

Parks Proposal Arising from the Pendle Meeting at Colne Town Hall:

A scoping meeting took place on Monday 20th June chaired by Cllr. Greaves relating to the future funding of park and playing field maintenance. Cllr. Greaves reported the borough council's position which included the expected reduction of £4million pounds over the next three years, which would necessitate cutbacks or new methods of working at least two of the four of the council's major expenditure areas.

The one's that were being explored this year was parks which has an expenditure budget of around £750,000 a year and The Leisure Trust which is currently subsidised annually to the tune of £1.5 million. Measures are underway to look at more efficient ways of providing Leisure services including possible private/public options.

The meeting concentrated on the parks and playing fields with Cllr. Greaves stressing that no decisions had yet been made but overall costs to Pendle needed to be significantly reduced, but Pendle had no wish to see the quality or number of parks reduced but that the status quo was not an option. Cllr. Greaves that it was likely that in future years Pendle would be amalgamated into a larger authority and that the local history of why Pendle had so many parks in comparison with other local authorities would be lost with only the perceived sense of overprovision is retained.

In the notes circulated to Clerks by P. Mousdale in relation to Barrowford including approximate costings for Barrowford Memorial Park, Bullholme Playing Field and Victoria Park six different possible scenarios for future park maintenance.

- a) The Council continues to own and maintain the parks with a significantly reduced budget;
- b) The Council continues to own and maintain the parks with a significantly reduced budget and with top up funding provided by Town and Parish Councils and agreements on how this is to be used;
- c) The Council transfers the parks to Town and Parish Councils but continues to maintain them with its significantly reduced budget and top up funding provided by Town and Parish Councils and agreements on how this is to be used;
- d) The Council transfers the parks to Town and Parish Councils who take over their maintenance with a tapering off grant or transitional payment from the Council;
- e) The Council transfers the parks to Town and Parish Councils without any funding.
- f) Trusts and/or social enterprise arrangements be examined involving the Council, Town and Parish Councils and potentially other interests, either for individual parks or for groups of parks;

Cllr. Greaves stressed that these were only a starting point and that no one solution would solve the problem across the borough and when asked about sale of parkland for development he replied, Pendle will be looking at the possible suitability of areas of the parks for development with any receipts being used to fund future maintenance of the parks.

After various questions from council representatives the meeting ended with all Councillors and Clerks being asked to discuss the parks with their respective councils.

In recent years as Clerk I have continually warned of the day when the future of the parks comes into question and the Council where possible has mooted that this was going to happen, in recent newsletters and other opportunities where practicable.

But the day has arrived and Barrowford Parish Council needs to seriously consider the best options for retaining existing levels of maintenance in parks and playing fields whilst assessing the impact on precept levels over future years. The costings supplied by Pendle Borough Council are based on; in Pendle's own words "the work schedule is fairly old and as such may not be wholly representative of the maintenance that goes on in the Park at present".

Barrowford Park:

In terms of grounds maintenance, it costs us **£37,826.10** to maintain the Park on an annual basis. The contract schedule for the Park is split in to two – one is for Sports facility maintenance and the other is for the general Park maintenance.

In addition, we have the following R&M revenue budgets for Barrowford Park (these are the base budgets for 2015/16):

Parks - **£5,350** (includes Grounds and Buildings R&M)

Parks Games - **£1,960** (includes Grounds and Buildings R&M & Electricity)

Total cost (Grounds Maintenance Contract + Revenue budgets) = **£45,136.10**

Bullholme Playing Fields:

In terms of grounds maintenance, it costs us **£15,657.60** to maintain the playing field on an annual basis.

In addition, we have the following R&M revenue budgets for Bullholme (these are the base budgets for 2015/16):

Playing Fields - **£25,350** (includes Grounds and Buildings R&M/Vandalism, Gas, Water/Sewerage, Electricity & Business Rates)

Play Facilities - **£2,586** (based on an average of £1,293 per play facility) (includes R&M/Vandalism, Grounds Maintenance, Litter picking and inspections)

Total cost (Grounds Maintenance + Revenue budgets) = **£43,593.60**

Victoria Park:

In terms of grounds maintenance, it costs us **£66,209.11** to maintain the Park on an annual basis. The contract schedule for the Park is split in to two – one is for Sports facility maintenance and the other is for the general Park maintenance.

In addition, we have the following R&M revenue budgets for Victoria Park (these are the base budgets for 2015/16):

Parks - **£11,800** (includes Grounds and Buildings R&M, Electricity & Water/Sewerage)

Parks Games - **£3,460** (includes Buildings R&M, Water/Sewerage & Electricity)

Total cost (Grounds Maintenance + Revenue budgets) = **£82,060.56**

As can be seen the maintenance cost are significant amounting to **£129,759.98** and this does not include other factors such as:

- Dealing with general issues and complaints relating to the Park, e.g. vandalism, organising contractors to do work, etc.
- Enforcing Public Space Protection Order's (PSPO's) ensuring the Park is used appropriately and in line with the PSPO (which is scheduled to come in to operation by the end of March 2017 and will include most things previously in the Bye-Laws plus dog control, fouling, etc.)
- Utility issues such as meter readings, legionella checks and general health & safety checks buildings. This is currently done through a combination of Neighbourhood Services staff and Property Services.
- The Park has Green Flag Award accreditation
- Office staff to take on responsibility for the day to day control of all aspects of running these areas.

The true long term cost should the Council decide to take over all the areas within Barrowford could be as high as £165-175,000 per year, which is far beyond the scope of both the Parish Council's current infrastructure and the realistic ability to increase the precept.

Effect on Precept Level:

The current precept level for 2016-17 on a Band D property was £48.86 and generated an income of £103,048.00

Working on the 2016-17 precept base of 2109.1 which generates £2109.10 per £1 of precept at Band D, the following figures will be indicative of the increases needed to fund some, part or all of the costs:

Park/Playing Field	Projected Cost	Increase Band D
Barrowford Memorial Park maintenance costs	£45,136.10	£21.40
Bullholme Playing Field maintenance costs	£43,953.60	£20.84
Half Victoria Park maintenance costs	£41,030.28	£19.45
Other costs for each park admin, park warden, enforcement etc.	£12-15,000	£5.69 - £7.11

As can be seen from these figures to take on all responsibility would necessitate an increase of between £78.34 and £83.09 and would represent an increase of between 160 -170% which would be totally unacceptable in one year. A longer term strategy needs to be formulated with consideration of each element and which option for support is suitable for each park/playing field and a managed increase of precept over several years dependant on the councils and electorates will to keep and maintain these community assets.

Desktop Assessments:

Barrowford Memorial Park: Most recent modification or major repairs to the park have both been carried out and overseen by the Parish Council with funding either being from the Parish Council, Pendle, the Friends Group or other sources such as Awards for All. These improvement/restoration works do not mean that the Parish Council has the necessary expertise to take over the day to day running immediately but could be absorbed over a few years with the procurement of the right equipment and staff.

The park includes all the buildings and land currently leased to Pendle Heritage Centre and the Bowling Pavilion used by the Bowling Club and due to existing leases or agreements the scope for generating income is low. The Park is well used and is a great asset to the village and is the village's War Memorial. The park is perceived as the property of the people of Barrowford and its loss would be widely felt.

The downside is that it has a lake and a steep banking both of which have suffered from lack of maintenance for years:

The Lake: Has an inadequate water supply mainly caused by alterations to the cauld in the 1960's as a result of the floods. The lake is silted up so as to be of a shallow depth and over the next decade will need extensive works if it is to be brought to its former glory.

The Bank: Currently covered with mature beech tree which suck up all the moisture and with their large canopy prevent undergrowth growing on large sections of the banking. This lack of undergrowth and their associated root systems have led to soil erosion over the years accelerated by teenagers on bike and other climbing the bank. This soil erosion is quite obvious around some of the walls erected around the bases of established trees to mark the Queen's Coronation which now in some cases are off the ground supported by the roots of the trees. This bank will again need extensive Maintenance over the next few years and some contingency will need to be allowed for these works. Due to the number of predominately mature trees with some reaching the end of their useful life these will need to be monitored appropriately and any remedial work carried out as necessary irrespective of cost.

The following conditions and agreements made by the Borough Council will presumably remain:

- Barrowford Park Bowling Club – Pendle have an informal agreement with them regarding the maintenance of the green. Pendle provide them with a mower and a container for storage of the mower. They have access to the building in the Park and use this as their home base. They look after this on behalf of Pendle Council but contact the Council when any issues/repairs arise. The green is open to all for FREE at all times (unless there is an organised match being played by the Bowling Club).

- Friends of Barrowford Park – Pendle have ongoing liaison and working with Group on all Park related matters particularly new ones. Attendance at quarterly meetings and AGM.
- Right of access (through the Barrowford Road entrance) to the Cemetery that is located above the Park.
- Pendle Heritage Centre – the Heritage Trust for the North West have a long term lease for a number of buildings and land associated with the Heritage Centre.
- Dealing with other organisations that want to use the Park for one off events/activities, e.g. Lifestyle Festival.
- Dealing with general issues and complaints relating to the Park, e.g. vandalism, organising contractors to do work, etc.
- Public Space Protection Order's (PSPO's) to uphold – ensuring the Park is used appropriately and in line with the PSPO (which is scheduled to come in to operation by the end of March 2017 and will include most things previously in the Bye-Laws plus dog control, fouling, etc.)
- Utility issues such as meter readings, legionella checks and general health & safety checks of the Bowls Pavilion building. This is done through a combination of Neighbourhood Services staff and Property Services.
- Coin operated toilet within the Bowls Pavilion that is managed and maintained by the Parish Council.
- The Park has Green Flag Award accreditation

Bullholme Playing Fields:

Bullholme includes the playing fields, cricket ground and land between the motorway and the river separating the site from Swinden. This facility has a symbiotic relationship with Swinden with regards to the Stephen Burke Cycling Hub on Swinden which has a proposed phase two on the Barrowford Side of the river. Problems exist with access to the Stephen Burke Hub and currently most access at non organised times is via Bullholme with the likelihood of this increasing following the building of the second phase.

The playing fields and new football pavilion are currently used by Barrowford Celtic in the football season and a cricket team in the summer. Use of both the pavilion and the field are used at weekends but are seldom used during the day through the week. The lack of ability to generate income through the already agreed leases and licences means that income levels are low whilst maintenance costs are high.

The high maintenance costs including day to day costs of running a large pavilion, the additional groundsman work needed to maintain and mark out both football and cricket pitches and maintain them to the level needed for competition is currently beyond the scope of the parish council's expertise. The crossover activities with Swinden are also another factor that should be looked at as some joint working and costs may arise from these activities.

The following conditions and agreements made by the Borough Council will presumably remain:

- Management and maintenance of MUGA and Outdoor Gym Equipment.
- Barrowford Celtic – they have a licence agreement for use of the pavilion including club room and access to changing rooms/toilets. They pay an annual fee to the Council in addition to a contribution to utility costs for this privilege. They also have a container next to the pavilion where they store goals/equipment. The floodlights are owned by the club and any usage is paid directly by them (via a sub-meter).
- Barrowford Cricket Club has a long term lease with the Council for a piece of land within the curtilage of Bullholme. The club do all their own maintenance of the pitch although we do on occasion help them out with grass cutting.
- Right of access for cars from Wilton Street entrance to the allotments for allotment holders. The allotments are located between the Cricket Ground and the Park.
- Barrowford Pre-School Nursery – they have a short term lease with the Council for the building and associated fenced off car park. This is for use only by Nursery staff and visitors during the week. Access to the car park is provided at weekends when organised matches are being played.
- Pendle Cycleway runs around the edge of the playing field from the Park towards Swinden Playing Fields (under the M65 motorway bridge).
- Organisation of Sports pitches for weekly Football fixtures – marking, grass cutting, liaising with teams, invoicing, etc.
- Pitch allocations prior to the start of a new season – again liaising with clubs/leagues (primarily Barrowford Celtic & Pendle Sunday Charity League) to see what pitches they want for the forthcoming season, e.g. for the 2015/16 season we have had 5-a-side, 7-a-side and 11-a-side pitches/matches at Bullholme.
- Organisation of Attendants to cover organised Football games including key distribution.
- Dealing with other organisations that want to use the Recreation Ground for one off events/activities, e.g. Barrowford Celtic Annual 2 day Football Tournament.
- Dealing with general issues and complaints relating to the Recreation Ground, e.g. vandalism, organising contractors to do work, etc.
- Public Space Protection Order's (PSPO's) to uphold – ensuring the Recreation Ground is used appropriately and in line with the PSPO (which is scheduled to come in to operation by the end of March 2017 and will include most things previously in the Bye-Laws plus dog control, fouling, etc.)
- Utility issues such as meter readings, legionella checks and general health & safety checks of the building. This is done through a combination of Neighbourhood Services staff and Property Services

As the former youth club now Barrowford Nursery owned by Pendle and built on Bullholme be part of the assets transferred, or will it be retained?

Victoria Park:

Victoria Park lies partially in Nelson and partially in Barrowford delineated by Pendle Water. But was originally was created, owned and maintained by Nelson and even up to recently Pendle has regarded this park as part of Nelson both in terms of decisions and planning irrespective of which side of the river the decision affected.

Barrowford and Western Parishes Area Committee and Barrowford Parish Council only input were as consultee's on Victoria Park. Given that the Park is historically perceived as a Nelson Park and that it would be problematic to manage the park jointly with Nelson Town Council so careful consideration would need to be given to this.

Barrowford's side of the park consists of a large open area containing a Bandstand which I believe is listed a woodland area leading to a subway and a large lake and former parks storage facilities adjacent to the park.

The main areas with potential future expenditure costs are:

The Lake: Has an inadequate water supply mainly caused by alterations to both the topography of the land with the building of the bypass and the demolition of both the mill and destruction of its lodge. Most of the land overlooking the lake and from which presumably some of the water was derived has been built on reducing water entering the lake. The lake has seen little or no maintenance with the island in need of work and the outer banks needing constant repair work. The lake is starting to show signs of silting up and this along with the other problems highlighted could cause long term high maintenance costs if the lake is to be improved. The public disposing of larger quantities of food allegedly for the ducks is a problem causing infestations of vermin and public health concerns.

The Wooded Area: This area consists of predominately mature trees with some reaching the end of their useful life and will need to be monitored appropriately and any remedial work carried out as necessary irrespective of cost.

The Bandstand: Has been subjected to various amounts of vandalism and if as suspected it is listed cannot be removed and the Parish Council will need to repair and maintain the bandstand up to the standard befitting a listed building.

Flooding: Victoria Park is part of the Pendle Water floodplain and has suffered significant flooding in the last twenty years the last on Boxing Day 2015 which resulted in significant cleaning up costs the exact figure has not been included in figures for the park.

Given that the annual costs are likely to be only slightly lower than the figures for Barrowford Park and could be considerably higher in the event of flooding serious consideration should be given to the Parish Council's lack of historical responsibility for this park.

The following conditions and agreements made by the Borough Council will presumably remain:

- Half the Park is within Nelson (Whitefield ward) whilst the other half sits in Barrowford. This could prove problematic from a management/maintenance point of view if the Park is split between Barrowford Parish Council and Nelson Town Council.
- Victoria Park Pavilion Café/Social Enterprise – The occupier has a long term lease for the building.
- Friends of Victoria Park – Ongoing liaison and working with Group on all Park related matters particularly new ones. Attendance at quarterly meetings and AGM.
- Subway – this is the responsibility of Lancashire County Council (LCC). Any structural damage should be referred to LCC.
- Environmental Services have a Landscape Maintenance Depot/Yard on the periphery of the Park (this is recognised as being part of the Park).
- Pendle Cycleway runs through the Park.
- Dealing with other organisations that want to use the Park for one off events/activities, e.g. Nelson Cricket Club Family Fun Run, Orienteering, etc.
- Dealing with general issues and complaints relating to the Park, e.g. vandalism, organising contractors to do work, etc.
- Public Space Protection Order's (PSPO's) to uphold – ensuring the Park is used appropriately and in line with the PSPO (which is scheduled to come in to operation by the end of March 2017 and will include most things previously in the Bye-Laws plus dog control, fouling, etc.)
- Utility issues such as meter readings, legionella checks and general health & safety checks of the building. This is done through a combination of Neighbourhood Services staff and Property Services.
- The Park has Green Flag Award accreditation