

Flagging up fears for parks

PARK pressure groups from across the borough's green spaces have come together to accuse the council of underfunding Trafford's parks and abandoning the prestigious green flag scheme.

Trafford Council has reduced the number of parks nominated for the green flag award - a national standard of excellence - from 14 in 2005 to six this year and just two in 2008.

Although the number of nominations will be increased in 2008, groups from ten parks met yesterday to discuss what they see as cuts.

Neil Peden, of the Friends of Worthington Park, said: "We are seeing quite a lot of anecdotal evidence that there has been a reduction in actual staff members. This is completely contrary to policy statements from the council in the past, but we have formed this forum to coordinate evidence to prove that these things are occurring.

"For various reasons Trafford has decided not to go ahead with the green flag scheme and have installed their own gold, silver and bronze scheme that doesn't mean anything to anybody

"They are trying to reduce the num-

ber of green spaces that they are prepared to sponsor. It is a them and us situation, and the public will be left with the responsibility

"I have been in touch with the green flags scheme, and we will run it ourselves. It only costs £200 to nominate a park. We don't need the council."

Cllr Jane Baugh said the council had only entered two green flag nominations because this is the minimum necessary for the authority's Continuous Performance Assessment.

She added: "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."

But Executive Councillor with responsibility for parks, June Reilly said the new council-run award scheme would give more people a say in the future of their local park.



FRIENDS of Worthington Park Neil Peden, Ruth Fletcher, Wendy Ruskin and Pam Warhurst TMN40PARK07

Cllr Reilly said: "We want everyone to be able to enjoy their local park. The new scheme means that resources are being directed at those parks that need a little more attention. With the new scheme park users are involved in rating in their park and are therefore able to influence their future development.

"The greenspace award is more comprehensive than the green flag. It combines the results of not only an internal green flag style judging but also the

results of twice yearly independent inspections and a unique public survey."

The council added that parks which have scored 64 and above were awarded either gold, silver or bronze. Those parks that did not make the grade will undergo improvements.

Walkden Gardens, Woodheys Park and Denzell Gardens are amongst the six sites to receive a gold award, a further seven sites will receive silver, while 11 sites will receive the bronze standard.