

FOR PUBLICATION

DRAFT PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY 2015 – 24

(E100)

MEETING: COUNCIL

DATE: 26 FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT BY: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MANAGER

WARD: ALL

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY: ALL

KEY DECISION REF: 37

FOR PUBLICATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR PUBLIC REPORTS

TITLE	LOCATION
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1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend for adoption, a revised Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for Chesterfield.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that;

2.1 That the draft revised Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is adopted.

3.0 **BACKGROUND**

3.1 In 2012 the Council consulted on a revised draft planning Core Strategy and received an objection from Sport England who are the statutory consultee using the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a benchmark. Sport England have clear objectives to protect, enhance and provide playing fields including the promotion of health and wellbeing in communities through appropriate and sustainable facility provision.

3.2 The Sport England objection advised:

Sport England does not accept that an evidence base dated 2002 (Parks and Open Spaces Strategy) and 2003 (Chesterfield Sports Facilities Strategy) can be regarded as up to date and therefore in compliance with Paragraph 73 of the NPPF. Not only are they considered to be out of date but they will no longer be robust given the changes in facilities which will have taken place over the last 10 years.

3.3 The Sites and Boundaries proposal requires a needs and evidence base which must be provided through robust strategic plans being in place including a Parks Strategy.

3.4 The original Strategy was launched in 2003 and during the last 10 years more than £8.25 million of capital was invested to improve our parks and open spaces, with 70% of this being secured from external sources. Revenue budgets for maintenance and management of parks over this period reduced by around £650,000 whilst public satisfaction rose from around 55% to 73%.

3.5 Over 20 Friends of Parks Groups established during that time and have had a significant part to play in attracting grant funding for projects and organising events and activities.

- 3.6 Publicly accessible land managed and maintained by the service for recreation purposes now stands at 509 hectares (1257 acres) which is 21% more than the total measured for the initial strategy.
- 3.7 As resources are being stretched, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain, let alone improve the quality of the majority of parks, outdoor sports facilities and play spaces. With the prospect of ongoing austerity measures the revised strategy (**Appendix 1**), which has been drafted based on consultation and extensive research of best practice, sets the framework for a pragmatic and sustainable approach to parks provision.
- 3.8 The current approach and use of robust methodology adopted for the borough Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is acknowledged as being suitable and sufficient to underpin the Core Strategy and inform future delivery within relevant Service Plans.
- 3.9 Within the timeframe available, significant consultation has been completed and this has included a Web Survey, Member workshop, Friends of Parks workshop, Community Assemblies, Other stakeholders workshop, Officer workshop and Planning consultation. The Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has also taken a close interest in the strategic review and a project group was set up to examine the process and findings in detail.
- 3.10 This report and along with the draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 27 January, 2015, and it was resolved that the adoption of the strategy be recommended to Full Council.

4.0 **PURPOSE, SCOPE and VISION**

- 4.1 The purpose of the draft strategy is: *To direct and prioritise resources to gain maximum benefits for all of our communities through the provision of quality, accessible green space.*
- 4.2 The strategy is primarily concerned with the management and development of publicly accessible green space within the Borough of Chesterfield that has recreational value. It therefore includes:

- Parks and public gardens
- Natural or semi-natural green space
- Amenity green space
- Provision for children and young people
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Green corridors including the canal
- Closed churchyards

The following categories do not fall within the scope of the strategy:

- Rights of way across private land
- Street trees
- Allotments, community gardens and smallholdings
- School grounds
- Council grazing land
- Farmland
- Highway verges, traffic islands
- Operational cemeteries
- Woodlands and wildlife sites in private ownership
- Civic spaces
- Green space of less than 0.3ha in extent

- 4.3 To set the Strategy in context this is the proposed Vision for the next decade.

Chesterfield's Vision for Parks and Open Spaces 2015–2024

To ensure that Chesterfield has an accessible network of high quality parks and open spaces which puts good health and an excellent quality of life within reach of everyone who lives in and visits Chesterfield.

5.0 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 Overall the revised strategy is a vehicle to enable us to focus resources where they are most needed and where they will have most effect.
- 5.2 It sets out the framework within which we will seek to engage with funders, partners and communities in order to maximise the impact of our collective resources both in terms of quality of provision and outcomes such as reducing health inequalities. It also sets out a clear policy for the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy and for the adoption of new open space.
- 5.3 The successful delivery of key components of the strategy will be determined by a number of factors:
- Developing the abilities , skills and capacity of the Green Spaces Team
 - Willingness and capability of sports clubs and community groups to engage
 - Viability of surplus land sales (commercial interest, mine – workings, covenants etc.)
 - Gaining Sport England, public and Ward Member support for land disposals and rationalisation
 - Economic limitations to growing revenue income

- Achievability of securing invest to save funding (e.g. to remove surplus play areas) and capital match funding
- Securing ongoing political support for refocused priorities

All of the above, to a greater or lesser extent, will have a bearing on the success and impact of the strategy.

Some of these are completely within the Councils' control – for example the quality and capacity of the Green Spaces Team – whilst others may be more difficult to influence.

- 5.4 At an early stage there needs to be a focus on reviewing the staffing resources at our disposal as an essential building block to underpin the delivery of the strategy.

One element of this would be to realign the ranging service and the wider team, to become more focussed and to have an enabling role to engage with and develop community groups.

- 5.5 Another early action would be to critically examine the provision and maintenance of our equipped Children's play areas (which now number over 90 spread throughout the Borough) which as an ageing stock is increasingly likely to give rise to insurance claims following accidents. As well as looking to dispose of surplus play areas, there will be a need to be consideration of a rolling programme of investment to refurbish or replace retained facilities.

- 5.6 Ring-fencing a proportion of capital receipts through sale of open-space in combination with Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL) as match to external grant funding would go some way to fulfilling aspirations set out in the strategy.

6.0 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The proposed objectives of the strategy are to;

- Prioritise investment in parks and open spaces
- Use resources effectively and sustainably
- Increase the use of our parks and open spaces
- Engage with our community and partners effectively

6.2 These are underpinned by strategic recommendations as follows;

Prioritise investment in parks and open spaces

- Identify key investment priorities
- Improve the quality of parks and open spaces at key sites
- Adopt a re-investment mechanism for capital receipts from recreational land sales and CIL
- Implement policies for adoption of new open space arising from residential development

Use 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 green space in areas of over provision
- Review parks management and maintenance regimes to realise efficiencies and improve biodiversity

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

Engage with our community and partners effectively

- Identify and engage with key partners, community and user groups
- Develop volunteering opportunities in parks

- Support the promotion and development of a local river and lakes stewardship scheme in partnership
- Support sports clubs and other groups to move to self-management of facilities

7.0 LEGAL POSITION

- 7.1 The Council is required to meet Statutory Planning requirements including compliance with the NPPF as part of its Core Strategy. The new Core Strategy has been published with conditional requirements for Strategy development including a Parks and Open Spaces Strategy being completed.
- 7.2 Planning development for the Borough and associated decisions require robust strategic needs and evidence being in place in event of challenge.
- 7.3 CIL and Section 106 arrangements are under review and will be amended by April 2015. Changes will impact on the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. Sport England are currently considering implications in consultation with the Council's Planning team and the Strategy will require suitable amendment to reflect new requirements once announced.

8.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Given the potential level of funding required, it is likely that investment will only be achieved through a combination of opportunities and funding sources as well as partnership opportunities.
- 8.2 Local authority finances continue to be under severe pressure and some previous major national funding programmes are no longer available.
- 8.3 The Council will seek to use assets innovatively and work on a multi-agency approach to address needs arising out of the strategy.
- 8.4 The main funding delivery mechanisms for the Council and others in delivering this strategy are:
- CIL and Section 106 developer contributions (new development and population growth will generate significant additional demand for parks and play provision)

- Capital Grant funding for example: Heritage Lottery, Landfill Communities Fund and Sport England
- Council funding: capital and revenue funding allocated to deliver facilities and improvements within the Council's ownership, and potentially through the use of capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets
- Partner funding such as DCC Health Improvement

9.0 EQUALITIES

9.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment is included at **Appendix 2**.

10.0 HUMAN RIGHTS

10.1 The relevant human rights issues have been appropriately considered in drafting this report.

11.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

11.1 A summary of the key risk management issues is shown in the table below:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Action	Residual Risk
Strategy not adopted resulting in planning objections from statutory consultees	Low	High - Core Strategy compromised and associated income and community development needs \ targets not met. Reduction in health inequalities priorities not progressed\ delivered. Chesterfield fails to progress as an active community.	Strategy completed and adopted to ensure service provision and infrastructure planned and delivered to meet robust needs and evidence based development.	Low
Strategic action plan not implemented effectively.	Medium	Disrupts services meeting customer expectations and consequential levels of Community health and well being compromised. Wider area "health" impact arises due to lack of investment and sustainable provision.	Clearly understood roles, planned actions, investment and functions. Effective partnership working with performance measures in place and monitored. Good communication at all levels including organisational reporting lines and responsibilities being understood with partners and CBC teams. Good corporate relationships and shared priorities at all levels. Members aware and driving plans clearly aligned to strategic need and corporate priorities.	Low
Legislative Pressures impact on non statutory investment	High	Service fails to meet both Council and Community needs.	Strong partnership working in place with key stakeholders. Vibrant 3 rd Sector base. Public Health priorities and strategies in place. Ability of CBC to raise capital through Community Investment Levy and prioritise\ support planned developments. Option to outsource with innovative partnerships.	Medium

12.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that;

12.1 That the draft revised Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is adopted.

13.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

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

13.2 It is essential that the Council understands local community needs and is able to strategically plan and resource future plans through a recognised methodology being used to develop essential investment. This should maximise mitigation of the impact of austerity measures affecting public service responsibilities in both statutory and non-statutory provision.

13.3 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

You can get more information about this report from Andy Pashley (Extension 5099)