

For Publication

Consultation on the Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2021 – 2030 (L000)

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	6 July 2021
Cabinet portfolio:	Health and Wellbeing
Directorate:	Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing
For publication	

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 For Cabinet to approve the draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for public consultation.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet approves the draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2021 – 2030 for public consultation.

2.2 That a report is brought to Cabinet with a final draft of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for adoption following completion of the public consultation.

3.0 Background

3.1 The last Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for Chesterfield was adopted in 2014 and has been a catalyst for realising a wide range of improvements in the quality of parks and open spaces.

3.2 Since the launch of the strategy, over 20 Friends of Parks groups have been supported and play a significant role in attracting funding to drive improvements and attracting more people to use their local park. The council has made available resource packs to enable new start up Friends

groups, with information on running and managing a Friends group and how to attract funding. The council has completed the restoration of Queen's Parks western boundary with the provision of a new 3G artificial pitch and associated landscape works.

- 3.3 We now have master plans and management plans for our main parks and hold four prestigious Green Flag awards at Queen's Park, Holme Brook Valley Park, Eastwood Park and Pools Brook Country Park. Brearley Wetlands, Norbriggs Flash and Blue Bank Pools have been declared as local nature reserves and large tracts of woodland are now being actively managed and made more accessible. The council manages numerous semi natural spaces under the DEFRA high-level stewardship scheme. The council continues to mitigate the effects of climate change through our tree planting programmes and a reduction in mowing spaces where it is appropriate to do so.
- 3.4 The Chesterfield in Bloom campaign is firmly established in the borough and we have successfully achieved a gold standard for the last 4 years.
- 3.5 The council has invested heavily in the refurbishment of our play spaces and a range of challenging and innovative play equipment, outdoor gyms, multi-use games areas and skate parks have sprung up across the Borough.
- 3.6 We continue to hold and support a wide range of successful events and activities in our parks and open spaces ranging from the Stand Road Bonfire Night, County Cricket, Gala Days and Chesterfield Pride to name but a few.
- 3.7 In 2018 the Council had an existing evidence base for open space, sports and recreation. However, elements of this evidence base were not adequate for local planning purposes given that the Playing Pitch Strategy required updating, whilst the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2014 did not fully meet the requirements of planning policy and guidance.
- 3.8 In 2018 the council undertook an open space assessment to support the Local Plan and to provide a more robust evidence base for the provision and protection of parks and open spaces in the borough.
- 3.9 The updated draft Parks and Open Space Strategy now takes account of the open space assessment and gives a clear direction of where open space should be provided and protected.

4.0 **The Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2021 - 2030**

4.1 The previous Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was adopted in 2014.

4.2 The updated and refreshed strategy will become the key document guiding the Council's protection and investment into parks and open spaces for the next ten years.

By adopting this strategy, the Council will have:

- Clear and transparent guidance and priorities for improving its parks and open spaces, to meet the needs of community attitudes and expectations in providing open space in the borough.
- Evidence of local leadership on and commitment to parks and open spaces, to underpin bids for funding for their improvement.
- Clear links to and co-ordination with the Councils Council Plan and the adopted Local Plan.
- Evidence and policies to underpin the negotiation of 'planning gain' for open space provision in association with new development.
- A developed structure of parks and open spaces, with a framework for prioritisation and resource allocation for management and improvement with the basis for the development of investment-backed annual action plans.
- Improved accessibility to Chesterfields parks and open spaces.

4.3 A copy of the draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is attached at **Appendix A.**

5.0 **Consultation of the draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2021 - 2030**

5.1 Consultation on the draft Parks and Open Spaces strategy will ensure that Chesterfield citizens have a direct say in how the council can address local needs and priorities for its parks and open spaces.

5.2 Consultation on the Parks and Open Spaces strategy will take place in two phases, influenced in part due to the current restrictions pertaining to the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.3 **Phase 1** – general consultation on the draft Play Strategy will take place via the council's online website.

5.4 **Phase 2** – analysis of the data captured from the general consultation will help to inform our further consultation with key stakeholders including ‘Friends’ groups, other local open space groups and elected members.

5.5 When consulting with specific interest groups the green spaces team will undertake the consultation using appropriate methodologies that adhere to Covid – 19 social distancing measures and government guidance at the time.

5.6 Once the public consultation has taken place the amended Parks and Open Spaces Strategy will be brought back to Cabinet for approval.

6.0 Implications for consideration – Council Plan

6.1 The parks and open spaces strategy positively contributes to the following council plan objectives:

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Improving our environment and enhance community safety for all our communities and future generations
- Helping our communities to improve their health and wellbeing

7.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money

7.1 No specific financial implications have been identified from the undertaking of the consultation. This implication will be considered further when the revised strategy is presented to cabinet following consultation.

8.0 Implications for consideration – Legal

8.1 The Council is required to meet statutory planning requirements including compliance with the NPPF as part of its Local Plan. A robust parks and open space evidence base is a key part of the evidence base and helps inform the parks and open spaces strategy.

8.2 Planning development for the borough and associated decisions require robust strategic needs and evidence being in place in event of challenge.

9.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources

9.1 No specific human resource implications have been identified from the undertaking of the consultation. This implication will be considered further when the revised strategy is presented to cabinet following consultation.

10.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Residual Risk
Strategy not adopted	High	Low	<p>The strategy has been developed to fully reflect the challenges of land use and open space development presents. It has been informed by a varied evidence base and as such it supports the Council vision and council plan objectives.</p> <p>Full consultation programme being undertaken to ensure local input and engagement to reflect local need.</p>	Low

11.0 Implications for consideration – Community wellbeing

11.1 Relaxing or participating in active exercise in a park or green space is an effective way to tackle poor health in an urban area. Access to good-quality, well-maintained public spaces can help to improve both physical and mental health by encouraging us to walk more, to play sport, or simply to enjoy a green and natural environment. We will encourage the

use of parks and green spaces for a culture of physical activity by all sections of our community. Open space as we have seen through the Covid-19 pandemic has played and continues to play an integral role in supporting the wellbeing of communities.

- 11.2 We will seek to ensure that our parks and open spaces can be beneficial for a range of physical and mental health condition priorities as part of a preventative 'natural health service'. Linking deprived communities and people with health-related issues to parks and open spaces is more important than ever. The council has a supporting public health leadership role, working with valued partners and we will work with our partners to create a joined-up approach using green social prescribing to better support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of local communities through use and development of green space, by supporting people to feel confident and encouraging them to become active participants in the natural world.

12.0 Implications for consideration – Economy and skills

- 12.1 Providing good quality open space will support the Council's wider ambitions regarding making Chesterfield a thriving borough by actively contributing to making Chesterfield a great place to live, work and visit.

13.0 Implications for consideration – Climate Change

- 13.1 Our parks and open spaces make a significant contribution to our commitment to become a net carbon neutral council by 2030 and borough by 2050. This includes maximising sustainable principles at all our facilities and in the way we manage and maintain our parks and open spaces but also in seeking to increase biodiversity. We have an overarching duty to consider the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment. In the management, maintenance and development of open space biodiversity will be a priority.
- 13.2 There is therefore a need to build climate adaptability into the maintenance of Chesterfield's parks, open spaces. This will in turn impact on the selection of species for planting, choosing specimens that are resilient to unpredictable weather conditions. There is potential to improve and promote the environmental sustainability of parks and open spaces and associated buildings and operations, for example, using low emission machinery/vehicles where possible. Chesterfield's parks and

open spaces can play an important role in reducing the borough's carbon and environmental footprint through for example recycling and composting of parks waste, encouraging local food growing and encouraging cycling, walking and public transport use where appropriate.

13.3 A full Climate Change Impact Assessment is attached at **Appendix C**.

14.0 Implications for consideration – Equality and diversity

14.1 The Equality Impact Assessment is attached at **Appendix B**. No negative impacts for groups with protected characteristics have been identified.

15.0 Recommendations

15.1 That Cabinet approves the draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for consultation.

15.2 That a report is brought to Cabinet with a final draft of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for adoption following completion of the consultation.

16.0 Reasons for Recommendations

16.1 The Council Core Strategy requires a robust needs and evidence base relating to green space to meet statutory planning requirements within the Local Plan Framework.

16.2 It is essential that the Council understands local community needs and can strategically plan and resource future plans through a recognised methodology being used to develop essential investment.

16.3 Parks and open space provision in local communities is an essential requirement to ensure that Chesterfield is sustained and developed both as a great destination; and a healthy and active place to live and work.

Decision information

Key decision number	1031
Wards affected	All

Document information

Report author	
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Appendices to the report	
Appendix A Part 1	Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2021 – 2030
Appendix A part 2	Evidence Base
Appendix B	Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix C	Climate Change Impact Assessment