

Meeting Date: 24th April 2018

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Environment & Transport Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Chris Southward**

GREEN SPACES & BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

Green Spaces – With hundreds of hectares of public open space land under the Council's ownership, the Green Spaces team has a constant job of keeping them in safe and welcoming condition for visitors.

To help us organise and prioritise this work we have been drafting a new 'Green Spaces Strategy', identifying the key aims and objectives of the service for the next 10 years. One of our themes is 'health and wellbeing' because we feel that much of our work has a positive impact on people's quality of life and we want to make sure that opportunity is available to everybody. We also look at children's play, allotments, biodiversity, reducing flood risk and impacts of climate change. Once the final draft is complete I will make sure the document is circulated to the Economic Growth Task & Finish Group and I look forward to their comments. It will be available to all Members.

The new outdoor exercise area at Bitts Park is complete with only some of the final landscaping work to be finished off. This is a state-of-the art facility and provides a great opportunity for people of all ages to get active. Next to the children's play area we thought it might encourage a few parents to try some of the activities on offer, while at the same time being able to keep an eye on the youngsters.

Green Spaces hosted a 'Dream Placement' student, for a week in February. 'Dream Placement' aims to provide Cumbria's brightest young people with a realistic introduction to the world of work. The student carried out a valuable project for us, conducting an audit of the assets within Bitts Park and interviewing park users to gain insights into the preferences and suggestions of our customers. At the Showcase Event, held at the Energus campus in Workington on 22 March, the young man went on

to win the prize for 'best exhibit' with his display illustrating his week at Carlisle City Council. Congratulations and best wishes for the future.

Allotment occupancy has risen again in the past few weeks, with the figure now standing at 89%. We have also had more applications for self-managed allotments, with the pigeon fanciers at Longsowerby being the latest to make the move.

While 2018 is the centenary of the end of World War 1, the major public memorials to the sacrifices made by local people were opened 4 years after the armistice, in 1922.

The Cumberland and Westmorland cenotaph that stands in Rickerby Park; the whole park itself and the Memorial Bridge across the Eden to Stoneyholme were all part of our city's determination to remember the fallen.

So now I'd like to hear any ideas on how we might mark this centenary, in 2022. Tens of thousands of people attended the unveiling of the cenotaph and it would be fitting if we could recreate that moment in time and mark it in an appropriate manner. I would be pleased to receive any suggestions so that we can start planning for the date, which will come round quicker than we realise. Thank you.

Talkin Tarn has had another successful year, with more visitors coming to enjoy the scenery, wildlife and attractions that the Tarn has to offer. The hard work of the staff is reaping dividends and the surplus income allows us to improve the facilities for future visitors.

As a follow-up to the last report, I am pleased to announce that the local vet was given a Community Award at the Civic Dinner in March for his prompt action in rescuing a swan from the Tarn and using his professional skills to remove the discarded fishing hooks which were choking the young bird. I am pleased to say the swan has made a full recovery and is now happily reunited with its family at Talkin Tarn.

Bereavement Services The emphasis in our cemeteries this winter has been on shrub and tree management, cutting back untidy growth and getting the flowering species ready for the new season.

At Upperby and Carlisle cemeteries, work has been carried out to widen and re-define some of the paths that had become overgrown. This makes it easier for the many visitors to access family and friends graves, even in the depths of winter.

Speaking of winter, we are proud to say that even through the worst that the 'beast from the east' could throw at us, no burials or cremations were cancelled by Bereavement Services as our staff battled blizzards and snow drifts to keep the service running, helped by our gardeners taking the initiative and clearing the driveways and footpaths – a big 'thank you' to them all.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Food Allergies –The County Council's Trading Standards Officers recent prosecution of local Indian Take-away, involved joint investigations with the City Council's Food & Public Protection Team. The complaint principally involved peanut protein being present in a dish which was requested to be nut free, samples were taken by the Food & Public Protection Team and peanuts protein was found to be included in the ingredients. The takeaway, having been found to be at fault were fined accumulative sums of over £6,000.

A lot of activity occurred in 2014 when the Food Information Regulations came into force requiring information on food allergens within ingredients. As Food Authorities both the City Council and the County Council will continue to work closely to ensure residents and visitors with food allergens are protected when purchasing food within the District.

CAR PARKING

The car park closures in Castle, Caldew Riverside and West Walls car parks have been amended which means that West Walls will close at 11pm as opposed to 8pm for the other two locations.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Due to the adverse weather at the end of February/beginning of March refuse and recycling and street cleaning services were suspended for three days. Staff from Neighbourhood Services were diverted to other duties, for example clearing safe pathways through the snow in the city centre etc. The City Council received a lot of positive comments from residents and local business owners for the effort of council staff during this time and I would like to formally take this opportunity to add my thanks and appreciation for the efforts of our frontline teams during these challenging conditions.

Garden waste collections, which are quiet at this time of the year, were suspended week commencing 5th March 2018 to allow our resources to be diverted towards catch-up for the refuse collections missed due to the adverse weather. Services returned to business as normal from Monday 12 March 2018. Key messages were placed on social media, our website TV and radio to keep residents informed of any service changes.

Officers have reviewed our operational response to the snow with a view to learning lessons for future severe weather events. This review is ongoing and will include the development of a single response plan to ensure our response is co-ordinated and resources effectively deployed to agreed priority areas, complementing the efforts of our partners. The review will also look at our fleet capacity to ensure our vehicles, plant and resources are appropriate for everyday use but also flexible and robust enough to use during severe weather. In this regard, our increased 4x4 capability introduced after the 2015 flooding was a great resource this year and was also available as part of the wider 4x4 pool to support priority responders (Police / NHS etc).

The street scene team have also been busy in March litter picking from roadside verges on key routes into Carlisle collecting over 100 bags of litter each day. The impact has been instant and highly visible but sadly within days in some areas we are noticing further litter dropped, undermining efforts to keep Carlisle clean. This is a resource demand and a high-risk activity but further litter picking will be co-ordinated for later in the year as we also work to try to change behaviour through a campaign to raise awareness of the problem of roadside litter. This will involve engaging with a number of local food outlets as we try to tackle this selfish, irresponsible behaviour of a minority of motorists.

Successful enforcement action has been taken through the court on three cases recently with positive outcomes as follows:

- Littering offence (dropping a cigarette) – costs and fines totalling £335
- Fly-tipping (two cases) – costs and fines totalling £805 for each case – in these two separate cases, the people responsible simply failed to engage with Council Enforcement Officers, refusing to attend interviews which formed part of our successful enforcement action.
- All three cases were heard in absence.

The Public Space Protection Order went live on 22 March 2018; this will see increased partnership working with the police to tackle anti-social behaviour. A period of education will be carried out initially to ensure compliance.

The Street Scene and Enforcement Team have been working with Community Payback and residents to help Keep Carlisle Clean, a number of projects have been completed including clearance of a back lane and removing weeds/moss from footpaths