

MINUTES OF SPECIAL EXPENSES SCHEME TASK GROUP

3 JULY 2019

PRESENT:

Members of the Group:

Councillors Leigh Hunt (Chair), Gillias, McQueen, Mistry, Mrs O'Rourke, Pacey-Day, Picker and Roodhouse

Officers:

Mannie Ketley (Head of Corporate Resources), Jon Illingworth (Financial Services Manager), Chris Worman (Parks and Grounds Manager), Lynsey Parkinson (Corporate Accountant) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 were approved and signed by the Chair.

5. SPECIAL EXPENSES BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Copies of the Special Expenses Background Information folder were circulated to members of the Task Group following the inaugural meeting on 11 June 2019. The folder was briefly introduced at the inaugural meeting but members felt that more time was needed to digest the information presented.

Due to the sheer volume of background information provided by officers, the folder was published separately to the agenda and minutes and is available to view [here](#).

The folder included the following information:

- LGA Publication: Basic Facts about Rugby broken down by Parish
- List of Councillors by Ward and Parish Areas
- List of Green Spaces in the Borough
- Budget Setting and Special Expenses Calculation:
 - Budget Setting and Special Expenses Process
 - An Overview of the Special Expenses Calculation 2019/20
 - Detailed Special Expenses Calculation 2013/14 - 2019/20
 - Tax Base 2019/20
 - Summary of Town Area Special Expenses 2019/20
 - Parks and Open Spaces Budget 2019/20
 - Cemeteries Budget 2019/20
 - Town Centre CCTV and Management Budget 2019/20
 - Parish Precepts 2019/20
 - Chart – Special Expense Areas Average Band D 2019/20
 - Special Expenses by Area and Valuation Band 2019/20

- Total Council Tax Billed by Area and Valuation Band 2019/20
- Council Tax Bill Examples 1 - 3
- The Special Expenses Calculation - Scenario
- CIPFA Special Expenses Review 2015 - Bedford Borough Council
 - Guidance Note on Financial Arrangements with Parish and Town Councils - May 2002

The Head of Corporate Resources, the Financial Services Manager, the Parks and Grounds Manager and the Corporate Accountant attended the meeting to answer questions.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- As Rugby Borough Council (RBC) was a two-tier authority, a clear understanding of charges and each council's responsibilities was needed. A breakdown would include responsibilities for Warwickshire County Council (WCC), RBC and parish councils/meetings.
- The layout of the CIPFA Special Expenses Review 2015 report for Bedford Borough Council (Section 7 of the Special Expenses Background Information folder) provided a better understanding of such a complex topic. It was agreed that similar layout will be applied to the Task Group's review report.
- Circulated with the folder was DEFRA's Guidance Note on Financial Arrangements with Parish and Town Councils (May 2002). Members felt that the document provided valuable information on how to undertake such a complex review. In particular, the 'five principles to follow in financial arrangements' were highlighted. A member of the Task Group highlighted the importance of clear methodology behind a set of principles informing the Task Group's conclusions and recommendations.
- The Chair sought clarification with regards to the frequency of meetings between the Borough Council and parish councils/meetings. Historically, two meetings a year (January and September) were held at the Town Hall to provide an opportunity for parish councils/meetings to discuss topics with Borough Councillors and officers. Officers informed the Task Group that as part of the precept setting process, parish councils/meetings were provided with the opportunity to meet with the Financial Services Team. With regards to the Borough Council and parish meetings, a response will be provided at the next meeting.
- In 2016, together with councils across Warwickshire, RBC signed up to the Local Councils' Charter. The document was a framework to support a mutually beneficial working relationship between the tiers of authority in Warwickshire. 'Improving Communication' was a key principle of the charter. It was noted that at some parish councils' meetings, communication with county and borough officers wasn't an issue.

The Task Group thanked the officers the background information provided in the folder.

Parks and Open Spaces

Parks in the urban area of Rugby were managed by the council. The Parks and Grounds Manager provided the Task Group with highlights from the RBC Parks and Ground Service Annual Report 2018. A copy of the report is attached at Annex 1 to the minutes.

Any parish that wished to extend their current play area or provide a playing field had to purchase their own land. Any play equipment was purchased by the parish council and maintenance of it paid for from the parish precept.

In the urban area, all parks service, play equipment maintenance, changing rooms, play buildings, etc were covered by the Special Expenses Scheme.

Any new play areas (rural and urban locations) were a general expense. Before requesting funding from the General Fund, officers would look at grant funding available.

Caldecott Park

Caldecott Park was the only park in Rugby with a visitor count and accurate figures were available. Annually, around half a million of people visit the park. The Caldecott Park Visitor Survey Report from May 2017 is attached at Annex 2 to the minutes. The survey was carried out bi-annually.

The Task Group was informed that four percent of visitors to Caldecott Park came from CV23 postcode. In terms of the rural area contributing towards the cost of Caldecott Park, a better understanding of how much was spend on the park was required.

Cemeteries

The council managed the following:

- Cemeteries
 - Croop Hill Cemetery (open to new burials)
 - Watts Lane Cemetery (open to new burials)
 - Whinfield Cemetery (open to new burials)
 - Clifton Road Cemetery (closed for new burials/open for family plots)
 - Rainsbrook Cemetery (not yet available for burials)
- 8 closed churchyards (urban and rural locations)

The Parks and Grounds Manager clarified that the Rainsbrook Crematorium was a general expense jointly managed by RBC and Daventry District Council. The Rainsbrook Cemetery attached to the Rainsbrook Crematorium was a special expense.

It was noted that villages were likely to have their own burial grounds and to accommodate the borough's growth, were required to buy more land.

Special Expenses/General Expenses

Officers provided clarification as sought by the Task Group on the following:

- Community rooms in the urban area that are not part of the portfolio – officers were not aware of any community rooms in the urban area that were not part of the council's portfolio.
- Changing rooms were a special expense.
- Capital costs were a general expense.

- Property repairs and maintenance – changing rooms, cemetery chapels, the band stand in Caldecott Park, etc were a special expense. Buildings such as the Town Hall and Rugby Art Gallery and Museum were a general expense.
- Works on trees – RBC was responsible for trees on RBC land. Trees in the urban area were a special expense. Some trees in the rural area (within the council's housing) were Housing Revenue Account expense. Highway trees were a WCC responsibility.
- The provision of dog bins and rubbish bins – in the parishes, the bins were purchased from the parish precept and emptied by RBC. It was unclear whether in the urban area this was a special expense or a general expense. Clarification will be provided at the next meeting.
- Enforcement was a general expense.
- Hanging baskets of flowers throughout the urban area – mainly covered by sponsorship. Parishes such as Dunchurch were charged for the service.
- Roundabouts were covered by sponsorship.

Grass cutting

Rugby's position was unique as a formal agreement with WCC was in place to manage the highway verges and trees in the villages. In the mid-2000, the formal agreement ceased but a gentlemen's agreement continued. RBC continued to provide the grass cutting in the town and village grass cutting in the parishes. The grass cutting of the interconnecting roads was carried out by WCC.

With regards to the highway verge cutting, a number of cuts was paid for by RBC with WCC paying for three cuts a year. 3 cuts a year were the highway safety cuts to ensure visibility.

In the town area, there were 14 grass cuts a year. RBC paid for 11 (part of the Special Expenses Scheme) and WCC for 3.

The responsibility of rural grass cutting was subcontracted by the council. If the council was approached by the parish council with regards to maintaining the grass in the village themselves, with the agreement of WCC, the responsibility would be transferred to the parish council. In this case, the village would become the council's subcontractor. Any interconnecting road (roads between the villages) were a WCC responsibility.

If a village wished to have more grass cuts through the year, the finances would be raised by increasing the parish precept. Similarly, if there was need for more grass cuts in the urban area, the finances would be raised by increasing the special expense.

It was noted that with regards to grass cutting, there was equity between the urban area and rural area as the service cost was covered by special expenses and parish precept respectively.

CCTV and Town Centre Security

A town centre management fee was paid to the Rugby Business Improvement District (BID) solely by the special expense area which included a contribution towards the cost of the CCTV. The fee was subject to annual inflation.

When the BID was formed, an agreement was made where the Borough Council would continue to fund the portion of the service that it initially maintained. Prior to BID, CCTV was a general expense but a decision was made at a later date to move the service to the Special Expenses Scheme.

A member of the Task Group commented that no service level agreement was in place between Rugby BID and the council. It was noted that the relationship of the council and Rugby BID was outside the remit of the Task Group and therefore recommended that a suggestion was made to scrutiny to review the council's partnership with Rugby BID and their expenditure.

A member of the Task Group commented that CCTV in the town centre added to the safety and economic prosperity of the town. It encouraged business, trade and tourism which benefited all of the population of the borough.

It was highlighted that not all people living in the Borough come into town. People living around the periphery of the Borough were less likely to come to Rugby since they border with other towns and cities such as Coventry, Hinckley and Daventry.

Officers stated that no data to support the conclusion that rural area doesn't benefit from the CCTV in the town centre was available. A suggestion was made to use census data to get a rough understanding of where people live, work, study, etc.

Members were informed that following a conversation with Managing Director of Rugby BID, information on users of the town centre wasn't available as the BID doesn't collect such data.

A conclusion made by the Task Group was that an agreed percentage contribution to special expenses based on parish and urban population could be applied but more information about costs was required, i.e. breakdown of costs for Caldecott Park, to ensure that the split was fair.

The Task Group agreed that a councillors' questionnaire was not required as part of the consultation.

Consultation Update

The questionnaire was circulated to all parish councils/meetings as requested at the inaugural meeting on 11 June 2019.

Following the initial email incorporating a link to the electronic version of the questionnaire, a letter with a paper copy of the questionnaire was sent out.

To date, nine responses were received. The deadline for responses was Friday 19 July 2019. A reminder will be emailed out next week to the parish councils and meetings that had not yet responded to the questionnaire.

Officers will aim to circulate a consultation summary to members prior to the next meeting of the Task Group scheduled for 24 July 2019. A presentation on the details of the findings will be given at the meeting.

The Task Group was informed that officers had received enquiries from parish clerks requesting further information to provide a better understanding of Special Expenses. Members were assured that appropriate responses were provided.

Officers will liaise with WCC to inform them of the review being undertaken as they may receive enquiries relating to Special Expenses.

6. PLANNING FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Task Group will take place at 6pm on Wednesday 24 July 2019 where the officers will present the following:

- A summary of consultation responses received from parish councils/meetings
- CV23 postcode figures for the users of the Rainsbrook Cemetery if available and feasible to produce
- A list of parishes subcontracted to provide their own village grass cutting
- A breakdown of costs related to Caldecott Park

CHAIR

Rugby Borough Council Parks & Ground Service

Annual Report 2018

Chris Worman MBE Parks & Grounds Manager

As the Parks & Grounds Manager, may I welcome you to the 2018 Parks and Grounds Service Annual Report. Can I firstly pay tribute to staff, officers, elected members and volunteers that support this service throughout the year and without whom we would not be able to provide the service we do.

During the current pressures that have been placed on all of local government , I would also like to express my huge appreciation of the support from the public for our Borough's parks and green spaces, which is testament to how important they are to our local communities.

Despite some challenges the service has managed to continue with its hard work in successfully delivering high quality parks and green spaces across Rugby, retained our 5 Green Flag Awards and 'in bloom' Gold medal status , installed a new play area at Whitehall Recreation Ground, supported Rugby as the countries second national hedgehog improvement area and attracted over £80,000 of external funding.

As a front line service we always seek to protect and promote a green environment for Rugby, whilst encouraging people to think differently. Some of the challenges we have faced have brought about positive change such as more wildflowers and greater community events. We all have a part to play in continuing this process to ensure an efficient and effective service is maintained.

During the last 12 months we have also undertaken a review of the grounds maintenance service to ensure it is operating efficiently and is still providing a cost effective service for the residents of the borough.

As the borough continues to grow we have also spent a considerable amount of time supporting our planning colleagues in ensuring all the new development delivers quality environmental benefits to our new and emerging communities.

It is encouraging to see through these challenging times that our dedicated staff continue to deliver on, and maintain awards along with our partners such as Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and the many voluntary and community organisations that we work alongside.

While the economic outlook remains uncertain, the Parks & Grounds Service will continue to focus on delivering and promoting our corporate priority of enhancing our local, open spaces to make them places where people want to be. So as one of the fastest growing towns in the county, the public can enjoy parks, green spaces, play areas, wildlife and allotments across the Borough, to enable them to live healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

Contents

1. The Parks & Grounds Service
2. Parks Accolades 2018
3. Service Improvement Targets 2018
4. Contacts

The Parks & Grounds Service

The Parks & Grounds Service is part of the Environmental and Public Realm Directorate of Rugby Borough Council, and sits with the Environment Portfolio. The service is committed to the advancement of a green, sustainable town providing parks, open spaces and services that are accessible to all sections of our community.

Our corporate priority is to enhance our local open spaces to make them places where people want to be.

Parks and Grounds consists of the following services:

- Manage and maintains over 350 hectares of green spaces including parks, country parks, public open spaces, woodlands and recreational grounds
- Manage the Councils outdoor sports facilities such as football and Rugby pitches.
- Manages all special events on Council land
- Manages the Borough Councils tree stock and protects the Boroughs Tree Preservation Orders.
- Supports the 8 devolved allotment associations across the Town.
- Manages and maintains 40 outdoor play areas, 19 youth facilities areas.
- Provide a ranger service to Caldecott Park
- Protects and enhances designated nature conservation sites throughout Rugby, and monitor regional targets for local biodiversity for the Borough.
- Manages the annual Rugby in Bloom campaign
- Liaise and work with community groups, schools and volunteers to support and improve our green spaces

Parks Accolades 2017/18

The Parks & Grounds Service prides itself on delivering excellence and have been fortunate to have been recognised through awards or being successful in projects. In 2017/18 the Parks & Grounds Service received the following recognition:

Heart of England in Bloom 2018

Rugby were once again winners of a Gold medal Award in the small city category, category winners and selected to represent the region in the 2019 National Britain in Bloom campaign.

Green Flag accreditation 2018

The Green Flag Award is the international standard for parks and green spaces and is supported by Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. In July Rugby was awarded 5 Green Flag Awards for Caldecott Park, Centenary Park, Millennium Green, Rainsbrook Cemetery and Crematorium and Gladstone Green Pocket Park.

National Keep Britain Tidy Network Finalist 2018

Rugby was a national keep Britain tidy national network finalist for the Love Parks Award 2018 for our achievements in improving local environmental quality.

British Horse Society Local Authority Access Award 2018

Rugby continues to work with a range of partner organisations to enhance our open spaces. One such example was to create a designated horse route around the Diamond Jubilee Wood to help to resolve some long standing conflict between different service users. Through this work the council was presented with the Access Award for excellence in delivering enhanced equestrian access at the Diamond Jubilee Wood.

Service Improvement Targets 2017/18

In line with the Green Spaces strategy our outcomes and measures are split into 10 themes. Each theme is designed to reflect the broad requirement of both strategic provision and operational delivery of green spaces within the Borough. Some of these will only be attained after the 10 year plan.

Theme 1 Strategic Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Quality, accessibility and quantity standards introduced.	A Green Spaces Audit has been completed as part of the local plan renewal Protected 2 more green spaces for perpetuity with Fields in Trust.

Theme 2 Quality Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Measures Average overall quality score for green spaces	Measured and reported as per our performance indicator.
Number of Green Flag awards (GFA)	5 Green Flag Park Awards
Retention of quality awards	Maintained the GFA and retained a Gold Medal in the Heart of England in Bloom campaign.
Number of modern apprenticeships	1 additional apprentice employed

Theme 3 Accessible Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Accessibility issues visibly addressed and reduced	Scrutiny review and audit undertaken to identify areas for improvement. Various small projects of improvements to paths, gates and street furniture to improve access and DDA compliance have been undertaken throughout the year.

Theme 4 Healthy Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
More diverse use of green spaces	Green spaces are used for a variety of organised or impromptu activities. Examples during 2018 have included a community scarecrow festival, outdoor yoga and supporting community growing spaces.
New partnerships formed with health agencies	Links being made to Public Health Warwickshire
Increased level of activities focused on health and well being	During 2018 we have facilitated the weekly Park Run at Whinfield Recreation Ground along with a number of night runs along Great Central Walk. Other activities include yoga and cycle cross.
Increased level of participation in sport and activities within green spaces	Facilitated 54 community events on our green spaces along with 398 sports matches.

Theme 5 Welcoming Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Increased level of participation and visitor numbers to green spaces	Whilst we only count visitors in Caldecott Park anecdotally our spaces are increasingly busy with reflects the national picture. Usage of Caldecott Park remains around 650,000 visits per annum
More diverse representation of local communities at events, activities and wider use	We have had representation at events from all sections of our community including; Single fathers Eastern European Community Afro Caribbean Community Asian Community

Theme 6 Sustainable Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Reduced impacts on the natural environment	Vehicles and mowing machinery fitted with 'trackers' to ensure mowing is undertaken in the most economical route. Introduced more electric powered hand held equipment. 100 new trees planted, and new hedgerows created.
Greater awareness among personnel of impacts on the environment	Over 250 hours of training undertaken with our grounds maintenance team.

Theme 7 Community Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Opportunities for community increased	With the increase in 'friends' groups we have more opportunities for volunteering along with facilitating community events across our green spaces.
Perception of anti-social behaviour reduced	Increased ranger and community warden patrols during the summer to include other Town Parks.
Volunteering by local people increased	Over 11000hrs of volunteering undertaken in 2018
More people becoming involved in their green space	New users groups established Bluebell Walk during 2018.

Theme 8 Network Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Green Infrastructure measurably increased	Additional green spaces provided in new developments including the Gateway Development.
Developments have a measurable benefit to the green infrastructure	Responded to over 250 planning consultations to ensure new developments comply with open space, arboricultural and biodiversity standards

Theme 9 Funding Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
More structured investment in green spaces	RBC capital programme in place

Measurable value for money for local residents	National research suggests that for every £1.00 invested in green space there is a return of £34.00 in wider community benefit.
Increased external funding as a result of partnership working	£80,000 of external funding secured in 2018 £21,299 raised in sponsorship or donations
Measurable improvements as a result of external funding	Improved and more inclusive play facilities at Whitehall Recreation Ground

Theme 10 Natural Green Space

Measures	Delivered Outcomes
Increased biodiversity within green spaces	150,000 m2 of grass land managed for biodiversity
Extension and expansion of green infrastructure networks	New development providing green infrastructure as part of national planning guidance.

Parks Development.

The further development, improvement and investment in our parks and green spaces is key in meeting the needs of both today's and our future generations. We are working ever more closely with local residents and community groups to deliver the aspirations of our local communities which includes better infrastructure such as footpaths and fences along with providing new facilities, better interpretation and quality play areas. This is a central pillar of the Borough Councils corporate priorities for the service.

Grounds Maintenance.

Meeting service standards and the maintenance of green spaces is achieved by our ongoing approach to undertake the work via our in-house grounds maintenance team. During 2018 we have reviewed the operational efficiency of the service and hope to introduce some changes during the next 12 months. These changes will ensure the service is fit for the future and adaptable to both the financial and climatic challenges that we are facing.

Grounds maintenance work includes the cutting of over 250 hectares of grass on various sites across the Borough including highways, housing and park land, and the pruning of 10 hectares of shrubbed areas, maintaining floral displays and play areas.

We have also engaged with local communities to produce added value by managing volunteering on ground maintenance works with no added cost to the Borough Council.

Local Nature Reserves

We continue to manage our local nature reserves in partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, and local friends groups. These are, Swift Valley Park, Newbold Quarry, Cock Robin Wood, Great Central Walk Ashlawn Cutting, and a newly formed group at the northern end of Great Central Walk at the Newton Cutting.

Alongside these we have local wildlife sites at Linnell Road, Parkfield Road and Kilsby Lane

We are also supporting the Nature Improvement Areas (NIA) and the Dunsmore Living Landscape Project, and the second national hedgehog improvement areas. These partnerships are led by The Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) to deliver biodiversity projects over the next few years across Coventry, Warwickshire & Solihull to encourage a variety of plants, animals and habitats.

Community Engagement & Partnerships

One of our keys strands of work is the partnerships with numerous groups and organisations across the Borough. These bring huge added value to the service area whilst also helping to build ownership and a sense of place within our communities. This work varies from volunteers working on site specific projects, engaging with local schools through Rugby in Bloom initiatives to wider community consultations, surveys and use of social media to ensure our services and activities are accessible and relevant to all.

A few examples include Friends of Parks groups, Local Residents Associations, Rugby Gardeners Guild, Local Allotment Associations, local schools and colleges, Public Health Warwickshire, Warwickshire Police, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum and Sport & Recreation Section of the Borough Council.

Volunteering

The Parks & Grounds Service recognises that volunteers make a significant and valuable contribution to the service. In 2018 there were over 11,000 hours of volunteer hours on our parks and green spaces undertaking a range of tasks from habitat management work to helping at events.

Apprenticeships in Parks & Grounds

Along with the rest of the Borough Council the Parks & Grounds Service supports training through the modern apprenticeship schemes and works with Warwickshire College to find suitable placements.

In 2017/18 the Parks & Grounds Service took on:

1 new apprenticeship with the Grounds Maintenance Team

We hope that you have found our Annual Parks Report interesting.

For information on any of our parks and green spaces please visit www.rugby.gov.uk/parks.

E-mail talkinthepark@rugby.gov.uk

Telephone 01788 533706

Twitter @RBCparklife

Or write to: Parks & Grounds, Rugby Borough Council, Town Hall, Rugby, Warwickshire.
CV21 2RR

Contacts within Parks & Grounds:

Parks & Grounds Manager – Chris Worman MBE

Green Space Officer (Development) - Colin Horton

Green Space Officer (North) – Stephen Cook

Green Space Officer (South) - Scott Ballard

Green Space Support Officer – Fiona James

Grounds Maintenance Team Leader Deborah Middlemiss

Arboricultural Officer – David Gower

Park Ranger – Trevor Hoyte

Head of Service

Dan Green – Head of Environment and Public Realm

Portfolio Holder

Cllr Howard Roberts

Our Partners include:

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (including the Rugby Branch Volunteers)

Individual Support Solutions

Rugby First

Rugby Gardeners Guild

HMP Onley Prison

Warwickshire Butterfly Conservation

Warwickshire County Council

Warwickshire Police

Warwickshire Bat Group

Public Health Warwickshire

Rugby Rotary Club

Rugby Disability Forum

The Royal British Legion

Friends of Swift Valley Park

Friends of Newton Cutting

Friends of Bluebell Wood

Benns Friends

Hillmorton Village Green Volunteers

Friends of Rugby East

Friends of Cock Robin Wood

The Caldecott Collective

The Toolshed Café

Nature Force

The Conservation Volunteers

The National Association of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners



Caldecott Park Visitor Survey

May 2017

Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Methodology	4
3.0	Results of visitor survey	5
4.0	Conclusions and recommendations	14

Appendix A: Visitor survey questionnaire 2017

Appendix B: Visitor survey data 2017

List of tables and figures

Table 1: Visitor survey sessions

Table 2: Method of travel

Table 3: Travel times

Table 4: Frequency of visits

Table 5: Changes in frequency of visit

Table 6: Average length of stay

Table 7: Change in visit duration

Table 8: Frequency of visits to cafe

Table 9: Perceived changes in quality of Caldecott Park

Table 10: Awareness of issues

Table 11: Preferred communication method

Figure 1: Percentage breakdown of method of travel

Figure 2: Percentage breakdown of travel times

Figure 3: Percentage breakdown of frequency of visits

Figure 4: Percentage breakdown of changes in frequency of visit

Figure 5: Percentage breakdown of average length of stay

Figure 6: Percentage breakdown of change in visit duration

Figure 7: Percentage breakdown of frequency of visits to cafe

Figure 8: Overall visitor satisfaction of cafe

Figure 9: Overall quality rating of Caldecott Park

Figure 10: Percentage breakdown of perceived changes in quality of Caldecott Park

Figure 11: Percentage breakdown for awareness of the Green Flag Award in England

Figure 12: Percentage breakdown for awareness of the Green Flag Award for Caldecott Park

Figure 13: Percentage breakdown for awareness of the Heritage Lottery Fund

Figure 14: Percentage breakdown for awareness of use of social media in Caldecott Park

Figure 15: Percentage breakdown of preferred communication method

Figure 16: Percentage breakdown of those interested in joining a friends group

Figure 17: Percentage breakdown of those interested in volunteering opportunities

Figure 18: Percentage breakdown of age ranges

Figure 19: Percentage breakdown of post code areas

Figure 20: Percentage breakdown of ethnicity

Project name: Caldecott Park Visitor Survey May 2017

Project ref: 183.14

Report status: Final

Issue: 7th June 2017

Report completed by:

Red Kite Network Limited

The John Rose Building, High Street, Coalport

Shropshire, TF8 7HT

t: 01952 582111

e: info@redkitenetwork.co.uk

w.: www.redkitenetwork.co.uk



1.0 Introduction

This report sets out the findings and results of a series of on site visitor surveys undertaken at Caldecott Park, Rugby during 2017. The report was commissioned by Rugby Borough Council (RBC) and Red Kite Network Limited were appointed in April 2017 to undertake the survey work and to interpret and present the data.

Caldecott Park is situated in the heart of Rugby Town Centre and has achieved the Green Flag Award for a number of years. The park was refurbished as part of a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) restoration project in 2008/09, which included general landscaping, a new cafe, warden's office, new play areas and improvements to drainage. As part of the HLF project, funding was given to bring new users to the park and a commitment given by Rugby Borough Council to manage and maintain the park to a prescribed standard until at least 2019.

A visitor survey was originally conducted within Caldecott Park in 2004. Red Kite Network Limited completed visitor surveys during 2013 and 2015, interviewing over 100 individuals each time. This report repeats the methodology conducted in previous years and provides general comparative commentary in relation to 2013, 2015 and 2017. In broad terms the visitor survey seeks to understand general patterns of visitor behaviour, perceptions of the park's quality, reasons for use and awareness of issues such as the Green Flag Award and Heritage Lottery Fund.



2.0 Methodology

The 2017 Caldecott Park Visitor Surveys were conducted with 102 individuals during May 2017 outlined within Table 1 below.

Date	Time	Duration	No of surveys
Thursday 25th May 2017	11.00am - 1.30pm	2.5 hrs	43
Saturday 27th May 2017	1.30pm - 3.15pm	1.75 hrs	36
Wednesday 31st May 2017	10.30am - 12.30pm	2 hrs	23

Table 1: Visitor survey sessions

The surveyor was equipped with paper copies of the survey form, clip board and pens. The surveyor approached people in the park and explained the reason for the survey. Each respondent was asked to complete the survey and return the form to the Tool Shed Cafe or a member of the survey team. Members of the survey team were on hand to answer any queries in relation to the questionnaire.

As an incentive for completing the survey, participants were entitled to a free cup of tea, coffee, cake or ice cream from the Tool Shed Cafe.

The surveys were undertaken around the late May Bank Holiday, and the last survey day was during May Half Term. The weather was hot and sunny for the first survey session, overcast and windy for the second session, and dry and warm for the final session. Surveying on Saturday 27th May took place after a lunchtime vigil, which included speeches and music.

The methodology focused on maximising exposure to visitor numbers during the day within available resources and time constraints. The limitations of the methodology therefore did not include visitors during early mornings or evenings. In addition there were no regular organised events or activities taking place during the survey session so users who attended specific events or activities were not sampled.



3.0 Results of visitor survey

The questionnaire template developed and used for the 2017 visitor survey is provided in Appendix A. Based on the information gathered from the 102 individuals completing the survey, the following results and findings have been obtained. It should be noted that not all the questions were completed by the 102 participants, and some participants gave more than one answer to some of the questions. The total number of recorded responses is given within each sub section of the report.

3.1 Method of travel

Respondents were asked to specify the main type of transport they used to get to Caldecott Park. Of those who answered the question, the main transportation types were walking (55%) and car (30%). Table two and Figure one provide a breakdown of results.

Question 1: How did you travel to Caldecott Park today?

Method	Number of responses
Car	30
Walk	55
Cycle	5
Bus	9
Other	3
Total	102

Table 2: Method of travel

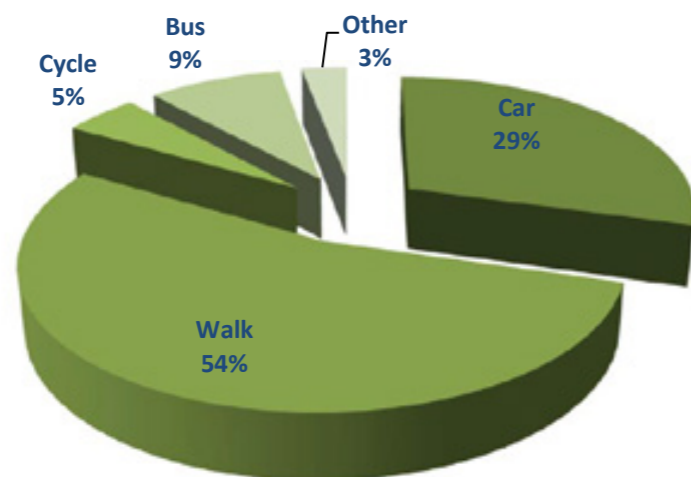


Figure 1: Percentage breakdown of method of travel

Comment: The percentage of respondents who walked to the park (54%) has returned to 2013 levels (51%), after a spike in 2015 (72%). This has not resulted in a proportionate shift to car use (29% in 2017 compared with 23% in 2015), but rather a greater variety in other transport modes, including cycle (5%), bus (9%), and other (such as coach and mobility scooter) (3%).

3.2 Travel time

Following on from the method of travel, those who responded were asked to indicate how long it took them to travel to the park. 50% of respondents indicated that their travel time was less than 10 minutes. Assuming that average walking speed is approximately 4 miles (6km) per hour and average car speed is 20 miles (32km) per hour, this would indicate travel distances for 50% of respondents of less than 0.67 miles (1.08km) or 3.33 miles (5.31km) respectively. 22% of respondents indicated that their travel time was greater than 25 minutes. Table three and Figure two provide a breakdown of the responses returned.

Question 2: How long did it take you to travel to Caldecott Park today?

Time	Number of responses
0-5 mins	22
6-10 mins	28
11-15 mins	20
16-20 mins	8
21-25 mins	2
More than 25 mins	22
Total	102

Table 3: Travel times

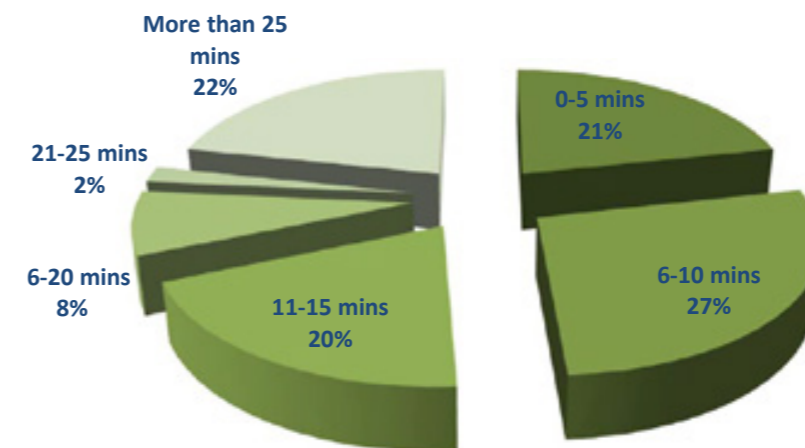


Figure 2: Percentage breakdown of travel times

Comment: The results from this year's survey reveal a higher proportion of respondents spending less than 15 minutes travelling to the park. This suggests a higher usage of the park by local residents and workers. The number of people spending more than 25 minutes travelling to the park has doubled from 2015, suggesting it has become a destination park for visitors to the area.

3.3 Frequency of visit

Question 3 asked those who took part in the survey to indicate on average how often they visited Caldecott Park. 15% of those who responded indicated that on average they visited on a weekly basis and 20% of respondents indicated that they visited the park more than once per week. Table four and figure three provide a breakdown of the results returned for question 3.

Question 3: On average how often do you visit Caldecott Park?

Frequency of visit	Number of responses
This is my first visit	6
Daily	13
More than once per week	20
Weekly	15
Monthly	22
Less than once per month	26
Total	102

Table 4: Frequency of visits

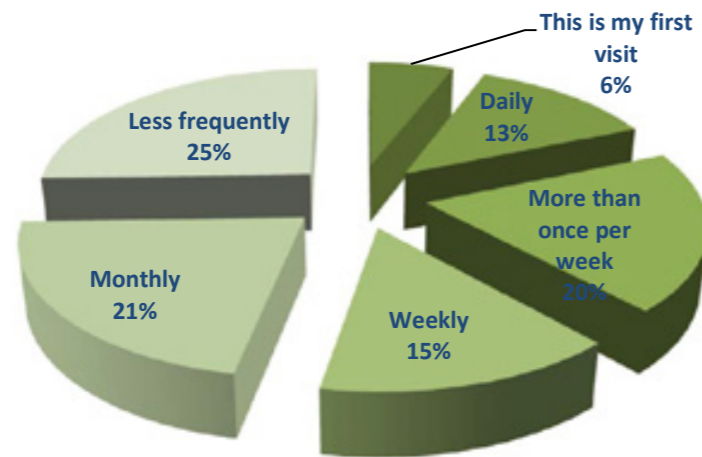


Figure 3: Percentage breakdown of frequency of visits

Comment: There has been a drop in the number of visitors who indicate they visit the park at least weekly, from 64% in 2015 to 48% in 2017. The number of respondents reporting they visit less than once per month has more than doubled over the same time period, which might correlate with the increase in visitors travelling from further afield to visit the park, as discussed in Section 3.2.

3.4 Changes in frequency of visit

As part of the questionnaire survey, visitors were asked to indicate whether in the last five years the frequency of their visits had changed. 55% of visitors stated that the frequency of their visits had increased in the last five years. Only 3% indicated that the number of times they visit had decreased. Table five and figure four provide a breakdown of the results obtained.

Question 4: During the last five years has the number of times you visit the park increased, remained the same or decreased?

Visit change	Number of responses
Increased	55
Remained the same	38
Decreased	3
Total	96

Table 5: Changes in frequency of visit

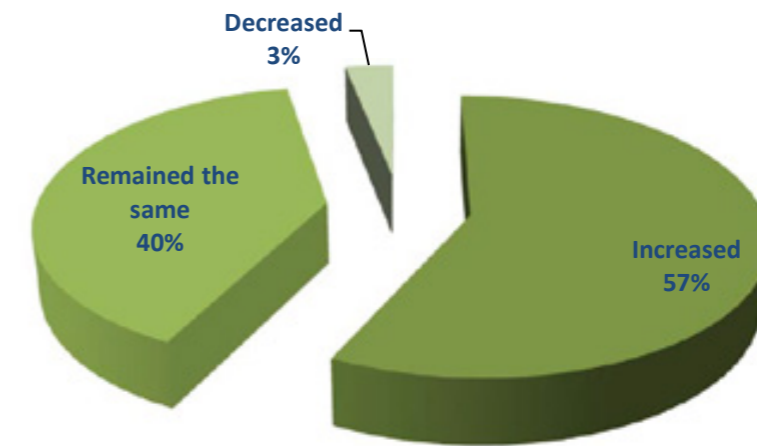


Figure 4: Percentage breakdown of changes in frequency of visit

Comment: The 2013 and 2015 surveys show similar trends. In broad terms visitors tend to state that their number of visits is increasing. Of those who's visits are decreasing a key barrier seems to be lack of time rather than an absence of facilities or poor quality facilities.

3.5 Motivations for increasing visit frequency

As part of the on site surveys conducted in 2013, 2015 and 2017, a number of qualitative statements were gathered. Question five sought to understand what would motivate people to visit Caldecott Park more often. Appendix B provides the raw data extracted from the survey responses. In general the following themes reflect sentiments expressed by those who answered the question:

- More play equipment for toddlers/ younger children, including water play;
- More equipment for older children/ teenagers including skate facilities;
- More organised events including large events, such as music concerts in the bandstand;
- Free and longer stay car parking;
- Toilets which are free and/or more consistently open;
- Picnic benches;
- Fitness equipment and activities for adults.

Comment: Many of the themes identified in the 2017 survey repeat previous years' comments. The majority of the comments cited diversification of facilities and organised events to provide for a larger range of visitors, especially toddlers and younger children. The few comments which addressed issues of existing provision of facilities mainly focussed on the toilets and car parking.

3.6 Duration of visit

As part of the on site survey, those who completed question six were asked to indicate the average length of their visit to Caldecott Park. 37% suggested that on average they stay for at least one to two hours per visit with 51% staying for up to one hour. A minority of visitors (8%) did also indicate that they visited the park for more than three hours. Table six and figure five provide a breakdown of the results obtained.

Question 6: On average how long do you stay in the Park?

Average length of stay	Number of responses
Up to 30 mins	9
30 mins to 1 hour	42
1 to 2 hours	37
2 to 3 hours	6
3 to 4 hours	5
More than 4 hours	3
Total	102

Table 6: Average length of stay

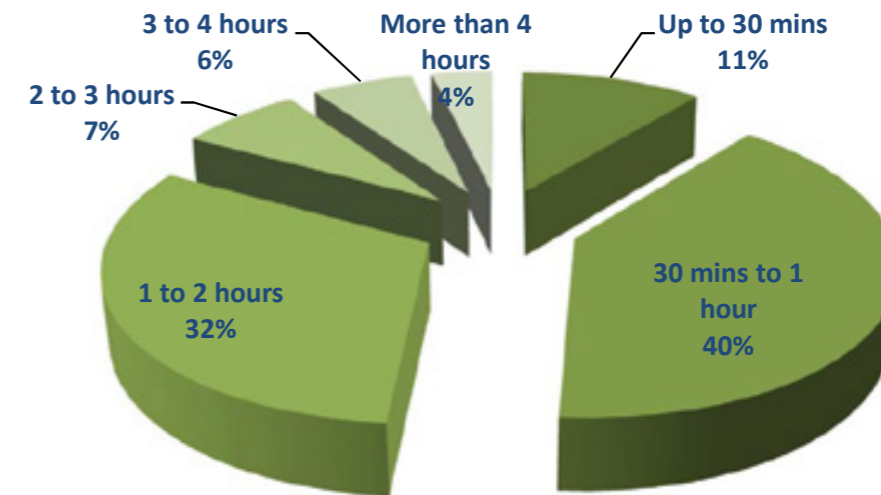


Figure 5: Percentage breakdown of average length of stay

Comment: As per previous years, the majority of visitors in 2017 stayed for 30 minutes to 2 hours. Compared with the 2015 survey, fewer visitors stayed for over two hours (14% in 2017 compared with 29% in 2015).

3.7 Changes in visit duration

Those who completed the on site survey were asked to indicate whether the average amount of time they stay in the park had increased or decreased during the preceding five years. Thirty eight percent stated that the average duration of their stay had increased with only 3% suggesting that their average duration had decreased. Table seven and figure six provide a breakdown of the results obtained for question seven.

Question 7: During the last five years has the average length of your stay in the park increased, remained the same or decreased?

Change in visit duration	Number of responses
Increased	38
Remained the same	57
Decreased	3
Total	98

Table 7: Change in visit duration

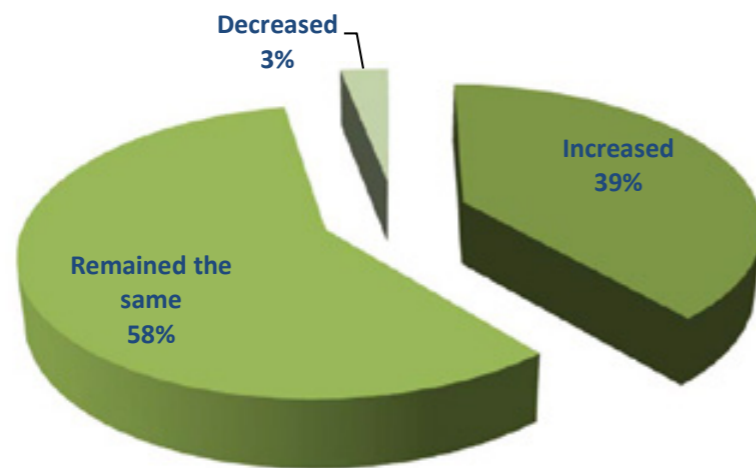


Figure 6: Percentage breakdown of change in visit duration

Comment: The results from the 2017 survey show a reduction in the number of people reporting that the average length of their stay in the park has increased over the last five years (39% in 2017 compared to 50% in 2015).

3.8 Primary purpose of visit

As part of the qualitative element of the survey questionnaire, participants were asked to outline the primary purpose or reason for their visit. The data obtained is provided in Appendix B. The following themes summarise many of the comments made by respondents. The themes remain consistent from the previous two surveys.

- To bring children or grandchildren to use the play area;
- To socialise or 'chill' with friends;
- To relax, sit or walk in the park;
- To enjoy the natural environment and horticultural displays;
- For their lunch break;
- To undertake activities, such as Pokemon Go!;
- To visit the cafe.

3.9 Frequency of visits to Cafe

Two new questions were added to the survey in 2017 relating to the Tool Shed Cafe, which was refurbished and re-opened by new management just prior to the surveys taking place. Question 9 asked participants to indicate how frequently they visit the cafe. The majority of people (45%) said they rarely visited the cafe, and 32% had never visited the cafe. Table eight and qigure seven provide a breakdown of the results obtained for question nine.

Question 9: How frequently do you visit the Tool Shed Cafe?

Frequency of visits to cafe	Number of responses
Never, I've not heard of it	33
Rarely, a few times a year	45
Occasionally, around once a month	19
Regularly, at least once a week	5
Total	102

Table 8: Frequency of visits to cafe

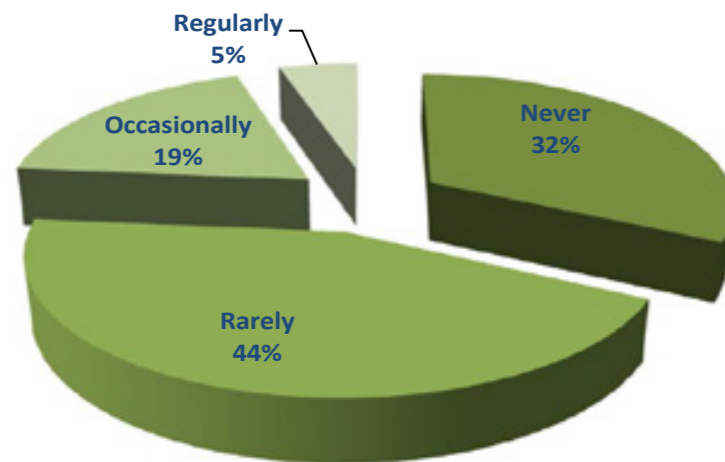


Figure 7: Percentage breakdown of frequency of visits to Tool Shed Cafe.

3.10 Overall visitor satisfaction of Cafe

This question was also included for the first time in the 2017 survey. Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction of the cafe. 39% of respondents gave the cafe a score of ten out of ten, and only 5% of visitors gave a score of less than five. Figure eight provides a breakdown of the results for question ten.

Question 10: If you have visited the Tool Shed Cafe, rate your level of satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied.

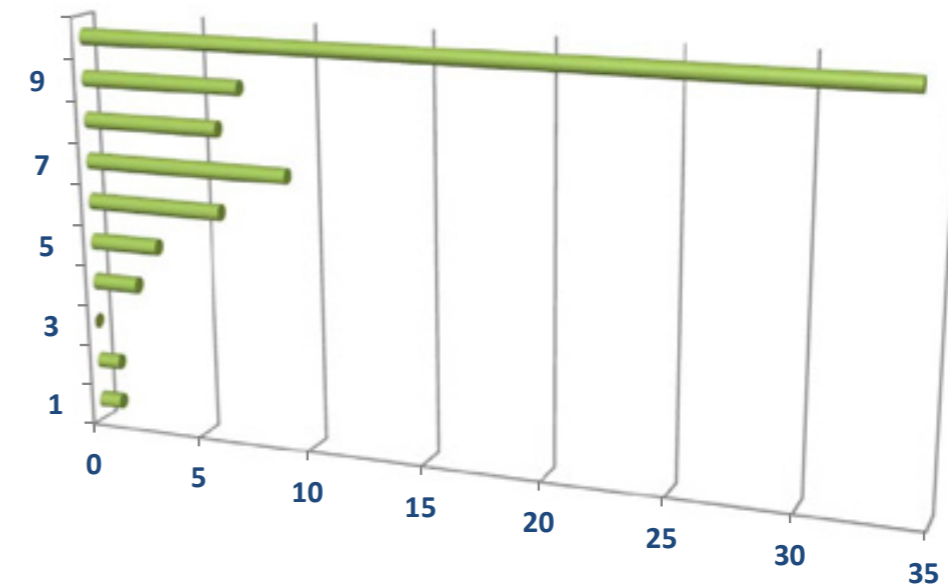


Figure 8: Overall visitor satisfaction of Tool Shed Cafe

Comment: As questions on the cafe were only introduced in this year's survey, it is not possible to make comparisons with previous years and comment on trends. 32% of participants had never visited the cafe, which suggests visitors to the park are unaware of the cafe, or they lack motivation for visiting the cafe as part of their visit to the park. However, those who do visit the cafe generally report a high level of satisfaction, with 39% of respondents giving it a score of ten out of ten.

3.11 Overall quality of Caldecott Park

Question nine prompted survey participants to give an overall quality rating for Caldecott Park. Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience on a scale of one to ten, with one being very poor and ten being exceptional. The modal quality rating (most commonly occurring) was ten. The majority of visitors (87%) gave a quality rating of seven or above. Figure seven provides a breakdown of the results for question 11.

Question 11: Taking into consideration the entire park, your visit and enjoyment how would you rate the overall quality of Caldecott Park on a scale of 1 to 10?

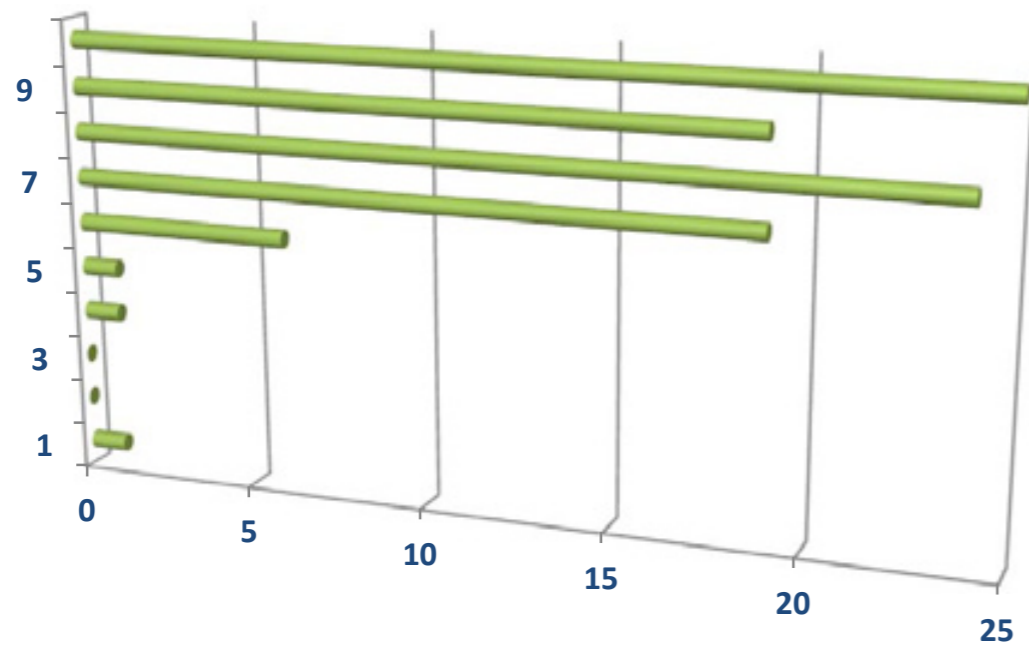


Figure 9: Overall quality rating of Caldecott Park

Comment: There has been an upward trend in quality rating since 2013. In 2013, the most common quality score was 7 and in 2015 it was 8. To receive a quality rating of ten out of ten in 2017 from the majority of visitors is a sign of the high satisfaction levels of many of the park’s visitors.

3.12 Changes in perception of quality

As an extension of question nine, question ten explored the perceived changes in quality of the park during the last five years. Those surveyed were asked to comment on whether the quality of the park had improved or declined within the last five years. The majority of respondents (78%) stated that the quality of the park had slightly or significantly improved. None of those who responded to the question stated that the quality of the park had slightly or significantly declined. Table eight and Figure eight provide a breakdown of the results obtained for question 12.

Question 12: During the last five years do you think the overall quality of Caldecott Park has...

Quality of Caldecott Park	Number of responses
Significantly improved	29
Slightly improved	44
Remained the same	21
Slightly declined	0
Significantly declined	0
Total	94

Table 9: Perceived changes in quality of Caldecott Park

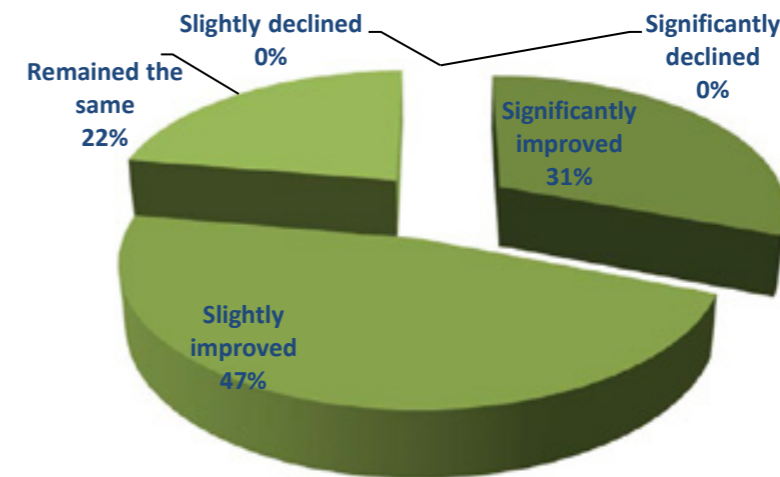


Figure 10: Percentage breakdown of perceived changes in quality of Caldecott Park

Comment: Compared with the 2015 survey where 6% of visitors reported that they thought the quality of the park has slightly declined, in 2017 all visitors said that they thought the quality of the park had either remained the same (22%), slightly improved (47%) or significantly improved (31%).

3.13 Awareness of key issues

As part of the survey participants were asked to comment on their level of awareness of a number of issues relating to the park. Overall there was a mixed response with awareness or lack of awareness divided. Table 9 shows the 2017 results with the 2015 results in brackets for reference. Figures 11 to 14 provide a percentage breakdown of the response rates.

Question 13: Please tell us your awareness of the following issues.

Awareness	Aware	Partially aware	Not aware
Are you aware of the Green Flag Award for parks in England?	38 (42)	10 (15)	54 (40)
Are you aware that Caldecott Park is a Green Flag Award park?	31 (38)	5 (6)	64 (53)
Are you aware of the Heritage Lottery Fund?	46 (53)	11 (13)	43 (29)
Are you aware that information about Caldecott Park is available using social media?	42 (42)	7 (9)	50 (42)

Table 10: Awareness of issues

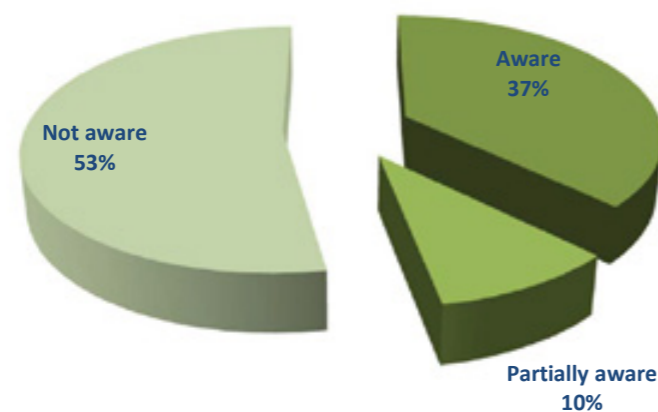


Figure 11: Percentage breakdown for awareness of the Green Flag Award in England

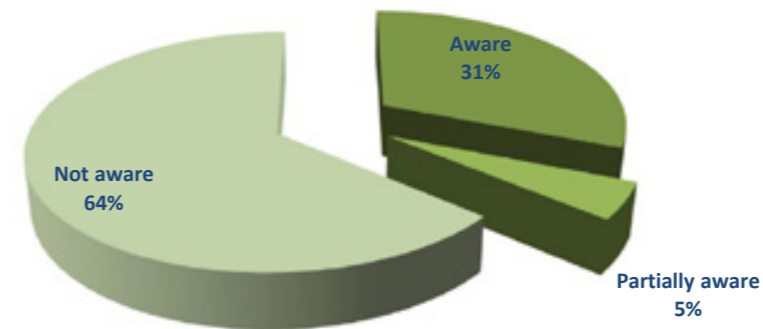


Figure 12: Percentage breakdown for awareness of the Green Flag Award for Caldecott Park

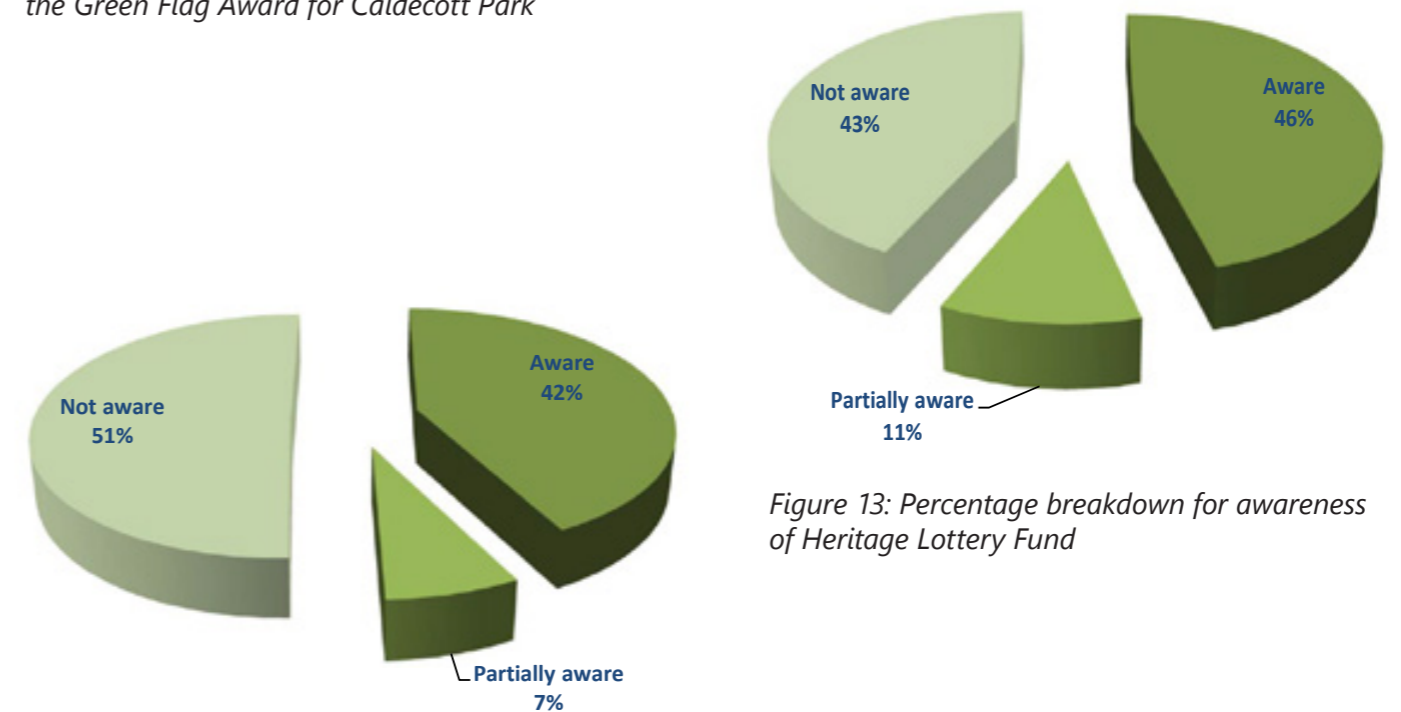


Figure 13: Percentage breakdown for awareness of Heritage Lottery Fund

Figure 14: Percentage breakdown for awareness of use of social media in Caldecott Park

Comment: In general terms, awareness of the Green Flag Award and the Heritage Lottery Fund remains inconsistent and this is reflected in the findings of both the previous surveys and the 2017 survey. 64% of respondents reported of not being aware that Caldecott Park is a Green Flag Award park, which suggests that further marketing activities could be carried out to raise awareness amongst visitors.

3.14 Improving awareness and understanding

Following question 13, respondents who stated that they were partially or not aware of issues were asked to comment on how their understanding could be improved. Participants were asked to provide a qualitative statement, which are provided in Appendix B. Key themes from the responses suggested that awareness could be improved by using leaflets and posters and also providing more/better information on notice boards. Several respondents also suggested using social media and local media to raise awareness.

Comment: The results of the 2017 survey are comparable with the 2013 and 2015 findings. Despite the presence of notice boards within the park displaying relevant information, respondents still felt the need for more information within the park.

3.15 Communication methods

Question 14 asked respondents to consider the best method for communicating decisions with the management of the park. Participants were asked to consider a range of statements and tick one of their preferred options. The majority of those who responded (35%) suggested that information should be available via social media. 28% stated that a letter or leaflet to home would be preferred. Table 11 and figure 15 outline the responses received for question 14. Table 10 shows the results of the 2015 survey for comparison.

Question 13: Each year Rugby Borough Council prepares a management plan for Caldecott Park. The plan sets out the priorities for the how the park will be maintained and managed using the resources available. The management plan is an important document and we want people to be involved in its preparation. Please tell us the best way for you to provide your input or any feedback you may have on the management plan.

Communication method	Number of responses
Attending and being involved with regular friends group meetings during the year	8 (1)
Formal presentations once a year by Council Officers	5 (4)
Information published on web page or via social media	35 (36)
A letter or leaflet sent to your home with a chance to provide written comments	28 (20)
General displays or information within the park	32 (30)
Total	108

Table 11: Preferred communication method

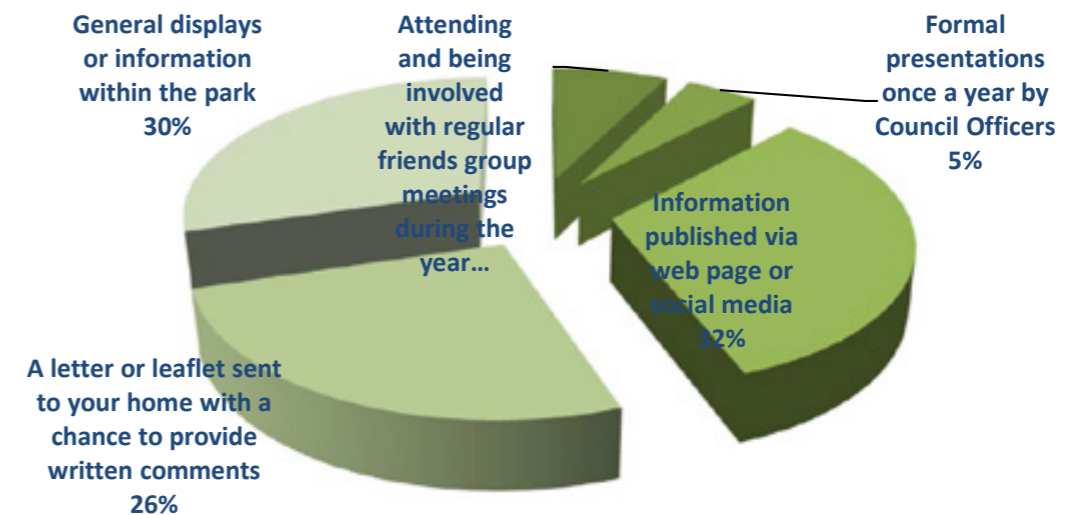


Figure 15: Percentage breakdown of preferred communication method

Comment: Results from the 2017 survey demonstrate a continued preference for more web-based information tools, such as a website or social media. However, as in previous years, a high proportion of participants also expressed a preference for more traditional communication methods, including information boards and distributed leaflets.

3.16 Community involvement

As part of the 2015 survey respondents were asked about being interested in volunteering opportunities or becoming involved with the park’s friends group. Figures 16 and 17 show the overall results. 78% percent of people stated that they would not be interested in joining a friends group. 81% also stated that they would not be interested in volunteering opportunities.

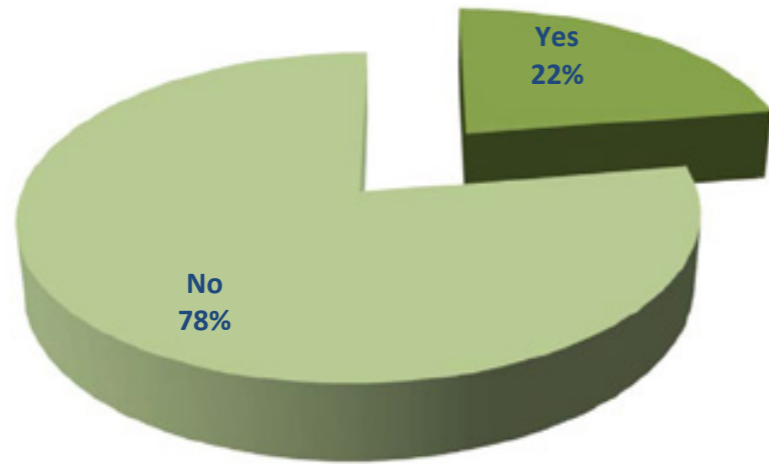


Figure 16: Percentage of those interested in joining a friends group

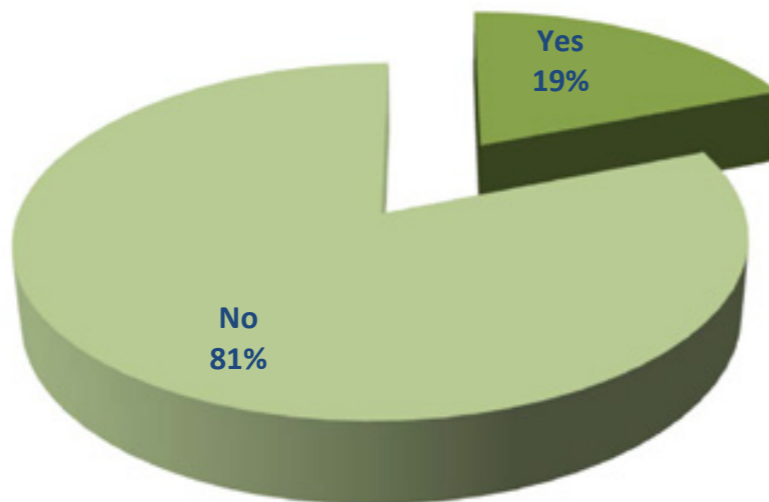


Figure 17: Percentage of those interested in volunteering opportunities

3.17 Observations and comments

To conclude the survey a general question was asked regarding any further comments or observations that participants had about Caldecott Park. The statements provided in relation to this question are provided in Appendix B. In the main comments were very positive with respondents complimentary about the high standard of cleanliness and horticultural management. As in previous years, the use and provision of toilets and nearby car parking was highlighted by a number of respondents. A number also mentioned their regret that the water feature had been removed.

3.18 Visitor survey profile

As part of the questionnaire participants were asked to provide details of their age range, gender, post code and ethnicity. 64% of those who responded to the question were female with the most common age range being under 25 to 34 (29%). White British was the most commonly stated ethnicity (80%). The majority of respondents were from within the Rugby post codes, CV21 or CV22. Figures 18 to 20 provide a summary of the visitor profile collated as part of the survey.

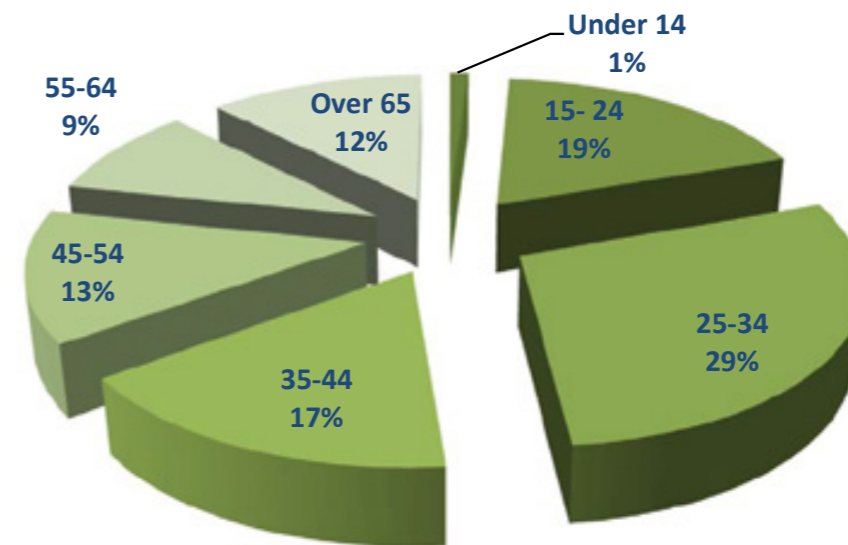


Figure 18: Percentage breakdown of age ranges

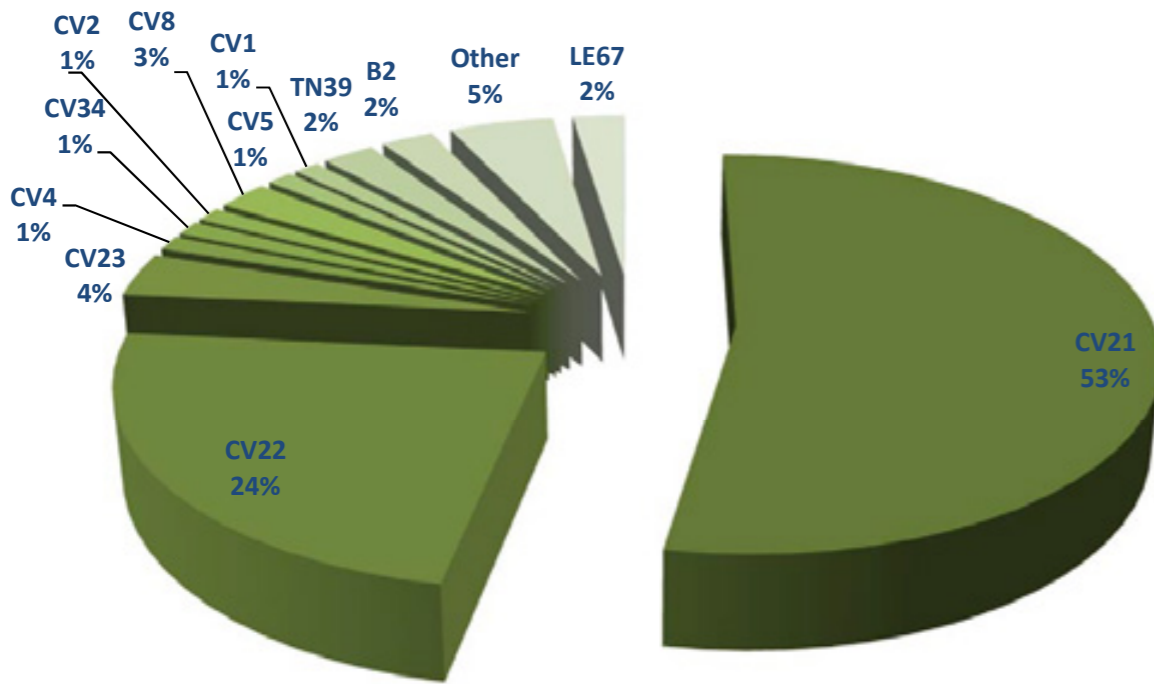


Figure 19: Percentage breakdown of post code areas

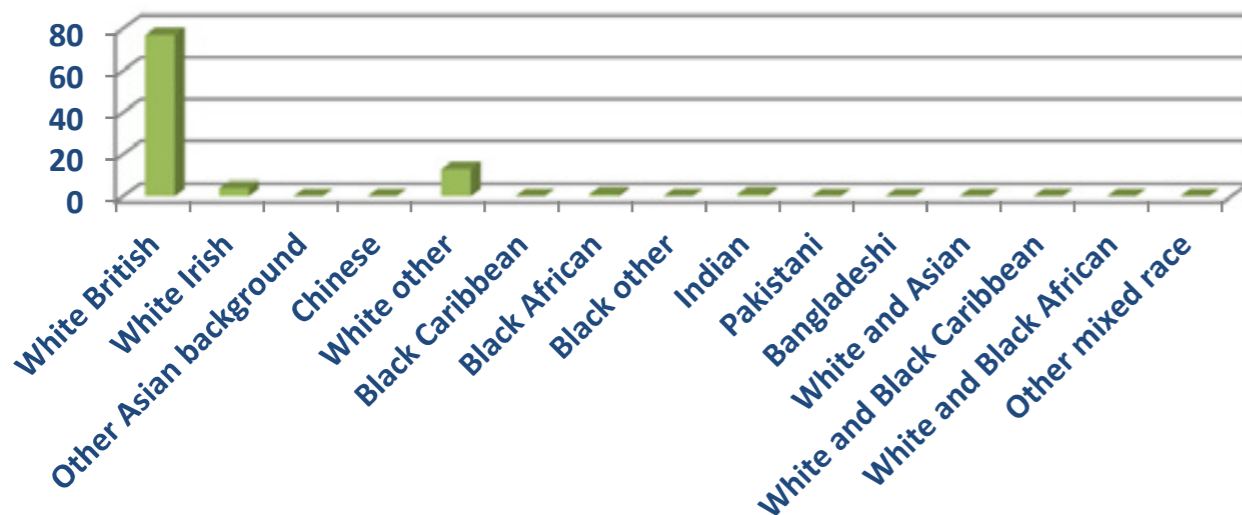


Figure 20: Percentage breakdown of ethnicity

4.0 Conclusions and recommendations

The main findings of the 2017 survey can be summarised as follows:

- 102 people were surveyed over three days during May 2017.
- People tend to walk or travel by car to the park and their journey is under 15 minutes for both modes of transport. Average travel time has reduced compared with 2015.
- 38% visitors visit the park at least weekly.
- There are more infrequent visitors to the park (monthly or less than monthly) in comparison to previous years.
- Typically visitors stay in the park for up to two hours, which remains unchanged since 2013.
- The primary reasons for visiting the park are to use the play area, socialise, sit and relax, and walk and enjoy the outdoors. Many people would like to see more planned events and activities, and more facilities for younger children and toddlers.
- Many visitors are not aware of or rarely visit the Tool Shed Cafe, but those who do visit it rate it highly.
- The perception is that Caldecott Park is of high quality and this is consistent with the 2013 and 2015 survey data.
- Awareness of issues for the Green Flag Award and Heritage Lottery Fund remains relatively low.
- There is a significant reluctance to becoming involved with volunteering or the friends group.
- Visitors expressed a preference for more interpretation, notice boards, posters and displays within the park to communicate with users.
- The profile of a typical visitor to the park during the surveys was female, white British aged 25-34 and living in Rugby.

As with the 2013 and 2015 surveys, the overall results demonstrate that people are happy with Caldecott Park and believe it is a good quality park that has improved over recent years. The park is used by a range of age groups, including local workers who visit on their lunchbreak, and retired people who use it for exercise. The surveys were carried out during the May Bank holiday and the school half term, so it is not surprising that many family groups with children and teenagers were also present in the park.

As with previous years, there is a general of awareness and engagement with the park. It is recommended that further interpretation within the park and social media activity be carried out as a matter of priority, in order to raise awareness of the Green Flag Award status of the park, and also involve more people in its management through volunteering and the friends group.

Another recommendation is to explore the feasibility of adding new features and infrastructure to the park to ensure the needs and preferences of the wide range of visitors to the park are met. This includes a water feature, more play features for young children and toddlers, picnic tables, and greater provision for teenagers.