

Meeting	Place Scrutiny Committee
Date	24 June 2025
Present	Councillors B Burton (Chair), Healey (Vice-Chair), Baxter, Fenton, Hook, D Myers, Vassie, Whitcroft and Coles (Substitute)
Officers in Attendance	Patrick Looker – Assistant Director of Finance Ian Hault – Head of Environmental Services Dave Meigh - Operations Manager Pauline Stuchfield - Director of Housing and Communities Guy Close – Democratic Services Manager
In Attendance	Councillor Kent
Apologies	Councillor Taylor

1. Apologies for Absence (17:30)

Apologies were received from Cllr Taylor, Cllr Coles attended as his substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest (17:30)

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

3. Public Participation (17:31)

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Flick Williams raised concern that the Parks Investment Fund report was still waiting on comments from the Council's Access Officer and Equalities Manager. She stated that Access should be a specific criteria for the distribution of funding.

4. Park Investment Fund (17:36)

Officers introduced the report on the Park Investment Fund, they confirmed that they were seeking the Committee's comments on the proposed criteria and an analysis of the weighting for those criteria. Officers confirmed that the Council would appoint a project Manager to ensure projects identified for the fund would get delivered.

The Committee agreed that it would be important to add accessibility as a criteria for parks funding. Members noted that consideration should include access to a site, getting around said site, and things such as if there is play equipment that is accessible. Members acknowledged that not all play equipment will be accessible to everyone, but that parks should have provision for everyone. The Committee raised the Council's 2012 Play Strategy and whether this had influenced the proposed criteria for funding and whether it could be out of date. Officers confirmed that they had not used the 2012 strategy when considering the Park Investment Fund criteria and Members of the Committee noted that they could consider reviewing the strategy as a future work plan item.

Members enquired about whether the ability to attract other funding as a criteria, would see some parks that had no external funding failing to receive Council funding. Officers confirmed that this should not be the case and that the aim of this would be to deliver improvements with external funding or Section 106 money instead of using the Park Investment Fund. The Committee also enquired about whether areas with active community groups might attract more funding. Officers confirmed that when looking at individual projects the Council would look at who the partners were, working with community groups where in place and with Ward Councillors to build up local relationships where there were not established groups.

The Committee discussed park's locations including large/destination parks that attracted visitation from across the city and those areas where there is little to no provision. Officers confirmed that there was little identified in the Local Plan for there being no available parks provision, noting that previous Government funding had helped address gaps. Members considered the criteria weighting for those more rural areas where there might be only one park and poorer quality public transport that might allow residents to access other parks. Members therefore considered whether for areas with only one park if the radius when measuring things such as Deprivation should be increased. On destination parks members also noted that the radius for consideration might not fairly reflect usage and suggested any formula for funding should aim to account for these larger parks.

Resolved:

- i. To recommend that accessibility be added as a criteria and as part of the scope of works to understand where spend is allocated;
- ii. To recommend that the radius of a park be expanded in cases where it is the only park available to residents and there are poorer public transport options offering the ability to get to other parks;
- iii. To recommend that officers work with Business Intelligence to map how 'destination' parks which attract residents from a wider catchment area should be measured when considering criteria such as deprivation.
- iv. To add a review of the Council's Play Strategy as a potential item for the Committee's work plan.

Reason: To assist in prioritising investment.

Cllr Coles left the meeting at this point.

5. Work Plan (18:32)

The Democratic Services Manager outlined the changes to Scrutiny following the review undertaken with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. It was confirmed that there would be more opportunities for Task and Finish Group work and that the Committee could hold briefing sessions outside of its scheduled public meetings. Members were asked to consider the list of outstanding scrutiny work plan items and any new topics to identify what the Committee wished to prioritise and if those items were something the Committee was seeking a briefing on for more information or if it involved more in-depth Scrutiny review work. The Chair outlined that the Committee should look to no more than two task and finish groups at a time.

The Committee discussed the possibility of undertaking work around a parking strategy for the city, noting previous challenges relating to considering this topic. Members did note the motion on parking past at Full Council and what progress had been made against this. Members also wondered whether there was the opportunity for work on the impact of holiday lets on the city.

Officers also highlighted several topics including the Council's investment portfolio and library needs assessment which were opportunities for briefings to the Committee. Members were reminded that briefings could provide the opportunity to highlight specific future work.

Resolved:

- i. To organise a July briefing to finalise the Committee work plan.

Reason: To ensure the Committee has a programme of work for 2025/26.

Cllr B Burton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.54 pm].