

# Park Strategy 2004 - Council News Survey Results

## Contents

Key Findings.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Demographics.....	3
Survey Findings.....	4
Use of local parks .....	4
Attitudes to local parks .....	7
Summary.....	11

## Key Findings

- 57.8% of respondents reported having visited a park within the last week.
- The main reasons residents don't visit their local park is due to vandalism, litter and dog fouling.
- 40% of responses come from residents who visit Saltwell Park most frequently.
- 40% of those who reported using their local park said they visit weekly.
- 91.26% of respondents use their local park between 12pm and 5pm.
- The most popular activity undertaken in parks is walking with 74.4% of respondents taking part.
- 57.5% of respondents rated the quality of their local park and its facilities as good to excellent.
- Although one third of respondents feel fairly safe whilst using their local park, one third reported feeling unsafe with 10% specifically at night time.
- Appearance was reported as a good point of local parks by one quarter of respondents.
- Anti-social behaviour from youths was the most reported bad point of local parks with 21% of respondents reporting this.
- 18% of respondents would like to see better play facilities for children, 10% would like to see more refreshment facilities.
- 16% of respondents would choose to update current play facilities for toddlers and older children if they could change one aspect of their local park.

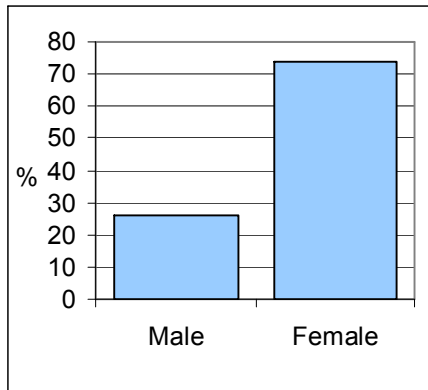
# Introduction

A survey of residents across the borough was undertaken in order to ascertain their views regarding parks in Gateshead and how they can be improved. An article was placed in 'Council News' from which 262 completed surveys were returned. This report summarises the findings of the survey.

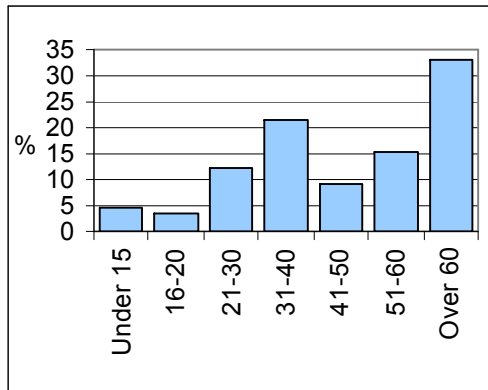
## Demographics

Basic demographics were collected to enable us to monitor the range of responses that had been collected.

Gender



Age



The range of residents that have responded to this consultation is slightly skewed in comparison to the general population of Gateshead. Over 70% of the respondents are women whereas across Gateshead only 52% of the population are women.

In terms of age, the range of respondents is slightly better. As other consultation exercises have been carried out with young people we can assume that their views will have been collected through other means. There is however a dip in responses from those aged 41-60 and a rise in those aged over 60. This is common in this type of consultation exercises but means it may be necessary to make further efforts to collect the views of those aged 41-60 in the future.

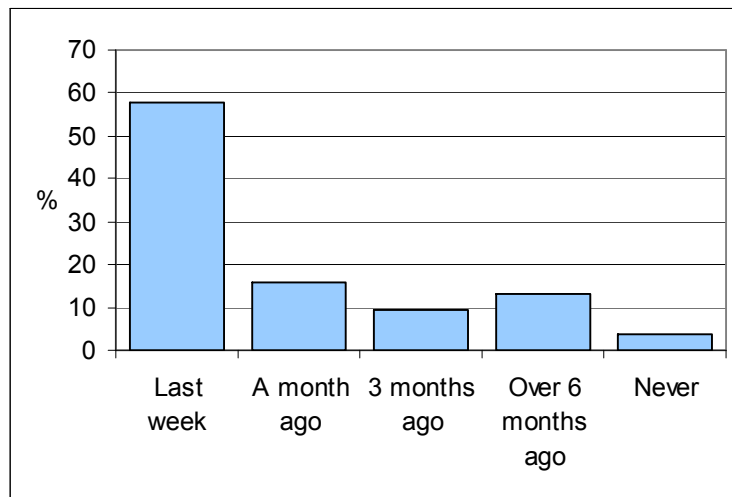
As the sample is not representative of the borough we cannot assume that these results tell us the views of the general population of Gateshead.

## Survey Findings

This section reports survey results and highlights important findings. The survey covered a variety of topics, giving respondents the opportunity to record their views on a range of issues concerning parks in Gateshead.

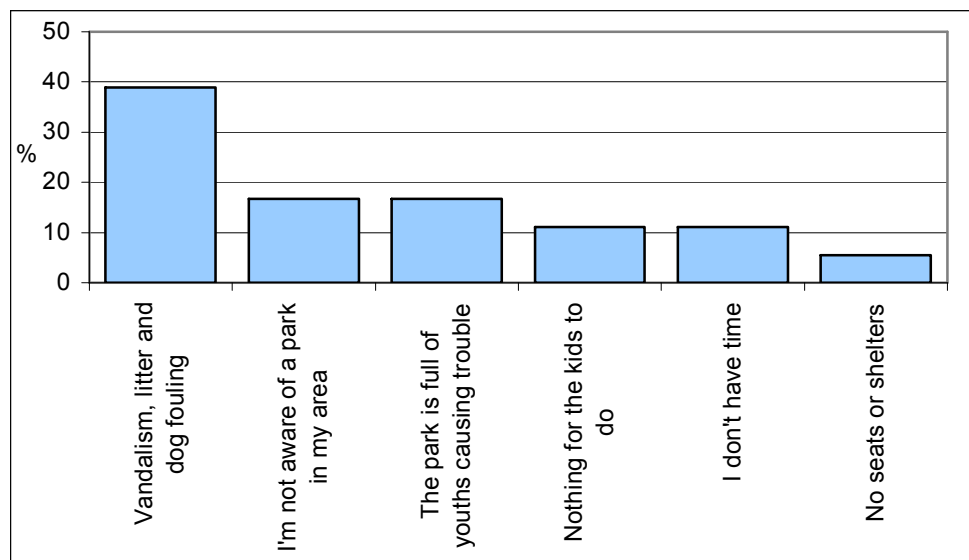
### Use of local parks

1) When did you last visit any park in Gateshead? (n=258)



As can be seen in the bar chart above, just over half of all respondents (57.8%) reported visiting a park within the last week. Very few respondents had never visited a park, (3.9%). Those respondents who reported having never visited a park were asked why.

2) If you never visit a park, why not? (n=18)

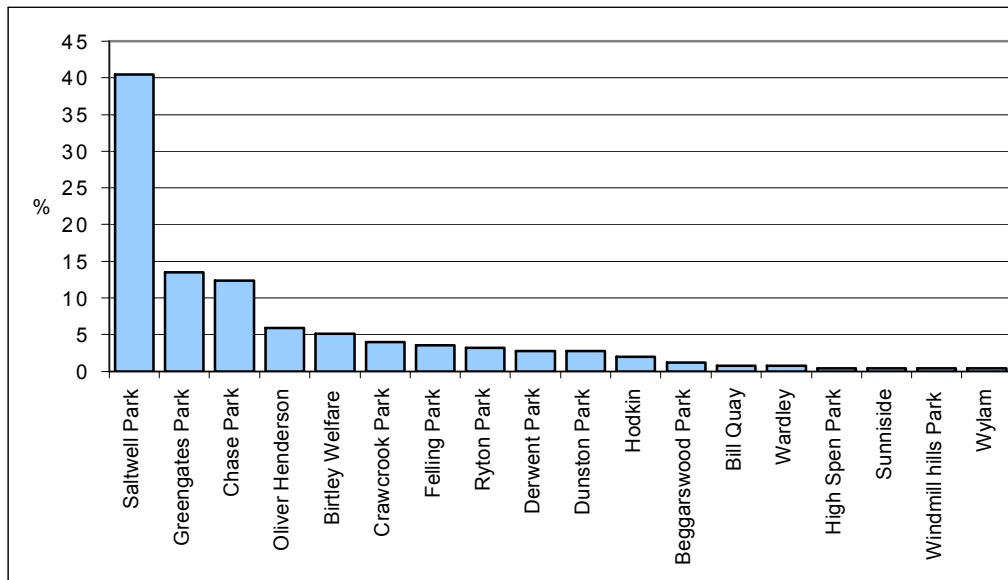


Although there were only a small number of responses, the main thing stopping residents from visiting their local park is vandalism, the amount of

litter and dog fouling. A small number of residents reported that they were not aware of a park in their area. Youths causing trouble is another factor that prevents residents from visiting their park.

3) Which park(s) do you visit most frequently? (n=252)

40% of responses came from residents who visit Saltwell Park most frequently, with a smaller number visiting Greengates Park (13.5%) and Chase park (12.3%). The graph shows a number of parks that are not used as frequently.

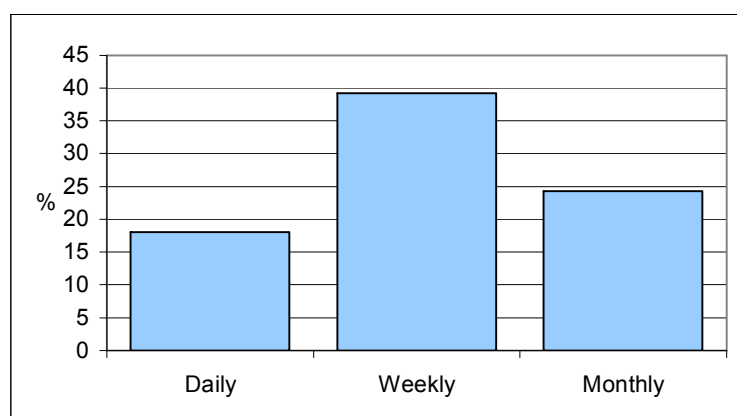


Although we cannot be sure, we may presume that further views are given in relation to those parks used most frequently, as this is where respondents' experiences lie.

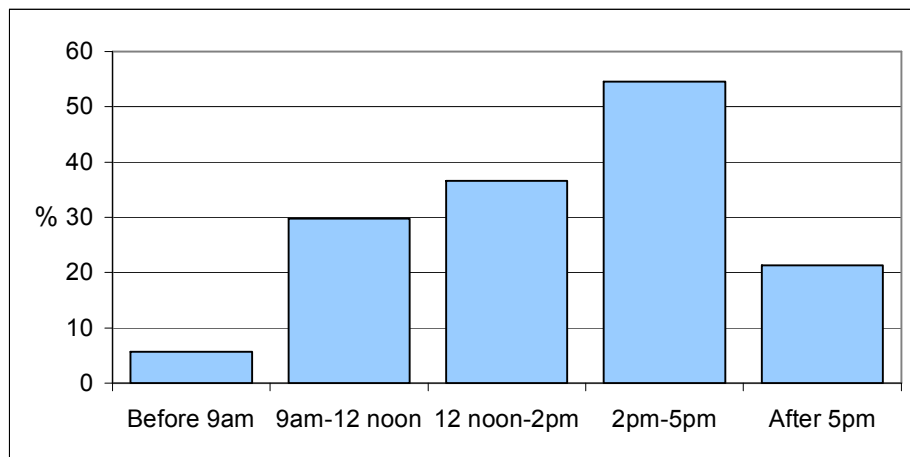
Those respondents who reported visiting a park where then asked a number of questions regarding their use of parks.

4) How often do you visit? (n=222)

The bar chart below shows clearly the range of answers with nearly 40% of respondents using parks weekly.

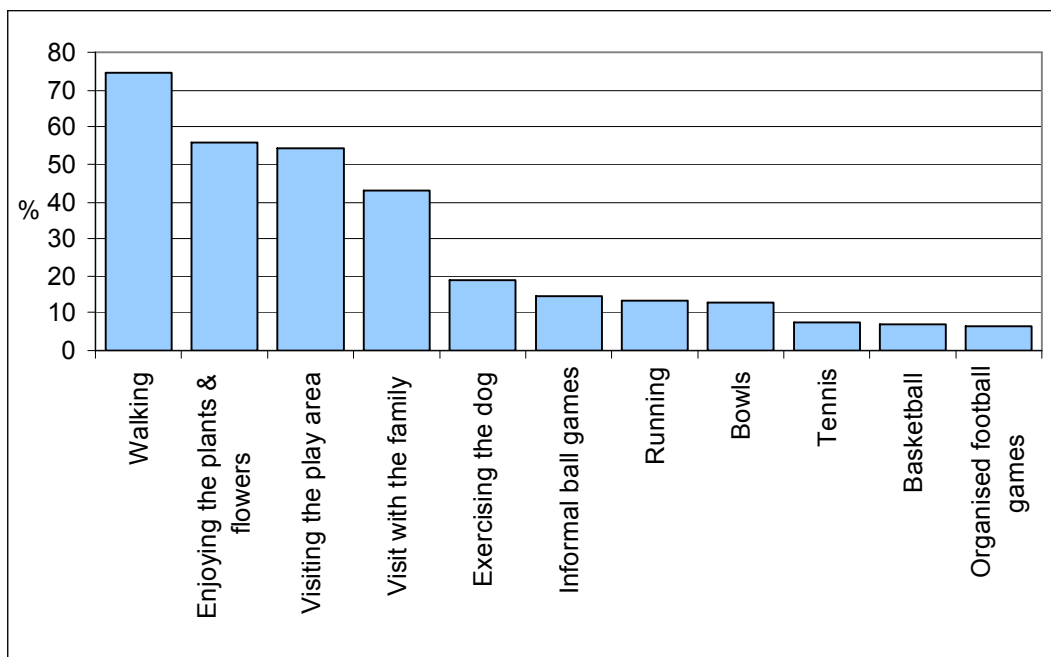


5) What time of day do you tend to use the park(s)? (n=262)



Looking at the bar chart above it is clear that fewer residents use the parks before 9 am and after 5pm, with the majority using the parks between 12pm and 5pm (91.2%). There is still substantial use between 9am-12pm (29.8%) giving an overall view of well used parks across the borough.

6) When visiting your local park which activities do you take part in? (n=262)



The most popular activities that residents take part in while visiting their local parks are: walking (74.4%), enjoying the flowers and plants (56.1%), visiting the play area (54.2%) and visiting the park with the family (43.1%).

## Attitudes to local parks

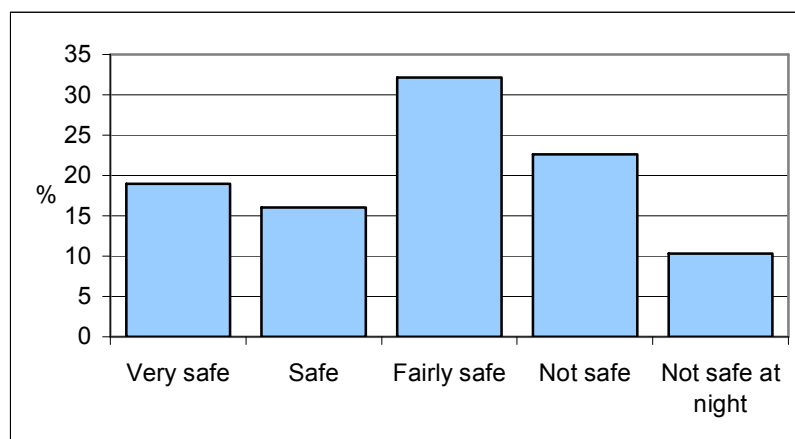
The following questions take into consideration how people feel about certain aspects of their local parks.

7) How do you rate the quality of your local park and its facilities? (n=262)



Respondents view the quality of facilities in their local park fairly positively with 57.5% rating them as good to excellent. However, 26% reported the facilities as poor.

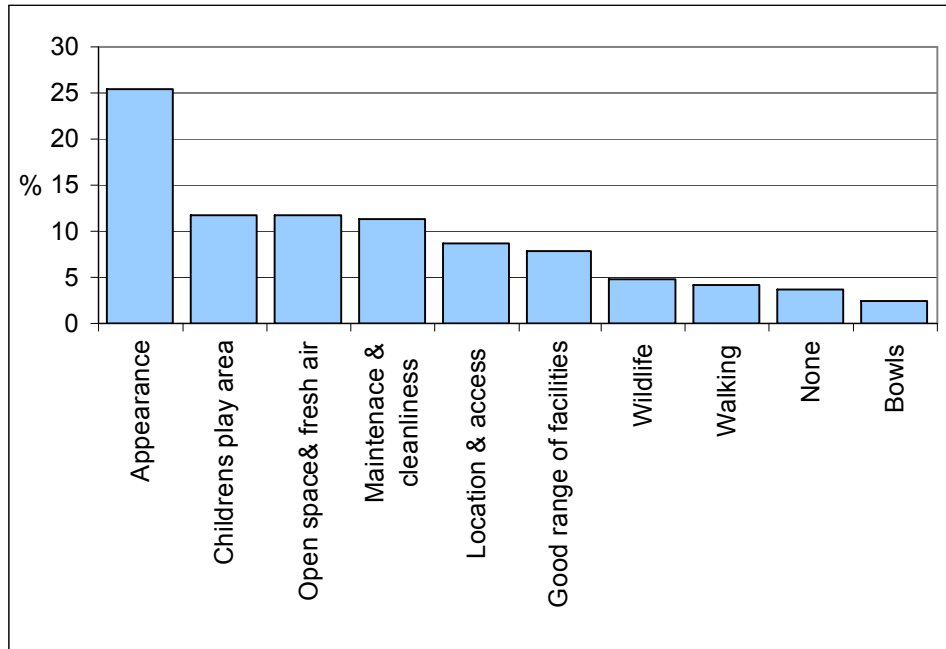
8) How safe do you feel when using your park(s)? (n=262)



Safety appears to be an issue that may affect use of local parks as one third of respondents reported feeling unsafe when using parks, of this 10% reported specifically feeling unsafe at night.

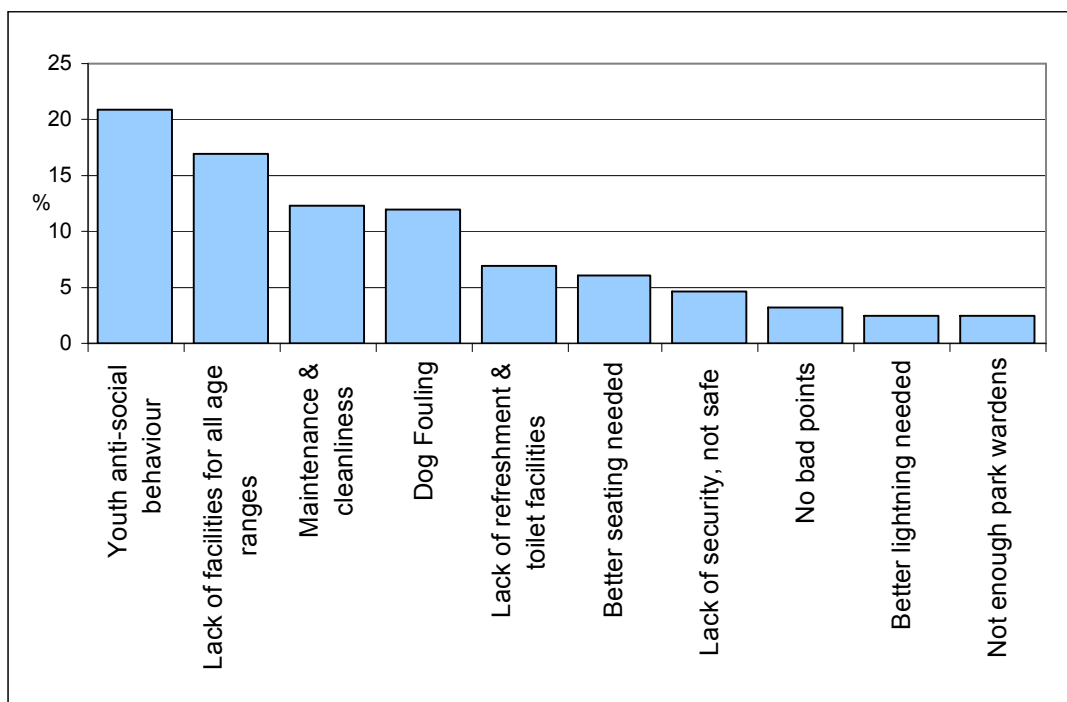
9) What do you think are the good points about your local park? (334 comments)

The bar chart below shows the top ten good points about local parks reported by residents. Appearance (25.4%) is the most common response, with the children's play area (11.7%), open spaces (11.7%) and maintenance and cleanliness (11.4%) also being thought of as good points.



This corresponds with previous results in the survey where walking, enjoying the plants and flowers and visiting the play area were reported as the top three activities that residents took part in when using their local park. Other good points mentioned were the architecture and restoration of buildings within the parks, park wardens and the fact that access is free.

10) What do you think are the bad points about your local park? (317 comments)



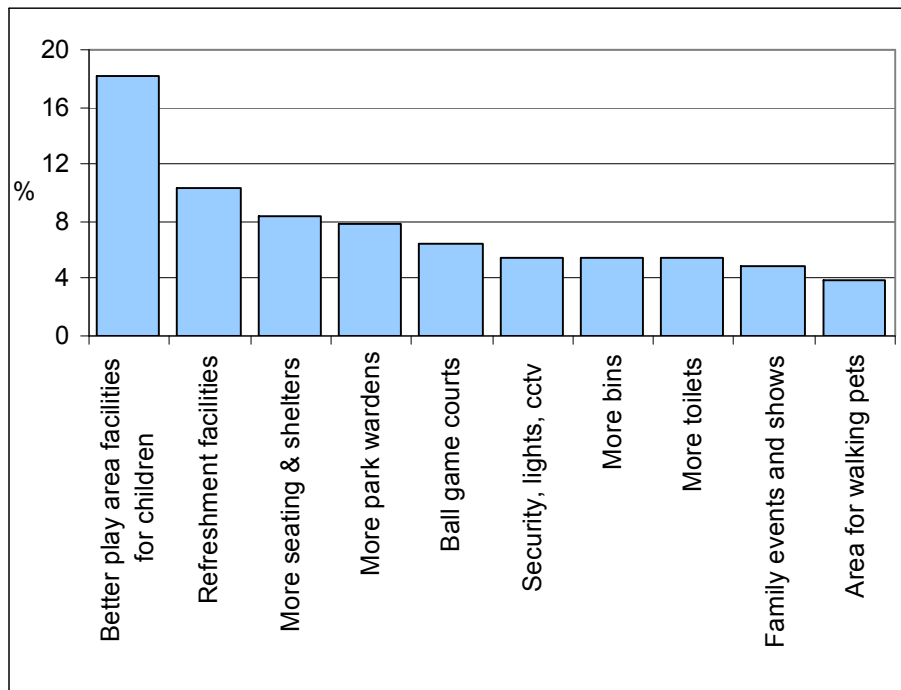
Youths behaving in an anti-social way (21%) is the most common response by residents when asked what the bad points are about their local parks, along with the lack of facilities for all age ranges (17%), maintenance and

cleanliness (12.3%) and dog fouling (12%). Again this coincides with the previously reported reasons why some residents never visit their local park, where vandalism, litter and dog fouling and the parks being full of youths causing trouble were two of the main reasons.

Other reasons mentioned were stray or roaming dogs, the lack of litterbins and lack of parking.

11) Please list any other facilities or activities that would like to see or use in your local park. (204 comments)

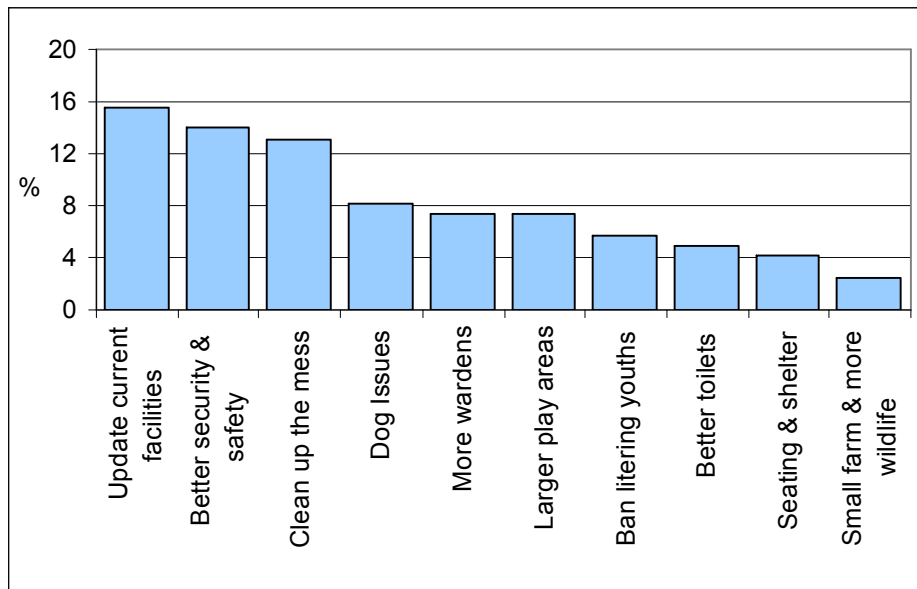
As this was an open ended question there was a wide variety of answers given. These have been grouped into categories of similar issues in order to give an overall view of the most popular activities or facilities residents feel they would like to see in their local parks in the future. The bar chart below shows the top ten categories that residents have reported.



Residents reported that they would like to see better play areas for children (18%), more refreshment facilities (10%), more seating and shelter areas (8%) and more park wardens (7.8%) in the future. All of these facilities were also reported earlier regarding bad points about local parks, hence strengthening the importance of these aspects to residents.

Other facilities that were reported by a smaller number of residents were, an animal farm or wildlife information, a skate and cycling park, picnic tables and paths and trails marked out to follow.

12) If there was one aspect about your local park that you would like to change what would it be? (122 comments)



Residents were asked to think of one thing they would like to change about their local park, again answers were categorised in order to show the most important issues to residents. There seems to be a need to update facilities in the parks (15.6%) as this has been reported in a number of previous questions, in this case facilities covers play areas for toddlers, and separate play areas for older children. Better security and safety measures (13.9%) is also an important issue to residents, along with the general cleanliness of parks (13.1%).

Other aspects residents would like to change are longer opening hours, especially in the summer, better disabled access and better car parking.

## Summary

The following is a summary and over view of results and findings from the survey carried out through Council News.

Residents use their local parks a lot for walking or simply enjoying the plants and flowers. Over 40% of respondents visit parks with their family and use the play areas. Nearly two thirds of respondents think that current facilities are of good to excellent standard but could be improved upon and updated. A number of times throughout the survey residents comment on the facilities for children at local parks, they would like to see larger play areas, with separate facilities for toddlers and older children to play separately. It was also suggested that more organised events could take place for children or families, with educational themes in order to teach people about the plants and wildlife.

Refreshment facilities and toilet amenities were consistently reported throughout the survey as lacking in local parks. Residents felt that it was difficult to spend any length of time in the park if these facilities were not in place and easily accessible. Consistently residents reported a lack of seating areas and shelters to use.

A big factor in local parks seems to be the number of youths using the parks for inappropriate activities and acting in an anti-social way, this is linked to vandalism, drinking and smoking, the use of motorbikes in the park, cycling and ball games in inappropriate areas. Residents suggest that an increase in park wardens may help to minimise this behaviour. This links in with how safe residents feel when using local parks, there was mixed perceptions of safety with a number of respondents requesting better security with CCTV and more lights for the evenings.

Residents feel that parks are in good locations and are accessible, there is however an issue surrounding parking near local parks. A number of respondents reported difficulties parking their vehicles when trying to access local parks. It was thought that access for disabled people into and around the local parks could be improved. Opening times were thought to be too short, especially in the summer months where it was suggested that the parks need not be shut at all.

Cleanliness and maintenance of the park was reported as excellent from some residents and as an issue from others. The lack of litterbins was reported several times throughout the survey. Some residents felt that the upkeep of the parks could be better with more flower displays and better fences to stop ball games damaging the flowers. The issue of the gates surrounding the parks was reported a number of times with residents feeling that they could be updated or tidied up in order to make the parks appearance nicer.

Overall residents reported that they used the parks regularly for a number of different activities and got a lot of satisfaction from local parks, with a

number of small changes they feel the parks would be an even better resource for the residents of Gateshead and those visiting the area.