

Newcastle's Parks and Allotments
Governance of the Newcastle Parks Trust
Public Sessions
July 2018

Introduction

Three public sessions were arranged for Council officers to explain the governance of the Parks Trust (Trust), listen to issues raised and answer questions, and also to take input from the public on the draft terms of reference for the Community Representation Group (CRG).

The draft terms of reference were published in advance of the session, and also informed by specific discussion with the following:-

| Date | Focus Groups |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 st February 2018 | Parks Forum (Focus Group) |
| 10 th May 2018 | Allotment Working Group |
| 16 th May 2018 | Parks Forum (Focus Group) |
| 19 th June 2018 | NAWG Allotment Forum |
| 3 rd July 2018 | NCVS Children and Young People Forum |
| 4 th July 2018 | NCVS General Roundtable Invitation |
| 3 rd September 2018 | Elder's Council |

Public sessions then took place as follows:-

| Date | Venue |
|----------------------------|--|
| 16 th July 2018 | Leazes Park, Springbank Pavilion |
| 17 th July 2018 | West End Women and Girls, Elswick Park (Blue Hall) |
| 22 nd July 2018 | Jesmond Dene, Visitor Centre |

Please note this paper refers to the following documents which can be accessed on request or at the following link: newcastleparks/parkstrust

- **Presentation Pack – July 2018**
- **Articles of Association – July 2018**
- **Draft Terms of Reference – Community Representation Group – July 2018**

The draft terms of reference for the CRG will be passed to the pending Board of Trustees of the Trust with the following key points for their consideration: -

1. General

Some concern was expressed about the way the Board would select members of the CRG. It was acknowledged that the same method of appointment might not be suitable for each category of representative.

2. Composition

2.1.1

There was some opposition to a Trustee being on the CRG and there was a suggestion that the CRG should not have a Trustee included in its number. It was also suggested that the Trustee should not chair the CRG so that any casting vote was made by a non-trustee member of the CRG.

2.1.2 & 2.1.3

There was a suggestion that the Park Representatives should be appointed by/from the members of the Newcastle Parks Forum. This may not be an acceptable suggestion as the Parks Forum is not truly representative of all parks in the city. It was proposed that the Trust should actively encourage the formation of Friends Groups in parks where there are none. Reservations were expressed about the division of the city into east and west. It was suggested that the city should be divided into north, east and west.

2.1.4 & 2.1.5

There was a suggestion from the Newcastle Allotments Working Group that they should be able to facilitate the appointment to the CRG of the two Allotment Representatives. The point was made that they represent all allotment sites in the city and already run an election for members of their committee.

2.1.6

Reservations were expressed that the Trustees would appoint the people they wanted to achieve the outcomes the Trustees seek. The concerns expressed stem from a concern that the creation of the Trust results in a loss of democratic control and accountability.

2.2

No specific comments noted.

2.3

The categories of people identified in this section are those which the project team believe are users of parks who do not always have resources available to actively influence what happens in parks. It was not an attempt to include someone with each protected characteristic as set out in the Equality Act 2006.

It has been suggested that a representative is included from the LGBT community in recognition of the fact that the Council has supported the LGBT community by providing space in the parks for Newcastle Pride.

2.3.1

A request has been made that the Trustees allow one or two young people to shadow them so that the young people develop the skills and experience to secure a place on a Board of Trustees in their own right. The minimum age for a trustee is 16.

2.3.2

The Elders Council want the representative in this category to be an older person and not, "...a person who works with older people." The alternate provision was included in case it is not possible to recruit an older person to the CRG. Experience in the public engagement process would suggest there will be no difficulty appointing an older person to the CRG and that the Terms of Reference could be amended to remove the potential of representation by anyone other than an older person.

2.4

Strong views were expressed that the appointment process to the CRG should be by way of open election. NCVS has offered to work with the Trust to facilitate the appointment process if that would be welcomed by the Trustees. The Elders Council will consider whether or not they can facilitate the appointment of an older person to the CRG.

2.5

No specific comments noted.

3. Conduct

3.1

One member of staff working in the parks was keen to point out that timing and location of meetings would be key to ensuring participation in the CRG. They were particularly concerned that the cost of travelling across the city to a meeting would prevent some people becoming involved.

3.2

It was suggested that the recommendations of the CRG should be binding on the Trustees. It was explained that this was not possible and that the Trustees had to be final decision makers.

3.3

It was suggested that the Chair of the CRG should not be a Trustee so that the casting vote would be held by an appointed member of the CRG.

3.4

No specific comments noted.

4. Administration

4.1

An observation was made that the taking of minutes is an onerous task and that it could be difficult to get a member of the CRG to agree to take minutes. It was suggested that the Trust should provide some administrative support for this task.

4.2

There was some suspicion about how the Chair of the CRG would use their discretion in deciding what is confidential information.

4.3

This provision should be amended to clearly express that the Board can only remove a member if it is in the best interests of the Trust and/or the member has acted in a way that is contrary to the charitable objects.

4.4

Concern was expressed that the Trustees would amend the Terms of Reference to diminish the role of the CRG.

5. Definitions

No specific comments noted.