



**Proposed Committee Work: Country Parks**

Subject of Committee Work	Management of Country Parks: A review of delivery options.
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Background	<p><b>Why Country Parks?</b> At its work programming workshop in December the Committee identified Country Parks as a topic they would like to examine within its work programme. This is an area planned for review within the Business Unit later this year, providing an opportune time for the committee to proactively influence the future direction of delivery options.</p> <p>This paper proposes that the committee have an information item on the topic to inform whether or not the committee wishes to do any further work and/or how and when to influence any future review and outcomes.</p> <p><b>Background to Country Parks:</b> Buckinghamshire County Council owns and operates four country parks; Black Park, Langley Park, Denham and Thorney (the Parks) in the south of the county. Since 1999 the Parks have been operating under a policy of operational self-financing. This means that they are required to generate all the income required for their daily operations. In the early years of the policy this was not achieved and the Parks activities were subsidised by the wider Countryside and Heritage Group. However since 2005 operational self-funding has been achieved and in 2010 an annual income target has been set each year as part of the Place service efficiencies, driving the development of new income generating initiatives. The current 'neutral' position is partly as a consequence of BCC investing and allowing income from tenants to be recycled within their business model.</p> <p>As well as the traditional country parks activities, the Parks have established a number of leases to provide additional on-site activities including; 2 high ropes courses, off road Segway's, cycle hire and café facilities, all of which help to attract in excess of ¾ million visitors per year and a combined turnover of the lease holders and the Parks approaching £2m per year.</p> <p>As a result of the Future Shape programme the Council now needs to consider what the most appropriate delivery mechanism might be for the future sustainable management of the Parks to place it in a better</p>



	<p>commercial position. That may mean remaining within the local authority structure, moving outside the traditional delivery model or potentially a hybrid of the two. Whichever option is chosen will present its own specific challenges and these options will need to be considered in association with other Council policies such as Corporate Landlord and Corporate Identity amongst others.</p> <p>The TEE business unit plan to review the area later this and are seeking guidance from the ETL select committee on which options would satisfy the objectives of the Future Shape Council. The ETL committee have an opportunity to proactively examine the challenges and opportunities of delivery model options with a view to inform, influence and help shape the future review/proposed options and future policy direction for the management of the Parks.</p>
<p>Aims and purpose of committee item</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For member to understand the challenges and opportunities surrounding Country Parks and the planned future review of delivery model options for the management of the Country Parks.</li> <li>• For members to consider whether they wish to examine the options and proposals at an early stage to influence the shape and design of the final project/outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p>Key Lines of questioning</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overview of the county's country parks, how many where financial forecasts, trends etc.</li> <li>2. What are the existing management arrangements?</li> <li>3. What are the challenges and opportunities of continuing with the current operation, vs alternative options?</li> <li>4. What are the business drivers for reviewing the existing management arrangements (e.g. financial, outcomes based commissioning framework of the council, changes in demand, partnership working and better outcomes etc.)?</li> <li>5. What is the proposed approach for reviewing the management arrangements for the countryside estate?</li> <li>6. What alternative delivery options are there?</li> <li>7. What are the benefits of outsourcing to the council and to local residents?</li> <li>8. What are the risks of removing country parks from local authorities – e.g. risks to residents, parks, county's special places?</li> <li>9. What appetite is there from partners (public, voluntary groups, districts etc.) to collaboratively manage sites?</li> <li>10. What are the planned review timelines for options appraisals etc. and how and when can the committee add value/influence at the timeliest opportunity?</li> </ol>

Link to BCC Strategic Plan	Our Special Environment.
Recommendations for next steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Committee to agree that they receive an information update at its April committee to examine the key areas of questioning.</li><li>2. Following the committee item the Committee has the option to decide whether or not it wishes to carry out any further work/inquiry in order to make recommendations which will influence the future direction/delivery model options for the future management of country parks.</li></ol>