

SUNDERLAND WEST AREA COMMITTEE

6 JULY 2011

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

BARNES PARK REGENERATION – FINAL REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update West Area Committee on the completed works undertaken within Barnes Park and the highly successful celebration event held 21 May 2011, which marked the re-opening of the Park following a £3.6 million regeneration scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It was agreed by Cabinet on 3 June 2009, following the award of the Heritage Lottery Fund Grant in April 2009, to proceed to procure appropriate works with appointed contractors and to accept the Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £2,420,000. The overall project value is £3,661,000.
- 2.2 A key element of the redevelopment was to make the whole park - and particularly the play areas - accessible to all, including those who are severely disabled. As well as specialist play equipment there is a changing/toilet pavilion fully equipped to support those caring for disabled children and adults and parking – including a number of disabled parking bays.
- 2.3 The 18 month redevelopment project commenced on the 19 October 2009 following the appointment of the main contractor – Brambledown in September 2009. The first phase of the project opened 21 May 2010 with phase two of the works due for completion in spring 2011.

3. COMPLETION OF PHASE TWO WORKS

- 3.1 Works were completed on schedule for phase two of the park and the park re-opened to the public, with a large-scale celebration event held on Saturday 21 May 2011.
- 3.2 The final works within phase 2 of the Barnes Park development included:
- Installation of bridge over lake
 - Installation of planting around lake, safety fencing and picnic tables
 - Installation of signage and interpretation
 - Installation of litter bins and dog bins
 - Time capsule buried
 - Bandstand completed
 - Wooden sculptures within the Park including new bridges over stream
 - Completion of woodland themed play area
 - All footpaths resurfaced including granite edging stone
 - All fencing painted
 - Grass seeded (albeit grass growth has been slow due to dry spring weather)
 - Installation of orchard trees adjacent to grand staircase

4. COMMUNICATION

- 4.1 The communication and media campaign to publicise the re-opening of Barnes Park – the most accessible Park in the region - was highly successful with BBC News, ITV News, Sun-FM, Radio Newcastle, Sunderland Echo, The Journal and The Chronicle, all promoting Barnes Park, with exceptionally positive features relating to the regeneration works and the ‘accessibility angle’ in relation to disabled facilities.
- 4.2 The Barnes Park website, www.sunderland.gov.uk/barnespark continues to be updated regularly to ensure the public are well informed. The website will continue to be updated by the Community Development and Education Officer, ensuring visitors (and potential visitors), are aware of activities and facilities available.
- 4.3 Robust communication has been critical throughout the whole project, ensuring the project gained maximum positive publicity and to minimise any complaints that may have arose during the regeneration works.
- 4.4 Detailed signage has been installed within the Park to highlight to visitors the major features and to enable them to enjoy the wildlife within the Park, particularly around the Lakeside. An information leaflet has also been produced to coincide with the re-opening of the Park, enabling visitors to navigate themselves around the Park and to experience all of the new features.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 The Barnes Park Community Development and Education Officer, has been working with local schools and with partners throughout the whole project – planting trees, developing the time capsule and reviewing the artefacts found during the regeneration works as an example.
- 5.2 The Time Capsule project was a great success with the support of the local community and schools. An information article was published in January and March within the Sunderland Echo. The time capsule was buried in March by the Mayor, and a commemorative plaque marks the spot where the time capsule lies beneath, stating that the capsule is due to be re-opened in 2060.

6. CELEBRATION EVENT – SATURDAY 21 MAY 2011

- 6.1 A successful celebration event was held on Saturday 21 May 2011 to celebrate the re-opening of Barnes Park. The event commenced at 12noon with the Park gates opening for the first time – hundreds of children and families flooded through the gates throughout the day with children squealing with excitement at the new Woodland Play Area!
- 6.2 The event included guided tours and ‘Wellness Walks and Games’ around the park, various craft activities including willow weaving, hanging basket and flower arranging, face painting and glass painting. There were Storytellers within the park, musical bands playing on the refurbished bandstand and the Friends of Barnes Park encouraged visitors to play a game of bowls.

- 6.3 A small marquee was placed on the grass adjacent to the Barnes Park Road entrance to allow invited guests to gather and share a cup of tea whilst hearing a short speech from the Mayor of Sunderland and the Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Chris Mullen. The project team were available to guide invited guests around the park to highlight key features. The newly refurbished Coach House Café was open throughout the day to service refreshments to park visitors.

7. GREEN FLAG STATUS

- 7.1 An application for Green Flag status for Barnes Park was submitted earlier in the year, with the Green Flag judges visiting Barnes Park on 6 May 2011. The judges were impressed with Barnes Park during their visit, commenting particularly on the Sensory Garden and the Lake.
- 7.2 Notification of the result for the Green Flag Award will be received during July 2011. West Area Committee will be advised of the Green Flag status when known.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 The following background papers were relied upon to compile this report.
- a. Parks for People Stage 1 Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund
 - b. Parks for People Stage 2 Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund
 - c. Barnes Park Cabinet Report 8 November 2006
 - d. Barnes Park Cabinet Report 3 June 2009
 - e. West Area Committee Update Report 4 November 2009
 - f. West Area Committee Update Report 1 March 2010
 - g. West Area Committee Update Report 21 October 2010
 - h. West Area Committee Update Report February 2011