

Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Review of Worden Park

Report

What's the review about?

Worden Park in Leyland is one of the most successful parks in the region having been awarded the prestigious Green Flag award and boasting a host of facilities from a children's playground, historical maze, football pitches, arts and craft centre, walled garden, model railway and parkland. The park has an estimated 250,000 visitors per year and has a number of stakeholders associated with the operation of the park.

Enhancing Worden Park as a local asset and visitor attraction was identified as a key action within the Council's corporate plan. The Scrutiny Committee has taken a keen interest in Worden Park since the Council's bid for external funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund was sadly un-successful a number of years ago. The Committee also made recommendations following projects within Worden Park not generating the anticipated income last year.

In March 2012 the Scrutiny Committee used its powers to call-in a decision awarding a concession for an ice cream kiosk in the park which identified some areas for improvement. There have also been changes with the approach to Worden Arts & Craft Centre and vacation of the Derby Wing over the last year. For these reasons the Scrutiny Committee felt it was an opportune time to carry out a review of Worden Park to ensure it remains South Ribble's 'jewel in the crown'.



Who was on the review team?

- ▶ Councillor Mike McNulty (chair)
- ▶ Councillor Derek Forrest
- ▶ Councillor Susan Jones
- ▶ Councillor Mick Titherington
- ▶ Councillor Linda Woollard

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What was the purpose of the review?

- ▶ To review the existing research and information available on Worden Park
- ▶ To explore the Council's long-term vision and plans for Worden Park
- ▶ To look at the cost of maintaining Worden Park, see if it is delivering value for money and investigate potential sources of income in the future.
- ▶ To engage with all stakeholders associated with Worden Park to find out about their vision and ideas for Worden Park.
- ▶ To make recommendations to the Council on the future strategy for Worden Park.

What has the review done?

The review team has carried out a great deal of research as part of the review. Some of the research included:

- ▶ A review of best practice from other councils that have carried out similar parks reviews
- ▶ Made use of existing previous consultation and research carried out by the Citizens' Panel, Residents' Survey and 'My Neighbourhood' consultation
- ▶ Reviewed key aspects of the previous lottery bid
- ▶ Carried out a familiarisation visit and tour of Worden Park with officers and members
- ▶ Met with key officers associated with Worden Park
- ▶ Met with the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Support Services who representing his Cabinet colleagues associated with Worden Park
- ▶ Met with representatives of park stakeholders including a Chocolotty as craft centre tenant, the Leyland Model Engineers Society who use the park and the Brothers of Charity who use the Walled Garden
- ▶ A workshop with Members and Officers was also held.

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What is the outcome of the review?

The task group commends the Council's work in continuing to enhance Worden Park with the limited resources available, which is greatly enjoyed by residents and park users.

Following the above extensive research, the task group have made the following recommendations:

1. The Council develops and agrees a long-term vision and action plan for Worden Park with all stakeholders associated with the park.
2. An options study into the occupancy of Worden Arts & Craft Centre, including the Derby Wing is carried out as soon as possible.
3. One named Cabinet Member is allocated responsibility for taking the lead on behalf of the Cabinet for Worden Park.
4. A senior officer is designated the lead officer in managing Worden Park.
5. An assessment of the capital cost in ensuring the infrastructure of Worden Park is to an appropriate standard is carried out.
6. The budget for Worden Park is accounted for separately showing all income and expenditure to help co-ordinate and allocate resources.
7. A regular stakeholder meeting is created for all stakeholders associated with Worden Park to meet with the Council to improve engagement and joint work in delivering the long-term vision and action plan for the park as well as more operational matters.
8. A joined-up marketing plan is developed to promote the whole park, including improved communications with councillors.

What next?

We very much hope that the Council will agree and take forward our recommendations. The Scrutiny Committee looks forward to the Council's response and will monitor progress on the review in six-month's time.

We would like to thank all partners, employees, councils and others involved in the review for their time and help with the review.

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How do I get more information?

For further information or to see the detailed and comprehensive information gathered as part of the review, please contact: Darren Cranshaw, Scrutiny and Performance Officer on 01772 625512, email: dcranshaw@southribble.gov.uk or visit www.southribble.gov.uk.