



AGENDA ITEM NO 5

St George Neighbourhood Partnership 16 December 2015

Report of: BCC Parks and Caretaking

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Title: Fishing at St George Park Lake

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1. Background/Context

At its meeting on 17th December 2014 the Neighbourhood Partnership voted in support of a ban on fishing at St George Park lake and advocated the removal of fish from the lake to discourage any anglers choosing to ignore a ban. This was in response to reported incidents of harm occurring to wildfowl on the lake as a result of fishing hooks and line. In previous years also, the nuisance behaviour of some anglers caused local concern.

For period of time the Council has been clear that the mechanism needed to provide an enforceable ban on fishing at the lake is a byelaw. The Council is developing a new set of Parks byelaws but the necessary powers are not available until Full Council has considered and agreed them and they are confirmed by the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government.

A number of measures have been tried to manage fishing at the lake and this was initially the preferred option. However the introduction of a fishing permit scheme has not had the impact desired.

When consulted, anglers have argued that most of them are responsible, fish safely in designated areas and always clear up their equipment. However some fishermen are in agreement there is an 'undesirable element' fishing at the lake that aren't responsible and do leave litter and have caused anti-social behaviour.

2. Progress on removal of fish

Parks officers have started the process of having fish removed from the lake. Prior to any movement or removal of fish a health check is legally required to check for parasites and general health. The City Council arranged for this to take place at both St George Park and Eastville Park lakes at a cost of £3000.

At St George Park, the outcome of the health check is:

- The fish stock is of poor health with evidence of parasites with heavy loads and bacterial infection;
- Stock density is extremely high and the lake contains a number of non-native species.
- There are no category 2 parasites that would prevent any fish being relocated. However the general condition of fish would mean selling them on would be difficult and the recommendation is that any fish not retained at the lake, or transported to another BCC still water, will be euthanized;
- The eels which are protected could be released into other water ways with agreement of the Environment Agency.

The removal of fish from St George Park lake will cost an additional £4000.

An estimate of £90k has been received to de-silt the lake and create a feature area close by using the silt. No decision has been made whether to do this, however it is noted that, as this would result in the removal of any residual fishing line and hooks, the aims of the Partnership would be better met. Due to the high cost, this work would be the subject of a tender process.

3. Fishing ban

The development of new Parks byelaws is ongoing. They are programmed to be considered at Full Council in January 2016. After this, some of the byelaws, those where designated areas could be identified within which an otherwise banned activity could take place, would undergo a consultation lasting approximately three months. This would include the byelaw to ban fishing. The council then seeks confirmation of the byelaws by the relevant Secretary of State. We anticipate that byelaws could be in place in May or June 2016 providing necessary approvals are given.

In November 2014, the Council adopted the powers of the Antisocial-Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act. The Act provides a number of enforcement mechanisms local authorities can use to control nuisance behaviour. Parks officer are considering whether one of these, a Public Space Protection Order, can enable a temporary ban on fishing at the park. The Council has not yet used this power in any of its parks.

As part of the process to apply for a Public Space Protection Order the Council has been collating data and analysing it that would clearly set out that there is a nuisance problem to resolve. It is envisaged that the first stage of the (internal) application process will be done by the NP meeting. From this we have found that there are issues relating to injury to wildlife at the lake but no police related ASB is being recorded. The following statement was provided by the police:

“Following last week’s emails our analytical department have informed us that St George’s Park has not been identified through our scanning process as a problem location therefore a report will not be produced at this stage”.

4. Recommendation

In order to meet the Partnership’s aim to discourage fishing at St George as soon as possible, and because of concerns about fishing at Eastville Park, it is currently proposed to remove and euthanize all fish from the lake.

A second option is to leave some smaller fish in the lake, relocate specimen fish to Eastville Park and euthanize the remainder. This option would require consultation with stakeholders representing Eastville Park and future monitoring of stock levels.