

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES****CHANGES TO THE STAFFING STRUCTURE IN THE COUNTRY PARKS SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Committee approval to amend the staffing structure of the Country Parks Service from 1 April 2015 by dis-establishing three current posts and establishing one new post of Community Support Officer.
2. To seek Committee approval to establish a part time (21 hours per week) Bestwood Community Heritage Officer post for one year.

**Information and Advice**Country Parks Service

3. In response to reducing grants from Central Government, all service areas within the County Council are obliged to make reductions to their operating budget. To this end a series of businesses cases were compiled suggesting levels of reductions to operational budgets covering financial years 2013-2016. The business cases were agreed by Members at the Council's Policy Committee meeting on 13 February 2013.
4. The Business Case 2013 – 2016 for the Country Parks Service has within it an overall savings target of £500,000. £150,000 has been saved during the current budget year and the remaining saving targets of £350,000 are scheduled to be realised in budget year 2015 and 2016. There is a specific target of £160,000 from the Country Parks operating budgets for the budget year 2015. This proposed staff reorganisation will make a £60,000 contribution to the £160,000 target.
5. Alongside the Ranger, Wardens and Janitor teams sits a small team of specialist officers that support the visitor experience. Managed by the visitor services team leader they include:
  - an **Interpretation Officer** - responsible for developing visitor information such as information panels, waymarkers, historical information packs
  - an **Events Officer** - responsible for planning, promoting and managing the country parks event programme

- a **Community Liaison Officer** - responsible for developing and managing volunteer groups to support activity across the Country Parks and Green Estates network
  - a **Community Heritage Officer** - funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, a job share post responsible for bringing to life the heritage assets at Bestwood Country Park.
6. The proposal is to delete three posts: **(i) Interpretation Officer, (ii) Events Officer and (iii) Community Liaison Officer** but to combine key roles in **(ii) and (iii)** in a new post that recognises the need for an ongoing resource allocation in these areas. A new post of **Community Support Officer** will therefore be established and integrated into the existing management structure of the Country Parks and Green Estates team.
  7. The overall effect of the changes will be the loss of an in-house expertise and capacity to interpret the country park offer and produce visitor signage. This can be mitigated by an increased involvement in this area by the Council's Communications and Marketing team and by engagement with third part suppliers where appropriate. The loss of a dedicated resource for the development and management of events will be mitigated by retaining a level of capacity in the new post of Community Support Officer and by a greater involvement in the events programme by the Ranger teams.
  8. The reduction of two posts from the current establishment will reduce the revenue costs by £60,000 and thus make a significant contribution to meeting the targets set out in the 2013 -16 business case proposals.

#### Bestwood Community Heritage Officer

9. A two year full-time Heritage Development Officer post, currently operated as a job share, has been in place at the Dynamo House at Bestwood Country Park since April 2013, financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
10. The remit of the post is:
  - to recruit more volunteers to maintain and open the Winding Engine House
  - to enable its opening to the public for more hours per year.
  - to engage the local community more with this restored heritage building
  - to create a small scale events programme and learning resources.
11. These outputs have been successfully achieved. This year and last year the site also gained the VisitEngland quality standard for tourism attractions following mystery shopper inspections. A further success has been the establishment of a Saturday morning community café, animating the Dynamo House at weekends and valued by park users.
12. The fixed term Heritage Development Officer post ends on 16 April 2015 but in view of momentum gained and the support required to seek new operating models for the Bestwood Park and Heritage facilities, it is felt that it would be prudent to retain a level of staffing in this area for a further one year period. The new opportunity will be ringfenced to the two existing jobshare postholders in the first instance.

## **Other Options Considered**

### Country Parks Service

13. There are a limited number of feasible options to generate the revenue funding required in support of the agreed budget reductions by April 2015. One alternative would be to further reduce the ranger, warden and janitor numbers but as front line operational workers it is felt that this would be more likely, compared with the current proposal, to impact negatively on the visitor experience.

### Bestwood Community Heritage Officer

14. Covering the transition period from remaining Country Parks staff was considered but it is felt that given other changes recommended in the body of this report this would not be possible. Allowing the contracts to expire without seeking an opportunity to retain some capacity, albeit on a temporary basis and reduced, would compromise the opportunity to establish a sustainable future for the site.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

### Country Parks Service

15. The recommendation is sought to dis-establish three posts, in order to effect the required savings.

### Bestwood Community Heritage Officer

16. To assist with the examination of new operating models for Council services.
17. To retain skills, networks and community support necessary to assist a further Heritage Lottery Fund bid.
18. To give time to plan an exit strategy, should no means be found to continue the work at Bestwood Winding Engine House and Dynamo House.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

### Country Parks Service

20. The restructure will make a saving of £60,000, supporting the budget reductions required to meet the agreed reductions to the Country Parks budget from April 2015.

### Bestwood Community Heritage Officer

21. The new part time post will be funded from within the Country Parks and Green Estates budget and will cost around £17,200 (including on-costs)

## **Human Resources Implications**

### Country Parks Service

22. Consultation has been undertaken with staff affected and with appropriate union representatives.
23. As per standing policy on redundancy and vacancy management, redeployment will be sought where possible for employees who face compulsory redundancy.

### Bestwood Community Heritage Officer

24. The post is temporary so does not increase the long term staffing commitments of the Authority.
25. The existing two job sharers are equally well placed to take on the new role, and if both wish to be considered, interviews will be held.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

26. The County Council's Equality Policy and redundancy management procedures will guide selection for redundancy.

## **Implications for Service Users**

### Country Parks Service

27. Inevitably, there is the potential for service provision to suffer when staff resources are reduced from service establishments. However, there are a number of mitigating actions proposed to minimise any reductions to the current service offer.

### Bestwood Community Heritage Officer

28. The post is to the advantage of local residents, country park users from Bestwood Village and also local tourists. It supports the work of the community café at the Dynamo House, and the work of the Winding Engine House volunteers who donate hundreds of hours per year to the project by carrying out essential maintenance to the 1876 winding engine.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) the changes to the staffing structure of the Country Parks Service as detailed in paragraph 6 of the report be approved.
- 2) the establishment of a one year part-time Bestwood Community Heritage Officer post be approved.

**Derek Higton**  
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### **Constitutional Comments (KK 19/12/14)**

29. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Culture Committee.

### **Financial Comments (SS 22/12/14)**

30. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraphs 20 and 21 above.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Budget report – Policy Committee on 13 February 2013

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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