

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) – 6 November 2018

<i>COUNCILLOR</i>	<i>PORTFOLIO</i>	<i>DATE</i>
Ian Moncur	Health and Well Being	September - October 2018

GREEN SEFTON

Green Sefton brings together the previous Coast & Countryside, Parks & Greenspaces, Flooding & Coastal Erosion, Risk Management and Grounds Maintenance teams to ensure a joined-up approach to the vital management, development and oversight of Sefton's coastline, parks and green spaces.

A service vision and service plan have been drafted and will be consulted on in the near future. Green Sefton staff have all had the opportunity to comment through a recent Away Day which included the opportunity for everyone to take part in practical dune habitat and beach management tasks.

Apprenticeships – A key support for the development of the new service, and to succession planning, is the development of six Apprenticeships across the service. Following a competitive interview process, four apprentices (3 Land Management and 1 Facility and Resources Management) have been appointed and are due to start in November.

Community Engagement – Volunteering (either 'public' or 'partnering') remains key to service delivery. We estimate that volunteer support is in the region of with 44,000 hours per year, the equivalent of 28 fulltime employees. The Community Rangers undertook an audit with all Friends/ community groups to establish what support they require and how the service will work with them in the future.

Green Sefton Friends Forum - The first forum is taking place on October 25th, supported by Sefton CVS, bringing together friends groups from both the former parks and greenspaces and coastal teams.

Public Space Protection Order - The Community Rangers have also been working with FOGs to roll out information on the PSPO including updating site signage and talking to park users. Hundreds of stickers and posters have been put in place in the borough's parks, rangers continue to promote the PSPO and articles explaining the PSPO have appeared in print and online. Permanent mapping signage is currently being created for all relevant park areas.

Green Sefton Communications – Working with Sefton Comms, a communications plan has been drafted. Green Sefton has a healthy social media presence managed by the Community Engagement Team and is putting together a series of public events celebrating our natural and cultural heritage across Green Sefton's sites, from shipwrecks to rare wildlife.

The team is also involved in the Liverpool City Region "Nature Connected" programme for 2019, the Year of the Environment.

Community self-management/Market testing of empty buildings

The service continues to explore new opportunities to facilitate community, sports and other groups taking on self-management of their facilities and features. In addition to existing arrangements, developing discussions are ongoing with a combination of groups and a market test exercise is to be undertaken to hopefully find suitable users for empty buildings (which may include commercial lettings).

Community / Partnerships

Hesketh Park – two new volunteer groups i.e. Hesketh Centre volunteers and the ‘Lake Group’ have recently started to volunteer in the Park and are making a huge contribution. Negotiations have begun for the ‘lake group’ to take on self-management aspects of the lake and floral clock and for them to look to bring back boats for hire on the lake. The contribution of the new Groups is alongside the various existing volunteer groups.

Flooding Issues

During the period of prolonged dry weather over Summer flooding still occurred in Sefton mainly as a result of short, intense downpours.

Following thunderstorms on 31st May, two houses in Birkdale were affected by flooding - mitigation put in place (flood doors) were effective on one house, and the other was flooded under floorboards, but this did not reach within the actual house.

On the 12th June, near Waddicar, a piped watercourse under the Leeds Liverpool canal collapsed allowing canal water to flow out uncontrolled. There was only 1 property internally flooded and we are working with Canal and Rivers Trust on ensuring the culvert is replaced to an adequate standard as part of the repair.

On the 12th July an area of Aintree experienced intense rainfall associated with a thunderstorm. The majority of the flood water was contained within the highway, however, a number of residents on Sherwood’s Lane had external (garden) flooding, had Merseyside Fire and Rescue not responded there would have been internal flooding.

Coastal / Beach Management

Beach Car Parks - Sefton’s beaches had one of the busiest seasons in recent years this summer. The on-beach car parking at Ainsdale and Southport has now closed for the winter and will reopen in April.

Beach safety signage – Part funded by the RNLI, four ‘primary’ beach safety and environmental information signage will be manufactured over the winter and installed at Ainsdale and Southport beaches ready for 2019 season.

Cockle fishery – Working in partnership with various agencies and led by the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, Green Sefton officers assisted in delivering a safe cockle fishery at Marshside during August 2018.

Dune Habitat Management - Cattle and sheep will be returning to Ainsdale & Birkdale Sandhills LNR in October / November. Conservation grazing is used by the majority of the coastal landowners to maintain and improve our rare dune habitats, temporary staff, apprentices and core staff will be assisting in the daily monitoring of the livestock throughout the winter.

Winter is also the time for removing invasive species, in particular Japanese Rose and Sea Buckthorn, both of which are a threat to our protected habitats and the species they support. We are working with partner organisations including Back from the Brink - ‘Gems in the Dunes’ and Lancashire Wildlife Trust – ‘Bee Inspired’ to remove invasive plants and raise awareness of key species and some less well-

known ones, at several sites along the coast. Volunteers also assist in this area through participation with Friends events and activities via several platforms of opportunity.

Capital schemes

Buckley Hill Playing fields extension of car parking - Funding of a car park extension has been allocated by Full Council in order to alleviate severe roadside car park issues experienced last playing season. The contractor started on site mid-October and is due to complete their work by early November. Following this there is additional landscaping work and secure cycle parking facilities to be installed that will be delivered by green Sefton. The overflow car park will require a period of bedding in prior to use.

Ovington Drive and Smithy Green Play Areas - Works are being procured and will be undertaken in the Autumn.

Benchmarking/ Awards

Green Flag Award - The following sites all retained the Award for 2018/19: Botanic Gardens, Hesketh Park, Lord Street Gardens, King's Gardens, Coronation Park, Hatton Hill Park, Derby Park, North Park and Duke Street Park, Formby.

Green Flag Community Award - In 2018/19 the service assisted several community groups in retaining the Green Flag Community Award: Rotten Row, Southport, St Luke's Church Grounds, North Park Community Garden (involving the Gateway Collective and Ykids), Bridge Inn Community Farm, Formby, Friends of Ainsdale Village Park (who achieved the award for the first time in 2017), and Edda, also located in Ainsdale.

Britain in Bloom - All town and neighbourhood entries have been made, judging took place in July, results will be announced in a ceremony in the Autumn. The BBC have taken an interest in Southport in Bloom and have begun filming the development of this year's entry.

Bathing Water quality - The Environment Agency have begun their monitoring of our three bathing waters. We are following requirements for providing public notices etc (e.g. at high tide, or after storms). No issues have been raised to date.