

For publication

Parks and Open Space and Play Strategies update.

Meeting:	Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Date:	9 February 2023
Cabinet portfolio:	Health and Wellbeing
Directorate:	Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing

1.0 Reason for inclusion on the work programme

- 1.1 Purpose of reviewing the topic: To support the development of the Parks and Open Spaces and Play Strategy.
- 1.2 What are the objectives of the review: To ensure that the strategy provides the context, vision and strategic direction for the provision, management and improvement of green spaces across the Borough.
- 1.3 Progress to date: The Enterprise & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee provided feedback on the draft strategy as part of the consultation process in late 2021. The strategy was approved in February 2022 and a progress update was requested for early 2023.

2.0 Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out an overview of the approach taken regarding strategy development and the actions and activities to date in relation to the Councils Parks and Open Spaces and Play strategies.

3.0 Report details

- 3.1 The Parks and Open Spaces and Play Strategies establish an understanding and ambition for the borough until 2030. A robust evidence base has been drawn from national policies and initiatives, local consultation and analysis of existing provision. This has enabled the development of local standards and policies, which provide a framework for delivery of the strategies.
- 3.2 The Parks and Open Spaces and Play Strategies were considered at the Cabinet meeting on 6 July 2021 where it was resolved that the strategies be approved for wider consultation.

Consultation

3.3 The consultation programme took place between August and October 2021. This programme, in addition to ongoing internal officer engagement, included:

- An online survey for members of the public to respond.
- A session with the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.
- An online survey for stakeholder groups such as 'Friends' groups.
- A presentation and online survey for the Councils Equalities and Diversity Group.

3.4 Initially the consultation was held over a four-week period; this was subsequently extended to six weeks to enable further engagement of stakeholders in the consultation process.

3.5 Feedback from the consultation was positive and supportive of the strategies including their key themes and direction of travel.

3.6 Due to the overall positive and supportive nature of the feedback there were no significant changes to the strategies following the consultation.

3.7 Following consultation, the final Parks and Open Space and Play strategies were approved at cabinet and Council in February 2022.

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022 - 2030

3.12 The vision for the parks and open spaces across the borough is:

'For every park and open space to offer a high quality and fulfilling experience; supporting biodiversity, promoting health, well-being and enjoyment, and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors to the borough.'

3.13 The aims of the strategy are:

- To provide clear and transparent guidance and priorities for improving parks and open spaces.
- To reduce inequality in those areas of highest deprivation according to the index multiple deprivation by providing good quality and accessible parks and open spaces.
- To enhance local leadership and commitment to improving and investing in parks and open spaces.
- To provide high quality evidence to underpin and support funding bids to improve parks and open spaces including community engagement opportunities.

- To feed into and maximise visibility within the Council's key strategy documents the Council Plan and Local Plan.
- To enhance our contribution to key agenda's including the climate emergency, nature recovery, improving accessibility and responding the borough's challenging health and wellbeing profile.
- To support negotiation with developers for 'planning gain and support' for open space investment / provision across the Borough.
- To develop parks and open spaces using local standards, evidence base and policies to provide a framework for prioritisation and resource allocation for management and improvement.

3.14 The key themes that set the delivery context for the strategy are focussed on:

- Using a clear approach for investment in parks and open spaces
- Using our resources effectively and sustainably
- Increasing the use of our parks and open spaces
- Engaging with our community and partners effectively

Play Strategy 2022 – 2030

3.15 The vision for play across the borough is:

'For every play space to be a destination, by creating a variety of sustainable play experiences that offer children and young people of all ages and abilities accessible, quality, challenging and fun opportunities for play.'

3.16 The aims of the strategy are:

- To increase play experiences for children, young people and families.
- To reduce inequality in those areas of highest deprivation according to the index multiple deprivation by providing good quality and accessible play experiences.
- To raise the standard, quality and experience of play opportunities across Chesterfield borough.
- To widen the concept of play and enable innovation.
- To improve play accessibility for our children, young people and diverse communities.
- To facilitate play experiences that are inclusive and accessible to all children and young people.
- To ensure that play experiences are properly resourced and sustainable.

3.17 The key themes that set the delivery context for the strategy are focussed on:

- Raising awareness of play
- Raising the quality of play

- Improving the range and accessibility of play
- Informal and natural play opportunities
- Maximising resources to improve and develop play
- Strategic Management and Growth Sites

3.18 The strategies will guide the Council's management of and investment in its parks and open spaces until 2030. Through the adoption and delivery of these strategies the Council will have:

- Clear and transparent guidance and priorities for improving its parks, open and play spaces to meet the needs of community.
- Evidence of local leadership on and commitment to parks, open and play spaces, to underpin bids for funding their development.
- Clear co-ordination with the Council Plan and the adopted Local Plan.
- An evidence base and local standards to underpin the negotiation of 'planning gain' for investment / provision across the Borough.
- Improved accessibility, opportunities and experiences.

Actions and activities to date

3.19 Following the adoption of the strategies the Environmental Services team have been working through a legacy delivery programme in accordance with the aims and the themes of the strategies.

3.20 The following areas provide an overview of activities, projects and programmes that have taken place since the adoption of the strategies.

- Safer streets funding has been secured for investment to support diversionary activities for children and young people to include a new concrete skate park and a new concrete skate park and multi-use games area. Expected to be delivered by March/April 2023.
- 1 x skate park, funding envelope secured and repairs and maintenance completed.
- 2 x play spaces, funding envelope secured and full refurbishment programme completed
- 2 x play spaces, land fill tax credit funding applications submitted (match funding in place) with decisions due in March 2023.
- 1 x play space, funding envelope secured, orders placed and work on site expected March/April 2023.
- 15 x play spaces have undergone a full painting planned preventative maintenance programme.
- 1 x new Green Flag submission for a park following a series of improvement works, with further work being completed in the coming months.

- Funding envelope secured from the Lawn Tennis Association to bring back into use 2No. tennis courts. Anticipated start date for the contract works is the end of March 2023.
- Funding envelope secured from landfill tax credits to support 1 x Bowls Club to develop their activities. This includes the extension of a canopy area around the existing bowls pavilion to give protection from the weather; to swap the existing metal halide lamps on the floodlighting units to LED lamps, reducing energy consumption and finally, to purchase a new ride on Dennis mower to enable the club to undertake an enhanced grass cutting regime.
- Safely delivered the Stand Road Fireworks event.
- Delivered in partnership with Derbyshire County Cricket Club the cricket festival.
- 1 x Petanque court (piste) funding envelope secured to enable an extension to the existing court (piste) to facilitate more space for a growing participant base, project completed.
- 1 x Petanque court (piste) funding envelope secured to extend the existing court (piste) to facilitate more space for a growing participant base. Work anticipated to be completed in the next few months.
- The service enabled the successful Chesterfield in Bloom campaign for schools, local businesses, community groups and private individuals culminating in an awards ceremony in late September.
- The Service entered the East Midlands In Bloom competition show casing the towns green infrastructure and community projects. We were awarded the gold award winning the Small City category for the first time.
- The service continued to exceed the Councils Climate Change action plan tree planting target of a minimum of 1000 trees per year; the year's programme will see in excess of 2500 trees being planted.
- To aid capacity building within our communities the Service has successfully promoted and implemented a tree warden scheme and now have 12 tree wardens. They have supported a range of activities over the year. This has included the Services work as part of national tree week and the Queen's Green Canopy activity.
- The Service supported the Councils Biodiversity Net Gain protocols as approved at Cabinet on 19 July 2022 and will actively enable this programme to be delivered.
- The Service is holding a `Friends of Groups` meeting in March 2023 (the first full Borough wide meeting since the programme of meetings was disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic) to continue to build capacity in our community groups, to share good practice and to help further the excellent work these groups have undertaken to date.

3.21 The above areas do not include the business-as-usual activity around the general open space maintenance programme, club, group, volunteer engagement, sports pitch activity and programming, tree work and wider landscape management activities all of which support the vision of both the play and parks and open space strategies.

3.22 The breadth of the areas of activity outlined above reflects the commitment of the Environmental Services staff to enhancing the Councils parks, open and play spaces across the Borough.

4.0 Potential barriers

4.1 The activities outlined have been achieved at a time of major challenge including cost inflation, supply chain and capacity issues. Despite this it is pleasing to note the extent of project and programme success which is set to continue as the service moves into the next stages of developing delivering plans for both strategies.

4.2 Resource does present potential barriers, however, to date the service has in the last five years enabled the investment of over £770,000 in play infrastructure and £1.6m in parks and open space infrastructure in addition to the Parks and Open Space services core general fund resource allocation. This successful approach to securing grant funding has continued through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund that will see additional resource allocation for parks, play and sports pitch development.

5.0 Future plans and areas for further scrutiny involvement

5.1 The service is currently working on the transition from a legacy programme of work to a five year programme of work in the form of a delivery plan for the Play and for Parks and Open Spaces strategies in accordance with Cabinet / Council approval of the strategies. The delivery plan will be costed and will reflect the aims and the themes of the strategies to ensure the effective and efficient allocation of resource.

6.0 Implications for consideration

6.1 To maintain the quality and the desired levels of positive customer experience across our parks, open and play spaces the Council, in addition to its general fund resource will continue its highly successful approach to securing external funding to enable the progressive development of the strategies. This includes:

- Council funding: capital and revenue funding allocated to deliver facilities and improvements within the Council's ownership.
- CIL and Section 106 developer contributions.
- Grant funding such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Landfill Tax Credits.

6.2 The strategies positively contribute 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.

- 6.3 Outdoor recreational opportunities provided through parks, open and play spaces can be beneficial to mental health and wellbeing by providing important opportunities to interact with nature and other people. The Council will, through the strategies, continue to work with partners to maximise the benefits to physical and mental health that arise from utilising our parks, open and play spaces.
- 6.4 Providing good quality parks open and play spaces will support the Councils wider ambitions regarding making Chesterfield a thriving borough by actively contributing to making Chesterfield a great place to live, work and visit.
- 6.5 Both strategies as a result of the aims, themes and overall approach to parks, play and open space management positively support the Councils ambitions pertaining to climate change.

Document information

Report author	
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Background documents	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
<i>This must be made available to the public for up to 4 years.</i>	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix 1	
Appendix 2	