance of landscaped areas in their ownership
1 st December 2011	Daveen Wallis	Lancashire Wildlife Trust	Sustainable & wildflower planting, Local Nature Reserves, partnership schemes with PCC and funding challenges.
	To be confirmed	Preston CC officers	Review of any outstanding issues & finalisation of study.
19 th January 2012	To be confirmed	Preston CC officers	Contingency