

To: Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

On: 16 March 2020

Report by: Lead Officer

Heading: Conversion of Grassed Areas to Parking

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 4 November 2019, members of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed the purpose, scope and timeline for this review.
- 1.2 This review will consider the potential to relieve parking pressures within residential areas through the repurposing of Council maintained open spaces.
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2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Board is asked to:
- Note the current position regards progress with this review.
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3. **Background**

- 3.1 There are many small areas of grassed and / or planted areas within our residential estates. The majority of which are maintained, on behalf of the Council, by Environment and Infrastructure (Amenity Services).

- 3.4 There are also suggestions of increasing pressures around available parking spaces within our residential estates.
- 3.5 This review will consider whether there is a need to, and whether it would be possible to, repurpose some of these maintained small areas to create additional parking space and thereby relieve some of the parking pressures.

4.0 Purpose of the Review

- 4.1 The key purpose of the review is to:
- (1) Set out the Council's current arrangements for maintaining and / or repurposing open spaces across Renfrewshire;
 - (2) Review available evidence to measure and identify the scale of the parking problem, linked to open spaces, within specific areas and across Renfrewshire;
 - (3) Identify benefits or challenges regards the repurposing of open spaces within residential areas; and
 - (4) Provide recommendations for consideration of the Board.

- 4.2 This first update focuses on Point 4.1(1) above, specifically setting out current arrangements for open space maintenance and the process involved in meeting requests to repurpose open spaces within Renfrewshire.

5 Current Arrangements – Open Space Maintenance

- 5.1 The council currently has significant areas of open space across Renfrewshire with ownership, split between Environment and Infrastructure and Communities, Housing and Planning Services (CHAPS).
- Each open space tends to be identified as being under the ownership of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or of General Services Account.
- 5.2 General maintenance of these areas is managed by Environment and Infrastructure (Operational Services).
- 5.3 Each open space is provided with a reference number. However, it is difficult to explicitly identify the actual total number of open spaces within residential areas, as many open spaces are in close proximity within the same locality and are often identified using the same reference number, also known as Polygons.

6. Current Arrangements – Repurposing of Open Spaces

6.1 There are opportunities available for an individual(s) to request to repurpose an area of open space. This will generally involve an application to purchase the open space from the Council.

6.2 The individual will identify the open space, which tends to be adjacent to their own property, and make an application to purchase to the Council's Asset Management Team.

6.3 Asset Management will initially seek advice from:

- Legal Services – to complete a Title Check to confirm the land is owned by the Council;
- CHAPS - to confirm that the land in question is / could be deemed as surplus and there are no Planning issues and / or applications; and
- Environment and Infrastructure – to confirm there are no issues with transferring the land.

6.4. If there are no issues the applicant will be provided with a quote for the purchase of the land and appropriate legal fees.

6.5. The timeframe for completion of each application can vary, however it would usually take a minimum of 6 months from initial enquiry to completion and transfer.

6.6. Points of Note:

- There are on average, no more than 10 applications each year;
- Very few applications are made by groups, including community groups, with the vast majority being made by individuals; and
- Very few applications are to allow the repurposing of the open space to create parking facilities, with the vast majority to accommodate property extensions.

6.7 A small number of requests have been made by Community Groups. However, these have tended to be to propose aesthetic changes to the open area e.g. planting of flower beds, rather than repurposing of the space.

Such requests tend to be dealt with through a leasing arrangement, rather than a purchase request.

- 6.8 Elected members can also make requests for repurposing of open spaces, as this would be viewed as a local ward issue. Such requests would be considered by the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board.

Officers from Environment and Infrastructure would usually undertake a formal consultation process and traffic monitoring surveys within the affected area. This would support Board members to take informed decisions.

- 6.9 If a community group felt they could improve underused or neglected green space within their area and had a project which could potentially strengthen the character, identity and heritage of their community they could consider making a funding request to the Council's Green Spaces, Parks, Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund.

This fund provides investment where the community can demonstrate a sustainable plan to improve and maintain the condition and use of a green space or community asset.

Whilst additional parking spaces could potentially be an element of such a request, it is unlikely that it would be its' core purpose.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable
3. **Community/Council Planning** – None
4. **Legal**- None
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** –
 - a) The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations

contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **Cosla Implications** – None
13. **Climate Implications** – None apparent as this stage, however this will require to be explored in more detail during the review.

List of Background Papers

- (a) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Approval 27/08/18
- (b) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Minutes 04/11/19

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Finance and Resources for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Michael Moran, Assistant Economic Development Manager, 0141 618 7269

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