

MP4 WP2.1
Peer Review of
Model Agreements for
Place-keeping

Analysis of existing
model agreements

Friends of Firth Park and Sheffield City Council
(FoFP and SCC)

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SUMMARY

This report presents an analysis of the 'Friends of' model agreement promoted by Sheffield City Council to engage local residents in the place-keeping of Firth Park in Sheffield. Model agreements for place-keeping are understood here in a broad way, not necessarily only as legal written documents signed by a number of parties (formal), but can be also tacit arrangements between parties without a signed contract (informal).

The information for the analysis was collected via interviews with Sheffield City Councils Regeneration Officer (Parks and Countryside Section) for Firth Park and the Treasurer of the Friends of Firth Park (FoFP). Additional information was gathered through analysis of documents provided by Sheffield City Council (SCC) and FoFP.

Firth Park is one of Sheffield oldest and most historic parks that since the late 1970's the Park had fallen into decline. The responsibility for place-keeping at Firth Park lies with the Parks and Countryside Section of SCC as trustees of the land. However there is a long established tradition in Sheffield of working in partnership with 'Friends of' groups to deliver a range of place-keeping activities in parks and open spaces across the city and it was the establishment of the FoFP in 1999 that was central to the reversal of the Firth Parks decline and they continue to play a key role in the ongoing place-keeping of the park. The FoFP provide a forum for stakeholder discussion about parks management, lobby for changes and resources as well as work with stakeholders, SCC in particular, to deliver a range of improvements projects, events and activities and help to informally monitor parks management.

Despite FoFP having their own constitution that governs their activities there is no formal place-keeping agreement between SCC and FoFP. The relationships between them and the respective responsibilities are summarised in the table on page 7. This sets out;

- project description
- purpose of place-keeping agreement
- actors involved in the agreement
- documents relating to place-keeping responsibilities and activities (including monitoring and redress)
 - i. how place-keeping is specifically addressed;
 - ii. what is the role and responsibilities of the different actors.

Evaluating this model, a series of issues which influence (or may influence in the future) the effectiveness of this partnership models was identified. In particular relating to the capacity and willingness of FoFP volunteers to take on roles and responsibilities and the capacity of SCC to support them. There are clear benefits to both partners in particular enabling FoFP to deliver its aims for the park (which largely concur with those of SCC) and enabling SCC to access additional funding streams via FoFP as well as deliver wider green space strategies. Despite the success of the model at Firth Park it is entirely reliant on the experience, skills and dedication of FoFP members and the model has not always transferred well to open space which do not have existing strong community interest and in deprived areas of the city.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents an analysis of the Friends of model agreement promoted by Sheffield City Council to engage local residents in the place-keeping of Firth Park in Sheffield. This report is intended as a practical tool to allow practitioners easily to understand the key elements of the 'Friends of' model agreement. It will thus allow comparison with other types of model agreement and contribute to the peer review of these, as part of WP2 in the MP4

project. To collect the information for this analysis, semi structured interviews were carried out with Sheffield City Councils Regeneration Officer (Parks and Countryside Section) for Firth Park and the Treasurer of the FoFP. Additional information was gathered through analysis of documents provided by SCC and friends of Firth Park, particularly informative being the Green Flag Management Plan for the Park produced by Sheffield City Council.

The report covers the following aspects:

- **Organisational context** for the model agreement.
- **Types of projects/activities** which model agreement are used in.
- **Model agreements** – a systematic presentation of this to allow cross-comparison.
- **Evaluation**, including a brief overview of key ideas & mental models influencing the model agreements, and a SWOT analysis based on stakeholder perceptions.
- Appendices describing the park and some aspects of the **socio-cultural context** and providing further **detail on relevant organisations** and further **background information on Firth Park**.

2. ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Model agreements for place-keeping are understood here in a broad way, not necessarily only as legal written documents signed by a number of parties. Model agreements may range from formal documents to tacit arrangements between parties. It is therefore crucial to understand the context in which each model agreement operates. Relevant aspects of the socio-cultural (and political) context are described in Appendix 1 and 2 at the end of the report. According to the Green Flag Management Plan 2008-2012 there are 13 stakeholder groupings (plus 'other park user groups') that have direct involvement in the Park. Topping the list are Sheffield Parks and Countryside Service, SCC Premises and Asset Section (who deal with the maintenance of buildings and built structures in the Park) and Friends of Firth Park. This section focuses on SCC Parks and Countryside Service and the FoFP as the key organisations of the 'Friends of' place-keeping model at Firth Park.

Sheffield City Council Parks and Countryside Service

SCC Parks and Countryside Service (<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/out--about/parks-woodlands--countryside>) is responsible for the management, maintenance and development of the city's parks woodlands, allotments and other recreational green spaces, including Firth Park. Where there are specific projects the Service acts as the client and may commission work from other Services within the Council such as those relating to landscape design. The Service is divided into four sections that work closely together to deliver different aspects of Parks development and management. All have some involvement in the place-keeping of Firth Park in partnership with FoFP and the intensity of their involvement may vary depending on the current management priorities and seasonal activities.

The **Parks Section** is responsible for the management of SCC owned parks and gardens. The day to day management of Firth Park is the responsibility of the North Area District parks officer who has a team of four grounds men who carry out the daily maintenance of the Park along with three other local parks. However, the cutting of the large grassed areas is sub-contracted to Streetforce (the maintenance section of Roads and Transport directorate). The section also employs a Premises Manager to manage SCC owned buildings in the park.

Trees, Woodlands and Countryside Section is responsible for SCC owned woodlands including Hinde Common (a heritage Woodland) and Firth Park Woods (also called Donkey Hill Woods) within the park. This section attends FoFP meetings and contributes only when there are specific management works planned or projects and this may be infrequently.

The **Community Services Section** is involved in encouraging community engagement in regeneration to develop area based improvement strategies. Officers work closely with interested community groups to facilitate links with relevant SCC staff and other agencies. As part of this work they actively promote and support the formation of 'Friends of' groups. They provide advice and guidance in setting up and running 'Friends of' groups and direct them towards possible funding opportunities such as the SCC Small Grant Fund (administered via a different service area). This can be used to help meet set up costs for 'Friends of' groups such as stationary, insurance and publicity. The level of direct support given by Community Services Section to groups varies and is focused on new or inexperienced groups. Indirect support is provided through their website, leaflets, and newsletters and through support and advice to other SCC offices working with 'Friends of' groups.

The section also delivers the **Ranger Service** that works closely with the FoFP to deliver activities and events (including Health Walks).

The **Policy and Projects Section** is responsible for the improvement and development of Sheffield's parks and the Regeneration officer for the area works closely with the FoFP. They regularly attend meetings to develop ideas, seek funding and provide support in writing funding bids and subsequent reporting. They will project manage and formally report (to FoFP and others) on the implementation of larger projects.

Working in partnership with others, and with local communities is central to SCC's strategy for improving and managing parks and green spaces. This was identified in Sheffield's Parks Regeneration Strategy the long term plan for regeneration of Sheffield green spaces first published in 1993 and embodied in the recently published Green and Open Space Strategy 2010-2030. This strategy sets out the vision for Sheffield – 'Sheffield is the greenest city in Britain, proud of its diversity of its rich variety of open spaces' – and one of the principal strategy outcomes that will help to deliver this vision is 'communities participating actively, getting involved in management and decisions on their local spaces'. One of the ways in which this is being achieved is through the support of 'Friends of' groups.

'Friends of' Groups

The 'Friends of' groups associated with green spaces in Sheffield are usually made up from residents with a particular interest in the site and their main aim is usually to support the improvement and promotion of that place. Depending on the type of green space and location there may be a focus on natural or built heritage, or both. Sheffield boasts one of the largest numbers of 'Friends of' groups in the UK in comparison to other major cities (74 in 2007). A survey (24 groups responded) undertaken by the Community Services Section of Parks and Countryside Service in 2007 gives an indication of the range and activities of these groups centered around open space improvements, practical conservation, fundraising for this and green space activities and events. Groups' membership varied in size from 10 to 500 in number. Experience shows however that the number of active members can be much lower and appears to be similar irrespective of group size. 16 of the 24 groups had raised funds of between £10 000 and £50 000, had held activities and events and produced publications. It was found that 76% of 'Friends of' groups worked in partnership with other organisations, particularly Sheffield City Council (76%), to deliver their aims. Other organizations they worked with include: those with an environmental focus such as Sheffield Wildlife Trust, allotment societies, local schools and Sheffield's Universities.

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Friends of Firth Park was established in 1999 and constituted in 2000. Its constitution states their aim is 'to improve the park and its adjacent areas in partnership with Sheffield City Council' and 'to make it a safer and friendlier and safer environment for everyone to use'. FoFP have been very influential in generating interest in the park, lobbying for change and working with Sheffield City Council to secure funding and implementing a wide variety of environmental improvements. They are described as the 'cornerstone of the Parks development' in the Green Flag Management Plan for Firth Park.

The group currently has a 'healthy' membership of over 30 members of which 8 -10 attend meetings. There is an elected committee and elected officials who undertake specific administrative roles: the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

3. TYPES OF PROJECT/ACTIVITY

The type of activities FoFP are involved with has changed over the years in line changing priorities, the success of physical improvements in the Park and increased resources for management. The initial focus was on raising awareness of the need for improvements in the park and lobbying for increased resources and regeneration. They organised and undertook practical based activities to implement changes such litter picks, painting railing and bulb planting, and events to raise awareness such as fun days and the now biannual, Firth Park Festival. Regular maintenance is now carried out by SCC and FoFP work closely with SCC to organise events with SCC often taking the lead. Many of the small scale improvement works have been undertaken. In 2001 they worked with SCC Parks and Countryside Service to engage consultants to develop a feasibility study and then in 2003 a masterplan for the park to take forward improvements. Since then they have been instrumental in the implementation of much of the masterplan.

The majority of activities are undertaken in partnership with SCC Parks and Countryside Services, however in some cases FoFP act independently, for example in lobbying Councilors about particular issues (although this will be reported on and discussed at FoFP meetings). Despite some change in the type of activity undertaken FoFP are still engaged in a wide range of activities and these can be divided into two overlapping areas.

- a) Those relating to ongoing, day to day management of the Park. These include:
 - organising the FoFP monthly meeting which serves as a forum for discussion on the parks management and improvements with SCC and other stakeholders.
 - informally monitoring park management and use and reporting on issues and problems.
 - lobbying Councilors and SCC officers for resources / to address issues,
 - engaging users / stakeholders in contributing to the parks upkeep, through opinion seeking, encouraging membership of FoFP and at events
 - organising events to encourage wide use of the park and raise awareness
 - informally monitoring park management and use,

- b) those relating to specific projects to improve and maintain the quality of the Park. These activities include:
 - fundraising, writing and submitting funding applications, and lobbying for local funding through the Community Assembly (see appendix 2)
 - consultation with users and other stakeholders,
 - inputting ideas / commenting on proposals,
 - monitoring and reporting on progress (often to satisfy funders requirements)
 - project publicity (posters in parks buildings etc.).

The monthly meeting is usually attended by an officer from Parks and Countryside Service, a local Councilor and other local stakeholders depending on current issues and projects.

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Ideas, priorities and parks issues are discussed and actions agreed on including any relating to special projects. Decisions relating to the day to day management of the Park are a matter for the meeting but specific management and maintenance issues, problems or ideas may be raised and discussed. The meetings are minuted and progress reported on at the next meeting.

4. MODEL AGREEMENTS

There is no formal agreement with P&CS, however the activities of the FoFP are governed by their constitution. This states their aims: 'to improve the park and its adjacent area in partnership with Sheffield City Council' and 'to make it a friendlier and safer environment for everyone to use'. The constitution states further objectives:

- to promote the health and wellbeing of the residents of the area,
- to positively encourage active involvement in the use of the park from all sections of the community not excluding any person because of their age, ethnic origin, ability, sexual orientation, religious belief, political affiliation or disability, recognising the value of our many differences,
- involving local people in improving the area,
- to carry out and promote both environmental improvement and practical conservation, to educate, encourage and support the local population in environmental practice work by with statutory and non-statutory agencies,
- promoting sport, community recreation and play facilities,
- to raise funds and receive contributions where appropriate to finance the work,
- to publicise and promote the work.

SCC is not a signatory to the FoFP constitution and although SCC officers may sit on the FoFP committee they do not have voting rights.

The following table summarises the key elements in the FoFP model agreements as well as the process which these form part of.

**“Friends of” Model – Friends of Firth Park (FoFP), Sheffield
Community-based voluntary organisation involved in place-keeping of Firth Park in partnership with SCC**

Purpose of PK: maintenance & management of open space and facilities

Actors	Place-Keeping - no formal agreement: Green Flag Management Plan for Firth Park sets improvement measures and identifies FofP as delivery partner & FofP constitution (states they will work in partnership with SCC and other organisations to achieve aims)	Monitoring	Redress
Sheffield City Council Parks & Countryside Service divided in 4 sections below that work closely to deliver PM & PK	Landowner & responsible for park management. They must be informed and approve any event or improvement project.		
Parks Section	Onsite maintenance & management staff. Staff & Parks Officer liaise with FoFP. Daily contact between FoFP and on-site staff where issues may be raised.	Progress on ideas & issues may be raised via different routes: FofP	Loss of Green Flag status, if park management falls below Green Flag standards. Report to Councillors
Policy & Projects Section	Park improvement & development. Regeneration Officer liaises with FoFP to develop ideas, seek funds, and manage larger projects	Progress monitored via Regeneration Officer reports to FoFP meetings, on-site staff, letter/phone call to North Area District Parks Officer or reported to Local Council.	Little redress. Loss of project budget. Report to Councillors.
Community Services Section includes the Ranger Services	Support & guidance to FoFP in delivering activities & events via Rangers Services.	Reports to FoFP meetings & to funder	
Trees & Woodlands Section	Responsible for woodlands. May attend FoFP meetings.	Reports to FoFP meetings & to funder for specific projects.	
Friends of Firth Park (FofP) – constituted group of residents & park users	Monthly meeting & lobbies for park users. Specific responsibilities in projects.	Informal responsibility for general management monitoring, also via reports to FoFP. Formal reporting to funders of specific projects.	Loss of project budget.

initiate

5. EVALUATION

A series of issues which influence (or may influence in the future) the effectiveness of this partnership model were identified in particular relating to individual and organisational capacity. The evaluation below relates primarily to that between FoFP and SCC although from this and discussions with SCC Officers it is possible to draw some general comments about the model.

4.1 Ideas and mental models

Model agreements are forms of organizational co-operation which are based on both on the nature and capacity of the organizations involved, and on the expectations that given societies have of such organizations. From this point of view it is important to understand mental models (in the form of traditions, habits, ideas and ideologies) in order to understand organizational arrangements. This subsection describes key ideas and mental models put across by interviewees.

Friends of groups are seen by SCC as playing an important role in raising the profile of a green space, engaging residents in decision making and helping to engender ownership and responsibility for green spaces by the local community. The presence of a Friends group is seen to reflect the value of a particular green space to its local community. Although SCC are not obliged to work with Friends of groups there are obvious benefits in doing so, in particular they are seen such as a mechanism for securing funding that is otherwise not available to the Council, and their remit is to work with local people. This is embodied in the Green and Open Spaces Strategy 2010 – 2020 within the theme 'People' - Greater Community Involvement. Specific actions include those 'to promote greater participation of the community in the planning, development, management and maintenance of green and open spaces' and includes 'exploring opportunities for the transfer of ownership and management of spaces to the local community.'

FoFP is seen as very successful, both by the group themselves and by SCC. They are described in the Green Flag Management Plan for Firth Park (2008) as having been being very influential in generating interest in the park, lobbying for change and working with Sheffield City Council to secure funding and implement improvements and are described as the 'cornerstone of the Parks development'. There are several factors related to the park itself and the individuals and organisations involved, that can be seen to influence the success of the model at Firth Park:

- a) The Park is at the heart of the community; it is located adjacent to the main shopping area and surrounded by residential areas. Recent improvements have strengthened the link between the entrance of the park and the shopping area and new facilities have attracted a wider range of users. This means the park is well used, very visible and cannot be ignored.
- b) It is a very much perceived of as a 'park' in the traditional British sense, having very clearly defined, traditional uses, activities and features (as well as large wilder, more natural areas), that match well to the Green Flag management standards. In this respect it is something that the local community and SCC Officers are familiar with, which makes it easier to understand and engage with the type of management and use that should occur there.
- c) FoFP members, particularly the key actors, feel a strong sense of ownership towards the park. They are very passionate about it and proud of the improvements achieved. Some use the park every day; it is their park, they want to see it well managed and are willing to commit time and energy to ensuring it is.

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d) There is a good understanding of the relative roles and skills within the partnership and a good level of trust between FoFP and SCC. FoFP are a long established 'Friends of' group and over the years they have developed a clear understanding how things are done 'in the Council' and whom to contact. They are aware of their own limitations, both skills and capacity. They know when they need help, or expertise, and are happy to engage with and rely on SCC Officers and others when necessary.

e) There appears to be good relationships between the key individuals, particularly the SCC Regeneration Officer and members of FoFP, on a personal level as well as working.

Despite the successful partnership between FoFP and SCC and joint management actions (such as improvement projects) the responsibility for managing the Park lies firmly with SCC. This is clearly understood and accepted by FoFP and there appears to be no desire by FoFP to take on greater responsibility. FoFP suggest that many users are not aware of who they are and what they do, despite their notice boards and publicity associated with events and that some users probably think of them as part of the Council. Some local residents do contact them with specific problems and they will lobby and raise issues on their behalf. This carries more weight with local Councillors than individual residents complaining.

4.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis	
strengths	weaknesses
<p>Gives a voice to local people and strengthens local ownership and responsibility. Provides local knowledge for SCC and route into local consultation. Provides access to funding SCC cannot. Added legitimacy to SCC work and good publicity to support funding bids and Green Flag award. Helps deliver strategies, both for the park itself and wider Council strategies. On the ground monitoring in place – group can report on problems and lobby local councilors to get things done.</p>	<p>SCC limited resources to support model. Dependant on skills and resources in group, may be reliant on SCC (or others') expertise. Membership voluntary, individuals may leave at any time. Informality of model may lead to lack of clarity group's role/scope of actions. Dependant on good working relationship between individuals. . 'Friends of' may not be a representative group. May be selective of management actions they are involved in. Reliant on external funding.</p>
opportunities	threats
<p>Widen membership (but have tried unsuccessfully in the past) Training for members. Amalgamate with other Park based/interest groups.</p>	<p>Key members leaving. SCC and 'Friends of groups' priorities differ. Internal conflict, differing priorities between members. Reduced SCC resources – not able to support group or undertake management and maintenance.</p>

The success of the 'Friends of' model appears to vary across Sheffield and to be largely dependant on the skills, knowledge and resources of the local community, as well as the type of green or open space itself. Reflecting on their own and other local 'Friends of' groups, FoFP and SCC Officers suggest that parks that are already well used, are at the heart of a community (location, use) and that have valued natural or cultural heritage are more likely to generate a strong 'Friends of' group. Similarly parks in the more affluent areas of Sheffield may benefit from 'Friends of' groups with greater capacity, whose membership

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of professionals may boast skills, networks and confidence not so readily found in less affluent areas.

The individual membership of a 'Friends of' group may affect the dynamic of the partnership between the Group and SCC. FoFP are reliant on SCC for certain skills and expertise and there is clear division and understanding of responsibilities. However anecdotal evidence suggests that where a group's membership includes skilled professionals members may exceed their remit, for example developing projects and securing funding for improvement projects without the knowledge or permission of the landowner (SCC). Events and improvement projects must have approval from SCC to ensure the correct legal procedures and development guidance (such as health and safety) have been adhered to, and to ensure there is the capacity to maintain any resultant improvement. It may be simply that, as the agreements with the 'Friends of' groups are informal, the group (particularly if new) are not clear about the scope of their responsibilities and power, as well as the rules and regulations governing implementation of projects. Or, they may have their own specific agenda for how a space should be developed and the skills, networks and contacts, for example with local Councilors, to ensure these are taken up.

The capacity of both FoFP and SCC and the viability of FoFP are ongoing issues. In addition the group is not representative of the local community, which has high ethnic diversity, which could be seen as an issue. Almost all FoFP members are older, white, retired females. The range of activities they are engaged in has changed over the years partly due to some of this work, such as litter picks, being undertaken by the parks grounds men, but partly because of the age group of key members – 'we're all getting older'. Despite many attempts FoFP have found it virtually impossible to recruit younger members or to diversify their membership to reflect the wide range of park users. SCC and FoFP do however have good informal contact with ethnic users through specific stakeholder groups such as the women's keep fit group that attracts many elder Asian women and through consultation events such as at the Firth Park Festival or more formally targeted at other users groupings. It should also be noted that FoFP is not the only route for Park users to contribute and comment on place-keeping. They are able to make direct contact with SCC staff or Councilors themselves and there are user groups, such as the Health Walks run by SCC that FoFP have no direct involvement with.

FoFP relies on volunteers and despite their current strong membership it is difficult to persuade members to take on official roles with responsibilities and administrative duties such as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The effectiveness of groups such as FoFP is also subject to internal relationships between individuals, possible differences in priorities and personal agendas as well as the dedication and availability of individual members. As the group's membership is voluntary there is little that can be done if a key member leaves.

As the model is informal and the membership of FoFP is voluntary, there is no formal redress if actions are not undertaken unless they relate to the requirements of specific funders, such as reporting on progress and monitoring outputs. If these are not undertaken then funding might be lost. The planned management of Firth Park is embodied in the Green Flag Management Plan, and ultimately if the standards are not met then the park will lose its green flag status.

To ensure the partnership is effective the model needs input from SCC Officers and most groups need support with technical issues required to develop improvements projects. The capacity for SCC Officers to support Friends of groups is very limited even when there is a larger implementation project that SCC themselves is project managing. Providing support can be time consuming, often involving meetings outside normal working hours, and does not always result in concrete actions or successful funding bids. 'Friends of' groups may feel that they are dependant on others to help deliver their priorities and ideas, over which they

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have no or little control. This can lead to frustrations if SCC Officers are not able to deliver agreed actions on time. In the case of FoFP because of the long established partnership with SCC, FoFP know how things work and how long they may take. This has ensured that when such problems occur they do not unduly affect the good working relationship.

One of the main issues, outside SCC and FoFP control, that will have an impact on place-keeping, is the SCC budget for management of parks and open spaces. As a result of the years of successful SCC and FoFP partnership and its current Green Flag and City Park status Firth Park enjoys a relatively high level of resources for management compared to other parks in the locality. It is unclear whether the level of management required to maintain the green Flag status will be safeguarded if budgets are reduced and whether it would be possible or effective for FoFP to refocus activities (where their activities began) towards more practical management to fill the gap.

References:

Firth Heritage Park Green Flag Management Plan 2008-2012

<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/out--about/parks-woodlands--countryside/parks/a-z-city-district--local--parks/firth-park>

Friends of Firth Park website

http://www.sheffieldhelpyourself.org.uk/full_search_new.asp?group=17999

Friends of Parks and Green Spaces Survey 2007. Parks and Countryside Service Community Services Team.

Sheffield's Great Outdoors - Green and Open Space Strategy 2010 – 2030

<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/out--about/parks-woodlands--countryside/green-and-open-space-strategy>

Sheffield City Council Parks and Countryside Section Website.

<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/out--about/parks-woodlands--countryside>

APPENDIX 1: Firth Park Background

Firth Park is one of Sheffield's oldest and most historic parks. It is a designated City Park, (one of 9 most important parks in the city) but also a local park serving as a community park. It is a City Heritage Site, on the English Heritage register of Parks and Gardens with special historic interest and contains a grade two listed clock tower. Hinde common Wood and Donkey Hill Wood are local nature sites (areas of natural history interest) and Hinde Wood classified within South Yorkshire Forest as 'Heritage Woodland'.

It was given to the people of Sheffield by Mark Firth, a local steel manufacturer, in 1875, and became Sheffield first publically-owned park. It was opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales. The Park is held in trust by the City Council for the residents and visitors of the city to enjoy. The park covers a total area of 15.2 hectares and consists of park landscape and ancient woodland and a grade 2 listed Clock Tower. It is situated 5 kilometers north east of the Sheffield city centre of Sheffield, located in a predominately residential area and at the boundary of two wards, Firth Park in which the park lies and Burngreave that are among the poorest in Sheffield and the 10% most deprived in the UK. Ethnic diversity is also a strong feature of the surrounding population, particularly Burngreave (Black 12.3% and Asian 22.9%) whilst Firth Park despite being traditionally white working class also has a high Asian population (15.5%).

The site is owned by Sheffield City Council, the park is held in trust with the Cabinet of Sheffield City council acting as sole trustees. For the first 100 years after it was established the park was very successful offering a range of activities and attracting visitors from across Sheffield. The decades following 1975 however saw increasing decline, rising concerns about vandalism and mis-use, stemming from reducing budgets, largely through the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering that saw the management of parks being outsourced and at much lower budgets. In many cases there was no longer the local 'park keeper'. The Park reached a low point in 1995 with an arson attack on the Clock Tower. However the later 1990s saw the decline of the Park arrested and the reversed. Many organisations have played a role in the transformation of the park but the partnership between the Friends of Firth Park (formed in 1999) and Sheffield City Council Parks and Countryside Section has been key, particularly in the early days.

APPENDIX 2: Sheffield City Council

Parks and Countryside Section sit within the 'Place' service area of Sheffield City Council along with other environmental and cultural services. Place is one of five service areas that have emerged from recent restructuring. The others service areas are: Children Young People and Families (education and children's / family services), Communities (housing, regeneration and adult services), Resources (financial, customer, commercial and transport services), and Deputy Chief Executives (strategy, legal and performance related services). The Directors of each service area make up the Executive Management Team (EMT) and they provide overall strategic direction, 'make decisions, formulate recommendations for the political leadership, and give a steer on policy issues where this is necessary.' Such issues are taken to Cabinet or Full Council for approval. More information on each service area can be found on the SCC website. <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/management-structure>.

Significant issues that affect the direction of the Council, such as new policy and strategies, citywide decisions and those that affect more than one service area, are discussed and decisions made by a representative group of elected members (Councillors) at Cabinet meetings. Certain decisions, such as the council budget must go to Full Council for approval. Full Council is attended by all Councillors. Cabinet and Full Council Meetings are open to the public and there is an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and submit petitions. There are currently 84 elected Councillors, three for each of the 28 wards, the geographical areas the city of Sheffield is divided into for electoral purposes. Councillors are elected on a four year cycle and the current number of Councillors for each party is; Liberal Democrat – 41, Labour – 40, Green – 2, Independent – 1. All Councillors in the Firth Park and Burngreave wards are Labour party representatives.

In addition to Cabinet and Full Council there are a number of committees such as Planning and Highways Committees that act as a local planning and highway authority for the Council and a number of scrutiny committees. Scrutiny committees monitor and examine services provided by the Council and its partners and carry out in-depth reviews into specific service areas the aim being to continuously improve the delivery of local public services to residents.

A recent development has been the establishment of Community Assemblies. These are made up of the local Councillors from four wards, supported by a number of SCC officers, and replace (and build on the work of) the Area Panels, that have been in place for a decade. The intention is to give even greater say to local people, including organisations such as 'Friends of' groups, about how services are provided to meet local needs. Community Assemblies will have a budget and will ask local people how this should be spent on their area on local projects and certain services such as parks, street cleaning and libraries. Local people can participate through their Councillor and by attending formal meetings which take place at least four times a year and 'You Say' and 'You Choose' sessions held regularly around each ward will give local people the opportunity to discuss what they would like to see changed or improved. These views along with those of partner organisations will be used by Councillors to prioritise services for their areas and reported on at Community Assembly meetings. Each Community Assembly has a Community Plan which outlines what has been decided locally, and includes targets for services that will be monitored. More information on Community Assemblies can be found at <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/council-meetings/community-assemblies>.