

For publication

Customer, Community and Organisational Scrutiny Committee Report on Friends Groups

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	14 November, 2017
Cabinet portfolio:	Health and Wellbeing
Report by:	Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

For publication

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present for consideration by Cabinet the report and recommendations of the Customer, Community and Organisational Scrutiny Committee on how the council works with Friends Groups.
- 1.2 To provide the statutory written notice that must be given by the Customer, Community and Organisational Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet to take required action as at 3.3 below.

2.0 Recommendations

That Cabinet consider the recommendations of the Customer, Community and Organisational Scrutiny Committee as set out below. This should include additional exploration of resource implications.

- 2.1 That an up-to-date data base of friends of groups' contacts is maintained by officers and that all friends of groups are given defined points of contact at the council to facilitate streamlined,

effective and accountable channels of communication between groups and the council.

- 4.2 That the Friends of Groups information pack is reviewed and updated to provide:
- Guidance on developing a new group or joining an existing group
 - Guidance on developing aims, constitutions, management committees and financial arrangements
 - Advice and tips for key management committee roles including the chair, secretary and treasurer
 - Tips for keeping the members of the friends of group, local community and council updated including social media and links to council publications, social media and websites
 - Basic insurance and risk management advice
 - Advice on developing an action plan
 - Templates and examples of key documents to assist groups
 - Where to go for help and support including Chesterfield Borough Council and Links CVS
- 4.3 That an annual survey with Friends Groups be carried out to collect information on their activities and achievements to enable the council to see how their work is contributing to the delivery of the councils objectives, as set out in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.
- 4.4 That the council encourage and support friends of groups to develop a plan for their park or open space. This plan should be developed in consultation with both the council and the local community and should clearly set out both the group's and council's role in developing the park or open space.
- 4.5 That in addition to the support within recommendations 2 and 3, the councils' policy and communications service work with the green spaces team and friends of groups to develop case study

material for Chesterfield Borough Council led promotional opportunities including Your Chesterfield (the Council's magazine that goes to all homes in Chesterfield borough), the website and social media channels.

- 4.6 That a bi-annual friends group's forum is re-established to share key messages, best practice, increase networking and support and to enable the work of the friends groups to be shared and celebrated with a wider audience.
- 4.7 That a working group be established to assist with the delivery of the recommendations within the report.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Customer, Community and Organisational Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Scrutiny Project Group be appointed to look at how friends and community groups work with Chesterfield Borough Council to improve local parks and open spaces.
- 3.2 Further information and background detail are contained within the Scrutiny Review Group's report attached at **Appendix A** which provides the purpose of the review and its findings.
- 3.3 Statutory Scrutiny Committees are also required to provide written statutory notice to Cabinet requiring action in response to its scrutiny report and recommendations. These actions require Cabinet to:
 - i. consider the attached report and recommendations;
 - ii. indicate the actions it proposes to take if any; and
 - iii. publish its response within 2 months of the receipt of the report.

With regard to (i) and (ii) above the Council's Constitution provides for Cabinet to consider the report at the earliest practicable opportunity.

4.0 Scrutiny Project Group Report

- 4.1 The report of the Scrutiny Project Group was considered and its recommendations approved by Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 24 January,

2017 subject to further consideration into the broader corporate considerations including equalities, finance, risk and resources.

4.2 Following this, consultations took place with finance, policy, HR, relevant Corporate Management Team members and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing; the outcomes from those conversations were incorporated into the report and recommendations.

4.3 A revised report and recommendations were considered and approved by the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee on 19 September, 2017.

5.0 Risk considerations

5.1 Risks relating to the review and its recommendations, as well as mitigating actions are shown below.

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
Retaining the current approach to engagement between the council and the friends groups reduces the opportunity for maximising positive outcomes for different groups, parks and communities across the borough.	Medium	High	The recommendations within the review aim to offer more support to groups including guidance on setting up new groups, developing aims, constitutions, committees and financial arrangements, basic insurance and risk advice and signposting for further help and support. These recommendations also aim to improve overall relationships and engagement between the Friends of Groups and the Council.	Low	Low
The recommendations will create additional financial and resource burdens for the Council which have not previously been planned for and do not fall within the priority areas identified within the Council Plan.	Medium	High	<p>The project group understands that some of the recommendations could initially take significant amounts of officer time. In order to mitigate this, the group has not put time frames on when the recommendations should be completed by. Also, the project group included the recommendation to establish a working group, which can include elected members, to assist with achieving the recommendations and reduce the reliance on individual officers to carry out the work.</p> <p>Engagement has taken place with the Greenspaces team as part of the review. They have indicated that some of these recommendations could be built into standard practices and work planning.</p>	Medium	Medium

			<p>However other recommendations (e.g. providing advice on developing constitutions, action planning etc.) will need to be prioritised and phased over a period of years. This will need to be clearly communicated to Friends of Groups to avoid creating unrealistic expectations. The working group will need to give further consideration into the impact on priority areas and additional resource requirements.</p> <p>Some of these recommendations impact significantly on the Policy and Communications Service e.g. communications and marketing support, increased consultation activity. The working group will need to give further consideration to understand the Policy and Communications implications.</p> <p>Stakeholder identification and engagement has been identified as a learning point for future reviews.</p>		
Increased level of expectation from friends groups in terms of council support that may not be sustainable in the long term.	Medium	High	<p>Please see points above.</p> <p>In the longer term these changes should enable groups to support each other more effectively and share knowledge, experience and skills.</p>	Low	Medium

6.0 Financial considerations

6.1 As identified within the risk management table above, there are likely to be financial and resource implications emerging from these recommendations which are not currently budgeted for and could impact on the resource levels available to deliver exiting priorities. These include:

- Providing advice on developing action plans, constitutions, financial arrangements and basic insurance and risk management – these would need to be carefully phased to enable delivery within existing resource levels. This may need to be considered over the medium term. Careful communication with the Friends of Groups would be required to avoid unrealistic expectations.
- Developing promotional material – the graphic design, photography, content development and editing time is not

currently built into the Policy and Communications Services or Green Spaces Team commitments. This would also be a new area of financial cost for printing and distribution. Costs could be reduced by using existing channels such as Your Chesterfield, the website and social media to promote this material.

- Offering advice and guidance on communications and marketing activity for Friends of Groups will add an additional resource burden to the Communications and Marketing team within Policy and Communications. Advice and guidance on communications and marketing could be provided through the production of the Friends of Group information pack; though there would be an initial resource implication to develop the material but the financial implications would not be long term.
- The annual survey of Friends Groups is also an additional resource burden between the Policy and Communications service and the Green Spaces Team. There would also be a small financial implication for consultation costs.

6.2 The project group agree that before the implementation of any resolution that could have a financial or resource implication to the Council, further investigation on the impact needs to be carried out by officers. The group also note however that in the medium to long term the recommendations should ultimately reduce the demand on officer time as friends groups will have better reference materials available and will also be communicating with, and supporting each other.

7.0 Legal considerations

7.1 There are no legal considerations arising from the recommendations in this report.

8.0 Equalities considerations

8.1 The review recommendations aim to improve how friend's group's work with council and each other so that the positive benefits of friends group work can be maximised and allow create greater equality of outcomes for the council's parks and open spaces, and consequently for communities right across the Borough.

- 8.2 As there could be equalities considerations arising from the recommendations in this report a preliminary Equalities Impact Assessment was completed.
- 8.3 The preliminary Equalities Impact Assessment showed that while the committee's recommendations would not have any negative impacts on any groups with protected characteristics, the recommendations did have a potential for positive impacts for people suffering deprivation or health inequalities as improved facilities in parks across the borough could play a part in increasing the health and wellbeing of residents. They may also lead to improvements within the parks and open spaces which positively impact on specific age groups such as younger people or older people. There is also potential for further improvements to park accessibility for disabled people.

9.0 Recommendations

That Cabinet consider the recommendations of the Customer, Community and Organisational Scrutiny Committee as set out below:

- 9.1 That an up-to-date data base of friends of groups' contacts is maintained by officers and that all friends of groups are given defined points of contact at the council to facilitate streamlined, effective and accountable channels of communication between groups and the council.
- 9.2 That the Friends of Groups information pack is reviewed and updated to provide:
- Guidance on developing a new group or joining an existing group
 - Guidance on developing aims, constitutions, management committees and financial arrangements
 - Advice and tips for key management committee roles including the chair, secretary and treasurer

- Tips for keeping the members of the friends of group, local community and council updated including social media and links to council publications, social media and websites
 - Basic insurance and risk management advice
 - Advice on developing an action plan
 - Templates and examples of key documents to assist groups
 - Where to go for help and support including Chesterfield Borough Council and Links CVS
- 9.3 That an annual survey with Friends Groups be carried out to collect information on their activities and achievements to enable the council to see how their work is contributing to the delivery of the councils objectives, as set out in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.
- 9.4 That the council encourage and support friends of groups to develop a plan for their park or open space. This plan should be developed in consultation with both the council and the local community and should clearly set out both the group's and council's role in developing the park or open space.
- 9.5 That in addition to the support within recommendations 2 and 3, the councils' policy and communications service work with the green spaces team and friends of groups to develop case study material for Chesterfield Borough Council led promotional opportunities including Your Chesterfield (the Council's magazine that goes to all homes in Chesterfield borough), the website and social media channels.
- 9.6 That a bi-annual friends group's forum is re-established to share key messages, best practice, increase networking and support and to enable the work of the friends groups to be shared and celebrated with a wider audience.
- 9.7 That a working group be established to assist with the delivery of the recommendations within the report.

10.0 Reasons for recommendations

- 10.1 To ensure that all friends groups can play as full a part as possible in the care and management of the Borough's open spaces.
- 10.1 To contribute to the delivery of the Chesterfield Borough Council Plan priority "to improve the quality of life for local people".

Decision information

Key decision number	Non-key 72
Wards affected	All
Links to Council Plan priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision: Putting our communities first. • Priority: To improve the quality of life for local people. • Objective: To increase the quality of public space for which the council has responsibility through targeted improvement programmes.

Document information

Report author	Contact number/email
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Background documents	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
None	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix A	Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny Project Group report on Friends Groups and Appendices to this report