



AGENDA ITEM:

SUMMARY

Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	11th October 2016
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Byelaws for Selected Parks and Open Spaces within Dacorum
Contact:	<p>Cllr Janice Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Environmental, Sustainability and Regulatory Services</p> <p>Responsible Officer: David Austin (Assistant Director Neighbourhood and Delivery)</p> <p>Authors: Barbara Lisgarten (Legal Governance Team Leader and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Robert Cassidy (Parks and Open Spaces Officer)</p>
Purpose of report:	To seek the views of this Committee on proposals to consider new byelaws for selected parks and open spaces within the Borough and detail the steps required for them to be approved by the Secretary of State.
Recommendations	That any comments from this Committee on the Draft Byelaws are passed to the Portfolio Holder for her consideration.
Corporate Objectives:	The byelaws will help promote a Clean, Safe and Enjoyable Environment
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There will be costs associated with publicising the relevant notices for consultation but these will be contained within existing service budgets.</p> <p>An income is likely to be generated from those proposing to use the parks for a commercial purpose but it is difficult to estimate the level of that income at this stage. Fees to be charged will need to be agreed separately and do not form part of this report.</p>

<p>'Value For Money Implications'</p>	<p>Receipts from the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices must be used for combatting nuisance (section 237D <i>Local Government Act 1972</i>)</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>The new Byelaws will ensure that those generating an income from the park will pay an appropriate licence fee.</p>
<p>Risk Implications</p>	<p>The proposed Byelaws aim to regulate activity in the Council's parks and open spaces and to provide an effective enforcement mechanism. Failure to have appropriate Byelaws in place could lead to unregulated activity to the detriment of all users of the parks and open spaces.</p>
<p>Community Impact Assessment</p>	<p>A Community Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the Scheme noted in paragraph 7 below.</p>
<p>Health And Safety Implications</p>	<p>None directly arising from this report.</p>
<p>Consultees:</p>	<p>Adriana Livingstone - Valuation and Estates</p> <p>Robert Cassidy – Parks and Open Spaces</p> <p>Julie Still – Group Manager, Residents Services</p>
<p>Background papers:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Model Byelaw 2 2. Flowchart 1: enabling powers for pleasure ground and open spaces byelaws 3. Model byelaw 2: guidance notes 4. DCLG Application for Provisional Approval of Byelaws 5. Local authority byelaws – Briefing Paper (Number 01817, 1 March 2016) 6. <i>The Byelaws (Alternative Procedure) (England) Regulations 2016</i> 7. Section 235-238 <i>Local Government Act 1972</i>
<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	<p>DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government</p> <p>The Regulations - The Byelaws (Alternative Procedure) (England) Regulations 2016</p>

Background

1. Dacorum Borough Council boasts many beautiful parks and open spaces. We are proud to own these green assets, some of which have won much coveted Green Flag awards.
2. Our parks are used daily by the public for leisure purposes and, more recently, for commercial exercise classes such as fitness boot-camps. The constant footfall brings with it instances of nuisance behaviour and damage to these areas.
3. The Council's existing byelaws date back to the 1899, and relate to the proper conduct in the borough's parks and open spaces. They allow the Council to deal with unacceptable behaviour which is not addressed through existing legislation, such as that which may cause distress or injury to other users of the parks or that might damage the park and detract from general enjoyment of it by others.
4. Officers have developed a set of proposed byelaws for the borough, based on Model Byelaws published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It is felt that these byelaws will improve understanding of their aims and help communication regarding acceptable behaviour in our parks, ensuring that residents and visitors are able to fully enjoy our parks and open spaces.

What are byelaws?

5. Local authorities and certain other bodies have powers under various Acts of Parliament to make byelaws, which are essentially local laws designed to deal with local issues. At present, byelaws must be approved by central government before they can be brought into force because they create criminal offences. They are enforced through the magistrates' courts on prosecution or by the issuing of fixed penalty notices.
6. Byelaws must:
 - a. Undergo any relevant action required by the legislation, such as consultation (see below);
 - b. Not duplicate or conflict with the general law, existing byelaws or any local Act, or common law. This means that our byelaws cannot address matters such as drinking, dog fouling, or traffic offences which are covered in other law;
 - c. Be reasonable and ensure that the nuisance they are created for address merits criminal sanctions and that, to a reasonable person, the penalty available is proportionate. The penalty for breach of a byelaw is a fine;
 - d. Directly address a genuine and specific local problem and do not attempt to deal in general terms with essentially national issues;
 - e. Not conflict with government policy.

The Process for making and confirming byelaws

7. There is a new process for making byelaws which apply from 11 February 2016. Under the new regulations, a local authority wishing to make a Byelaw must prepare a 'scheme', which must include a draft of the proposed Byelaw and an assessment of the regulatory burden which it would create. Matters which need to be considered within the 'scheme' are set out in Regulation 5, which states that in preparing a scheme an authority must:
 - a. prepare a draft of the proposed byelaw;
 - b. carry out an assessment of whether the regulatory burden imposed by the proposed byelaw is proportionate, which must include, but need not be limited to—
 - (i) identification of the objective which the proposed byelaw is seeking to secure;
 - (ii) whether the objective intended to be secured by the proposed byelaw could be satisfactorily secured by alternative means;
 - (iii) the impact of the proposed byelaw on all persons identified by the authority as being potentially affected by it;
 - (iv) whether the result of the proposed byelaw would increase or lessen the regulatory burden on persons potentially affected by the proposed byelaw, insofar as possible expressing that increase or reduction in monetised form;
 - (v) how these alternative means and the proposed byelaw compare with carrying out no further action; and
 - c. prepare a statement of the assessment within which must record in the statement—
 - (i) conclusions as to the impact of the proposed byelaw on persons potentially affected by the byelaw;
 - (ii) conclusions as to whether the proposed byelaw results in an increase in the regulatory burden; and
 - (iii) in the event that the proposed byelaw results in an increase in the regulatory burden, the reasons why such an increase is considered to be proportionate and necessary.
8. It must also consult with people who would be affected by the byelaw, and publish a statement of its assessment both locally and on its website.
9. It may then apply to the Secretary of State for approval, identifying what it intends to achieve with the byelaw, whether a model byelaw will be used, and summarising any responses to the consultation.

10. The Secretary of State must then decide whether to “give leave to the authority to make the byelaw”. If s/he does so, the local authority must then publish a notice on its website, and in at least one local newspaper, stating its intention to make the byelaw. A formal consultation period of at least 28 days runs from the publication of this notice. If the authority then makes the Decision to make the new byelaw (whether modified or not), it must do so no more than six months after the publication of this notice.

What areas in Dacorum require a byelaw?

11. The following areas have been identified as being in need for byelaw protection:
- Bunkers Park
 - Canal Fields
 - Gadebridge Park
 - Margaret Lloyd (playing field)
 - Tring Memorial Garden
 - Water Gardens (open space)
12. Currently there are parks and open space byelaws in place that cover the following areas:
- Gadebridge Park – made in 1952 and 1972
 - Leverstock Green – made in 1899 and 1939
 - Randalls Park – made in 1914
 - Heath Park – made in 1934
 - High Street Green – made in 1960
13. The Byelaws listed in paragraph 12 above are outdated and very few people within the Council know they exist, understand them, let alone use them as an enforcement tool. It is proposed that these should be revoked as they serve little purpose. The new Byelaws use a style of language that is simpler, clearer and easier to comprehend. They are also more relevant to a modern society and the modern use of parks and open spaces and no longer duplicate offences for which there are now powers granted by legislation.

Inclusions (taken from Model Byelaws)

14. The new byelaws consist of a number of provisions which were not included in the existing byelaws, and aim to offer further protection to park and open space users:
- (a) Preventing interference with lifesaving equipment
 - (b) Prohibition on overnight parking
 - (c) Permitting skateboarding and ball games
 - (d) Restriction of cricket to designated areas
 - (e) Restriction on archery and field sports
 - (f) Prohibition of golf
 - (g) Restriction on bathing
 - (h) Stricter requirements on model boats, boats and fishing
 - (i) General prohibition of power-driven model aircraft
 - (j) Restriction on the provision of any service for a charge without Council consent
 - (k) Restriction on excessive noise
 - (l) Restriction on public shows and performances

- (m) Restrictions on the use of aircraft, helicopters, hang gliders or hot air balloons
 - (n) Restriction on kites
 - (o) Restriction on metal detectors
 - (p) Restriction of barbeques
15. By restriction it is meant that the Council is able to limit the relevant activities to certain circumstances or locations or by licence from (for free or for a charge).
16. Byelaw 40 of the new Byelaws is a catch-all restriction applying to any person or enterprise offering any service for a charge. Therefore, those wishing to use our parks and open spaces to charge participants for organised events such as fitness boot-camps, sports, leisure and the like will need prior Council approval, in the form of a licence. This approval will be granted if the organiser makes a formal application for a licence and complies with any Council requirements. These requirements include, but are not limited to:
- a. A risk assessment
 - b. Relevant public liability insurance
 - c. Site plan, if required
 - d. Traffic management plan, if required
 - e. payment of any fees and charges
 - f. First aid and emergency details
17. The above will be publicised on the Council website and include all necessary information relating to charges and forms.
18. The new Byelaws include an updated list of sites, parks and open spaces to which the new Byelaws apply (Schedule 1), and also an updated list of sites, parks and open spaces to which the new Byelaws apply (Schedule 2), in respect of opening times. There are also updated rules for playing ball games in designated areas (Schedule 3).

Not covered but could be included

19. Consideration may be given, following further assessment, to provisions that cover:
- Restricting the use of drones
 - Fundraising, and soliciting or gathering money
20. The DCLG will need proof from us of the justification for adding any provision that is not already contained in their Model Byelaws.

Enforcement

21. Any enforcement by the Council of the Byelaws will be in accordance with the Council's enforcement policy. The policy sets out the following clear principles for the Council's enforcement action:
- raising awareness of the law and its requirements;
 - proportionality in applying the law and securing compliance;
 - consistency of approach;
 - transparency about the actions of the Council and its officers; and
 - targeting of enforcement action.

22. Byelaws give the Magistrates' Courts the power to issue fines, following prosecution, of up to £500 against offenders who cause damage to Council property or breach the Byelaws. Additional legislation (under the *Clean Neighbourhood and Environmental Act 2005*), which allows the Council to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for breaches under litter control and dog fouling, is also applicable to parks and open spaces.
23. Agencies that can be deployed in enforcing and applying Byelaws include the Police, Anti-Social Behaviour Teams, Dacorum Borough Council Enforcement Officers, and Clean Safe and Green Supervisors.

END

Appendix A – Draft Byelaws.