SCRUTINY & REVIEW (REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SECURITY – PARKS WORKING GROUP
FINAL REPORT - APRIL 2007

SEFTON MBC

LOCAL PEOPLE
LOCAL CHOICE

ITEM NO. 5

SCRUTINY AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)

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FINAL REPORT
MARCH 2007

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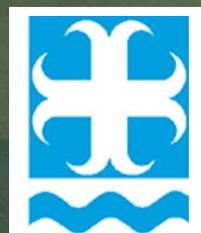
LOCAL PEOPLE
LOCAL CHOICE

Chair's Introduction

For the past four months a Working Party of this Committee has been reviewing Community Safety and Security in Parks. The review has involved numerous meetings taking evidence from officers of Merseyside Police, the staff of the Leisure Services Department, the Youth Service; the Community Safety Unit and Sefton Security Services. The Working Group have also carried out both daytime and night time visits to a range of parks throughout the Borough and have visited parks in Bury and Leicestershire to look at nationally recognised examples of good practice. The views of park users were also taken into account and a survey of user groups was carried out by way of a questionnaire and interviews.

What is apparent is that for the first time for many years there is now a willingness on the part of both Central and Local Government to acknowledge that our Parks can be a valuable asset in providing all manner of outside recreational activities to all sections of the community. It is evident from our visits to other Local Authorities that they are now prepared to provide both resources and help from many different agencies. We have seen from our own parks that much has been done to improve both the appearance maintenance and provision of amenities for park users. What has to be done now is to provide a safe environment for all legitimate park users. This can be achieved if our recommendations are implemented

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Working Group in drawing up this report and to thank the Merseyside Police, the staff of Leisure Services, the Community Safety Unit, Sefton Security Services, the Youth Service and the Scrutiny and Review Support Staff for their help and expertise. I would also like to thank staff from Bury and Leicestershire Councils who helped facilitate the Working Group's visit to parks in their areas and all those organisations that took the time to respond to the Questionnaire.

May I thank to all my colleagues on the Working Group for their support and involvement that has made it possible to reach a successful conclusion to a complicated subject. I also thank Mr Ian Aylward-Barton for his help in writing this report and for his considerable assistance throughout the four months investigation.

Wendy Jones,
Chair,
Scrutiny and Review Committee
(Regeneration and Environmental Services).

Contents

		Page No.

Cover photograph – children's play area, Derby Park, Bootle.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Scrutiny and Review Committee (Social and Community Services) at its meeting held on 23 August 2005 (Minute No 17 refers) resolved that Community Safety and Security on Leisure Land be the subject of a review. At the subsequent meeting held on 27 September 2005 the membership of the Working Group was established with a view to its commencement in October 2005.

1.2 The original membership of the working group was the entire membership of the former Scrutiny and Review Committee (Social and Community Services): -

Councillors Cluskey, Hands, Ms Johnson, Mann, Platt, Rice, Ridge, Sumner, Tweed and Weavers.

1.3 The Working Group met on 1 November 2005 and scoped the review following which it was proposed that the next stage of the review would be to organise and co-ordinate site visits to parks in the Borough and to some outside the Borough to look at examples of good practice.

1.4 At its meeting on 16 May, 2006, the Scrutiny and Review Committee (Health and Social Care) referred the Working Group to this Committee, in accordance with the revised Scrutiny Committee terms of reference.

1.5 The Scrutiny and Review Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services) at its meeting held on 6 June 2006 (Minute No 5 refers) resolved to continue the work of the Community Safety and Security – Parks Working Group and appointed members to serve on the Group.

1.6 From June 2006 Councillors Doran, Francis, Ibbs, W. M. Jones, McGinnity and Tonkiss were appointed to the working group. Councillor Veidman was subsequently appointed as an additional Member at the Meeting held on 2 January 2007.

1.7 In order to assist in the management of the Committee's workload and as the Parking Services Working Group and Arts Artefacts Working Group (both of which had also been continued from former Scrutiny and Review Committees) were close to completing their reviews, it was agreed that these two working groups would meet to conclude the work outstanding. Once these had been concluded, meetings of the Community Safety and Security – Parks Working Groups would then commence. Consequently the first meeting of the Working Group did not take place until November 2006.

2.0   BACKGROUND

2.1   The re-constituted Working Group held meetings as follows: -

(i)   20 November 2006;
(ii)   28 November 2006;
(iii)   7 December 2006 - daytime visit to parks;
(iv)   8 December 2006 - 209 Linacre Lane, and evening visit to parks;
(v)   11 December 2006;
(vi)   2 January 2007;
(vii)   16 January 2007;
(viii)   6 February 2007;
(ix)   13 February 2007 – Visit to parks outside Sefton;
(x)   21 February 2007 – attendance at Greenspace conference;
(xi)   5 March 2007
(xii)   13 March 2007
(xiii)   19 March 2007

2.2   At the first meeting of the revised Working Group Councillor W. Jones was appointed as Lead Member for the review and the new members of the group reconsidered the original scoping document. A revised scoping document with the following terms of reference was agreed: -

1.   To identify the issues in relation to our parks and parks security.

2.   To investigate if the service provided by Sefton Security is Value for Money; is it what Sefton's parks require ?

3.   To investigate the Leisure Services Policy in relation to the locking of park gates.

4.   To investigate how successful the pilot scheme for Park Rangers in Bootle has been and should it be rolled out to the whole of the Borough.

5.   To investigate the Communities perception of what is required.

6.   To investigate the role of volunteers and user groups in our parks.

7.   To investigate the role of all relevant agencies involved in helping to tackle crime, anti social behaviour and the fear of crime in parks.

8.   To identify the most appropriate and effective measure for dealing with the above.

A copy of the scoping document is attached as appendix A to this report for information.

3.0   SITE VISITS

3.1   In order to save time and to fit in with work commitments the Working Group decided to split into two to carry out both daytime and evening visits to parks within the Borough.

3.2   On 7 December 2006 Councillors Doran and Ibbs accompanied by Officers from Leisure Services carried out a daytime visit to a number of parks within the Borough: -

(i)   Botanic Gardens;
(ii)   Bedford Park;
(iii)   Moorside Park;
(iv)   Coronation Park;
(v)   Victoria Park;
(vi)   South Park;
(vii)   North Park;
(viii) Derby Park;
(ix)   Hatton Hill Park;

3.3   The general opinion was that there was much better maintenance than was expected especially in the South of the Borough. Derby Park and North Park, because of the presence of static Park Keepers (4), Victoria and Coronation Parks because of the work of the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) Park Rangers and the efforts of Leisure Services to try to achieve Green Flag status. Now that there are no Park Rangers in these last two parks there is now a slow incremental decline in the condition that is now apparent with the emergence of vandalism once again. Although there had been much cutting of shrubbery in Alexandra Park and Moorside Park, these parks showed evidence of neglect and vandalism, especially Moorside Park. The Parks in the North of the Borough were well managed and again showed a high standard especially where there were static Park Keepers as in Botanic Gardens and Hesketh Park.

3.4   On 8 December 2006 Councillors W. M. Jones, McGinnity, Tonkiss and Veidman accompanied by Officers from Sefton Security Service and Leisure Services carried out an evening visit to a number of parks within the Borough: -

(i)   Hatton Hill Park;
(ii)   Victoria Park;
(iii)   Derby Park;
(iv)   Coronation Park;
(v)   Moorside Park;

3.5 Despite the cold wet weather it was very obvious that youths do congregate in parks. The Working Group did see evidence of incipient vandalism in Marine Gardens on the CCTV cameras in 209 Linacre Lane. On the visit to Victoria Park Members witnessed a small fire lit on the pavilion steps. The Police had been alerted and had responded to the call when the Working Group was there. In Derby Park a group of youths could be seen within the park despite the high perimeter fencing and the locked gates. In Hatton Hill Park the damage to the pavilion was noted and the fact that it had no alarm system.

3.6 In general terms however, it should be noted that Members were impressed by the general condition and tidiness of the parks visited with many being in a better state of repair etc. than they had imagined.

3.7 On 13 February 2007 the Working Group accompanied by Officers from Leisure Services carried out a visit to a number of parks within the Metropolitan Borough of Bury and in Leicestershire. Both of these authorities have received national recognition regarding the quality of their parks service.

Bury:

The Working Group was very impressed by what they saw in Bury. The service was very well organised with the Park Rangers having a pivotal role engaging with park users, neighbours, "Friends of the Parks", schools, Police, youth services etc. The Park Ranger Service started in 2002 with the help and support of a local residents association. One Park Ranger was recruited into a park in the most deprived area with the help of SRB4 money. This was increased to 2 Rangers with the help from the Bury Children's Fund in 2003. It was increased to 8 Rangers in 2004 through receiving £3 million from the Liveability Fund from the ODPM. Bury MBC now funds the Service. Therefore the £3 million "kick start" did give the impetus which made it easier to continue this successful project more easily.

There are now 8 uniformed Park Rangers working in pairs looking after clusters of parks covering every park in all 6 townships, (There are 14 major parks within the Borough). The Park Rangers duties are patrols, health and safety inspections working with volunteers, annual events and activities (112 events have been held during the year), monitoring outputs, on site surveys and consultations, site management, school environment education advice and information, liaison with "Friends" Groups, Partnership working, Park improvement and Green Flag work, enforcing Litter and Dog Fouling Laws. The security for parks is undertaken by a private firm and is reactive to calls only.

If this Council agrees to implement the cluster model based on the Bury project, this will initially only result in 12 Park rangers for 50 parks.

Leicester:

The actual reorganisation of the parks service in Leicester was a rather complicated arrangement that was difficult to understand. It seemed to work for Leicester, but it did not seem to the Working Group that it could be adapted successfully for Sefton.

What was significant was that a dedicated Police Officer was based in the Abbey Park that the Working Group visited together with an adjacent industrial area and took a pride in ensuring that law and order was maintained. There had been very extensive cutting back of shrubs and trees to ensure open sight lines and vision into the park. Lighting had been installed in parts of the park.

4.0 GREENSPACE CONFERENCE – MAKING IT SAFE

4.1 On 21 February 2007 Members of the Working Group attended the Greenspace Conference "Making it safe" which focussed on how to address crime and antisocial behaviour in parks and public spaces.

4.2 The Objectives of the Conference, which took place in the Civic Centre Newcastle and included tours of parks in Newcastle, were:

(i) to look at issues surrounding safety and the perception of safety in parks and public spaces;
(ii) to understand the safety concerns of all park users, especially women, children and young people;
(iii) to consider the importance of working in partnership with a variety of agencies to combat crime and anti social behaviour.

4.3 Topics covered at the conference included:

(i) partnership working to tackle anti social behaviour;
(ii) the potential of local area agreements;
(iii) engaging young people in the creation of park facilities;
(iv) effective consultation methods;
(v) the role of on-site staff;
(vi) women's safety in parks;
(vii) anti social behaviour orders; and
(viii) the role of landscape design in reducing crime and anti social behaviour.

4.4 The actual conference emphasised that the presence of Park Rangers was crucial to the improvement of the physical appearance and safety within the parks.

4.5   An organised visit took place to Walker Park. This park was in a deprived area had 4 CCTV cameras, a community pavilion and additional lighting. Much had been done to cut back shrubbery and trees to open up areas that had formerly attracted anti social behaviour. Police and Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) involvement had also helped to turn this park into a more inviting place.

4.6   Exhibition Park visited by Councillor W.M. Jones and two Leisure Service Officers, showed a cafe and community centre, well looked after amenities and was safe enough for students from nearby colleges to walk through on their own at dusk. It was similar to South Park, Bootle in some respects, although bigger, as both could be used as a thoroughfare.

5.0   CONSULTATION WITH USERS

5.1   The Working Group was keen to ascertain the views of park users and it was agreed to consult with the various "Friends" associations and appropriate clubs and organisations that used the various parks. In view of the number of organisations involved it was agreed to initially consult by way of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was put together by the working group at meetings in December 2006 and subsequently circulated to the appropriate groups.

5.2   In order to keep the numbers manageable and given the timescale of the review, questionnaires were sent to umbrella organisations wherever possible for example questionnaires were sent to the various Amateur Football Leagues within the Borough rather than to the individual Football Clubs. Consequently whilst the number of questionnaires received is not vast, hopefully they represent the collective views of a much larger group of park users. A list of the groups consulted is attached as appendix C to the report.

5.3   The Questionnaire was sent out in early January 2007 with groups given a month to respond. Forty questionnaires were sent out and 25 responses were received which represents a 62.5% response rate.

5.4   Respondents were initially asked to give an indication of their group's activities and level of use of parks, interestingly all respondents claimed to use parks more than once per week with the exception of two who claimed once per week use.

5.5   The questionnaire then asked a number of basic questions which could be answered by simply ticking a box following which respondents could then elaborate with further details. A summary of the responses to the questions is set out below:

5.6   the first of the questions asked respondents to indicate the types of problems (if any), which their group had encountered in using parks from a list of possibilities. The following responses were received:

|	
Evidence of vandalism	88%
Broken glass or other hazards left	78%
Youths congregating	76%
Dog fouling	60%
Litter	60%
Other reasons for feeling unsafe	52%
No visible staff present to call for help	48%
Motorbikes, vehicles being driven	48%
Threatening behaviour	47%
Nuisance that caused disruption to your use/activities in the park	44%
Other forms of unacceptable behaviour or activity	44%
Other forms of misuse	40%
Drug dealing	40%
Arson	36%
Dark or overgrown environment	16%
Obscure, poorly sited entranceways	8%
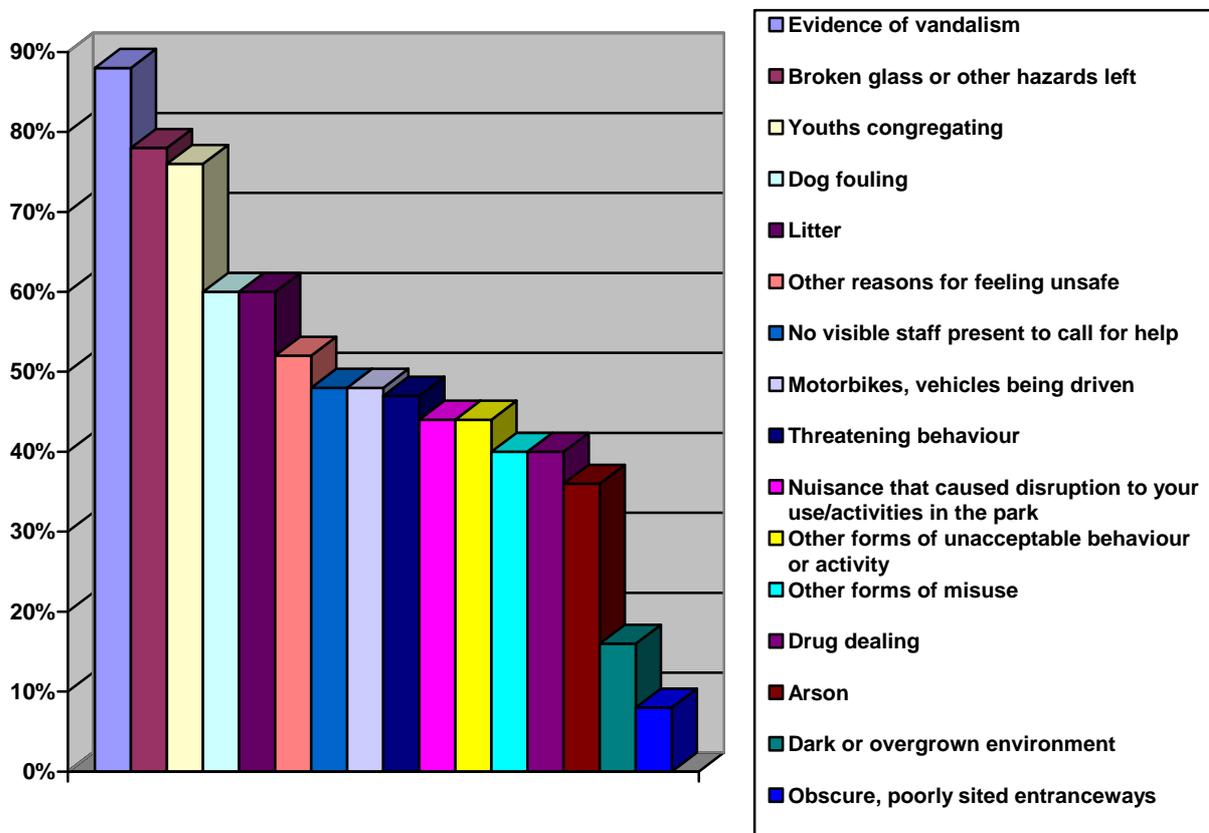
5.7   56% of the respondents indicated that the above problems were either serious or very serious (this figure does include a number who indicated that they were serious or very serious at some time but not constantly).

5.8   Under the categories "Other reasons for feeling unsafe" and "Other forms of unacceptable behaviour or activity" the following issues were highlighted: -

- Gangs of Youths;
- Golf Balls landing on Bowling greens and pitches (x2);
- Entrance to Bowling Greens very dark;
- Football on areas other than pitches (x4);
- Scooters and bikes racing through parks (x2);
- Disruption of bowls matches;
- Drinking by Youths (x2);
- Skateboarders using steps and handrails;
- Verbal abuse, throwing missiles (x2);
- Damage to Bowling Greens surface;
- Lack of adequate lighting;
- Excessive bread fed to ducks;
- "Cottaging" and prostitution;
- Lack of adequate lighting.

5.9   In response to the question "to whom were problems reported?" The following replies were received: -

|	
Merseyside Police	72%
Leisure Services	60%
Sefton Security	56%
Park Maintenance staff	40%
Other (please indicate)	24%
Park Rangers / Park Keepers	20%
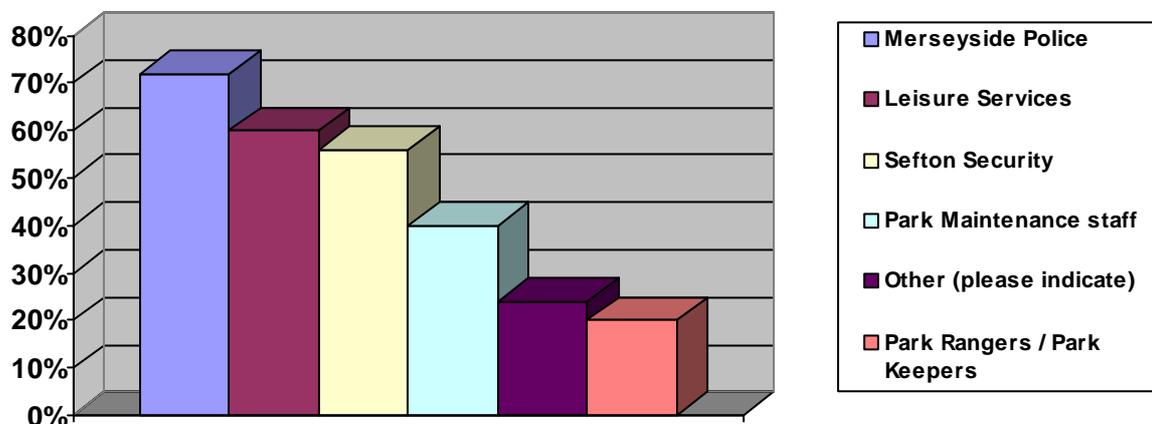
The 24% "other" amounts to six responses, which included:

- Public
- Sefton Council (x2)
- Politicians
- Fire Service
- Southport Visiter.

5.10 In response to the question "how well was the matter dealt with?" The following replies were received: -

Poorly	36%
Not at all	20%
Adequately	20%
Swiftly and appropriately	12%
To your satisfaction	-
Other (please indicate)	-
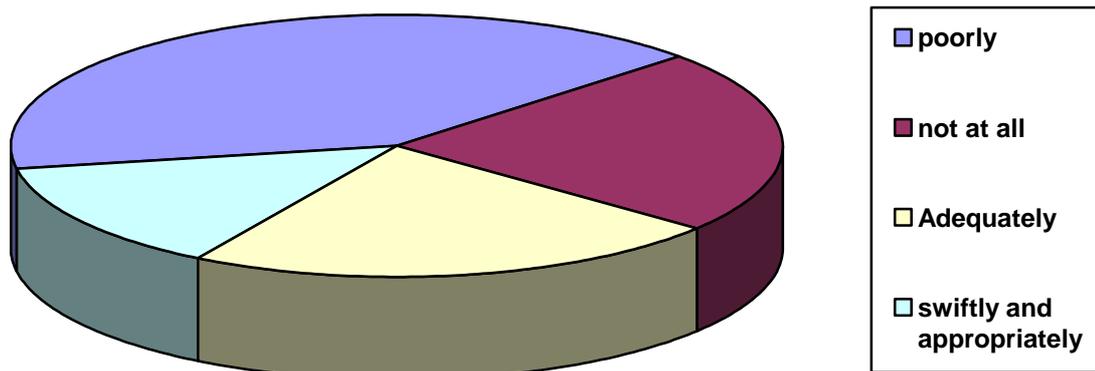
5.11 The Question "What measures do you feel might encourage greater use of our parks by your organisation or other organisations?" resulted in a range of responses however 64% of respondents made comments/suggestions which involved the issue of a physical presence within the parks for example:

- Regular patrols;
- Provision of staff with powers to take action 8:00 am – Midnight;
- Higher profile of security staff and action taken against offenders;
- Introduction of old style park keeper/warden;
- More inspections by security staff;
- Park Warden to patrol regularly, worst problems 6.30 pm – 9.30 pm;
- More frequent patrols at dusk or just after dark;
- More Park Wardens;
- More Police patrols;
- More patrols and official presence.

In addition to the above the following measures were also suggested:

- Higher fencing;
- CCTV to vulnerable areas;
- Anti motorcycle barriers;
- Regular maintenance and more funds for improvement;
- Directional signs;
- Better toilet facilities

5.12   The final request for "other comments" did produce some anecdotal comments however the following constructive comments were made:

- A suggestion to get teenagers and children involved in activities in parks;
- Education re: use of parks

5.13   Following receipt of the questionnaires all those associations who had indicated a willingness to discuss matters with the Working Group were invited to attend a meeting on 13 March 2007.

5.14   The meeting on 13 March 2007 took place at Southport Town Hall and was attended by 12 park users representing 9 groups/organisations. In addition officers from Leisure Services and English Landscapes were also present.

5.15   The meeting discussed a wide range of issues relating to parks, parks maintenance, anti social behaviour and possible ways of addressing the issues.

5.16   Arising from the discussions it was suggested that it might be useful for users to have the facility for a regular meeting for all park users to share experiences and discuss problems with the departments and agencies involved. All present were in favour of such a meeting, possibly on a twice-yearly basis, being arranged.

Recommended:

The Police and all other relevant agencies should hold formal bi-annual Forums with all relevant agencies. i.e. Leisure Services, Youth Services, Community Services and Sefton Security Services and particularly User Groups. These should be organised in five groupings i.e. North Southport, South Southport (Birkdale, Ainsdale, Formby), Crosby and Bootle in order to coordinate measures to curtail criminal damage, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. *These meetings should have strong chairmanship to ensure that there are positive outcomes.*

6.0   CONSULTATION WITH DEPARTMENT/PARTNERS

6.1   Departments and Partners were invited to attend meetings of the Working Group to give information regarding their role in relation to parks. The Working Group received presentations from the following:

(i)   Community Safety Unit: At its meeting held on 28 November 2006 the Working Group received a presentation from Amanda Langan (Head of Community Safety) giving an overview of the work of the Community Safety Unit. This was followed by further presentations at the meeting held on 2 January 2007 by Police Inspector Dave Kay (Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator); Police Inspector Lol O'Donnell (Partnership Development Officer); and Dave Ellison (Sefton Security Services Manager) giving details of operations within their individual areas of work.

This was informative and gave the Working Group an insight into the Community Safety unit and Sefton Security service. We were given information listing the duties of Sefton Security. This included the original specification that Leisure wanted pricing, the full range of services provided on behalf of Leisure Services, the opening and unlocking of parks, a breakdown of cost, and the number of visits to parks over the past 5 years.

After this, the Working Group requested further clarification to the above report. This could not be provided before the meeting on the 6 February 2007. What the Working Group were provided with then, were not the detailed answers to specific questions requested previously. These were relayed to the Working Group on 21 February 2007.

(ii)   Merseyside Police: At its meeting held on 16 January 2007 the Working Group received a presentation from Inspector Lol O'Donnell (Partnership Development Officer), three area inspectors, Police Inspector M. Woosey (Southport Area); Police Inspector J. Woods (Formby, Ainsdale and Birkdale Area) and Police Inspector S. Stephenson (Bootle Area) and from Police Inspector J. Anderson (Control manager, Sefton).

These senior officers were adamant that all parks that could be locked should be locked in particular Hesketh Park was cited. There was one PCSO covering both Hesketh Park and Botanic Gardens. The Duke Street Park, Formby, had an infra- red CCTV camera but it displaced the problem to a part of the park not covered by the camera. It was said that if Bedford Park could be locked it would reduce the problem. One PCSO covered Dukes Street Park, Bedford Park and Victoria Park (Southport).

Derby Park, Bootle was the only park in Bootle to be locked. The Police saw locking as a deterrent.

The Working Group was told of an informal meeting by Inspector Stevenson (Bootle Area) in which representatives from all interested parties came together to work out how to solve the recent upsurge in anti social activities in Bootle and the Crosby parks. The Working Group obtained the minutes of this meeting and considered that this was an excellent initiative that should continue on a more formal basis and be adopted by the Police throughout the Borough.

(iii)   Sefton Security Service: Following on from the discussions at the meeting on 2 January 2007 the Working Group held a further meeting with Sefton Security Service on 6 February 2007 to clarify issues regarding the service provided.

This was the Working Group's least satisfactory meeting as the information that had been requested before the 6 February 2007 meeting was presented to Members only at the beginning of this meeting and a large part was material that was already known. The information requested was given to the Working Group on the 21 February 2007.

From discussions with both Leisure Services and Sefton Security Service it is clear that currently no formal, up to date Service Level Agreement exists in respect of the services provided by Sefton Security Service in respect of Parks.

The Leisure Department contributes £485,000 for the services provided by Sefton Security Service to that department as a whole but the proportion of this that is specific to services in parks is not clear.

It appears that a proposed specification was prepared in 1997 but that this was subsequently amended to tailor the services provided to the financial resources available. As an example parks are not patrolled during daylight hours as a result of the negotiations at this time.

Since 1997 the service provided appears to have evolved in line with the changing needs and specific requests of the Leisure Department but this has led to the service provided, and the actual cost of this service being unclear.

It would be fair to say that this has resulted in Leisure Services having concerns as to whether the Department receives its "fair share" of Sefton Security Service's time.

Conversely Sefton Security Service would draw attention to the fact that it provides a responsive service and will always accommodate requests from Leisure services in respect of attendance at events etc. without any additional charges being made. In effect whatever service is requested is contained within the total £485,000 budget provision.

Given the above, determining whether what is actually provided at present represents "value for money" is difficult, as clear figures cannot be provided. It is clear however that there is a need for the Leisure Department and Sefton Security Service to examine whether the existing service reflects present needs.

From the information received from this and from previous meetings and our own observations, the Working Group are of the considered opinion that there is still a role for the Sefton Security Service but that it needs to be streamlined to be "fit for purpose". It should lock at night those parks that Leisure Service, the Police, "Friends of Parks" and users want to see locked and are capable of being locked. They should continue their monitoring and response role but not their regular patrolling of all parks regardless of whether it is necessary or not. Leisure Services must set out their requirements as a service level agreement, the cost of which should be considerably less than the present figure.

(iv)   Youth Service: At its meeting held on 5 March 2007 the Working Group received a presentation from Margaret Loughlin, Assistant Director - Young People Support

The Youth Service plays an important role throughout the Borough, but it is apparent that the outreach and outside activities side of this has been under funded (worst funded Authority, 107th out of 150) and the whole service had not been performing well until the last 12 months. There are 5 Mobility units funded by NRF that can and should be used more in parks. Jointly run and funded "Smart Play" events with Leisure Services should also be expanded. The Youth Service now uses Orrell Mount Pavilion and vandalism has virtually ceased there. This is an example of what could be done with our other park pavilions c.f. Hatton Hill Park.

(v)   Leisure Services: At its meeting held on 5 March 2007 the Working Group received a report presented by the Head of Landscape Development & Management,

The document "Provision of a Borough Wide Ranger Service" had originally been written in October/November 2006 for submission to the Cabinet Member – Leisure and Tourism but following the establishment of the Working Group this was held in abeyance pending the outcome of the review.

The report proposes 12 Park Rangers covering 6 clusters: -

Southport North Cluster	2 Park Rangers
Southport South Cluster	2 Park Rangers
Formby and Hightown Cluster	2 Park Rangers
Crosby, Seaforth and Waterloo Cluster	2 Park Rangers
Litherland, St Oswald's, Netherton, & Orrell Cluster	2 Park Rangers

Total   12 Park Rangers

Plus 2 Area Supervisors and a Senior Park Ranger

TOTAL ONE YEAR COSTS   **£383,556**

Total year two costs onwards - £303,556 plus inflation   £315,700

Some of this cost could be met from: -

1. Savings from the slimmed down Sefton Security provision for Park locking and response only; and

2. Savings from fewer repairs due to arson, vandalism and break-ins that would dramatically fall (This was true in Sunderland, Rotherham, Leicester and Bury where the savings went down from tens of thousands to under £3,000)

7.0 LOCKING PARKS IN AN EVENING

7.1 The issue of locking park gates in an evening is one which continued to be raised throughout the Working Group's deliberations and one which appears to have been the subject of debate by most local authorities at some time.

7.2 A number of neighbouring local authorities have been contacted and a range of practices appears to exist.

7.3 The existing practice in Sefton can be summarised as Sefton Security Service locks those parks capable of being secured whereas others where the lack of a secure boundary or lack of gates renders them incapable of being locked are left open.

7.4 The debate surrounding locking of parks polarises into two views, one that parks should be locked and secured, the other that locking is ineffective and consequently all parks should remain open.

7.5 Those in favour of locking maintain that locked gates discourage unauthorised use. Whilst all accept that a locked gate and fence will not deter those determined to gain access, those in favour of locking maintain that the deterrent of a locked gate reduces incidents of misuse, and makes the few remaining incidents easier to police. They would also claim that not locking the park could be seen as an invitation to enter.

7.6 Those in favour of not locking parks feel that a locked gate and fence will not deter those determined to gain access but that the locked gate does deter the bona fide innocent user and makes it more difficult for the Police to gain access to a park in an evening should there be an incident within the confines of a locked park. Moreover some would claim that the privacy afforded by a locked park is an incentive in itself to gain access and make use of the park for activities such as illegal under age drinking or drug abuse.

7.7 The Working Group considers that Leisure Services should establish which parks can be locked and which of these should be locked. Conversely they should state which parks either cannot be locked and which they see no necessity for locking.

Recommended:

Sefton Security Service should lock only those parks that Leisure Services indicate that they want locked. A list of these parks should be part of the new Service Level Agreement. It is recommended that the Grounds Maintenance Staffs unlock park gates in the morning. Any savings together with savings due to decreased damage should go towards paying for the new Ranger Service.

8.0 YOUTH SERVICE:

Sefton's Youth Service has a vital role to play in making our parks more congenial places for legitimate users by providing events and activities. Its role should also be one of concentrating their resources on targeting those young people that are most in need of help. Again, there should be greater coordination between all agencies to bring all activities that can be in our parks under one umbrella.

9.0 LEISURE SERVICES:

9.1 As the lead department with responsibility for our parks, Leisure Services has the most vital role of all in ensuring that our parks are well maintained and are safe for all users.

9.2 They have gone a considerable way towards ensuring that the ground maintenance is better, and are also tackling the pruning of shrubs and trees to improve visibility within the parks in order to deter inappropriate activities.

9.3　If the recommendation for a clustered Park Ranger Service were implemented, then this would be central to all other recommendations.

9.4　*It must be strongly emphasised that all our investigations, research and visits proved conclusively that the permanent presence of Park Rangers in parks has the most significant impact on security and safety and transcends all other possible solutions. Therefore the implementation of a Park Ranger Service throughout the Borough is essential.*

Recommended:

As it has been proved conclusively that the presence of Park Rangers is the single most important factor in reducing anti-social behaviour and vandalism, it is imperative that a Borough-wide Park Ranger Service should be introduced now. This would be initially based on 6 clusters with 12 Park Rangers, 2 Area Supervisors and one Senior Park Ranger. The prime aim of the Park Rangers would be to promote the parks and their use. Because of the termination of the funding for the Park Keepers in the South of the Borough in March 2007, the introduction of the new service should not wait until April 2008.

Leisure Service's Park Rangers should act as facilitators to liaise with Schools, the Youth Service, Community Safety Service, User Groups, "Friends of the Parks", and Voluntary Organisations and encourage the formation of volunteer rangers in order to bring events and activities into the parks. They should also oversee the grounds maintenance staff.

There should be an overall strategy document drawn up stating the aims and goals that we as a community want from our parks. All parties should be consulted and have an opportunity to contribute to this strategy.

A clear management plan should be formulated for each park or cluster of parks stating how these aims and goals will be attained.

Each of the above (the overall strategy, management plans and in particular the Job Specification between Leisure Services and the Sefton Security Service) should be reviewed and audited annually with a report going to the Cabinet Member and the appropriate Scrutiny and Review Committee.

There should be one point of contact for the public in every park, with a clear indication of this on park notice boards at all entrances to the parks.

10.0 SEFTON SECURITY SERVICE:

10.1 Sefton Security Service should lock all park gates at night that Leisure Services indicate can be/should be locked. It is possible that the Ground Maintenance staff can unlock these in the morning.

10.2 Sefton Security service should continue to monitor on their CCTV screens in 209, Linacre Lane, those parks that have cameras and respond to incidents reported to them. If these are serious they should be reported to the police but to continue to act in unison with the police at all times.

10.3 A new service level agreement should be drawn up between Leisure Services and Sefton Securities for a streamlined slimmed down service. Any savings should go towards providing a Ranger Service as outlined in the report.

Recommended:

There should be a streamlined, slimmed-down service provided by Sefton Security Service for security in parks that should be responsive to incident-reported calls only. This should cost much less than the present disproportionate one-third share of the total overall budget of £1.6 million paid by Leisure Services to Sefton Security Service and should be under £200,000. A clear job specification should be drawn up between Leisure Services and Sefton Security Service stating exactly what is required.

10.4 Councillor McGinnity wished it to be placed on record that whilst he supported the proposals for the establishment of a Park Ranger Service he was not in favour of its funding by reductions in the budget allocation to Sefton Security Service.

11.0 FINANCE

11.1 There was a difference of opinion between Sefton Security and Leisure Services about the annual cost to Leisure Services of the service provided to the parks by Sefton Security. Leisure Services thought the annual cost was £451,000 and Sefton Security thought it was £380,000. Perhaps Finance Department could determine the correct figure.

11.2 In any event these figures appear to the Working Party to be massively high for the service provided which is locking the park gates where appropriate, some patrolling and responding to call outs. It was felt by the Working Party that there should be much tighter control over the service provided, that the gates to be locked should be specified, that patrolling was unnecessary and that there should be a tighter control and monitoring of call outs.

11.3 It was the Working Party's view that the charge for this reduced service should be capped at £200,000 per annum. If this proposal should lead to the need for redundancies in Sefton Security, surplus staff should be considered for the park ranger service and, of course any other suitable vacancies available in the Council.

11.4 If therefore this recommendation is accepted the annual saving will be either £251,000 or £180,000 depending on which of the two cost figures is correct.

11.5 It is proposed that the Council consider establishing the new ranger service with effect from 1st October 2007 and at the same time bring in the new arrangements with Sefton Security.

Cost implications

2007/8

Annual Revenue Costs

1 Senior Park Ranger@SO1 (plus on-costs of 20%)	£ 29,709
1 Area Supervisor @ Scale 5 (plus on-costs of 20%)	£ 22,791
I Area Supervisor @ Scale 5 (ditto)	
(Funded via restructure of LDM Service)	£ nil
12 Park Rangers @ Scale 4 (plus on-costs of 20%)	£ 241,056
Annual Operating and Administration Budget	£ 10,000
	£ 303,556

Additional Initial Set up Costs (First Year only)

2 Ranger vehicles (same as current vehicle)	£ 25,000
Installation of one pavilion and refurbishment to another	£ 50,000
Bikes, communications, uniforms, tools and equipment etc.	£ 80.000

Total first year costs (starting 1st October, 2007)

Revenue Costs for 6 months	£151,778
Set up Costs	£ 80,000
	£231,778

Less saving from the capped cost of	
Sefton Security service (6 months)	£ 125,500
(or £90,000)	

2007/8 cost to Council	£ 106,278
(or £141,778)	

Second and subsequent years cost to the Council

Annual Revenue Costs (as above)	£ 303,556
Less saving from capping cost of Sefton Security service (full year) or £180,000)(plus inflation)	£ 251,000
	£ 52,556

(or £123,556)

In line with the above it is therefore suggested that if the recommendation at 21.8 is accepted, that, with effect from 1st October 2007: -

(i)   the service provided by Sefton Security should be reduced and streamlined and the charge for this service should not be in excess of £200,000,

(ii)   a Parks Ranger Service should be established comprising 6 teams of two Rangers covering all the parks in the Borough together with two Area Supervisors and one senior Park Ranger at an additional cost to the Council of £106,278 (or £141,778) in 2007/8 and £52,556 (or £123,556) plus inflation in 2008/9 and subsequent years.

12.0 THE ROLE OF POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS (PCSOS)

12.1   Existing PCSOs seem to be working well within the overall Police Service having responsibility for certain areas that include parks. The role of any additional PCSOs in South Sefton should be factored in to these arrangements with the caveat that these additional officers are time limited to two years.

12.2   What must be borne in mind is that any external funding that may be obtained is more often than not time limited but can, as in the case of Bury MBC, give a "kick start" to any improvements.

13.0 ADDITIONAL POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

13.1   The Working Group were informed of a bid which had been prepared from which it is proposed to provide an additional 14 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Sefton who would be deployed to respond to identified issues of anti-social behaviour and environmental crime in our most vulnerable communities.

13.2 The resource will provide a discrete service to specific geographical locations across the borough identified by the Neighbourhood Planning Unit (NPU) as key problem areas for anti social behaviour and criminal damage. Data already suggests that this will involve a considerable focus on addressing perceptions of safety in and around parks and open spaces in Sefton. The PCSO's would therefore be a flexible resource available to target identified hot spot areas. They will work together with other local authority services and agencies as part of a partnership approach to addressing ASB and providing reassurance to our communities.

13.3 This joint proposal with Merseyside Police involves £210,000 funding from the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership, together with negotiated match funding from the Police of £518,000.

13.4 The Working group was advised that this is a pilot scheme, with funding currently guaranteed for a two-year period. Throughout the project evaluation will be undertaken to review its impact and any succession plans will defer to this evaluation.

Recommended:

The fourteen new Police Community Support Officers designated specifically to parks under the Safer, Stronger Communities Partnership, are welcomed by the Working Group. However, Members' attention is drawn to the fact that funding is only for two years and that there should be an exit strategy planned well in advance.

14.0 THE ROLE OF CCTV COVERAGE

14.1 The effectiveness of CCTV coverage on its own is debateable but it can have a part to play in certain circumstances. There may be a need for cameras if they can give a clear picture of someone in a "hoodie" in the dark or in bad visibility. Often, however, the evidence is insufficient to prosecute. It is easy to work out where the blind spots are and hide there, e.g. Dukes Street Park, Formby.

14.2 CCTV cameras have been used to good effect in some areas of the Borough. Quality cameras producing clear images can be used in evidence in criminal proceedings and some members were strongly in favour of such provision in identified problem or "hot spot" areas.

Recommended:

CCTV cameras can have a part to play and should be provided where appropriate particularly in known "hot spots" for anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

15.0   BUILDINGS WITHIN PARKS - ALARMS

15.1   During the visits to parks within Sefton, Members were concerned that many buildings within the parks were not alarmed. A recent fire at the building in Hatton Hill Park was viewed on the Working Group's visits. The fire had caused extensive damage that would be costly to replace. The building appeared to be extensively used and in addition to the cost of remedial works the fire would have caused upset to users many of whom were the elderly and the very young.

15.2   Members felt that the fitting of monitored alarms to buildings within the parks should be a priority.

Recommended:

All significant buildings within parks should have a monitored alarm system. Sefton Security Service should also respond to triggered alarms.

16.0   GENERAL PLANTING AND SHRUBBERY

It was noted during the visits that in a number of parks areas of shrubbery had been thinned in order to provide better visibility through the park. Members considered that this generally seemed to give a feeling of greater safety within the park and it was felt that this practice should be encouraged.

Recommended:

That the programme of pruning to improve sight lines and visibility within parks and enhance public safety be continued.

17.0   DAMAGE BY VEHICLES

17.1   During the visits to Sefton's parks it was noted that in a number of parks there was noticeable damage caused by contractor's vehicles and that this gave a bad impression to visitors. Members felt that often this damage did not seem to be caused by a lack of care by the workforce but simply that the vehicles used were not compatible with the layout and size of pathways within the parks.

17.2   Members felt that consideration should be given to either widening paths and turning areas or reducing the size of vehicles used.

18.0 LIGHTING

18.1 The Sefton CDRP Safety in Parks and Open Spaces Tracking Survey 2006/07 indicated that 59% of respondents felt either very unsafe or unsafe using local parks after dark. Perhaps surprisingly however, a much smaller percentage (around 20% in total) identified the lack of adequate lighting as an issue. Lighting can however be an issue and indeed the lack of any lighting in Hesketh Park, Southport was highlighted by the Area Inspector at the presentation to the Working Group on 16 January 2007.

18.2 The provision of lighting would be a major cost that the Working Group would find difficult to justify, however where specific problems exist this might be considered as part of a package of interventions.

19.0 DOG WALKING AREAS

19.1 From the survey carried out 60% of respondents cited dog fouling as a problem they encountered when using parks. Clearly dog Fouling is a nuisance and can be a serious health hazard particularly where there are playing fields.

19.2 On the site visits Members viewed a number of parks where dedicated dog walking areas had been introduced. These are fenced off from the rest of the park and provided with appropriate bins for the disposal of waste. Also, as in the case of Coronation Park it is often possible to provide gates that deter dogs from being able to enter dedicated children's play areas.

19.3 Providing these across all parks would clearly represent a significant cost however if it were possible for such provision to be incorporated into any planned improvements the Working Group would be supportive of this.

20.0 GRAFFITI

It was noted on the site visits that there were a number of specific areas for example the Skate Park area in North Park, Bootle where graffiti was tolerated provided that it was not obscene, racist or offensive. Members felt that this was a sensible compromise allowing young people to establish "ownership" of the area designated to them and allowing them to express themselves without causing offence to other park users.

21.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

21.1   As it has been proved conclusively that the presence of Park Rangers is the single most important factor in reducing anti-social behaviour and vandalism, it is imperative that a Borough-wide Park Ranger Service should be introduced now. This would be initially based on 6 clusters with 12 Park Rangers, 2 Area Supervisors and one Senior Park Ranger. The prime aim of the Park Rangers would be to promote the parks and their use. Because of the termination of the funding for the Park Keepers in the South of the Borough in March 2007, the introduction of the new service should not wait until April 2008.

21.2   Leisure Service's Park Rangers should act as facilitators to liaise with Schools, the Youth Service, Community Safety Service, User Groups, "Friends of the Parks", and Voluntary Organisations and encourage the formation of volunteer rangers in order to bring events and activities into the parks. They should also oversee the grounds maintenance staff.

21.3   There should be an overall strategy document drawn up stating the aims and goals that we as a community want from our parks. All parties should be consulted and have an opportunity to contribute to this strategy.

21.4   A clear management plan should be formulated for each park or cluster of parks stating how these aims and goals will be attained.

21.5   Each of the above (the overall strategy, management plans and in particular the Job Specification between Leisure Services and the Sefton Security Service) should be reviewed and audited annually with a report going to the Cabinet Member and the appropriate Scrutiny and Review Committee.

21.6   The fourteen new Police Community Support Officers designated specifically to parks under the Safer, Stronger Communities Partnership, are welcomed by the Working Group. However, Members' attention is drawn to the fact that funding is only for two years and that there should be an exit strategy planned well in advance.

21.7   The Police and all other relevant agencies should hold formal bi-annual Forums with all relevant agencies. i.e. Leisure Services, Youth Services, Community Services and Sefton Security Services and particularly User Groups. These should be organised in five groupings i.e. North Southport, South Southport (Birkdale, Ainsdale, Formby), Crosby and Bootle in order to coordinate measures to curtail criminal damage, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. These meetings should have strong chairmanship to ensure that there are positive outcomes.

21.8 **There should be a streamlined, slimmed-down service provided by Sefton Security Service for security in parks that should be responsive to incident-reported calls only. This should cost much less than the present disproportionate one-third share of the total overall budget of £1.6 million paid by Leisure Services to Sefton Security Service and should be under £200,000. A clear job specification should be drawn up between Leisure Services and Sefton Security Service stating exactly what is required.**

21.9 **Sefton Security Service should lock only those parks that Leisure Services indicate that they want locked. A list of these parks should be part of the new Service Level Agreement. It is recommended that the Grounds Maintenance Staffs unlock park gates in the morning. Any savings together with savings due to decreased damage should go towards paying for the new Ranger Service.**

21.10 **All significant buildings within parks should have a monitored alarm system. Sefton Security Service should also respond to triggered alarms.**

21.11 **There should be one point of contact for the public in every park, with a clear indication of this on park notice boards at all entrances to the parks.**

21.12 **CCTV cameras can have a part to play and should be provided where appropriate particularly in known "hot spots" for anti-social behaviour and vandalism.**

21.13 **The programme of pruning shrubs and trees to improve sight lines and visibility within parks and enhance public safety should be continued.**

22.0 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

22.1 The Working Group is grateful to all those witnesses and other persons who assisted it with its research and provided it with information.

23.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

23.1 During the process of this review, the Working Group has gathered a substantial amount of information and data, which has been invaluable in helping it to form its conclusions and recommendations.

23.2 Any background information required is available on request from Ian Aylward-Barton, Scrutiny Support Officer (telephone 0151 934 2788, e-mail: ian.barton@legal.sefton.gov.uk

SEFTON COUNCIL

SCRUTINY AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
(Regeneration and Environmental Services)

Community Safety and Security - Parks Working Group

SCOPING EXERCISE

MEMBERSHIP

**Councillors: - Doran, Francis, Ibbs, W. M. Jones, McGinnity and
           Tonkiss**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Clear well thought out Terms of Reference and Objectives are required

1.   To identify the issues in relation to our parks and parks security.

2.   To investigate if the service provided by Sefton Security is Value for Money, is it what Sefton's parks require.

3.   To investigate the Leisure Services Policy in relation to the locking of park gates.

4.   To investigate how successful the pilot scheme for Park Rangers in Bootle has been and should it be rolled out to the whole of the Borough.

5.   To investigate the Communities perception of what is required.

6.   To investigate the role of volunteers and user groups in our parks.

7.   To investigate the role of all relevant agencies involved in helping to tackle crime, anti social behaviour and the fear of crime in parks.

8.   To identify the most appropriate and effective measure for dealing with the above.

METHODS OF ENQUIRY
Investigative techniques/site visits

1. To ascertain what powers Sefton Security hold.

2. To ascertain what Leisure Services require from the service.

3. To ascertain the views of the Community Safety Unit

4. To receive and consider the policy in relation to locking gates and statistics regarding vandalism and anti social behaviour.

SITE VISITS

1. Derby Park
2. Hesketh Park
3. Duke Park
4. Devonshire Road Recreation Grounds
5. Birkenhead Council (Heritage Park) Contact Jim Leicester Head of cultural services
6. Coronation Park
7. Hatton Hill Park
8. South Park, Litherland
9. North Park, Bootle

TIMESCALES
Planning Chart

OFFICER SUPPORT
Named Officers / witnesses

1. Leisure Services
2. Community Safety
3. Legal
4. Finance
5. Technical Services
6. Cabinet Member - Leisure and Tourism

OTHERS WHO WILL BE INVOLVED
Residents, stakeholders, tenants, other public sector organisations to all as witnesses etc. or
consult etc.

1. Wirral Council
2. CABE (www.cabespace.org.uk) (N.B. Consultees for advice only)
3. Friends of: - All Parks
4. Neighbourhood Police (Chief Superintendent Dave Lewis - Bootle)
5. Youth Council
6. Youth Service
7. Existing Park Wardens – North and South Parks Bootle
8. Inspector Kay Merseyside Police (Anti Social Behaviour Unit)

ARRANGEMENTS FOR REPORTING TO CABINET/COUNCIL
Timetable of committees, link into the planning chart, type of report/minute

1. Scrutiny and Review Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services)
2. Area Committees
3. Scrutiny and review Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services)
4. Cabinet Member
5. Cabinet

PLANNING CHART

The Planning Chart is an example of the way reviews could/should be planned.
It is recommended that realistic time frames in which to carry out tasks should be considered including possible delays for public holidays and Council business. Effective planning suggests that more planning time be built into the chart.

Activity	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Planning	▓							
Consider Document		▓						
Witnesses			▓	▓	▓			
Site Visits			▓	▓	▓			
Initial Findings					▓			
Draft Report						▓		
S&R Cttee Considers						▓		
Submit to Cabinet						▓	▓	

N.B. The above planning chart does not allow for submission of the final report to Area Committees

In view of the time available if the review is to be completed in the current Municipal year it may be necessary to review how area Committees would be consulted.

List of Consultees

Leisure Services:

Ian Makins, Head of Landscape Development & Management;
Rajan Paul, Assistant Director (Strategic Development & Management);
Mark Shaw, Principal Development Manager;
Reg Clappison, Tree & Woodland Manager;

Youth Service:

Margaret Loughlin, Assistant Director - Young People Support

Community Safety Unit:

Amanda Langan, Head of Community Safety;
Inspector Dave Kay, Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator;
Inspector Lol O'Donnell, Partnership Development Officer;

Sefton Security Service:

Dave Ellison, Security Services Manager;
Dave Fenney, Community Safety Assistant;

Merseyside Police:

Inspector M. Woosey (Southport Area);
Inspector J. Woods (Formby, Ainsdale and Birkdale Area);
Inspector S. Stephenson (Bootle Area);
Inspector J. Anderson (Control manager, Sefton);

List of Associations Consulted by Questionnaire:

Bedford Sports Club;
Bedford St. Johns Bowling Club;
Botanic Gardens Bowling Club;
Crowlands Men's Society and Bowling Club;
Coronation Park Bowls Users Assoc;
Crescent Bowling Club;
St. Monicas/Albany Bowling Club;
Crossens Bowling Club;
Derby Park Bowling Club;
Formby Park Bowling Club;
Hatton Hill Users Assoc;
Johnsons Bowling Club;
Killen Green Bowling Club (Netherton & Sefton R.B.L.);
Southport Flat Green Bowling Club;
Moorside Park Bowling Club;
Moss Lane Bowling Club;
Doric Bowling Club;
Victoria Park Bowling Club;
Sandbrook Park Bowling Club;
Crosby & District Amateur Football League;
Southport & District Amateur Football League;
Southport & District Amateur Cricket League;
Southport Rugby Union Football Club
Crosby Model Boat Club;
Amos Park and the Avenues Assoc.;
Brookvale Residents Association;
Friends of Coronation Park;
Crossens Community Association;
Friends of Deansgate Lane;
Derby Park Conservation Area Community Association;
Friends of Duke Street Park;
Friends of Hatton Hill Park;
Hesketh Park Heritage Group;
Hightown Park Action Committee;
Mellanear Residents;
Peel Rd./Knowsley Rd (Riverside Housing);
Friends of Victoria Park (Waterloo);
Woodvale Community;
Waterloo Residents Association

Background Documents

The following background information was considered by the Working Group and is available on request from Ian Aylward-Barton, Scrutiny Support Officer (Telephone 0151 934 2788), or by E-mail: ian.barton@legal.sefton.gov.uk

Presentation - Community Safety Division;
Presentation - ASB Co-ordinator;
Presentation – Youth Issues, Assistant Director - Young People Support;
Sefton Community Safety Tracking Survey;
Sefton Parks and Open Spaces Sample Anti Social Behaviour and Criminal Damage Area Profiles;
Hotspot maps and associated statistics;
Barchart – Crimes per 1000 Residents;
Report prepared by Sefton Security Service;
Sefton Security Service Department Percentages;
Parks User Questionnaire;
Greenspace North West Summary of Responses to question concerning locking of parks – January 2007;
Sefton Parks Charter;
Sefton Parks and Open Spaces Strategy;
Friends of Victoria Park Questionnaire;
Friends of Victoria Park presentation on results of Questionnaire;
Extract From BBC News;
Press Articles;
Provision of a Borough Wide Park Ranger Service, Report of Leisure Director;
PCSO Team (Parks Focussed) Commissioning Response;
Home Office Research Study 292 Assessing the impact of CCTV;
Home Office Online Report 10/05 Public Attitudes towards CCTV;
Defining and Measuring Anti-Social Behaviour Home Office Development and Practice Report;
The Influence of Street Lighting on Crime and Fear of Crime (Crime Prevention Paper No: 28);
Preventing Vandalism What Works? (Police Research Group Crime Detection and Prevention Series Paper 56);
Minutes of Working Group Meetings November 2006 – March 2007;