



ARTICLE NO: 1E

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

MEMBERS UPDATE 2011/12

Article of: Director of People and Places

Relevant Head of Service: Assistant Director Community Services

Issue: 2 September 2011

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SUBJECT: Site Visit to Tawd Valley Park

Wards affected: Ashurst, Birch Green, Skelmersdale North

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

- 1.1 To outline the findings of a site visit to look at the environmental management of Tawd Valley
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2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23rd June 2011 Members resolved that officers arrange a site visit to Tawd Valley Park, Skelmersdale to look at the environmental management of the site.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 A site visit to Tawd Valley Park was undertaken on 12 July 2011, attended by Cllrs Kay, Furey, Nolan, Pye and Savage, officers Steve Kent and Ian Silverwood, and two representatives from the Environment Agency.

4.0 ISSUES

- 4.1 The following issues were noted during the visit:-
- 4.1.1 Access – entrances to the park were not obvious and signs were lacking. Paths were grassed and wet and slippery in places. More formal entrances and surfaced paths would benefit the park.
- 4.1.2 Bridges – bridges in the park suffer vandalism and one in particular that was crossed was in a very poor condition, requiring immediate attention. Work has

now been undertaken to completely refurbish this bridge. Other bridges showed evidence of damage and repair. All bridges continue to be inspected regularly by the ranger service.

- 4.1.3 Trees – some tree management is required throughout the park, and fallen or leaning trees seen during the visit, which were not seen as an immediate risk to the public, have been put into a winter works schedule for the Ranger service.
- 4.1.4 River – the water quality on the day of the visit was a cause for concern with the clarity being quite cloudy. The Environment Agency officers outlined issues of incorrect domestic waste water connections causing this cloudiness, and discussed actions being taken by the Agency to try and rectify this issue. They also stressed the difficulty in identifying and rectifying the numerous connection problems within a catchment as large as the River Tawds.

A very small number of shopping trolleys were identified in the river showing the improvement created jointly by the work of the Council and the local Trolley Watch scheme set up by ASDA.

- 4.1.5 Grassland – the fringes of the park, adjacent to the residential areas had recently been mown and were looking in good condition, however, there was an issue with accumulation of litter at the edge of the mowing areas, which has since been rectified.
- 4.1.6 Litter/Debris – some litter was present in the valley but amounts were limited.
- 4.1.7 Vegetation – some paths were in need of edge vegetation clearance to ensure free passage by pedestrians. A programme of clearance has since been undertaken.
- 4.1.8 Furniture – suggestions were made to install seating/picnic benches around the valley for visitors. At present there is a general lack of park furniture. It was suggested that the Friends of Tawd Valley Park are currently investigating providing some seating.
- 4.1.9 General – although Tawd Valley Park has its problems and issues it remains a pleasant and valuable area of public open space available for the community of Skelmersdale. Recent input to the site has created significant improvements in relation to water quality in the river, cleanliness, habitat management and access.

5.0 FUTURE OPTIONS

- 5.1 Co-ordination of maintenance and improvements to Tawd Valley Park could be steered by the production of a masterplan and management plan, which would also outline resource requirements. Officers are currently in discussion with Lancashire County Council's Environmental Projects Team who have indicated that they may be in a position to undertake the production of these plans, in conjunction with the Borough Council.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 Future environmental management of Tawd Valley Park will determine the level of amenity afforded by the facility to continue to provide a beneficial public open space and opportunity for healthy outdoor activity, and hence improve quality of life for the local community.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The actions reported as a result of this site meeting were undertaken within current budgetary provision. Any changes to the future environmental management of the park, which require changes in resource or financial commitment, will be reported to Members at the appropriate time.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Tawd Valley Park is a valuable public open space serving the community of Skelmersdale. The Council has a duty of care to its community to ensure that efficient environmental management of the site is undertaken to provide a safe and secure facility.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 Although recent actions have created a significant improvement to the park there is still a lot that can be done to improve this facility for the local community. Resources will be a constant limiting factor however, the production of a masterplan/management plan for the park may be a good point from which to take this improvement further.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is no evidence from an initial assessment of an adverse impact on equality in relation to the equality target groups.

Appendices

None