

## **Appendix 3**

### **EIT Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation**

#### **Ranger Service, and Countryside and Greenspace**

##### **A) Countryside Ranger Team**

###### Current Position

1. The Countryside Ranger team within CFYA carry out the day to day management of all the Countryside sites, visitor centres and Local Nature Reserves. They also organise and participate in numerous site based events and lead educational site based activities. In the year up to September 2009 the team delivered:
  - Countryside events – 7638 people attending 114 scheduled events
  - School groups – 2910 pupils attended 86 educational sessions
  - Cubs, scouts etc – 462 youngsters attended 24 activity led sessions
  - Community groups - 3397 people attended 85 activity led sessions, walks etc
  - Other groups & talks – 1571 people attended 95 activity led sessions, walks etc
2. The Ranger team consists of 15 officers, 10 of which are involved in organising and participate in these site based events and educational activities in addition to carrying out maintenance functions.
3. Below are three options to consider for future service provision within this service.

###### Option 1

The service to remain the same with no changes to the current management and maintenance regime, educational activity site based projects and events. The implications of this option are that the current cost of the service and the existing

staffing structure will remain unchanged. Salary costs will remain at £520,771. This will enable the service to continue to manage and maintain the parks and community involvement to Green Flag standard, of which there are 6 in the Borough, the highest number of Green Flag parks among Teesside Council's.

### Option 2

The service to carry out the management and maintenance functions within all the sites however to reduce the numbers of educational activities, on site activity based projects and events. The implications of this option being implemented are that there will be a requirement to reduce the level of staff by two full time officers, one Head Ranger and one Assistant Ranger. For a Head Ranger the saving would be £29,624. For an Assistant Ranger the saving would be £26,838. Supplies and materials saving would be £5,000. The potential saving would be £61,462. Whilst maintenance standards will remain high, community engagement and involvement will be reduced. Green Flag standards are possible, though unlikely to be met.

### Option 3

The service cease all educational activity based projects and events and focus purely on park management and maintenance functions. The implications of this option are that there will be a reduction in the staffing structure of four full time officers, two Head Rangers and two Assistant Rangers. For a Head Ranger the saving is £29,624. For an Assistant Ranger the saving is £26,838. Supplies and materials savings would be £10,000. The potential saving would be £122,924. Whilst maintenance standards will remain high, community engagement and involvement will cease entirely. Green Flag standards will not be met.

### Further Review Options

4. Further to this, initial meetings have taken place to explore the possibility of the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust taking over the management of both Billingham Beck Valley Country Park & Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park. If the agreement is reached there is also potential further savings through staff reductions. Discussions with the TVWT are at a very early stage so no calculations with regard potential staffing saving's have been made.

## **B) Countryside & Greenspace – Strategy & Development Team**

### Current Position

5. The team's role includes:
- Coordinating delivery of the Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy;
  - Developing and delivering greenspace regeneration programmes and projects in collaboration with other sections of the Council, local communities and external partners
  - Management of Council-owned trees and woodlands
  - Some aspects of open space management and development, including the title transfer of land from developers, easements, wayleaves and licence agreements, and policy development
  - Research and consultation to inform delivery of services

The Team currently comprises 8 full-time officers.

6. Below are two options to consider for future service provision within this service:

#### Option 1

Commit no further funding to research work or other projects which have, for example, been used to inform development of the Local Development Framework and Green Infrastructure Strategy - unless there is a compelling case to do so. This will result in a saving of £25,000 per annum. The implications of this option would be to reduce the Council's capacity to develop evidenced-based strategies and work-programmes in the future.

#### Option 2

In addition to the above the service would delete most of the 'Environmental Development' budget which is used to undertake small-scale schemes on open spaces - where there is no prospect of securing external funding. This would result in a saving of approximately £15,000 per annum.

## Further Review Options

7. In addition to the above, Stockton Council has initiated a meeting with all Tees Valley local authorities to explore opportunities for collaborative working in relation to tree and woodland management. Through this meeting and subsequent work the group will consider whether any efficiency savings might be possible in relation to: arboricultural contract / operational works, tree surveys and inspections, project work, provision of advice and information and so on. More generally further consideration will be given to the future role of the team in relation to project development and delivery, including its role in supporting community-led activity.

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