

Appendix C – Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy Questionnaire

Objective 1: A clear strategy for investment in parks and open spaces

Identify key investment priorities

Improve the quality of parks and open spaces at key sites

Any comments or suggestions about objective 1:

- There needs to be good signposting between the council and user groups for grants etc as sometimes there are funding opportunities that cannot be accessed by the council or vice versa.
- A defined budget for parks and open spaces is needed to determine maintenance programmes and to enable direct re-investment.

Objective 2: Using our resources effectively and sustainably

Rationalise play area provision

Maximise income and external funding opportunities

Explore the potential to dispose of or make alternative use of low value and low-quality open space in areas of over provision

Review parks management and maintenance regimes to realise efficiencies and maximise climate change benefit

Any comments or suggestions about objective 2:

- We understand that it may be difficult to maintain everything we have now to a high standard. We accept that it may be better to maintain the open space and keep the areas green rather than investing in play areas. We feel we should encourage natural play in our green open spaces which would be more cost effective than maintaining equipment. A sound investment would be to run programmes that show children the wonderful opportunities for fun, activity, imagination and education when using adapted natural play. In an ideal situation, we don't want to lose any green spaces and ensure that everyone has space that is accessible to them, even for people without vehicles.
- Some areas could be left wild in order to reduce maintenance costs and the use of tree schemes would be very positive
- We accept that there are some examples of open space that could be used for building ie for housing

Objective 3: Increase the use of our parks and open spaces

Develop a diverse and attractive programme of events and healthy activities in partnership

Promote open space benefits for health, learning and wildlife

Encourage responsible use of sites and take effective action with partners to combat anti-social behaviour

Any comments or suggestions about objective 3:

- The programme of activities that took place over the summer was excellent and should be continued using a diverse range of locations across the borough

Objective 4: Engage with our community and partners effectively

Increase engagement with key partners and user groups

Develop volunteering opportunities in parks

Seek to promote a local river and tree stewardship scheme in partnership

Support sports clubs and other groups to move to day-to-day management and maintenance of facilities

Any comments or suggestions about objective 4:

- Remove the word “key” when describing partners. All partners are important.
- Friends of and Community groups need terms of reference that ensure the whole community is involved in discussions about the park, particularly when agreeing developments. It is vital that all points of view are heard and considered. This will also encourage new interest in growing the number of members participating in the work of Friends of, or Community Groups.
- Schools have been engaged in the past to get involved with various schemes and this needs to be maximised which encourages local children to take ownership of the parks and spaces.
- Lots of questions arose surrounding groups, and management and maintenance of facilities, referred back to John. Some concerns were raised regarding what the benefits to the clubs would be, how it would be monitored from a H&S and liability perspective, whether it could be sustained over the long term, reduced maintenance costs for the council but potentially also reduced income, as fees would need to be adjusted accordingly.

Do you have any other suggestions or comments to make about the proposed strategy?

- This needs to be a corporate strategy that cuts across the parks teams, maintenance, economic growth and others, fosters cross-department working and collaboration and involves regular communication so that investment and development opportunities are maximised.
- If we want to encourage more use of parks then we need to recognise that it is an experience for the whole family. Children don't visit parks on their own any more so parents need to be catered for too.