

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Forest Heath**  
District Council

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Annual Report by the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>OAS/FH/19/001</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	10 January 2019
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<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<p>As part of the "Challenge" role, Overview and Scrutiny are asked to consider the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members. It is part of the Scrutiny role to "challenge" in the form of questions.</p> <p>Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member shall attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee.</p>	

<b>Recommendation:</b>		<p><b>Members of the Committee are asked to question the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture on his portfolio responsibilities, and having considered the information, the Committee may wish to:</b></p> <p><b>1) Make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture for his consideration; OR</b></p> <p><b>2) Request further information and / or receive a future update; OR</b></p> <p><b>3) Take any other appropriate action as necessary.</b></p>	
<b>Key Decision:</b> <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <b>do not</b> apply.)</i>		<p><i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i></p> <p>Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
<b>Consultation:</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>	
<b>Alternative option(s):</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>	
<b>Implications:</b>			
Are there any <b>financial</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any <b>staffing</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any <b>ICT</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any <b>legal and/or policy</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any <b>equality</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
<b>Risk/opportunity assessment:</b>		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
None			
<b>Wards affected:</b>		All	
<b>Background papers:</b>		<p>Brandon Country Park Report to Cabinet on 13 February 2018, Report No: <a href="#">CAB/FH/18/012</a></p>	
<b>Documents attached:</b>		<b>Appendix 1</b> – Brandon Country Park Management Plan 2018-2028	

## **Key issues and reasons for recommendation**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 As part of its "Challenge" role, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members. To carry out this constitutional requirement, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member shall be invited to give an account of his or her portfolio and to answer questions from the Committee.
- 1.2 Last year, on 11 January 2018, Councillor Andy Drummond, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture attended this committee and presented a report which summarised the areas of responsibility covered under his portfolio.

### **2. Scrutiny Focus**

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member has been asked to prepare a report which answers the following specific questions identified by committee members as being relevant to the leisure and culture portfolio:
- 1) **Parks and opens spaces:** Are there any long-term plans currently being considered for Brandon Country Park?
  - 2) **Parks and open spaces:** Request an update on progress of the re-surfacing of the main Brandon Country Park car park.

### **3. Response to Key Questions Set out in the Scrutiny Focus**

- 3.1 **Parks and open spaces:** Are there any long-term plans currently being considered for Brandon Country Park?

Brandon Country Park transferred to Forest Heath District Council from Suffolk County Council on the 1 June 2018.

In accordance with the transfer agreement, Forest Heath District Council prepared a 10 year Strategic Management Plan for the site. (Attached as **Appendix 1**)

This ten-year plan was prepared in accordance with the industry best practice which follows the principals of the Green Flag judging criteria. The plan includes a detailed plan of action which sets out six key objectives and below each objective there are then specific targets to be achieved:

The six objectives being:

- (1) Provide an accessible green space managed for informal recreation available to all, while maintaining the un-spoilt character of the site.
- (2) Conserve and enhance the landscape, historic and

ecological features of the site.

- (3) Monitor site features and recreational use to determine the effects of site management.
- (4) Promote the benefits of visiting the Country Park to the local community and provide visitors with information and events to enhance their enjoyment of the site.
- (5) Check and manage the site to ensure that it is safe for public access and informal recreation.
- (6) Reduce the overall cost of maintaining the park by increasing income whilst maintaining service standards.

The Council has now been responsible for the Park for just over six months and the following has been achieved without any disruption to peoples enjoyment of the site:

- Management of the Café and the staff associated with managing it have been transferred to the council's joint venture company; Verse Facilities Management. Under this arrangement the council are now receiving an agreed rental sum as well as a share of any Verse profits.
- A new Senior Ranger (Sarah Austin) has been appointed to help manage this site along with the other public open spaces in Forest Heath. Sarah is accompanied by two other part-time rangers who were TUPE'd across as part of the site transfer.
- The Engine House is now being marketed as a venue to hire. Leaflets have been produced and bookings are increasing.
- The play area is now on the council's play inspection regime. Investment in the play area was made over the summer period to top-up the large bark pit.
- The site has been subject to an internal H&S audit and a number of issues have been addressed.
- The car-park has been properly licenced as a Pay & Display car-park and new payment machines have been installed.
- The main car-park has been resurfaced.
- The activities and events hosted at the park are now marketed on the sites web page and 'What's on West Suffolk' see links below:

<http://www.brandoncountrypark.org.uk/>

<https://www.whatsonwestsuffolk.co.uk/whats-on/2018/12>

The Parks team were successful in obtaining the Green Flag accreditation for Aspal Close Nature Reserve this summer (a first for a park in Forest Heath) and we hope to get Brandon Country Park assessed over the forthcoming summer.

3.2 **Parks and open spaces:** Update on progress of the re-surfacing of the main Brandon Country Park car park

The sites main car-park which was in a poor condition was resurfaced week commencing 3 December 2018. The marking of the car-park will take place in the spring of 2019 when the risk of frost has past.

4. **Proposals**

- 4.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee ask questions of the Cabinet Member following this update.