

Greenspace Groups Forum no. 14

Meeting held 18/11/15 at Morecambe Town Hall

Present: Rita Gerrard (Poulton Cemetery), Kamilla Elliot (Parks for the People), Pete Turnbull (Barley Cop Woods), Simon Gershon (Lancaster Green Spaces), Joy Greenwood (Williamson Park), Helen Ryan, Maurice Brophy and Rebecca Richards (Lancaster City Council)

Apologies: Hilary Smith, Roger Frankland

Note: The meeting was previously scheduled for October, but was postponed due to a break-in at the Town Hall.

Good News Stories

Barley Cop Woods has costed a new footpath and is hoping for some cash and/or materials from Costain who are building the new bypass

Williamson Park has a revamped children's play area. Old play equipment will be reused at Branksome (off shrimp roundabout). The Friends group has put up new bird boxes, and a survey shows that 50% of boxes were occupied this year.

Rita Gerrard reports a grant to spend on Poulton le Sands Cemetery

Planning team has completed 14 public engagement sessions, engaging with 20 city councillors and over 900 residents

City Council intends to apply for Green Flag status for Ryelands Park, and the Friends group has planted several thousand bulbs.

Local Green Space update of from Rebecca Richards:

The PPG17 study (refreshed 2010) which looks at the provision of playing field as well as parks, is still a current document.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provided local authorities with the ability to designate Local Green Spaces – once designated, they have the same level of protection as Green Belt. A call for sites was put out earlier this year (16 march to 24th April) with the result that 48 sites were put forward. The Planning team are now working on a 'first filter' to eliminate those sites that do not meet the factual criteria, and have also mapped them.

An advisory group will be formed to comment on the applications, and to determine how special they are and in what ways. The group will mostly consist of council officers, but will also include the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the Civic Society and someone representing the Greenspace groups in the district. The meeting put Simon Gershon forward as this representative. [update 31/12/15 – Simon has not yet received details of the sites]

The theme of this session was ' Play Facilities'

Helen Ryan advised that the City council owns 72 play areas in the district. There are also some non-council publicly accessible areas e.g. Fairfield Green, and some facilities provided by housing developers, which revert to Council ownership after 5 years. Some of these consist of just one or two pieces of equipment and are little used. Helen thinks that Cabinet may decide to close 15-20 play areas, not just due to

a lack of funding for replacement and maintenance, but also because new play areas have been provided nearby. But Ward councillors need to be consulted first.

Several play areas have Friends groups and some Friends groups in parks also raise funds and help the play areas there. Where there is a Friends group looking out for the play facility, it often makes a big difference.

Maintaining play areas is expensive – as well as the equipment itself, the safety surface needs to be replaced every few years. Safety inspections need to be done monthly, and there are often fences to maintain as well. The high cost of insurance is the main problem with Friends groups or Parish councils taking responsibility for play equipment.

However, items with a fall height of less than 60cm do not require safety surfacing. Similarly, 'natural play' items can be installed, and landscaping done, to create mounds and slopes which similarly do not require safety surfacing