

# Review of the Chesterfield Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

## Briefing Note - 5 June 2014

### Background

The first Strategy was launched in 2003 with the aim of maximising social, environmental and economic benefits of green space provision. In the last 10 years more than £8.25 million has been invested in our parks bringing about a wide range of improvements.

Over 20 Friends Groups have established during this time and they have played a significant part in driving improvements.

Public satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces has risen by 18% and now stands at 73%.

### Why is a review is needed?

The original Strategy was broad in focus and possibly over ambitious.

Revenue funding for green spaces in Chesterfield has declined by £650,000 in real terms over the life of the Strategy and is set to decline even further.

Sport England has highlighted that our Strategy is out of date and in need of review if it is to be regarded as a robust Planning tool.

A refreshed Strategy will provide the context, vision and strategic direction for the provision, management and improvement of green spaces across the Borough.

### Research, Consultation, Data collation and Mapping

The original Strategy document has been used as a base from which to launch the review.

We have researched latest thinking in the sector and drawn on best practice where appropriate.

A series of workshops have been held to gather the views and aspirations of staff and key partners from a range of disciplines.

The results of recent public consultation exercises have been drawn on to help shape the Strategy.

A lot of work has been done to ensure that records are up to date regarding the types and location of open space we have.

Parks and open spaces have been assessed out on site for quality and accessibility.

All this has been recorded and plotted on maps and then analysed to identify where the gaps in provision are.

### Draft findings

#### *Quality*

Out of the 80 spaces assessed against basic Green Flag criteria 53% just met the standard, 14% exceeded it and 33% fell short.

Smaller sites lacked signage, needed repairs to paths and offered little in terms of amenity.

Larger parks were found to be generally well maintained and most had active Friends groups

#### *Quantity*

The land area of accessible Parks and Spaces amounts to 585 hectares and is made up as shown in the table below:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Hectares</b>	<b>Hectares per thousand population</b>
Parks	247.63	2.4
Amenity/local open space	163	1.58
Semi natural space	126.39	1.227
Outdoor sports	42.89	0.416
Closed churchyards	5.75	0.056
<b>Totals</b>	<b>585.66</b>	<b>5.69</b>

This equates to an increase in 167 hectares since we last measured for the original Strategy..

### Emerging Priorities and Objectives

Based on research and consultation so far, these are the draft priorities for the Strategy

- Rationalise quantity of provision and improve quantity
- Identify key needs/investment priorities and deliver in partnership through external funding and capital receipts
- Maximise the efficient use of resources to achieve our priorities

- Understand the needs of partners and deliver shared objectives
- Increase community engagement and ownership
- Make sites safer
- Promote green spaces for health, physical activity and to increase use
- Increase access to nature and improve biodiversity
- Improve site links via multi-user routes and out into the wider countryside
- Offer a diverse and attractive programme of events and activities
- Realise the full potential of green space in terms of tourism, lifelong learning and economic development
- Seek to provide new facilities or improve quality of existing facilities through new development

An action plan has been drafted to address these priorities which is set out under the following headings (these can also be viewed as key objectives).

1. Improving the quality of existing open spaces
2. Rationalising the quantity and accessibility of open space
3. Promoting our spaces and engaging our communities to maximise use and benefits
4. Improving biodiversity and sustainable landscapes
5. Maximising the efficient use of resources to achieve our priorities
6. Improving partnership working to achieve joint aims such as Healthy Lifestyles

### Emerging Policies

The Strategy reflects the current and probable financial position of the Council particularly in being realistic in the way we have developed the action plan. That said it is still stretching within this context.

The Strategy will be presented to Members in October where they will need to consider the policy context. To date the following potential policy changes have emerged:

- It is likely that the Strategy will only propose the development of new open space where there is a deficiency in open space within a particular area and where this coincides with multiple deprivation.
- Where new open space is developed, this should be in the context of either external funding or within an agreement with a developer to set up a management company to cater for ongoing maintenance costs.

### Next steps

The draft Strategy will be posted on the Council's website in June and the public will be invited to fill in a short questionnaire in response.

This will be advertised via the Community Assembly newsletter and Friends of Parks groups will be invited to discuss the Strategy.

A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out on completion of the Strategy and following consultation with the Equality and Diversity Forum.

The intention is to take the Strategy to Members for adoption in October. The Strategy will continue to be shaped and refined to take account of consultation responses where appropriate in the meantime.

Andy Pashley

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