

Elders Council Workshop
Have your say about Parks - 10 April 2017
Broadacre House

On 10 April 2017 staff from the Communities Team of Newcastle City Council attended a workshop with members of the Elders Council of Newcastle at Broadacre House. The purpose of the workshop was to collect the views of the Elders Council regarding the proposal to transfer the parks and allotments to a charitable trust.

Fifteen people attended and were split into three tables with a facilitator on each. The questions were compiled by the by the Elders Council and sent to the Communities Team in advance.

Main points

Overall there was no outright opposition to the proposal but those present did raise concerns around the Trust's governance and how accountable it would be. This has been a consistently cited issue raised during many of the drop-ins and workshops that have been held so far.

More activity in the parks such as arts, music and organised exercise activity were cited as things that would encourage older people to use parks more. Toilets and seating were also mentioned. The health benefits of parks was cited on all three tables as being important and should be promoted by the Trust.

Well organised volunteering was seen as an important factor in getting older people involved with the parks. Inter generations or 'mixed' volunteering ws also cited.

Below are the responses from all three tables underneath each of the questions.

NB Figure in brackets after comment indicate how many times the issue was mentioned.

What do you think about a charitable trust taking over the running of the parks and allotments?

- How will Trustees be selected and to whom will they be accountable? THIS IS OF GREAT CONCERN
- There are reservations but to do nothing would be worse **(2)**
- It is a lot to take on – high number of parks, conservation areas etc. – how would a charitable trust do this?
- Is one Trust the answer?

- Needs to be an umbrella type board with local parks perspective feeding in
- The Trust should build on existing groups
- Concern for smaller, less used parks
- Could residents/local groups share some responsibility for the smaller parks?
- Could there be opportunities to get equipment such as lawn mowers etc. donated from suppliers?
- Concerns about a 'remote board' – the board needs the right people to make it work. Needs to be democratic and accountable **(3)**
- In theory, a Trust is a good idea
- A Trust will be able to access more funding streams
- A Trust should not have a political agenda
- What happens if the Trust only wants the parks and not the allotment?
- What are other councils pursuing?
- Has a social enterprise been discussed?

What would encourage older people to use the parks more?

- Toilets – but as part of another facility such as a café or shop **(3)**
- Small café perhaps with a community space for displays or exhibitions **(2)**
- Seating at appropriate height – encourage seating as a legacy **(2)**
- Arts displays **(2)**
- Drama activities
- Feeling safe **(2)**
- Plenty of information/notice boards **(2)**
- Safety – lighting/fencing/dogs on leads
- Music **(2)**

What activities do we think the parks should support/put on that would benefit older people?

- Free concerts (there are lots of music groups that would offer their services) **(3)**
- Exercise classes or equipment – linked to Clinical Commissioning Group and advertised or using social prescribing **(3)**
- Social exercise groups such as dog walking, Tai Chi, cycling, table tennis etc
- Access to park via public transport
- Art activities/craft fayres **(2)**
- Markets
- Tea shops
- Health trail (as per park in Morpeth)

In what ways can older people contribute to keeping the parks going?

- Volunteering: **(2)** litter picking needs to be targeted prior to 'call out'
- Different categories of volunteering – perhaps local older people's groups?

- Enjoying and making use of them
- Encouraging friends to join activities **(2)**
- Leave a legacy
- Help to publicise events across all types from hard copy to social media **(2)**
- Time banking so there would be some reciprocity
- An Elders Council publication to highlight what's positive about the parks

What would encourage you to volunteer in the parks?

- Organised group activities (to tackle social isolation) such as litter picking – and at reasonable times –i.e. allowing use of off-peak bus pass **(3)**
- Shared transport to help arrive at volunteer station/meet up point
- Some ad hoc activities
- Inter-generational volunteering **(2)**
- Recognition for what you do **(2)**
- To know I was doing something useful and enjoyable
- Knowing it would promote my health and wellbeing

Any comments?

- Council & Trust should work together looking at health as to what/whom are given license (and how many)
- Parking charges should be reasonable and use of tennis courts and bowling green etc. **(2)**
- Promote health benefits in parks **(3)**
- Dedicated cycle parking
- Board needs to be democratically elected/accountable **(3)**
- Sponsorship should be heavily considered
- Friends groups are essential **(2)**
- Cultural/behaviour change is needed
- Promotion of conservation in parks and countryside is important
- The Trust needs a community engagement strategy
- Agree that allotments should be part of the trust
- Would welcome a Warden presence (if viable)