

TRAFFORD LABOUR GROUP



PRESS RELEASE

Labour calls on Trafford not to abandon Green Flags for Parks

Labour councillors are calling on the Conservatives to "think again" about removing Green Flag status from parks in the Borough of Trafford. Recent information indicates that Trafford need only submit 2 parks for Green Flags Status in order to meet the requirements of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Cllr Jane Baugh Opposition spokesperson for Parks and Countryside said "Our concern relates to the fact that the Council appears to be only making the submissions to the Green Flag because they are required for the CPA, and not because they believe in entering parks for Green Flag Status.

We strongly believe that it has been a backward and detrimental step for the environment of the Borough to reduce the number of Green Flag entries from 14 to 6 this year and the possibility of being reduced to only 2 in the coming year is disturbing news

When in control of the Council we initiated and fully supported the Green Flag Awards Scheme which is the only National Standard for parks and greenspaces in England and Wales. The Green Flag Scheme is an important way of encouraging friends and parks users and staff to all achieve the same high Environmental Standards creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational areas.

We also know that winning a Green Flag award brings excellent publicity to our parks and both the media and the public are increasingly aware that a site flying a Green Flag is a high quality green space.

The introduction of Gold Star Awards to replace green flag awards without any consultation with the Friends groups was an insult to the Friends groups and has resulted in low morale for all those groups and staff involved with the awards. Gold star awards are not recognised National Awards.

Green Flag Awards ensure that difference and diversity is welcomed and each site is judged on its merit and its sustainability for the community it serves. We also know that the friends of the Green Parks have been very supportive and value Green Flags and have worked tirelessly to ensure their applications for the prestigious Green Flag Awards are successful

We are concerned because there has been much debate over the years about the declining quality of our parks and the lack of focus upon rural greenspaces. We therefore believe that removing the Green Flag Status from our parks is a backwards step and will indeed mean that the parks are no longer maintained to a standard of excellence which we have achieved so successfully through working with local communities and friend groups.

We only have to look at our parks now compared to twelve years ago when they were run down and neglected. Now they are shining examples of outstanding greenspace management and these awards have showed the way forward for other parks in the area.

The Green Flag Awards Scheme is an impetus to our ever improving parks and greenspaces without that impetus I fear that our parks and greenspaces will go into gradual decline as the standards needed to ensure success for the Green Flag Award Scheme will not be kept up.

We hope therefore that the Conservatives will listen and understand our views rethink their proposed strategy to limit the Borough of Trafford to only to only two Green Flags in 2008."

Contacts:-

Cllr. Jane Baugh

Tel: 912 2644

28 September 2007