

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO HEALTH, WELLBEING AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

02 March 2020

Report Title: Encouraging Greater Use of Parks and Open Spaces

Submitted by: Head of Operations – Roger Tait, Head of Leisure and Culture – Robert Foster

Portfolios: Leisure, Culture and Heritage

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek the Committee's views on how a greater use of parks and open spaces can be encouraged to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing

Recommendation

That the Committee sets up a Task and Finish Group to scope and explore this topic and report the findings back to a future meeting

Reasons

To respond to a request from a member of the Committee to scrutinise the potential for encouraging greater use of parks and open spaces to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing

1. **Background**

At the meeting of the Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee of 2 December 2019, a member of the committee requested a report on the potential for encouraging greater use of parks and green spaces to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing.

2. **Issues**

This is a very broad topic area, which could involve a number of stakeholders and organisations across the Borough and beyond. Therefore, it is important to clearly define the scope of the scrutiny at the outset, and the desired outcome of the work.

In general terms, there are perhaps three main strands which could be explored as a starting point:

- What is the scale and nature of the problem of physical and mental ill-health in the Borough?
- Is access to, and use of parks and green spaces a critical part of the solution in terms of both prevention and cure?
- Are there any barriers which are preventing people from accessing parks and green spaces to improve physical and mental health at present?

It will be necessary to research these questions with appropriate agencies to establish a starting position and it is therefore recommended that a task and finish group is set up to determine the purpose and scope of the scrutiny to ensure it is in line with statutory guidance, and the desired outcomes.

3. **Proposal**
It is recommended that the Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to scope and explore this topic and report the findings back to a future meeting.
4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**
To respond to a request from a member of the Committee to scrutinise the potential for encouraging greater use of parks and green spaces to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing.
5. **Options Considered**

The establishment of a Task and Finish Group is considered to be the only practical option to undertake the detailed work requested.
6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**
There are no implications arising from a decision to establish a Task and Finish Group. Any implications arising from recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group will be considered through that reporting process.
7. **Equality Impact Assessment**
Equality issues will be considered as part of the work of the task and finish group.
8. **Financial and Resource Implications**
Financial and resource implications will be considered as part of the work of the task and finish group. However, appropriate resource needs to be identified to gather, analyse and present the information suggested under section 2 above.
9. **Major Risks**
The major risks arising from this piece of work are the potential for creating expectations around options that might be identified but are not affordable or otherwise within the Council's ability to deliver.
10. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**
Sustainability and Climate Change Implications will be considered as part of the work of the task and finish group.
11. **Key Decision Information**
The decision to set up a Task and Finish Group is not a Key Decision. Proposals that might arise from the work of the Task and Finish Group, if taken forward, could be Key Decisions depending on the cost to the authority and/or impacts on communities working or living in the borough.
12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**
None
13. **List of Appendices**
None

14. **Background Papers**
Health, Wellbeing and Scrutiny Committee 2 December 2019 minutes.